

St Stephen's News

ST STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH • TIMONIUM, MARYLAND

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FROM THE RECTOR

The 10th anniversary of the rationalization of a miracle

Ten years ago (on January 15th, 2009, to be precise) a spectacular miracle took place – on live television, in real time, before the eyes of the entire world.

“Miracle on the Hudson” blared the newspaper headlines. And the same sentiments were echoed by television and radio anchors and reporters, not just in this country but all over the world

Indeed, how else can one describe a pilot landing a crippled jet airliner with 155 people aboard – and with both engines shut down – safely on New York's Hudson River.

Landings on water are extremely dangerous. Water is a very hard substance – ask anyone who has done a “belly flop” at a swimming pool. In almost every instance of a water landing, the fuselage disintegrates on impact. In the rare event, they do not disintegrate, the fuselage is so badly ruptured it sinks immediately.

This landing on the Hudson is said to be the only instance on record of a modern passenger jet landing on water with its fuselage intact and with everybody aboard surviving the impact.

It is, thus, hardly surprising that the first reaction of almost everybody involved – including New York's news hounds and politicians – was to hail the event as a miracle. And a miracle is the only way to describe it.

■ It was a miracle that the exploding engines did not ignite the aviation spirit and destroy the aircraft in flight.

■ It was a miracle that the aircraft was high enough in the air to miss the George Washington Bridge and allow the pilot to make his approach down the Hudson.

■ It was a miracle that the engines appear to have fallen off prior to impact – for the drag they would have exerted as they went into the water could have torn off the wings.

■ It was a miracle that the pilot was able to put down the plane in the fast-flowing Hudson close to the Battery Park Ferry Terminal, where there was a fleet of boats to rescue the passengers and crew.

Absent any of these (among many other) factors, the outcome might have entirely, and tragically, differed. Small wonder, then, the headlines that immediately followed the incident. Yet within a few days of the initial rejoicing we were being told there

was really nothing in the least bit miraculous about the event.

This, I guess, should have come as no surprise. In this, the most materialistic of ages, we human beings are evidently exceedingly uncomfortable with the notion that God can intervene directly in our affairs.

Nor, it seems, is the notion of sheer dumb luck any more palatable. The idea of vast cosmic games of chance are apparently just as discomfiting to us as the miraculous.

“For those who fly commercial jets for a living, what's quickly become known as ‘the miracle on the Hudson’ wasn't simply luck after all,” we were told.

“Bill Fisher, an American Airlines pilot who flies out of Chicago's O'Hare airport, said there was more

Parish Prayer List

Our Prayer Chain offers prayer daily for people on the Prayer List and guests of the Joseph Richey Hospice. To add a name to the prayer list, or visiting list, or to join the Prayer Chain, call the parish office (410) 560 6776.

FOR RECOVERY: Leona, Charlotte, Bryan, Rachel, Elizabeth, Dorothy, Sarah, Betsy, Edie, Alan, Terry, Helen, Linda, John, Judy, Neal, Stephen, Nathan, Hobbie, Betty, Helen, Robert, Jan, Bobby, Lee, Cary, Marie, Jim, Joanna, Kendall, Ian, Gloria, June, John, Adrian, Tom, Michell, Al, Kathy, Jack, Lewey, Stephen, Pamela, Judy, Elizabeth, Wade, Sifa, Theresa, Lisa, Larry, Dan & Scott

FOR LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE: Bethany, Caroline, Mavis, Melba, Sam, Vinnie, Doug, Ian, Lisa, Carey, Cindy, Jacob, Casey, Beth & Kath

IN MEMORIAM: The Rev. Canon Roger Rovelstad

THOSE WHO MOURN: Mrs Ardis Rovelstad & family

ON ACTIVE SERVICE: Lt. Col. Charles Bursi, Lt Nicholas Clouse, USN; Lt Col. Harry Hughes; MSGT Michael Holter, USAF; Cpt Fiodor Strikovski, US Army.

than fate at work when U.S. Airway's flight 1549 ditched in the icy waters of New York's Hudson River. Fisher says it starts with training . . .”

Training – so that explains it all . . . or does it?.

The safe landing of Flight 1549 came about as a consequence of a uniquely complex set of circumstances – the experience and skill of the pilot being just one of the them. Certainly, Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger II, the U.S. Airways pilot, who landed the jet in the Hudson, was a highly-trained aviator. Not only is he a veteran airline pilot, he is former Air Force fighter pilot and a certified glider instructor.

Doubtless, all this extraordinary training contributed to the amazingly safe landing. Actually, some might argue that it was something of a miracle that of all the pilots working for U.S. Airways it was

Captain Sullenberger who was flying this particular aircraft at this particular time. But this was not the only factor in the “miraculous” landing,

To be counted a miracle, it is not necessary that a host of angels swooped down from heaven to bear the plane up in their wings. Nor is it necessary that the Prophet Elijah or even our Lord, himself, should have been physically present in Battery Park bidding a miracle to happen.

As William of Ockham, the 14th Century English logician, declared, God works in the most economical way available. This concept lies at the heart of the principle known as “Ockham’s Razor.”

The Old Testament provides some useful examples of this principle in practice. Some of the most spectacular miracles were simply the result of natural phenomena – the parting of the Red Sea by the wind, the collapse of the walls of Jericho by an earthquake. The miraculous aspect of these events was the timing.

Same goes for the “Miracle on the Hudson.” It was a miraculous coming together of a unique and complex

combination of circumstances. And we should still give thanks for it. *Laus Deo!* GPH✠

FROM THE TREASURER

Please send in your pledges

Churches, like families, need to plan their budgets, but, also like families, they find it hard to do so if they are unable to forecast what their income will be. St. Stephen's is i drawing up its budget for the year, but cannot finalize things until you have all sent in your annual pledges.

We know that most folks regard making a pledge is just a formality and that you will be making the contribution whether you notify us or not. And we realize that making a pledge is a chore at a time of the year in which there are more than enough chores already. But pledges are our "security blanket" And, like Linus in the Peanuts cartoon, we need our "security blanket." Wishing you a happy and prosperous New Year: **BOB REYNOLDS**

FROM CYNTHIA BAKER

Christmas Pudding Bowls & Jelly Jars

Please remember to bring your Christmas Pudding bowls and jelly jars back to church. We will need them for refills for next year’s Cookie Walk.

St Stephen’s Anglican Church

11856 Mays Chapel Road, Timonium, MD 21093

Office: 410 560 6776 · **Rectory:** 443-425-2420

Pastoral Care: 410 252 8674

www.ststeve.com

The Rev. Canon Guy P Hawtin, *Rector*

The Ven. Michael Kerouac, *Vicar* ·

Associate Rectors:

The Rev. Michael Belt, The Rev. John Novicki,

The Rev. M Wiley Hawks, The Rev. Robert Ludwig. &

The Rev. Dr. Norman Flowers

Mrs Happy Riley, *Director of Pastoral Care & Wedding Coordinator*

SUNDAY SERVICES

8am: Said Eucharist

9.15am: Sung Eucharist (with Nursery & Church School)

11am: Sung Mattins (1st Sunday: Sung Eucharist)

Choral Services (as announced) – evensong.ststeve.com

WEEKDAY SERVICES

Wednesday, 6pm: Evening Prayer

Friday, 12 noon: Healing Eucharist

Saturday, 5pm: Family Eucharist

Calendar of Events

WEEKLY

Monday, 6.30pm: Bridge Club

Thursday, 10am: Knitting Circle

Noon: Bible Study

Friday, 10.30am: Bible Study

MONTHLY & SPECIAL

TAKE NOTE: CHANGED DATE

The Vestry Meeting

Wednesday, January 23rd, 7.00 pm

Ladies Who Lunch

Wednesday, Noon, February 20th

at the Peppermill, Towson

Reservations: Call Sara Douglas at 410-560-9026

Monthly Choral Evensong

Sunday, February 3rd at 6 pm

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

St Stephen's Anglican Church
11856 Mays Chapel Road
Timonium, MD 21093

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