

**Speech - GPBA President Arlene Harrison
World Trade Center Remembrance Service
Calvary Church - September 11, 2016**

On September 11, 2001, our world and our lives were changed forever.

On that day fifteen years ago, ordinary citizens took extraordinary steps to help their fellow man and in doing so many gave up their own lives.

Thousands lost their lives at the World Trade Center, at the Pentagon in Washington, and in a field in Pennsylvania.

The year that followed was a year of great courage, great patriotism, great love and great sorrow.

It was a year of endless funerals, endless memorials, and endless tears.

In our neighborhood it seemed that everyone we talked to had been touched personally by this senseless act of terrorism, either directly or through the loss of a loved one, a friend, a neighbor, a business associate.

On that tragic day 12 of our Gramercy Park neighbors went to the World Trade Center and never returned. They were William Biggart, Jim Paul, Jean Marie Collin, Richard Fraser, Jeffrey Smith, Jeffrey Wiener, Steven Jacobson, Janet Gustafson, Alan Lederman, John O'Neill, Arnold Lim, Christopher Hanley, Sean Lugano, and Marta Peterson's 25 year old son Davin.

The most vivid memory of many of our neighbors who worked at the World Trade Center, was the young faces of the rescue

workers who were rushing up the stairs as they themselves fled the buildings. “They saved everyone but themselves” was the headline that soon flashed around the world.

Before September 11th, every day that our public protectors went to work they never knew if they would return home that night.

And on that day, when unimaginable death and destruction fell from the clear blue skies, many of our local first responders answered their final call.

Just a block away from here on 21st Street at the 13th Precinct and Emergency Service Squad 1, we lost police officers Moira Smith, Robert Fazio Brian McDonnell, John A’Allara, Walter Weaver, Santos Valentin Shelby, Vincent Danz, Stephen Driscoll, Ronald Kloepfer, Jerome Dominguez, Thomas Langone, Paul Talty, Sgt. Michael Curtin, Sgt Rodney Gillis, Sgt. John Coughlin, and Det. Joseph Vigiano, and on 20th Street at the Police Academy, officer Glen Pettit. On 19th Street at Cabrini Medical Center emergency medical technician David Mark Sullins. A few blocks away we lost transit police officers Mark Ellis and Ramon Suarez.

In the Fire Department companies that directly serve our community, from Ladder Company 3 on 13th Street, the company which participated yearly in our National Night Out Against Crime and who over the years had become our friends, we lost Capt. Patrick Brown, Capt. John Williamson, Lt. Kevin Donnelly and firefighters Michael Carroll, James Coyle, Gerard Dewan, Jeffrey Giordano, Joseph Maloney, John McAvoy, Timothy McSweeney, Joseph Ogren, Steven Olsen.

From Engine 16/Ladder Co. 7 on 29th Street, Capt. Vernon Richard, and firefighters George Cain, Robert Foti, Charles Mendez, Richard Muldowney, Vincent Princiotta.

From Engine 5 on 14th Street, Manuel Delvalle.

From Rescue One, Captain Terry Hatton and from Engine 21, Captain William Burke, Jr.

We also mourned the loss of Firefighter Keith Glascoe, the son of a great friend of our community Ben Glascoe. Keith and seven of his fellow firefighters from Ladder Co. 21 went down to the World Trade Center that day and none of them returned.

After 9/11, for many months the Gramercy Park Block Association organized a round-the-clock community relief effort at the 13th Precinct. It was made up of area residents, merchants, restaurants and hotels. We prepared and served thousands of meals, provided shelter in our hotels and homes, and distributed critical supplies to police, fire, emergency and other support units. We also served the Medical Examiner's office, the Coroner's office, and Pier 94 families, and took care of the visiting national guardsmen, and volunteers from around the country who rushed here to assist workers at Ground Zero.

For many months, tens of thousands of children from across the country wrote cards and letters, drew pictures and sent homemade banners of support. We wallpapered every inch of our command center at the 13th Precinct with their messages. They sent cookies and muffins they had baked, and enclosed notes and pictures of love and support.

We were told over and over again that those expressions of love and support that came to our rescue workers from the children around the country was what often brought tears to their eyes and helped them face yet another day of unimaginable devastation and anguish at the site.

Among the many projects we organized were :

- A few days after 9/11, then Rector Rev. Tom Pike and I led a Prayer Vigil and Candlelight Procession that filled every seat in this church and ended at The Brotherhood Synagogue. As part of the vigil we hung a huge homemade banner in front of this altar that said "They Cannot Dim the Light," and scores of children lined up from the back of the church to pin silver stars on the banner. For many months this banner was then hung over the entrance to the 13th Precinct.
- Due to heightened security at Ground Zero, critical supplies from all over the country could not be delivered there, so Tom offered us the use of Anderson Hall as a depot for these supplies, which were delivered in huge tractor-trailers that lined Park Avenue South. I vividly remember that at that time there was a Korean service going on here, and the congregants rushed outside to joined strangers who we were commandeering as they passed by to help us form a chain of people to pass hundreds of boxes of supplies from the tractor trailers into the church. To give you an idea, the supplies reached the ceiling of the Narthex before being transferred into Anderson Hall, and then down to the World Trade Center site.
- We did Memorial Concerts, some that took place right here at Calvary, including one with the National Jazz Museum of Harlem.

Other projects included:

- Neighbors Helping Neighbors Benefits to raise funds for the families of local police officers lost at the World Trade Center.

- A nationwide “Kids Helping Kids” effort for children to reach out to the children of our police officers who were lost on 9/11.
- A Video Project documenting memories of their fellow officers who died at The World Trade Center that we gave to their families.
- A project to facilitate health services for World Trade Center uniformed personnel.
- A children’s year-round planting of a Remembrance Garden at the 13th Precinct, which we continue to plant on Easter, Memorial Day, July 4th, September 11th, and Christmas.
- An installation of an 8-foot photographic exhibit inside the Precinct showing our community’s relief effort and support following 9/11 that reads, “NYPD YOU MAKE US PROUD.”

Descriptions of our community’s many World Trade Center projects is now housed in the National September 11 Memorial & Museum at the World Trade Center site.

We will never forget 9/11 and those devastating months that followed, and we will always remember the courage of our police officers, firefighters and first responders during that time.

Through the years we have gotten to know many of the families of these men and women who perished that day and all they ever ask is one thing – THAT WE NEVER FORGET – and that is what we will continue to do.

Thank you.