



## Caroline Oakes: Mind and Spirit The countercultural call of the darkness of Advent

It is Advent. And it is dark. The season of Advent always falls during the darkest days of the calendar year, the four weeks before Christmas Day. It is a candle-lit, reflective time, rich with symbols of the natural turn of seasons as a mirror of the turnings of our inner selves. So, the spiritual intent of Advent sits in sharp contrast to the way our culture celebrates this time of year — brightly lit, with lights neon and flashing, vying for our attention to buy the latest and best and brightest. But there is a quality of grace to the darkness and the waiting of Advent, a countercultural call to look past the “shiny-shiny,” to notice that something more meaningful is happening, hidden in plain view. Taking place just before Christmas, it seems at first strange that Advent is also the darkest time of year — until we realize that

Advent customs date back to the ancient celebration of the winter solstice, when the days are darkest and most gloomy. Longing for the return of the sun's light and life, the ancient people cut down branches of evergreens, an ancient symbol of immortality, and brought them inside to make candle-lit garlands and wreaths while they anticipated the return of the warmth and life of their sun-god. Then as now, far from being a thumbingly call to eschew the festive air of preparation that precedes Christmas, Advent calls us to take time from the frenzy, the neon and flashing of our own ego, to remember our selves, to remember others, to remember the ever-present Light that is, whatever we are inclined to name it. So, yes, it is dark. But we can wait in that darkness without becoming lost in it. There is a kind of grace in waiting, a kind of grace,

even, in the darkness, knowing with an ancient kind of knowing that the turning of the light will come. In the meantime, even the tiny white lights we see everywhere in the midst of this black, December darkness — on garlands and trees and in deep, darkened windowsills — can be for us a mirror of the nascent points of light in our own lives that illuminate our inner darkness and bring awe, bring wonder, and

show us the way home. *Caroline Oakes, a Bucks County resident, has a master's degree in Ascetical Theology. Follow her on Twitter @carolineoakes. oakes.caroline@gmail.com*

**Country church marks 160th anniversary**

Lahaska United Methodist Church celebrated its 160th anniversary this year. The country church with a hundred members has survived amid the growth of Peddler's Village around it. Robert Stotz the senior member has belonged to the church for 63 years. Ginnie Hall has been the choir director for 25 years and longtime member Paul Balderston of new Hope is president of the board of trustees.



*Members of the Lahaska United Methodist congregation wore clothing from the mid-19th century as their church marked its 160th anniversary. Susan Stotz, Will and Connie Hopkins, Robert Stotz, the senior member of the church, Judy Shaw and Paul Balderston. Members Robin and David Heebner are at right.*

### Come Home for Christmas

**There's room enough around our table for you!**

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**"No matter who you are,  
no matter how you vote,  
no matter who you love,  
no matter what you've done or left undone,  
what matter what."**

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**Christmas Eve**  
4 pm and 10 pm

**Christmas Day**  
10:15 am

**St. Philip's Episcopal Church**  
10 Chapel Rd. New Hope PA 18938  
**www.stphilipnewhope.org 215-862-5782**



### Family of God Lutheran Church

**Buckingham, Pa.**  
(on Rt. 202 just North of Rt. 413)  
**215-794-5973**  
**www.familyofgodpa.org**

#### CHRISTMAS EVE, DECEMBER 24

**4:00 pm** Family Service with Candle Lighting and Holy Communion

**8:00 pm** Holy Communion: A Christmas Carol Service with Candle Lighting

**The Rev. N. Jackson Haas, Pastor • Visitors Always Welcome!**  
*Come early and enjoy the special music prior to each service!*

### Celebrate the Christmas Season with the Family of Doylestown United Methodist Church



**Sunday, Dec. 15 - 3rd Sunday of Advent**  
8:15, 9:30 & 11:00 am - Worship Services  
6:30 pm - Christmas Pilgrimage

**Wednesday, Dec. 18**  
6:30 pm - All Church Christmas Caroling - Circle of Awareness

**Sunday, Dec. 22 - 4th Sunday of Advent**  
8:15, 9:30 & 11:00 am - Worship Services  
5:30 pm - Children's Christmas Celebration

**Christmas Eve Worship Services**  
4:00 pm - Candlelight Traditional Worship Service (Nursery provided)  
5:30 pm - Candlelight Worship with the Youth Choir and Youth Praise Team (Nursery provided)  
7:00 pm - Candlelight Contemporary Worship led by Adult Praise Team (Nursery provided)  
9:00 pm - Candlelight Traditional Worship Service with Adult Handbell Choirs

**11:00 pm - Candlelight Traditional Worship Service with Communion, Harp and Sanctuary Choir**

**215-348-5224 | 320 East Swamp Rd.**  
**www.doylestownumc.org | Doylestown**

### HAPPENINGS

**Church slates Celtic Christmas concert**

Charlie Zahm and Mark Sullivan present "A Celtic Christmas" from 7 to 9 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 14, at Solomon's United Church of Christ, 2990

Bedminster Road (Route 113), between Center School and Kellers Church roads, Bedminster. The event marks Charlie Zahm's eighth annual appearance in the church's Christmas holiday concert.

The church is seeking donations of snack foods, cookies, etc., from the congregation to feed the evening's guests. Proceeds from the free-will offering will be given exclusively to Penridge FISH.

### Worship Directory

**SALEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**Sunday, December 15, 2013**  
*The Rev. Dr. Tyson Frey, Sr., Pastor*  
**9:30 am Worship / Sunday School**  
**10:30 am Fellowship and Refreshments / Nursery Service Available**  
**Faith@5 - Engaging Contemporary Worship Saturday at 5 pm**  
**186 E. Court St., Doylestown • www.DoylestownSalemUCC.org**  
**215.348.9660**  
**GOD'S LOVE EXPERIENCED AND EXPRESSED**

**Church hosts third Advent concert**

The Country Gentlemen Barbershop Quartet perform "Christmas Harmonies" at the Wednesday Advent Concert at noon Dec. 18 at Salem United Church of Christ, 186 E. Court St., Doylestown. The performance will be followed by a complimentary lunch of soup and dessert.

**Evening features readings and carols**

St. John Lutheran Church, 1203 Pine Grove Road, Morrisville, hosts an "uplifting evening" of readings and carols at 7 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 14, to celebrate the Christmas season. Light refreshments will follow. For information, call 215-295-1603 or visit the church online.



**Tinicum United Church of Christ  
"The Brick Church"**  
310 E. Dark Hollow Rd., Pipersville, PA  
A historic church with a passion for music!  
No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!  
Sunday Worship at 10:00 215-766-7368  
Candlelight Christmas Eve Service 7:30 p.m.



**POINT PLEASANT COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH**  
35 River Road, Point Pleasant, PA 18950  
**Pastor: Rev. Dr. Brady McDaniels**  
**Sun., Dec. 22, at 6 PM: Live Nativity**  
*Followed by Cookies & Hot Chocolate*  
**Tues., Dec. 24, at 7:30 PM Candlelight Service**  
**www.ppbaptist.org 215-297-5047 info@ppbaptist.org**

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To advertise here,  
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at 215-794-1097  
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**Christian Science  
Worship & Sunday School**  
29 N Church St,  
Doylestown 18901  
**csdoylestown.org**  
215-348-2150  
Sun. Services/Sun. School - 10:30am  
Wed. Testimony Meeting - 7:30pm  
**CHILDCARE PROVIDED**

### May God Bless you This Christmas with Healing and Grace.




**God is with us forever!  
Christ, the Great Light,  
Has come into our lives!  
Thanks be to God!**

**St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
470 Church Hill Road, Ferndale, Pa 18921  
**610-847-5630 / lkferndale@epix.net / www.stlukeferndale.com**  
**Worship Times**  
**Christmas Eve Worship - 7:30 pm**  
**Learning and Worship Opportunities**  
Sundays - 10:00 am Worship  
Sunday School - 10:00 am  
Thursdays - 7:00 pm Bible Study

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