

On the Spiritual Side

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Caroline Oakes: Mind and Spirit

Paying attention to holy days to feed a spiritual hunger

Many people these days are hungering for a more meaningful, spiritual experience of life as they rush through the details of everyday living.

And in their search, some are discovering the power of an ancient spiritual practice: The honoring of holy days.

Sounds very religious. But to engage in this practice, one need not even be affiliated with a particular faith or tradition. You can simply choose to intentionally follow a particular tradition's holy days through a one-year cycle — from, say, Passover

to the next year's Passover, or Advent to the next year's Advent.

"Exploring the meaning of a tradition's holy days and holy seasons through its rituals, practices and activities is a powerful way to become more aware and more attuned to the natural rhythms and cycles of our lives," say Frederic and Ann Bruscat, authors of "Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in the Everyday."

Think of the natural, spiritual cycles of hope, renewal and rebirth in the holy days of Christmas and Hanukkah, Easter and Passover. In the darkness of

December comes the Solstice. In the first blush of spring comes the release and resurrection of nature and the captive spirit.

Holy days also embrace the lonelier, quieter cycles that are part of our lives' rhythms — times of reflection and inner housekeeping that unite us with the rest of humanity in the hungers, the trials, and the injustices of our collective and individual lives.

Think of Yom Kippur. And Lent. And Ramadan.

Some resist the practice of following holy days because they are put off by scriptural literalism. But

holy days are about the honoring of the Spirit, not literal interpretation. And much of scripture can be read with "the eyes of the heart," gleaning message and meaning through metaphor and reflection.

As an example, many well-regarded Jewish and Christian leaders have, since the earliest centuries, encouraged followers to interpret the story of the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt as a powerful metaphor for the spiritual journey. This is not new.

So Passover, then, becomes much more than history. And this holy season between

Christmastide and Lent that is Epiphany becomes more universal — "the Christian celebration of what our brothers and sisters in other religions call enlightenment," as Trappist monk Thomas Keating says.

And another quiet invitation to honor the holy days of any beloved spiritual tradition.

Caroline Oakes, a Bucks County resident, has a master's degree in Practical Theology and leads spiritual practice seminars and workshops in the Philadelphia region.

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Delaware River blessing

Ancient custom connects Feast of the Baptism of the Lord to natural world

The Christmas season closed Sunday, Jan. 11, with the Feast of the Baptism of Christ.

It is an ancient custom to bless

water, including rivers, on this day. It connects the feast to the natural world and the need to protect and honor natural resources.



GORDON NIEBURG

Celebrating the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the Rev. Michael Ruk of St. Philip's Episcopal Church in New Hope, reads a passage from the Gospel of Mark.

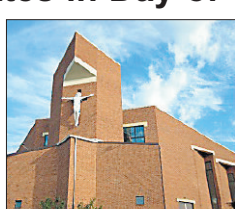


GORDON NIEBURG

The Rev. Michael Ruk of St. Philip's Episcopal Church in New Hope blesses the Delaware River in New Hope before a crowd of more than a dozen people.

St. Martin of Tours Parish participates in Day of Service

St. Martin of Tours Catholic Church in New Hope will participate in the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service between 9 a.m. and noon Monday, Jan. 19, at the Parish Life Center at 1 Riverstone



St. Martin of Tours, New Hope, hosts MLK Day of Service activities on Monday, Jan. 19.

Circle.

More than 350 people are expected to take part in the event. The annual program at the church has grown quickly over the past few years, starting with 100 participants seven years ago.

This year, participants will volunteer in one of seven different forms of service.

They will decorate T-shirts for hospitalized children, make blankets for special needs babies, pack meal containers for shut-ins in the Aid for Friends ministry, knit hats for the homeless, create "grab and

go bags" for children at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, prepare bags of toiletries for the homeless, and pack breakfast bags for the homeless.

The Day of Service is widely supported by parishioners. For them, participation in the Day of Service embraces catholic social teaching about the poor and vulnerable

"A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first" (US Catholic Conference of Bishops).

St. Martin of Tours congregation consists of more than 1,100 families. The parish boundaries encompass 35 square miles, including parts of Lumberville, Lahaska, New Hope, Solebury and Upper Makefield.

For information, contact 215-862-5472 or info@stmartinoftours.org or visit the church online.

Theology scholar speaks about responses to human suffering

Professor Dennis Olson from the Princeton Theological Seminary presents "My God, Why? The Variety of Biblical Responses to Human Suffering," at Doylestown Presbyterian Church, 127 E. Court St. Doylestown.

The DPC Forum presentation will be held in the Celtic Cross Room (sanctuary building) from 7:30 to 9 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 27

Olson, one of the nation's premier scholars on biblical theology and interpretation, is the Charles T. Haley Professor of Old Testament Theology and chair of the Biblical Studies Department at Princeton Theological Seminary.

He earned his M.Div. from Luther Theological Seminary and



PROFESSOR DENNIS OLSON

his M.A., M.Phil., and Ph.D. from Yale University.

An ordained Lutheran minister, Olson has chaired the Convocation of Teaching

Theologians for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

He is currently the Pentateuch general editor for a 30-volume project titled, "The Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception."

Refreshments will be served. Doylestown Presbyterian Church is wheelchair accessible at the Mechanics Street entrance.

Parking is available in the church lot located at Church Street and Selner Lane and in the county lots at either Court and Broad streets or North Main Street. There is limited street parking.

For information, contact the church office at 215-348-3531 or dpc@townpc.org, or visit the church online.

HAPPENINGS

Salem UCC welcomes Simple Gifts

The folk group Simple Gifts performs at the Salem United Church of Christ, 186 E. Court St., Doylestown, on Wednesday, Jan. 21.

The female duo has been entertaining throughout the Mid-Atlantic region with a variety of instruments and songs that highlight Appalachian folk music.

Simple Gifts is the featured performance for the monthly Prime Timers group of Salem UCC, which meets on the third Wednesday of the month.

All are invited to enjoy lunch with at noon (monetary donations accepted) and the program at 1 p.m. in the church sanctuary.

Call 215-348-9860 or e-mail admin@SalemDoylestownUCC.org for luncheon reservations.

Salem welcomes Simple Gifts via a grant from the PA Council

for the Arts and PECCO. The performance is supported in part by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

Archdiocese holds lecture on church communications

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia and Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary host the second annual John Cardinal Foley Lecture Series, honoring Cardinal Foley's work in the media by featuring speakers of national or international renown who are engaged in evangelization through social communications.

This year's event features John L. Allen, Jr., associated editor at the Boston Globe and Cruxnow.com, specializing in coverage of the Vatican and the Catholic Church.

Allen will speak on the topic of "The Crux of Church Communications" at 7 p.m. Monday, Jan. 26, at Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, Viamey Hall Auditorium, 100 E. Wynnewood Road, Wynnewood.

The lecture is open to the public with free admission. For information, visit scs.edu.

Temple Judea offers service for youngsters

A short Shabbat service for families with very young children will be held at Temple Judea, 38 Rogers Road, Furlong, at 6 p.m. Jan. 23.

It will be followed by a family Shabbat dinner and traditional Shabbat service, beginning at 7:30 p.m.

For information, call 215-348-5022.

Worship Directory

SALEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Sunday, January 18, 2015

The Rev. Dr. Tyson Frey, Sr., Pastor

9:30 am Fellowship / Sunday School

10:30 am Fellowship and Refreshments

Nursery Service available

186 E. Court St., Doylestown • www.DoylestownSalemUCC.org

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