

On the Spiritual Side

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Caroline Oakes: Mind and Spirit

Learning how to balance our internal "negativity bias"

Scientists believe humans are wired with a strong "negativity bias," an inclination to react more intensely to negative events in our lives than to equally strong, positive ones.

As Rick Hanson, Ph.D. and founder of the Wellspring Institute for Neuroscience and Wellbeing says, "The brain is like Velcro for negative experiences, and Teflon for positive ones." This is why, no matter how many things go well during the day, what we tend to remember most are the couple of things that didn't go so well.

From an evolutionary standpoint, this makes sense — our human ancestors needed to be on constant alert for danger in order to survive.

But even now, hundreds of thousands of years later, our brains are still primed to seek out negative events that then immediately get stored in memory, whereas positive events and experiences usually need to be held in awareness for a dozen or more seconds in order to be transferred to long-term memory.

Left unchecked, our negativity bias can incline us toward chron-

ically negative emotional patterns that maximize our stress levels and minimize the positive events we experience every day.

New science is confirming that we can consciously intervene and balance out our negativity bias by intentionally cultivating a practice of focusing on the positive.

In an experimental comparison conducted at the University of California, Davis, for example, subjects who were asked to keep weekly gratitude journals demonstrated higher levels of wellbeing and reported fewer pain symptoms compared to those who

were asked to record "hassles" or neutral life events.

This study and other current research on wellbeing and gratitude suggest two primary steps to facilitate the rewiring of the brain toward a more positive outlook:

1. During each day, intentionally look for six to 12 simple, positive events — a good cup of coffee, a beautiful sunset, a warm shower, a call from an old friend.
2. Stay with each experience; enjoy each experience, for 20 to 30 seconds. Research shows that the longer something is held in awareness and the more emotion-

ally stimulating it is, the more neurons in the brain fire and thus wire together, and the stronger the event is traced in memory.

As Brother David Steindl-Rast wisely notes, "It daily life we must see that it is not happiness that makes us grateful, but gratefulness that makes us happy."

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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"Worldviews" course examines views on philosophy, religion, science

"Worldviews in Philosophy, Religion, and Science," a seven-week course, is offered through the New Hope-Solebury Community School on Wednesdays, beginning April 8.

Important questions about human nature and the nature of the universe lie at the heart of phi-

losophy, religion and science. Our answers to these questions deeply affect our religious beliefs, spiritual practices, and possibilities for fulfillment in life.

The course will examine Hindu, Buddhist, theist (Jewish, Christian, Islamic) and scientific approaches to understanding real-

ity.

It will explore how we might comprehend these different approaches as complementary rather than contradictory.

The course includes reading the new book, "Reality's Fugue: Reconciling Worldviews in Philosophy, Religion, and

Science," currently under review for publication.

For more on the book, visit Reality's Fugue online.

Instructor Samuel Brainerd, Ph.D., has taught World Religions, Asian Religions and Buddhism at Rutgers and Temple universities.

His work has been published in The Journal of the American Academy of Religion.

He is the author of two books, including "Reality and Mystical Experience" (Penn State Press, 2000).

Register online at srrg.com/csns.



Easter Services

Ascension Lutheran Church, 900 Washington Crossing Road, Newtown (Upper Makefield Township), holds Palm Sunday worship at 10 a.m. March 29.

The church holds Maundy Thursday worship at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 2; Good Friday worship at noon and 7:30 p.m. Friday, April 3, and Easter worship at 6:30 a.m. and 10 a.m. Sunday, April 5.

For information, call 215-497-0447 or visit ascensionweb.org.

Good Shepherd Church (Episcopal), 1634 Hilltown Pike, Hilltown, holds Palm Sunday, Procession of Palms and Holy Eucharist, at 10 a.m. Sunday, March 29; Maundy Thursday, Holy Eucharist, at 7 p.m. Thursday, April 2; and Good Friday, The Way of the Light: Good of Christ's Cross, at

noon Friday, April 3.

The congregations of **Good Shepherd Episcopal and St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church** will worship together at the Good Friday evening service and the Great Vigil of Easter on Saturday evening.

The Good Friday service will be held at **St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church**, 1530 Augsburg Drive, Hilltown, at 7 p.m. April 3. The Holy Saturday Easter Vigil and Holy Eucharist will be held at **Good Shepherd Church (Episcopal)**, at 7 p.m. April 4.

On Easter Day, Sunday, April 5, Festival Eucharist with music led by Good Shepherd Singers and Ringers, is at 10 a.m. at **Good Shepherd Episcopal**.

For information, call 215-822-3930 or visit goodshepherdhilltown.org.

the following Eastertide events.

Palm Sunday Worship beginning with a "procession" into Jerusalem, is at 11 a.m. Sunday, March 29.

Maundy Thursday Worship (at **Kirkpatrick Memorial Presbyterian Church** in Ringoes), with Communion served around a table, 12 at a time, is at 7 p.m. Thursday, April 2.

Easter Sunrise Worship is outdoors at Dilts Park, (Buchanan Road, near Sergeantsville) with multiple churches attending, at 6:30 a.m. Sunday, April 5.

Morning Worship is at Mt. Airy, 11 a.m. Sunday, April 5; and Eastertide Hymn Sing, an Easter-themed celebration of hymns and special music, is at 7 p.m. Sunday, April 26.

Visit mtairychurch.org or call 609-397-2086 for information.

Baptist Church, 35 River Road in Point Pleasant, offers a full schedule of Easter worship.

On Palm Sunday, March 29, a special children's ministry and puppet show will be included in the worship service, followed by the traditional Sunday Linger Longer.

The choir will sing at a traditional Maundy Thursday Communion Service at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 2.

The church will be open for prayer from noon until 3 p.m. on Good Friday, April 3.

On Easter Sunday, there will be a Sunrise Service at the Point Pleasant Cemetery on Cafferty Road, one quarter mile from the church, at 6:30 a.m. April 5.

Afterward, all are invited to Easter Sunday Breakfast in Fellowship Hall.

The traditional Easter Sunday worship service will be held at 10:30 a.m.

For information, call 215-297-5047.

Jesus Lives!

Live - Fearless!

How about that!

Easter Sunday
6:30 am Sunrise
Easter Breakfast
10:00 am Festival

St. Luke Evangelical
Lutheran Church

470 Church Hill Road
Ferndale, PA 18951
610.847.5630

lkferndale@stlukeferndale.com
www.stlukeferndale.com
Find us on Facebook

St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church

Come for Easter...

and come as you are!

There's room enough around our table for you!

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

Holy Thursday 7pm
Good Friday Noon and 6:30pm
Holy Saturday 7pm
Easter 8:15 and 10:15am with Egg Hunt

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

CHURCH OF ST. MARTIN OF TOURS

1 Riverstone Circle, New Hope, PA 18938
215-862-5472
www.stmartinof-tours.org

HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

PALM SUNDAY, March 29, 2015
Masses: Saturday at 5:30 PM, Sunday at 8:30 AM and 11:00 AM
Palm will be blessed and distributed at all Masses

MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK, March 30, 2015 - Morning Mass at 8:30 AM
Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM
7:30 PM - Tenebrae

TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK, March 31, 2015 - Evening Mass at 7:30 PM
"The Way of the Cross" - 7:30-9:00 PM
By The Immaculate Heart Central School's Mystery Players

WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK, April 1, 2015 - Morning Mass at 8:30 AM
Confessions from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM

HOLY THURSDAY, April 2, 2015, 9:00 AM - Morning Prayer in Chapel
7:30 PM - Mass of the Lord's Supper
Visits to the Repository in Chapel until 11:00 PM

GOOD FRIDAY, April 3, 2015, 9:00 AM - Morning Prayer in Chapel
Visits to the Repository in Chapel until 7:30 PM
7:30 PM - Stations of the Cross
7:30 PM - Celebration of the Lord's Passion

HOLY SATURDAY, April 4, 2015, 9:00 AM - Morning Prayer in Chapel
7:30 PM - Celebration of the Easter Vigil
Blessing of the New Fire, Baptismal Water
Reception of New Members into the Church

EASTER SUNDAY, April 5, 2015, Masses are at 8:30 AM and 11:00 AM

HE IS RISEN, ALLELUIA!

St. Martin of Tours Catholic Church in New Hope holds Tenebrae services at 7:30 p.m. Monday, March 30.

Confessions will be heard from 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, April 1.

Services for Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday will be held at 7:30 p.m. Masses on Easter Sunday morning will be held at 8:30 and 11 a.m. All are welcome.

On Holy Thursday, Mass will commemorate the institution of Holy Communion at the Last Supper.

On Holy Saturday evening, Mass of the Easter Vigil is celebrated, including the Blessings of the New Fire and Baptismal Water and the reception of three new members into the church.

For information, visit smartinof-tours.org, contact info@smartinof-tours.org or call 215-862-5472.

Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church, 50 York St., Lambertville, N.J., holds the following services.

On Palm Sunday, March 29, two morning celebrations are at 8 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. (a choral celebration with hymns and anthems.)

On Wednesday, April 1, the Holy Eucharist will be celebrated at 7 p.m. On Maundy Thursday, April 2, the Holy Eucharist will be celebrated at 7:30 p.m. Evocative of the Last Supper, there will be the washing of feet and the stripping of the altar. A Watch follows.

At noon on Good Friday, April 3, the Stations of the Cross will be conducted. The Liturgy for Good Friday will take place at 7:30 p.m.

On Easter Even, Saturday, April 4, the Great Easter Vigil begins at 7:30 p.m. On Easter Day, Sunday, April 5, there are two celebrations, at 8 a.m., and a festive celebration at 9:30 a.m.

For information, call 609-397-2425, e-mail standrews@snip.net, or see standrewslambertville.org.