

# On the Spiritual Side

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## Caroline Oakes: Mind and Spirit Forgive and forget; forgive and remember

Does forgiving someone make that person less accountable for the offense he or she has committed against us?

This question has been hotly debated in the past few weeks, with strong opinions volleyed back and forth across family dinner tables and media pundits' desks since witnessing the extraordinary forgiveness, which family members of the nine Emmanuel A.M.E. churchgoers killed in Charleston offered to the alleged gunman, Dylan Roof.

Our ego-driven, judging minds find forgiveness to be messy and

complicated. Our ego-mind prefers neat and tidy boxes of black or white, good or bad, either/or. When something hateful happens, our ego mind prefers uncomplicated, swift, immediate justice.

But new and real possibilities become available to us when we allow our hearts and minds to move away from black and white, either/or dualistic thinking. When we instead consider the possibility of both/and, then forgiveness or justice is no longer the only possibility.

"Forgiveness is not excusing,

justifying, condoning or pardoning an offense," says Daryl Van Tongeren, an assistant professor of psychology at Hope College. "Individuals can forgive while the justice process is being carried out."

Van Tongeren and others involved in the study of forgiveness and reconciliation point out the distinction between forgiveness that is offered quickly — called "decisional forgiveness," i.e., making a commitment to try to forgive — and "emotional forgiveness," which takes time.

"The kind of forgiveness offered

by the families of the Charleston victims is often the first step of a larger personal and communal process," says Van Tongeren. "People affected by tragedy sometimes offer different kinds of forgiveness, usually as a part of a bigger process that works in several stages — ideally in ways that pursue justice."

This understanding of the decisional and emotional forgiveness process can bring some hope to us all, that we might ultimately develop the capacity to forgive, and thereby release the power of hate and vengeance that can overwhelm

us in the face of personal tragedy.

In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., "We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies."

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Back row from left are: Allyson Kearney, Phyllis Eckelmeyer, Leah Benscofer, Eric Slater, Susan Whitenack, Caitlyn O'Connor and Janet Ogleby. Front row from left are: Caitlin Swartley, Will Stone, Thomas Kearney, Cora Stine, Oliver Gilbert-Cole, Jack Swartley, Ford Kearney, Sam Swartley and Eli Wolf.

## Salem UCC hosts successful program

Rainbows, musical theater, science, art and yoga highlighted the SmARTS program at Salem United Church of Christ, 186 E. Court St., Doylestown last week.

The festive week for children focused on the theme, "Over the Rainbow."

For the third year, young children participated in a Christian-based arts, science, music and theater program that had them jumping, creating, singing and acting.

The SmARTS program was co-directed by Phyllis Eckelmeyer and Susan Whitenack.

Doylestown's Whitenack used her musical talents in leading the children to develop and perform a showcase of talent. Guitar, piano and ukulele accompanied the children in song.

Allyson Kearney, a chemistry teacher, led the children in scientific experiments. Caitlin Swartley, a yoga and fitness instructor, kept the children on their toes as they practiced for the musical presentation, and artist Janet Reed Ogleby led the youth as they made rainbows, tiles and stained glass designs highlighting the week's activities.

A staff of teenagers aided the instructors in their creative endeavors and enjoyed the activities along with campers.

A musical program and refreshments were presented in Salem's Assembly Room on Thursday, July 9.

Contact Salem U.C.C. at 215-348-9860 for information about next year's SmARTS program.

## New cantor brings Latin flair to Ohev Shalom

When Ohev Shalom of Bucks County welcomes its new cantor on Aug. 1, it also will be welcoming a "vibrant vocalist of spiritual sound," sometimes enhanced by the cuatro, a Venezuelan folk guitar.

Cantor Annelise Ocantio will join the temple in Richboro, after serving as cantor for four years at Congregation Beth Israel in Worcester, Mass.

While a New Englander by birth, there is no denying the influence of her Venezuelan parents — her mother a classical musician and her father a classical music enthusiast — in shaping her passion for music with a Latin flair.

"It is so important to teach people the joy of music and of singing out," said Ocantio.

Her interest in channeling her love for music toward a career as a cantor first sparked while preparing for her Bat Mitzvah, when her cantor encouraged her to join her synagogue's various choirs.



CANTOR ANNELISE OCANTIO

Ocantio is eager to bring the love of music fostered by her past cantors to her new position. "I am excited to be a mentor to the kids and to show everyone at Ohev Shalom how they can explore their identity through music," she said.

According to Ohev Shalom Rabbi Elliott Perlstein, she

already has started to do so.

"When Cantor Ocantio visited our congregation this spring, I was amazed how mesmerized the kids were in seeing her and singing with her. She brings tremendous warmth to her interactions with children and adults, and I am excited to see what is ahead," he said.

The search for Ohev Shalom's new cantor spanned the nation, and the synagogue brought in six candidates to lead the Sabbath service, according to Board President Barry Klein. "By all accounts, our congregation fell in love with Annelise Ocantio," he said.

The public is invited to meet Ocantio at an informal Shabbat in the Park, at 6 p.m. Friday, Aug. 14, in the Upper Plantation area at Tyler State Park in Newtown. Bring blankets or lawn chairs.

For information, visit ohev.org.



JOHN HOOK

## Celebrating marriage equality

Jean Bochnowski, left, and Karen Hayman, who were married at the BucksMont Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Warrington a couple of years ago, cut the wedding cake at the fellowship's Marriage Equality Wedding Reception on Sunday, July 12. The reception was a celebration of the Supreme Court's recent ruling on marriage equality. On the podium are the Rev. Dan Schatz of the BucksMont UU Fellowship, Marlene Pray of the Bucks Equality Coalition and Ted Martin, executive director of Equality Pennsylvania.

## HAPPENINGS

**St. Phillip's celebrates Feast of Elijah**

St. Philip's Episcopal Church, 10 Chapel Road, New Hope, celebrates the Feast of Elijah the Prophet at both Masses, at 8:15 and 10:15 a.m. Sunday, July 19.

It is traditional to bless vehicles of all kinds and feast in remembrance of his fiery chariot recorded in the Bible. Feel free to bring bikes, motorcycles and cars for the "fun, summertime tradition."

For information, visit stphillipsnewhope.org or call 215-862-5782.

ter online visit, [jerusalemchurch-sellersville.org](http://jerusalemchurch-sellersville.org).

**St. Martin's holds vacation Bible school**

St. Martin of Tours Roman Catholic Church invites children ages 4 to 10 to its Vacation Bible School.

The program will feature SonSpark Labs, where children will sing songs, watch skits, create crafts, play games and learn.

Camp will run from 9 a.m. to noon Aug. 17 to Aug. 21 at the Parish Life Center, 1 Riverstone Circle, New Hope.

The deadline for sign-up is July 17.

For information, contact 215-862-5472 or [info@stmartintours.org](mailto:info@stmartintours.org).

**Trinity Lutheran hosts vacation Bible school**

Trinity Lutheran Church, 19 S. Fifth St., Perkasie, offers a "G Force: God's Love in Action" Vacation Bible School from 9:15 a.m. to noon Monday, Aug. 3 through Friday, Aug. 7. The program is co-sponsored by First United Methodist Church.

Children age 3 through those entering grade six are invited to attend. A Family Night program will be held at 7 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 6. A special offering projects will benefit Penridge FISH.

For information, or to register, call 215-257-6801 or visit [trinityperkasie.org](http://trinityperkasie.org) by July 31.

**St. Martin's offers program for women**

St. Martin of Tours church offers Endow, a program for women that studies Pope Saint John Paul II's "Letter to Women."

The nine-session program is offered on Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. through Sept. 3. St. Martin's parishioner, Sara Lavenduski, facilitates the weekly sessions.

Participants will take part in faith and fellowship in a program that involves no homework. Women are welcome to join the group at any time, even if they have not attended previous sessions.

Participants will use a workbook that is available at a modest cost.

Endow was founded more than a decade ago by three lay women from Denver, Colo., who were inspired to share Pope Saint John Paul II's teaching on women's dignity and the unique gifts women bring to society.

For information, contact 215-862-5472 or [info@stmartintours.org](mailto:info@stmartintours.org).

**Jerusalem Evangelical offers vacation Bible school**

Get ready for a "blast" at SonSpark Labs Vacation Bible School, from 9 a.m. to noon daily, Aug. 10 through Aug. 14, at Jerusalem Evangelical Lutheran Church, 733 Ridge Road, Sellersville.

The VBS is for children age 3 through those who have completed seventh grade.

For information, call 215-257-9423. To regis-

## Worship Directory

**SALEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

**Sunday, June 21, 2015**

*The Rev. Dr. Tyson L. Frey*

**9:30 am Worship**

Sermon: "ASAP — Always Say A Prayer"

Children's Message: "Filled With Spiritual Energy"

*Nursery Service available*

**186 E. Court St., Doylestown • [www.DoylestownSalemUCC.org](http://www.DoylestownSalemUCC.org)**

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