

Pilot: 'God sent His angels' to guide her in plane landing



"The pilot, Tammy Jo, was so amazing! She landed us safely in Philly."

Originally published in [Charisma News](#)

The pilot who safely landed a stricken Southwest Airlines flight on Tuesday got her first flying experience in the U.S. Navy, touching down F-18 fighter jets at 150 miles per hour on aircraft carriers.

Tammie Jo Shults, 56, may have drawn on her Navy skills when one of the two engines on her Boeing 737-700 blew and broke apart at 32 000 feet on Tuesday, forcing her to implement a rapid descent towards Philadelphia International Airport.

The explosion killed one passenger and nearly sucked another out of a shattered window.

One of the first female fighter pilots in the U.S. Navy, Shults calmly told air traffic control that part of her plane was missing, and she would need ambulances on the runway.

"So we have a part of the aircraft missing so we're going to need to slow down a bit," Shults told a controller.

Many of the 144 passengers sang her praise on social media after Shults thanked them for their bravery as they left the plane.

“The pilot Tammy Jo was so amazing! She landed us safely in Philly,” said Amanda Bourman on Instagram. “God sent his angels to watch over us. I actually heard someone say, there is a God!!”

Passengers identified Shults as the pilot. Southwest Airlines declined to name the crew of flight 1380 and Shults was not immediately available for comment.

Authorities said the crew did what they were trained to do.

“They’re in the simulator and practice emergency descents ... and losing an engine ... They did the job that professional airline pilots are trained to do,” National Transportation Safety Board Chairman Robert Sumwalt told reporters.

‘God Sent His angels’

Shults might never have become a pilot if she had not been so determined to fly from a young age.

She is quoted on fighter plane blog F-16.net saying she tried to attend an aviation career day at high school but was told they did not accept girls.

A native of New Mexico, she never lost the urge to fly and, after studying medicine in Kansas, applied to the Air Force. It would not let her take the test to become a pilot, but the US Navy did.

She was one of the first female F-18 pilots and became an instructor before she left the Navy in 1993 and joined Southwest, according to the blog.

A Christian, who is married to a fellow pilot and has two children, Shults said that sitting in the captain’s chair gave her “the opportunity to witness for Christ on almost every

flight.”

Bourman was among passengers who said they had been saved by divine intervention.

“God sent his angels to watch over us,” she said.

Israel's 70th Birthday: A miracle amid thanks and threats



Celebrating at the Western Wall
(PHOTO: CBN News, John Waage).

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Israel opened its 70th anniversary festivities yesterday with song, dance and fireworks, albeit under the shadow of an Iranian threat.

Israel's national celebration wove a theme of technological progress and survival through seven decades of its modern history. They told the story of the Jewish people from Moses

to the early pioneers, through the Holocaust to the planting of the land growth of technology. They said the rebirth of their nation was where prophecy became their reality and the answer to their prayers.

"We pray to God to return to Jerusalem, His city and now in 1948, 70 years ago, Jerusalem, His city became available to us," Nobel Prize-winning economist Robert Auman said.

"The Jewish prayers always talked about returning to Zion, returning to Jerusalem and here we are 70 years despite all the things that have happened and the threats from Iran they talk about, there's still the technology and the things going on that do seem quite miraculous," Jerusalem-based photographer and author Sharon Alshul told CBN News.

Earlier, a siren wailed throughout the country as Israelis stood silent and remembered their fallen through their many wars and terror attacks. The commemoration and celebrations took place despite threats from Iran. An Iranian spokesman blamed Israel for an attack on an Iranian base inside Syria and warned that Iran would retaliate. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel would face the Iranian threat.

→ INSERT VIDEO HERE

"Today too we are not deterred from a struggle against those who strive to annihilate us because we know how to defend ourselves with our own forces, which is the essence of independence," he said.

"We all appreciate the strong alliance with the United States," Netanyahu continued. "We all welcome President Donald Trump's historic decision to recognize Jerusalem as our capital and to transfer the embassy of the strongest power in the world to it. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, America."

The celebration ended with a rendition of the song

“Hallelujah” for the things that were and the things to come.

Trump speaks out for Pastor Andrew Brunson after ‘disturbing’ trial twist



Pastor Andrew Brunson. (PHOTO: [WND](#))

Originally published in [CBN News](#)

President Donald Trump is speaking out for captive American Pastor Andrew Brunson who’s being held in a Turkish prison.

Tuesday night the president tweeted: “Pastor Andrew Brunson, a fine gentleman and Christian leader in the United States, is on trial and being persecuted in Turkey for no reason. They call him a Spy, but I am more a Spy than he is. Hopefully he will be allowed to come home to his beautiful family where he belongs!

Pastor Andrew Brunson, a fine gentleman and Christian leader in the United States, is on trial and being persecuted in Turkey for no reason. They call him a Spy, but I am more a Spy than he is. Hopefully he will be allowed to come home to his beautiful family where he belongs!

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [April 18, 2018](#)

On trial for his Christian faith

Brunson, who is on trial for his Christian faith, was sent back to prison following his hearing Monday.

“The judge late today said the trial will be continued until May 7 and ordered Pastor Andrew Brunson to return to prison. Instead of being returned to the prison he was at prior to this hearing date, he’s been sent back to a prison that is notorious for its overcrowding and it is a prison where eight prisoners are to be held in one cell. Instead, there are 22,” [American Centre for Law and Justice](#) Chief Counsel Jay Sekulow said on his podcast Monday.

Sekulow called this latest development “disturbing” and is asking the international community to continue to call for the pastor’s release.

Brunson has been imprisoned for 18 months in both grossly overcrowded prison cells and solitary confinement.

“His pre-trial detention, I would argue, has become a sort of torture,” Aykan Erdemir told CBN News. Erdemir is a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defence of Democracies and a former member of Turkey’s parliament.

He says Brunson’s trial was historically long – 12 hours.

“Right after the noon break when he came back and was defending himself he had a mental breakdown. He sat down; it’s reported that he started crying and he told the judge how

difficult it is to survive in this kind of isolation chamber,” Erdemir said.

“The next three weeks are critical to turn up the pressure on Turkey,” Sekulow warned.

Trying his best to convince the court of his innocence

Pastor Brunson took the stand Monday and did his best to convince the court to give him his freedom. He faces 35 years in prison.

“I’ve never done something against Turkey. I love Turkey. I’ve been praying for Turkey for 25 years. I want truth to come out,” Brunson told the court, according to [Reuters](#). “I do not accept the charges mentioned in the indictment. I was never involved in any illegal activities.”

ACLJ Senior Counsel Cece Heil told CBN News the Turkish government is using false testimonies and anonymous witnesses to build a case against the pastor.

“According to Mr Cem Halavurt (Turkish attorney representing Pastor Brunson) Turkey has resorted to false testimony by secret witnesses, stating in the recent interrogation report that, ‘This is one of those operations that we all have witnessed in many investigations within the Turkish judicial system with fake digital data and directed statements by secret witnesses. We clearly see that a similar operation has already been started against my client,’” Heil reports.

Meanwhile, Sekulow is encouraging believers to join more than half a million others in signing a [petition](#) calling for the pastor’s release.

Both Sam Brownback, US ambassador-at-large for religious freedoms, and North Carolina Sen Thom Tillis attended Brunson’s trial.

“I know that neither of the two had confirmation ahead of the

visit that they would be allowed into the courtroom. They took a risk and I'm glad they did. They certainly raised the profile of this case. I think their presence conveyed to their Turkish counterparts that Pastor Brunson is not forgotten," Erdemir said.

"The administration is deeply concerned about this case. We completely believe factually he is innocent. Andrew Brunson is innocent. We are hopeful that the judicial system will find that, that he will be released, released soon," Brownback told reporters after the trial.

Accused of helping orchestrate a coup

Turkey accuses the 50-year-old North Carolina native of helping orchestrate a coup that threatened President Recep Erdoğan's leadership in 2016.

The 62-page indictment also charges the pastor with committing an act of terrorism by spreading the Gospel in the majority Muslim country.

"Turkey has literally taken the position that Christianisation is terrorism," ACLJ Senior Counsel Cece Heil told CBN News. "They have no specific evidence that Pastor Brunson has committed any crime. The fact that he is a Christian, and specifically a Christian pastor, is what they are equating as terrorism."

Sen Tillis travelled from North Carolina to attend the trial and expressed "deep disappointment" in the court ruling.

"After the questionable evidence presented at the hearing, I am more convinced than ever that Pastor Brunson has a compelling case to be released and should be exonerated," Tillis said in a statement provided to CBN News.

"Turkey and the United States have a long history of alliance and partnership, and I hope the Turkish government will make a

good faith effort to serve proper justice to Pastor Brunson and allow him to be free once again," Tillis added.

Erdemir says Brunson is simply a pawn in Erdogan's effort to practice "hostage diplomacy" with the US.

"At the centre of his paranoia is his fixation with the West and what he sees as the Judeo-Christian civilisation. This is part of his crusade against the West," Erdemir said.

A group of Christians gathered just outside the White House gates Monday to pray for Brunson's release and protest his captivity.

"Hebrews 13:3 says this: *Remember those in prison as if you were in prison with them and those who are suffering, you suffer along with them,* " Rev Pat Mahoney, director of the Christian Defence Coalition, told CBN News at the prayer vigil.

Former Muslim plants first church town has seen in 700 years



Urim Bogaj.

Originally published in [CBN News](#)

A man is helping take the gospel to the four corners of the earth by planting the first church a town in Kosovo has seen in 700 years.

It's a story with an unlikely beginning.

Urim Bogaj grew up in a Muslim family that hated Christians.

But everything changed when his aunt converted to Christianity in 1999 just after a bloody war rocked the small Southeastern European country.

She shared her new faith with 15-year-old Urim, who found it hard to accept.

"It was hard to listen to her. To receive what she had to say. We always knew that Christians were serpents. Serpents were evil. I did not want to become a Christian," he told Peter Wooding from the Global News Alliance.

However, Urim continued reading the Bible and eventually gave his life to Christ.

His family was shocked by the news of his conversion. Despite this, he shared the gospel with them and his entire family renounced Islam.

Now, he has planted a church in Malisheve, the first one the majority Muslim town has seen in 700 years.

“There were challenges. There were different problems. Persecution of every kind,” he said.

Urim is calling on the global community of believers to pray for the work he is doing there.

“As the first generation of Christians, we need your prayers to pray for us to be standing strong for Christ...to finish the race and go to the end.”

‘Multitude’ of Egyptians coming to Christ despite persecution from Muslim extremists



Christian worshippers carry crosses as they take part in the Eastern and Orthodox Church's Good Friday

procession in the Old City of
Jerusalem April 13 2012. (PHOTO:
Reuters)

Originally published in [The Gospel Herald](#)

Despite continued persecution from Muslim extremists, Christians in Egypt remain unwavering in their faith, compelling a “multitude” to come to Christ, church leaders have revealed.

The Rev Sameh Hanna, associate pastor at the Evangelical Church in Cairo, told [Premier](#) on Monday that the “mood is very, very good amongst Christians who are living in Egypt.”

“Not because the situation is good or bad – that is not the reason,” he explained. “We have two kinds of news – earthly news, which is very ugly, very discouraging and I think in the West, you get only the earthly news – a bombing here or there.”

“But there is heavenly news. We know what is going on spiritually. We see things that not everybody is seeing. We see things you are not hearing. We see the multitude coming to the knowledge of Christ from every background, so this brings joy to us.”

Faith in God alone

The Rev Andrea Zaki Stephanous, president of the Protestant Community of Egypt, said that believers in the country put their faith in God alone, as further attacks by the Islamic State terror group or other extremists are a very real possibility – even in church.

“When security knows I’m going to a certain church there will be double security, but you never know. You can expect at any moment that someone will come with a bomb and create a massacre. So every day we trust God and we go,” he said.

Fr Kyrillos Fathy was at St Mark's Coptic Church, one of the houses of worship that was bombed by Islamic extremists during Palm Sunday of last year, and said that he narrowly escaped crossing paths with the suicide bomber during the attack.

"Even though the incident was very terrible and it left us emotionally vulnerable, we believe in the Bible and in the verse in the Bible that says everything works out for the good," Fathy shared.

He explained that the church was full for service after the attack on Palm Sunday despite the horror the people had suffered through.

Sharing the gospel with everyone

Albert Falzi, SAT 7's Egypt director told Premier they want to share the message of Christ with everyone – no matter how resistant to the gospel.

"Many times we receive comments from people who are not Christian and we welcome them. Even when people send hostile messages, we just react in the Christian way," he said.

Last Palm Sunday, ISIS carried out [twin attacks](#) on churches in Egypt, leaving 45 people dead and 126 injured. In a letter written to persecution watchdog [Open Doors USA](#), believers in the region declared they would not give in to the spirit of fear, but would attend Easter services to worship Jesus.

"We love Egypt. We will not leave Egypt. We cast out the spirit of fear by the power of His love," the believers wrote. "We will go to churches on Easter and beyond to worship the Name of Jesus."

"We will spread out the light we were given by His grace, in every street, village, town and city," the letter continued. "We will keep praying for all Egyptians, especially for those dark minded, brainwashed and miss-led so that our Father may cleanse their minds and hearts."

China bans online purchases of the Bible



Catholic worshippers attend a mass on Holy Saturday, March 31, as part of the Easter celebrations at Beijing's government sanctioned South Cathedral. China has banned the sale of online Bibles, as part of its increasing crackdown on Christianity. (PHOTO: Greg Baker/AFP/Getty Images)

Originally published in [The Blaze](#)

In its ongoing crackdown on Christianity, the Chinese government has banned sales of the Bible by online retailers including Amazon.

Taoist and Buddhists texts are still available online, as is the Quran.

While Buddhism and Taoism are both encouraged by the Chinese government as traditional Chinese belief systems, other religions not viewed as historically Chinese, including Islam

and to a greater extent Christianity, have been targeted.

What's the story?

China had already heavily restricted the in-store sale of Bibles, but the arrival of online ordering created a loophole that has not been closed until now. Searches for Bibles on Amazon or other online retailers like JD.com and Taobao from China now come up empty, according to The New York Times.

This is not the first time that the Chinese government has cracked down on its Christian population.

The New York Times reported in May 2016 that “[f]rom 2014 to 2016, more than 1 500 crosses were removed from churches in one Chinese province with close ties to [Chinese President Xi Jinping].” The government said that the crosses were removed “for the sake of safety and beauty.” In January, the Chinese government demolished a well-known Christian megachurch.

A report by the US-based organisation Freedom House found that: “Since Xi Jinping took the helm of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in November 2012, the authorities have intensified many of their restrictions, resulting in an overall increase in religious persecution.”

How many Christians are in China?

The number of Christians living in China is hard to pin down. Reports put the number of Catholics in the country anywhere between 5 million and 12 million, and the number of protestants at around 38 million. Other estimates put the total number of all types of Christians in China as high as 100 million.

The Vatican is currently negotiating to come up with a deal regarding Chinese Catholic bishops. As of now, bishops appointed by the Chinese government have been in conflict with bishops appointed by Rome, who are largely forced underground.

In a statement on Tuesday, Chinese senior official Chen

Zongrong said that there was no place for Vatican influence over a church on Chinese soil.

“I think there is no religion in human society that is above the state,” he said. “Foreign forces cannot be allowed to interfere with China’s religious environment and religious affairs.”

What about other religions?

In a 2016 speech, Xi told members of the Communist party that they needed to “resolutely guard against overseas infiltrations via religious means.”

But even Protestant churches with their lack of a foreign authority are targeted by the government. In 2016, senior Pastor Gu Yue-se was arrested on trumped-up charges after he publicly opposed the removal of crosses from churches. The Chinese government sees Protestant Christianity as a “western” value inherently at odds with China.

This persecution has led to the formation of hundreds of underground home churches in the capital city of Beijing alone.

While Islam seems to be viewed more favorably by the government, China has also cracked down on the wearing of long beards or headscarves, and restaurants that don’t serve pork in accordance with Islamic dietary restrictions.

Texas megachurch pays off over R120m in medical debt

for 4 229 Families this Easter



Pastor Stephen Hayes of Covenant Church in Carrollton, Texas reveals during Easter service on April 1 2018 that the congregation has helped relieve over 4 000 local families of medical debt. (PHOTO: Screenshot Covenant Church via [The Christian Post](#))

Originally published in [The Christian Post](#)

A Texas megachurch has blessed more than 4,000 families within a 20-mile radius of each of its five campuses this Easter by paying off their medical debt totaling more than \$10.5 million.

Stephen Hayes, senior pastor of Covenant Church based in Carrollton, announced during his Easter Sunday [sermon](#) that thanks to generous giving by church members, the church had enough extra funds to donate \$100 000 (R1 203 240) to an organization that purchases medical debt for pennies on the dollar and forgives individuals and families of their debt.

Hayes explained that in years past, the church had spent

upwards of \$100 000 to promote Easter services through radio, TV commercials, billboards and mailers. The pastor said that a billboard alone costs about \$20 000 to \$30 000 per month.

However, this year Covenant Church took a different approach to how it spent the \$100 000 it would normally spend on Easter advertisements.

What if we bought up some of this medical debt and write on the letters, 'We are Covenant Church and we are local in this area and we can serve you in any way and we would love to be your church. But even if we don't get to meet you, just know that God loves you,'" Hayes said.

Hayes said that the church donated \$100 000 to an organisation called [RIP Medical Debt](#).

Initially, the church wanted to designate \$50 000 (R601 574) to veterans with medical debt within a 32km radius of each of the campuses and \$50 000 to families with medical debt within 32km.

However, there weren't enough veterans in the area to use up the entire \$50,000.

"Right now, there is no veteran in our radius where we minister that will have [medical] debt from this day forward," Hayes said, adding that many of them suffered injuries caused by war. "It is already paid. Really cool."

Hayes said 4 229 families in the area will receive letters informing them that their medical debt has been paid off.

"We decided to put up \$100,000. Man, can I tell you it is the easiest decision we have ever made," Hayes told his congregation. "[I]t ended up paying off \$10 551 618 (R127-million) in total debt that is paid and gone forever."

Hayes reminded the crowd that they, too, have received similar letters, referring to what is written in John 19:30 when Jesus was on the cross and said, 'It is finished.'

“That is your letter in the mail,” Hayes said. “If you can imagine what those people this week will be feeling when they receive the letter you sent them saying their debt is paid. I prayed 100-fold that [is how] you would feel in reading the letter He wrote to you in the book of John 19:30. ... Hey, your debt of sin is paid. You are covered. He wrote a letter to us too. How do we not respond when we see the letter and understand what it means? How do I not want to send letters to others and say, ‘Guess what? I received it, would you consider receiving it?’”

Hayes knows firsthand what it’s like to be riddled with medical debt. According to [NBC-DFW](#), Hayes was hit by a car when he was 17, and spent 12 days in intensive care. His family was aided in paying off the medical bills by his church family.

50 Years after their divorce, this couple is ready to say ‘I do’ again



Harold Holland and Lily Barnes

(PHOTO: Youtub/Time vis [Faithwire](#))

Originally published in [Faithwire](#)

Harold Holland and Lillian Barnes got married in 1955 after meeting at a restaurant in Salt Lick, Kentucky. By December of that year, they were married. Over the next eight years or so, the couple had five children together. Over time, however, their marriage became strained, and in 1967, they split up. So that was that, for some 50 years, until the couple reunited at a family reunion last year.

By December 2017, the two former spouses were talking about tying the knot. He's now 83 and she is 78.

"We decided we want to walk the last mile together," Holland explained to the Lexington Herald-Leader.

The pair credits their faith in God as being central to them being able to grow in their decades apart, preparing them for this glorious reunion. Their grandson Joshua Holland, who is a minister from New Orleans, will perform the ceremony on April 14 at Trinity Baptist Church.

Now, upon a lifetime of reflection, this wonderful couple see where the crack began to appear. Harold, who ran a carpet business, said he worked way too much and left his wife to raise the kids by herself.

"It was 100% my fault," he admitted.

He wants to do things differently now, and make up for a huge amount of lost time – a sound piece of advice that would serve many young couples well!

"We'll go do whatever we want to, whenever we want to do it," he declared, stating his commitment to putting his wife first from now on. "I'll take her wherever she wants to go."

With these words comes a golden rule of any successful

marriage: putting God at the foundation of your love for one another. A certain scripture comes to mind:

“Love is patient, love is kind, it is not envious. Love does not brag, it is not puffed up. It is not rude, it is not self-serving, it is not easily angered or resentful. It is not glad about injustice, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” – 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

“We have a lot in common,” Lillian explained.

“I don’t think we ever lost that love, to tell you the truth,” Harold noted.

Lillian laughed how Harold “didn’t think I’d ever speak to him again.”

“He got fooled,” she quipped.

**Saudi textbooks still
teaching hate, says US
Commission**



Secondary students sit for an exam in a government school in Riyadh June 15 2008. (PHOTO: Reuters)

Originally published in [CBN News](#)

Despite a highly publicised reform movement in Saudi Arabia, Saudi school textbooks still include violent and intolerant content, [according to a new study](#).

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) found passages praising jihad against non-Muslims, calling for the execution of apostates and those who mock Allah or Muhammed, demeaning non-Muslims and warning Muslims not to associate with them.

“USCIRF is disappointed to find inflammatory content in Saudi textbooks that was previously thought to have been removed,” said Chairman Daniel Mark.

The State Department last year designated Saudi Arabia as a “Country of Particular Concern” under the International Religious Freedom Act for “engaging or tolerating systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom.”

Officials expressed disappointment that the reform efforts of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who is trying to bring religious tolerance to the desert kingdom, have not been

extended to the nation's school textbooks.

USCIRF is urging Congress and the administration to make textbook reform a priority in its engagement with the Saudi government.

Bethel Church issues rare urgent call to action over 'troubling' bills



Worship at Bethel Church in Redding, California.

Originally published in [Charisma News](#)

Bethel Church issued an urgent call to action last weekend in regard to several upcoming bills in the California legislature. Much of the action is required by Monday March 26.

The church says they rarely venture into politics, but felt

the bills harmed the body of Christ as a whole. In a press release, the church [says](#):

We want to bring attention to some alarming upcoming legislation in the state of California. We have been made aware of three upcoming bills concerning same-sex attraction and gender identity in children and nonminor dependents. We are releasing this statement in an attempt to educate families and ministries connected across California that may be of like mind on these issues. These bills are troubling to us. Therefore, we have made this uncommon step of broadcasting our concern and encouraging the faith-based community in California to research and contact your assembly members regarding these bills.

If these bills passed, it would be illegal for anyone to sell resources that offer treatment or ministry in order to reduce or eliminate same sex-attraction or gender dysphoria. This includes conferences, counselling, teaching, books or publications where money is exchanged for the resource. Also, children in foster care who expressed gender identity issues would be prohibited from receiving counselling or medical services that encouraged the child to embrace their biological gender. And those who are asking for resources to assist with addressing unwanted sexual attractions or gender identities would be prohibited from accessing mental health providers, even if they themselves desire such resources.

For Christians who live in California, the church movement asked for residents to email or send a letter to their representative. For those outside the state, Bethel asked to share the information via social media.

“We have a hope-filled anticipation for California and our prayers are that the Lord would continue to shine His favour on this land,” the church says in the release.

The specific bills Bethel issued a warning about include the

following. For each bill, Bethel composed a letter that residents can send their legislative leaders:

AB 1779 Regarding Sexual Orientation

Proposed bill to ban mental health providers from assisting in sexual orientation change efforts for adults under a conservatorship or guardianship who express same sex attraction or gender dysphoria. The bill amends legislation that already prohibits mental health providers from any kind of effort to treat same sex attraction or gender dysphoria in children under the age of 18. (We oppose the bill and the existing legislation.) Click [here](#) to read the Bethel letter.

AB 2943 Regarding Unlawful Business Practices

Proposed bill to prohibit resources concerning treatment or ministry in order to reduce or eliminate same sex-attraction or gender dysphoria. Essentially, conferences, counselling, teaching, books or publications where money is exchanged for the resource would be prohibited. Click [here](#) to read the Bethel letter.

AB 2119 Regarding Foster Care

Proposed bill that mandates that any child in foster care expressing gender identity issues must only be provided counselling and medical services that affirm the gender identity that the child believes they have. Any professionally-guided exploration questioning that belief or encouraging the child to embrace their biological gender would be prohibited. Click [here](#) to read the Bethel letter.