

On the Spiritual Side

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Caroline Oakes: Mind and Spirit

Making our smartphones a "zone of spirituality"

I've been pondering a comment a colleague of mine made recently: "Think how different the world would be if we checked in on our selves as many times a day as we check in on our smartphones."

He was referring, of course, to how often we swipe and tap in and out of our phones throughout the day, constantly checking to see what e-mail and text and Facebook notifications have come in.

And he was referring to how rarely we take a moment to stop the fight/flight momentum of our day, to notice our own state of being, or even to be aware of whatever task we're caught up in.

But trading in our smartphones, tablets and laptops and just "going dumbphone" is not the answer, according to religion writer Patton Dodd.

Dodd instead suggests making our digital devices a "zone of spirituality," a place to practice what he calls smartphone spirituality.

"At one level spirituality just means right living, living the examined life," says Dodd. "Practicing smartphone spirituality simply means using our digital devices to develop daily habits of personal transformation that make us more available to those around us, and more aware of our state of being."

Here is a sampling of some exceptional online "spirituality zone" resources:

- Prayer/Meditation Sites:
 - MonastersOffTheHeart.org — word, sight and sound meditations (including music by YoYo Ma), all offered by the Benedictine nuns of Erie;
 - SacredSpace.ie — contemplative reading with Jesuit monks from Ireland;

- Meditation Apps:
 - Calm.com — a variety of peaceful images of nature with accompanying calming music;
 - Headspace.com — concise lessons (both practical and scientific) on how to practice mindfulness meditation;

• InsightTimer.com — hundreds of guided meditations by world-renowned teachers; resonant Tibetan bell timers;

- Retreats and Online Courses:
 - SpiritualityAndPractice.com — a virtual playground of prayer, meditation and book study resources;
 - Daily E-mails:
 - CAC.org — progressive thoughts on faith and practice, authored by Franciscan priest and monk Richard Rohr.

And do not forget what I call smartphone Sabbath-time: All smartphones now have a Do Not Disturb feature enabling you to schedule certain times when all notifications are turned off except

for calls from the small group of people who should always be able to reach you.

No matter how busy, how stressed, how scattered we are, there is a world of quiet support and rich resources we can literally tap into to recollect and reconnect our selves — body, mind and spirit.

Caroline Oakes serves on the staff of Trinity Buckingham Church in Buckingham, as Associate Minister for Spiritual Growth and Mission. Follow her on Facebook and on Twitter at @carolineoakes.

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St. Thomas choir sings at Trinity Buckingham

The African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas Gospel Choir presents a gospel choir concert at Trinity Buckingham Church at 4 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 8.

The concert will feature well-known traditional spirituals and contemporary gospel music, as well as original songs written by musical and spiritual director Waltier Blocker.

The ticket price is \$12 for the general public and \$10 for seniors and students. Tickets may be purchased at the door. All are welcome.

Selected as "the best church gospel choir" at the Verizon How Sweet the Sound competition in Radio City Music Hall, the Gospel Choir of the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas is

known nationally and internationally for its energetic and uplifting performances offered in churches, concert halls and synagogues.

The first choir to ever record gospel music in the Episcopal Church, the choir's recently released fourth CD features international recording artist Kefau Rollerson, a Sunday Best TV Series finalist, and Charlene Holloway, featured background vocalist for American singer, author and actress Patti Labelle.

"Hearing the music and feeling the energy of the Gospel Choir of St. Thomas is a spirit-filled and truly unforgettable experience that touches the heart of every listener," said Regina Gordon, min-



The African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas Gospel Choir sings at Trinity Buckingham Church Nov. 8.

ister of music at Trinity Buckingham. "We are thrilled to be able to offer the Bucks and Montgomery County communities the chance

to hear and be with the members of this magnificent choir."

"Music today has become a leading medium to spread the

gospel," said Waltier Blocker, director of the St. Thomas Gospel Choir. "The African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas Gospel Choir is a one-bodied, one spirit, Christ-centered organization that uses our God-given talents of music as a ministry to spread the gospel of Christ to the lost with the word of God through song."

The African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas was founded in 1792 by Absalom Jones, the first black ordained Episcopal priest, and is located in the Overbrook section of West Philadelphia at 6361 Lancaster Ave.

Trinity Buckingham is located at 2631 Durham Road, Buckingham, Call 215-297-7921 for information.



Baking challah in the woods

As part of Kehilat HaNahar's adult education program of mini-courses, known as "Bagel U," member Sarah Levinson, third from left, leads a class through all steps of preparation, baking, and finally tasting, challah in the woods on the Shul property in New Hope using a campfire setting near the outdoor sanctuary. Participants learned five ways of baking challah on a campfire. According to Jewish tradition, the Sabbath meals incorporate a braided bread called challah, which commemorates the manna that fell from the heavens when the Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years during the Exodus from Egypt, according to Jewish religious belief.



Students visit families on All Souls Day

In remembrance of the Feast of All Souls, student members of the St. Joseph/St. Robert Service Corps delivered handmade cards and plants last weekend to families of St. Joseph Parish and St. Robert Bellarmine Parish who have experienced the loss of a loved one in the past year. Pictured are the students preparing for their visits.

Hollywood writer offers laughter and Jewish insights

Emmy-nominated writer, David N. Weiss ("Shrek 2," "The Smurfs" movies, "Rugrats") presents an evening of useful personal and professional stories in "Why Pray When You Can Worry," at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 17, at the Glazier Jewish Center, 25 N. State St., Newtown.

Weiss's presentation springs from his unlikely adventures as a "nice Jewish boy" who spent years as a charismatic church youth-worker before returning to

his Jewish roots via a blockbuster screenwriting career.

He draws on his rich, unlikely past and wacky adventures in show business, to present a funny, yet practical, presentation that inspires, educates and entertains.

"When you find yourself under a wedding chuppah with a gorgeous blonde in a Presbyterian Church being married by a Jew for Jesus rabbi, something has to give," Weiss said.

Weiss also co-wrote "The Rugrats" movies, "Clockstoppers," "Are We There Yet?" and Academy Award-nominated "Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius."

He was nominated for an Emmy as co-head-writer for the "Rugrats" series and has various

other film and TV credits, including the MGM classic, "All Dogs Go to Heaven," for a combined box office exceeding \$2.3 billion.

An award-winning short film director, Weiss is a member of the Motion Picture Academy and a former vice president of the Writers Guild of America.

He has also written several children's books.

Weiss teaches how to uncover the daily, practical tools of Judaism that can help anyone take steps toward reaching their fullest potential ... wherever that might lead.

The cost for the lecture is \$15. For reservations and information, call 215-497-9925, e-mail reva@jewishcenter.info or visit jewishacademy.info.

HAPPENINGS

Myrh-streaming icon visits St. Philip Orthodox Church

St. Philip Orthodox Christian Church, 1970 Clearview Road, Souderton, hosts the visit of "the Taylor myrh-streaming icon of the Mother of God" (called "Cardiotissa," meaning "having a heart" or "having sympathy") on Friday, Nov. 13.

Vespers for St. Philip will be celebrated at 5 p.m., and a Paraklesis (prayer service) will be said before the icon at 6 p.m., followed by veneration of the icon and anointing with the myrrh.

All are welcome. Refreshments will be available after the service. A free-will offering will be received.

For information, visit st-philip.net, or contact 215-721-4947 or apostlephilip@gmail.com.

The icon comes to St. Philip from its home at St. George Orthodox Church in Taylor, Pa., in the care of the Rev. Mark Leasure, pastor of St. George Church.

St. Philip's Episcopal holds Spirituality of Depression forum

St. Philip's Episcopal Church, River and Chapel roads, New Hope, hosts Dr. Scott Robinson and Mandala band for a unique morning of spirituality and music on Sunday, Nov. 8.

Robinson is professional musician and Third Order Franciscan. He will lead the 9:15 a.m. adult forum on the spirituality of depression by using

his recently published book, "The Dark Hills," an exploration of depression and spirituality.

Robinson neither shies away from his personal bouts with depression, nor from his warm and intimate love for his family.

Robinson and Mandala will lead the 10:15 a.m. Eucharist in the music of kirtan chant: audience-participatory devotional music with Indian, Middle Eastern and Gregorian roots, with lyrics ranging from Sanskrit mantras to the Psalms.

Visit stphilipsnewhope.org for information.

Ascension Lutheran hosts Advent Festival

Ascension Lutheran Church hosts its annual Advent Festival at 6:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 20, for all ages. Guest can make Advent wreaths for use at home, sing favorite carols and enjoy refreshments. Register at the sign-up center in the narthex at church.

Donations of greens that can be used for making the wreaths would be appreciated, as would a tray of cookies to share. A free-will offering will cover the expenses for beverages and wreath-making supplies. Invite your friends and neighbors. All are welcome.

Everyone is invited to attend the worship service from 10 to 11 a.m. The church is located at 900 Washington Crossing Road, Newtown. For information, call 215-497-0447 or visit ascensionweb.org.

Worship Directory

SALEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Sunday, November 8, 2015

9:30 a.m. Worship / Sunday School
Pastor *Michelle Schenk*

10:30 a.m. Fellowship and Refreshments
Ministry Service available

186 E. Court St., Doylestown • www.DoylestownSalemUCC.org
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All Are Welcome!

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