

## December 2010 newsletter

Greetings from the airport chaplains! This is an occasional newsletter to co-workers in the world aviation community and to other interested parties. We hope that in these news updates you will see your own interests reflected through the eyes of a faith-based team, and will find the material to be of interest.

- ❖ Despite warnings of enhanced terrorist risks, **traffic and cargo volumes achieved record highs** in September with 200,000 passengers a day at holiday peak. Most favourite destinations were New York and Dubai, then Dublin, Amsterdam and Paris.
- ❖ Sixty staff in T5 underwent a **one hour 'boot camp' workout** run by the Army and raised £1,000 for Help for Heroes. Staff of the Sheraton Hotel walked the **13 miles to the West End** of London and raised £4,000 for UNICEF; someone else cruised across the English Channel in a **Spot the Bear costume** to raise £1,000 for Children in Need. The charity Aviation Without Borders shipped **7, 400 kg of medical supplies** to Haiti.
- ❖ **Gate Gourmet** staff rallied in observance of the fifth anniversary of their 2005 strike when 600 people were sacked. The BA Cabin Crew strike rumbled on with background negotiations and ballots.
- ❖ Chaplain John Mackerness attended the **Royal Aeronautical Society** and addressed their Human Factors Group conference on the engagement of airport chaplains in Emergency Response teams.
- ❖ A newly-hired cashier at a *bureau de change* **did not return from her lunch break** and £98,000 was found to be missing from the safe - the hunt is on! Border Agency officers detained two passengers arriving from Nigeria who had **£500,000 cash in their hand baggage**. Two British Citizens were arrested attempting to smuggle a quarter of a million pounds worth of cocaine **out** of the country. A businessman was sentenced to prison for the illegal export of **100 sniper-rifle scopes** to Iran; a businessman importer was jailed for **smuggling in £22 million of heroin**.
- ❖ A BA IT expert went on trial accused of **plotting a terrorist attack**.
- ❖ Volunteers repaired, rebuilt and decorated **the Goat shelters** at the Heathrow Special Needs farm
- ❖ Val Morrison, the **co-Moderator of the United Reformed Church** spent a day with the chaplains visiting the airport and the Immigration Removal Centre.
- ❖ Chaplains attended an incident when **a deportee died in custody on a plane**; the three escorts who were accompanying him were arrested but not charged. The chaplains are now routinely requested to attend any 'death on board' situations.
- ❖ Harmondsworth Moor (owned and managed by BA) has won **an environmental award** - otters, falcons, and hobbies have taken up residence along with skylarks and grass snakes
- ❖ An **Armistice Day service** at the Chapel was well attended by members of the airport community and a Salvation Army band played.
- ❖ A meeting at Heathrow of the British Isles and Eire **Airport Chaplains' Network** was attended by 40 chaplains from across the country; **guest speakers** included Vincent Nicols, Archbishop of Westminster, and Colin Matthews, BAA Chief Executive.
- ❖ With 3 million passengers expected to pass through at Christmas **the airport hired 30 Gifting Angels** to greet passengers with gift suggestions from our 400 retail outlets, thus offering "a positive shopping experience" as part of the festive winterval season.
- ❖ There was All Saints, All Souls and Diwali, Hajj and Bodhi Day, the Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev, and Christmas.
- ❖ We sadly **said farewell** to Revs. David and Sonia Jackson, who have retired, and to Debo Adelaja who has taken up a university academic post in Nigeria.
- ❖ **Salvation Army bands played** in the public areas for Christmas; additionally **38 Christmas, carol and communion services** were held for passengers and staff across the terminals.
- ❖ Then on the weekend before Christmas (the year's peak period for passenger numbers) **it snowed and the airport stopped** for Christmas week. Tens of thousands of stranded passengers camped out in the terminals for many days. It was a very unpleasant, and often threatening, experience for everyone – and the world watched it all on TV. **Chaplains were continually engaged** supporting the airport Operations team and management; the Salvation Army emergency response vehicle turned out to feed passengers; Chaplains were interviewed for various media news reports.

In the packed, frequently hostile, chaos a few Gifting Angels (tall, blond, dressed in silver dresses with bejewelled white lacy wings and silver tinsel halos) were seen **doing their best to cheer people up**. As were many other less exotic angels amongst the airport staff.

This occasional newsletter is sent to members of the aviation industry community, in Heathrow and beyond. If you do not wish to receive further letters, please let us know and we will remove you from our mailing list.