

# **GCI-NYC, NEW LIFE IN CHRIST**

## **REMEMBERING SEPTEMBER 11, 2001**

On this solemn anniversary of the horrific events of 20 years ago, members of New Life in Christ members pause to recall and reflect on where they were and how they were feeling. They remember Christ in the fallen and in the living. In these recollections, we can also see the Hand of God in operation, protecting and guiding ALL our steps.

### ***What were you doing on that day?***

**Ruth Ann Phillips:** “I will never forget September 11. I was on my way to school that day. I had just started high school. I heard about the towers before I arrived at the building.

**John Vojtko:** “I was working out in Long Island back then. I heard about the Twin Towers while at the job. We **watched** the television at the job together and witnessed the events in disbelief.”

**Dora Long:** “I was on my way to a funeral in Amityville, NY. We learned of the attack at the funeral home. The LIRR and roads were all shut down by the time the funeral ended, so I could not get back to the City that day. We were blessed to have a family member in Amityville with whom we could stay. We watched the news reports of the at her home”

**Kiat Tsan:** “I was at home that day when I heard about the Twin Towers on the radio.”

**Eleanor Toussaint:** “I was going about my normal day at work when we got the news about the Towers. Our facility did not receive casualties from the devastation, but doing our normal work was very difficult while also realizing what was going on in NYC and around the country that day.”

**Fred Cohen:** “I was working in downtown Brooklyn back then. Only one other coworker and I made it to the job that day. No work could be done, but we listened to the events unfold on the radio.”

**Rosa McCullough:** “I was doing home care at the time. I didn’t learn about the Twin Towers until I reached my client’s home. She is the one who first informed me, and together we were both watching the terrible events on TV.”

**Edgar Patilano:** “Nancy and I were still in the Philippines at the time. I clearly remember just putting 1-year old Ashley down to bed when the news came on the TV. It was nine in the evening our time.”

**John Fackre:** “I was working in Huntington, LI that day. I had just arrived, when our boss informed us of the terrible events in the City. We were all transfixed by the horrible events on television. Being so far away from the action meant the traffic where we were was not as disrupted. One of the pizzerias remained open to take care of the locals and our employer was able to provide us with at least one meal since we wouldn’t have another until we got home. I later learned several LI veterans died in the collapsing buildings.”

**Eileen John:** “I was doing home care back then, and was on my way to work when the first plane hit the tower. When I arrived at my client’s house, I learned of the attacks on the World Trade Center. We watched the events unfold throughout the day. We could see the smoke and fire from the towers from the house in Brooklyn. The smell was noticeable where we were. I will always remember that day.”

**Eugene Harvin:** “I was still a NYPD Sergeant working the midnight shift at the time. As I was awakened that morning, I remember dreaming the Twin Towers were on fire, but as I fully woke, I realized it was not a dream. All NYPD personnel were contacted to report for duty immediately. My unit in downtown Brooklyn was the first to be sent out to the World Trade Center area. I only had to go down there that one time. Several of my fellow cops continued to work in the area over the weeks and months of the recovery and cleanup period. During the past twenty years, nine of my coworkers have since died from various health concerns related to all the dangerous materials in the environment that everyone was told was not harmful. I have often considered how the Lord had his hand of protection on me when I think of my fallen friends.”

**Charles Brown:** “I heard about the events on the radio, like many people. I was doing courier work in those days. I would often go inside those buildings for deliveries. I had just been in one of the Towers a day before.”

**Marilyn Cudjoe:** “On that day, I was stationed at Fort Polk, Louisiana, receiving training in order to be deployed to a peace-keeping mission in Kosovo. I was able to watch the occurrences on TV in the Operation Center.”

**Patricia Austin:** “I was home-schooling my two daughters that morning. My girlfriend called me and said, ‘Patricia, turn on the TV right away!’ That is when I first learned what was happening. I took the girls and went to check on my parents, and we all watched the events unfold on TV.”

**John Henderson:** “I was working at Woodhull Hospital back then. We heard about the Twin Towers on the radio. We could see the smoke from Manhattan at our location in Brooklyn.”

**Maria Monzon:** “I was working in Great Neck, LI back then. When I arrived at the house, my employer opened the door and was in tears. ‘Maria, look at what is happening with the Twin Towers!’ We watched everything on television. The buildings on fire, the collapses, and all the frightened people crying and looking for friends and loved ones. It took me three hours to get back home by bus that day. I will never forget 9/11”

**Roy Ramkissoon:** “1) I was working at a warehouse in Long Island the day of the attack. There was a small black and white TV that was broadcasting the event. But because there were antennas problems, the reception was in and out and lots of static.

But we saw in real-time the falling of the towers. Getting back home that afternoon after work was a bit of a hassle due to the commotions.

2) My sister-in-law worked close by and she witnessed the events and saw people jumping out of the towers. It was a frightening experience for her

3) My eldest sister’s sister-in-law’s niece’s two kids perished in one of the towers.

Their names: Ronald (Roshan) and Kamini Singh. They worked at Windows on the World, on the 107th floor of one of the Twin Towers

I wrote a letter to the US Immigration in Guyana requesting that my sister's Sister-in-Law's son be allowed to visit the US for the memorial. It's always difficult for a Guyanese to obtain a US visa. I told him to walk with the pictures of the deceased and news articles also to US Immigration.

In the interview, when the Immigration officer saw the pics and articles, they immediately stamped his passport and offered their condolences, and were very accommodating. Emotions were very high at the time as you can imagine.

Also, I was asked to write a poem to be read at the family's memorial...which I did.”

**Vicki Walker:** “I was working at a daycare facility in Brooklyn at the time. I was doing my regular work, listening to the music and news on my Walkman radio. When I heard of the Twin Towers being on fire, I rushed to the Principal’s office and told her to turn on the TV. When she saw what was happening, she was upset, as were we all. I went to all the classrooms and told the teachers to turn on their televisions or radios so they could see what was going on as well. All during that day, we all talked together about what all this would mean for the country and ourselves. A few of my coworkers also felt the need to talk about God and faith with me. They didn’t normally talk about such matters at the job, but that day everyone felt the need for it.”

**Gerry Thompson:** “I was a driver in Queens at the time. I actually had passengers with me when the news came over the radio. From the Long Island Expressway, we could see the smoke from the Towers in the distance. Before long, all drivers were called off duty, so we ended our runs as quickly as possible and brought the vehicles back in. By then, the roads were unusually clear of traffic. The rest of that day was spent watching the latest on TV.”

**Lourdes Docteur-Bailey:** “I was at work that day when coworkers let us all know what was going on. We were glued to the TV in shock and sadness all day long until we could leave.”

**Brian Piontkowski:** “I was at work when we all heard about the news on the radio. We spent the rest of the day watching the television as each part of the drama unfolded. “

**Sharon Stevens:** “I was at home when I heard about the Twin Towers. I watched as everything was displayed on TV”

**Fitzgerald Bailey:** “I was working in downtown Manhattan at the time. I was actually outside watching in person as the first Tower was on fire and the second one was hit by the plane. I saw the Towers fall. I would later learn that some of my own family members perished in the destruction.”

**Florence Emerole:** “On 9/11/01 I was working in mid-town near Grand Central station. I remember getting to work that morning with no problem at all and settling in to work. It was just a normal work day, nothing out of the ordinary. Back then we had a radio in our office that we tuned in to listen to the news every now and then. Just around 9 a.m., or shortly before that, there was an announcement on the radio that a plane had crashed into the World Trade Center and people were hurt. Since the news was fresh and the newscaster did not have much information other than what was said, we went to the internet to see if we could find out more information. We saw the picture of the crash and the smoke and as we were trying to understand what was going on, there was another announcement on the radio that a second plane had hit and at that point they began to say that it may be a terror attack on the United States and there were reports of fire and people trapped and people jumping down from the windows of the towers. We were all in shock at the news and could not believe what we were hearing and seeing. We looked out the window towards downtown and we could see the smoke billowing in the distance.

At that time my daughter was in high school and her school was on 91st street in Manhattan and when they mentioned on the radio that it was a terror attack, I decided to go to the school to pick her up so that we could go home. Not long after that, I received a call from her school asking me to come and pick her up.

Of course, the trains were shut down and I could not get a train to her school. I decided to take a bus but the buses were barely moving. It seemed like everything came to a screeching halt. I then got off the bus and walked all the way to her school praying that by the time I picked her up the trains would be back up and running so that we will have a way to get back to Queens. I remember how quiet the school was when I got there and I wondered where everyone went. It turned out that the school was on a lockdown and the students had been ushered into a hidden section of the school to wait to be picked up and no one could get into the school or pick up any child without showing proper ID. I finally picked her up and thankfully, by that time, the trains were running again (with limited service). We finally made it home where my son who was going to school in Queens had already made it home and was waiting for us. Eventually everyone in the family made it home safely and we watched the news on the TV still stunned from the day's event.

On that day, as I listened to the news and watched the towers burn and fall, I was reminded that several years earlier, I had interviewed for a job at one of the twin towers. Naturally, when I did not get the job, I was upset. However, as I watched the events of 9/11 unfold, I was grateful that I did not get that job because who knows, I could have been one of the casualties. I was reminded at that point of Romans 8:28 "*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose*". My heart goes out to those who lost loved ones on that fateful day. May the spirits of those lost rest in perfect peace and may God give hope and peace to those who are left behind.

**Elder Victor Henry:** "I was working in downtown Brooklyn at the time. When I arrived at the 17<sup>th</sup> floor office, several of the women were upset and crying. That's when I learned that the towers were on fire. The coworkers asked if I could pray with them, and I said, "Of course!" We continued to pray throughout our time at the office as we watched the terrible events unfold. No one was allowed to leave the building until we were given the all clear. From the office windows, we could see thousands of people walking along Flatbush Avenue, streaming from the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges. I also saw burnt pieces of computer paper and other documents floating in the air and landing at the street on Flatbush. No business was conducted, but we also spent much of that day trying to get in contact with the coworkers who did not make it into work. By the evening and next day, we had reached everyone. When we finally were allowed to leave, I caught up with my wife, Louise, and it took us three hours to drive the seven miles home."

"I also remember the account of one of the young couples in the Brooklyn congregation. They both worked at the World Trade Center, but were out of town for the weekend. They were returning to the City by bus that morning. Because the wife was 8-months pregnant, there was a delay in the departure time. As the Twin Towers were ablaze and about to fall, all traffic was held up and nothing but emergency vehicles could enter Manhattan. From the Brooklyn side of the Battery Tunnel, they could see the Towers falling. The couple was so thankful for the driver's patient heart because of the wife's condition. Had the bus arrived on time, the bus might have been trapped in the tunnel or caught in the area as the buildings were collapsing. The Lord was with so many of us that day."

**Elder Jonathan Browne:** "I decided to call out of work that day. Normally, I might have been getting off the E Train at the World Trade Center Station around 8:40. I was in Queens when I heard the first reports about a plane crashing into the first building. I went to my mother's house for a few minutes, saw more events on TV. I then went to get my car from the garage to head home. The roads where I was were mostly empty, including the Grand Central Parkway, which was being shut down. As I made it home and continued to watch the day's events on TV, I could not help but wonder about all the folks I knew who worked in that area: Serge Volpe, Walter Dolengo, Joe Lima, Bill Louw and others. My boss and his family members would also have been in the area on a regular day. Thankfully, all were kept

safe. I still remember that day vividly and often consider the many ‘coincidences’ that occurred that day and how they were not accidental at all.

**Elder James Hills:** “I was ‘coincidentally’ off work that day, expecting two large deliveries in my home. That Tuesday was also Primary Day, and I had thought to go vote later on. Normally I would have been in Queens about the time of the first plane crash. I was actually listening to the radio when that news broke. At first, everyone thought it was an accident as had happened to the Empire State Building once. The unfolding events proved that quite the opposite was unfolding. Had I been at work, I would not have been able to get home, as all the subways were shut down by then. I learned the next day that several coworkers slept as they could in different spots within the large work areas and offices. The ‘smell of death’ lingered in the air up in Harlem for the next three days. For a few weeks after this tragedy, church services all around were filled to capacity, and everyone in the Government was actually working together.”

**Vicky Barrios Newsom:** “I was a 23-year-old case manager in Queens. I pulled into work that morning and was listening to the radio. They stopped playing music and were talking about what was occurring. A sense of disbelief, confusion, and dread filled me. I ran into my workplace yelling, "Did you hear what happened?" My coworkers were stunned as we convened in front of a TV to watch in real time the rest of the devastating events. I was absolutely emotionally gutted. We were sent home early where I cried inconsolably. Soon, I got a call from my supervisor of my evening job, "Vicky, this is a hard time for all of us, but we need you here tonight at work-especially tonight." You see, I worked on a crisis team at the Psychiatric ER in Far Rockaway and we were expecting calls to our hotline and we were providing support to distressed hospital staff who were waiting for patients that never came. It was a hard and traumatic time for all of us.

I pray for all the those that we lost on 9/11, their families, their friends, and those survivors who are still impacted. I especially think of a fellow college peer from Class of 2000, Jennifer Mazzotta. She should still be here. She's in God's embrace now and that's a small consolation.”

**Pastor John Newsom:** “My memories of those days range from the large moments to the small details. I was in Midtown that day, my sister was in D.C., and she could see the smoke from the Pentagon. She would later move to New Orleans and experience Katrina. I’ve only known my mother to cry over those two news events in the last 20 years. I remember having to stay in the city that night and waking to an empty Times Square with the odor of smoke still looming. There was such a spirit of national and spiritual unity that we seemed to have lost. I attended a service at Fifth Avenue Episcopal Church and it was filled up with people in places we never knew existed. It seemed possible we could have a moment of spiritual unity. Is the Church not called to bring the power of the Spirit to heal these divisions?”