



THE YOKE

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."
Matthew 11:29-30

The First Baptist Church of Hanover in Etna and The First Congregational Church of Hanover in Hanover Center

NEWSLETTER: WINTER ISSUE 2018-19 (December, January, February)

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PASTOR'S PARAGRAPHS



To the Faith Family of our Etna and Hanover Center Churches,

From time to time a question is asked about our weekly Christian Yoga offering in Trumbull Hall. The comment is usually, "What is Christian Yoga?" On a few occasions it's an unfavorable critique of such a program. It may be a complaint that Yoga is not compatible with Biblical teaching or that it is an affront to traditional Yoga to link it to something Christian.



In an attempt to explain the reason we offer this community outreach, our Christian Yoga instructor, Jenny Voelker, has written a piece for our *Yoke* publication. I have also included a commentary based on my understanding of how the church uses social and cultural practices to present the message of God to its community. Jenny and I welcome your responses to what we offer.

- The Old Testament law code calls Ravens an unclean animal, making it unacceptable for a faithful Hebrew to touch such a creature. Yet God chose to feed Elijah by using Ravens to preserve his life through the lengthy famine, until his next prophetic assignment. If we apply only the "Letter of the Law," the Raven is not a suitable food service vehicle. Jesus taught the primacy of the "Spirit of the Law" over the Letter.
- Paul advised Christians to go ahead and eat meat offered to idols in the pagan temple ritual, if it didn't offend their conscience. It was a choice. Again, what does the Spirit of the Law afford us?
- Paul quoted the ancient sage Epimenides in his sermon on Mars Hill in Athens to explain the altar "to an unknown God." Epimenides was a Cretan philosopher, prophet, and wise sage of a pagan religious system. There were many Jews living at that time, but God used the agency of this man of historical significance to construct these altars of sacrifice. Hundreds of years later, Paul quotes him to appeal to the philosophical Athenians in the audience, and a line from the poem of Epimenides is included in scripture as a non-Christian proof-text for the existence of the God whom Paul is introducing to them.
- When John and Charles Wesley were writing hymns to encourage and inspire the continuing spirit of the Reformation within "Methodism" and beyond, they didn't want to use the slow dirges of the Church of England. They set many of their new texts to the popular tunes being sung in the local taverns and beer halls where joyful and exuberant music (and ales) were enjoyed. When challenged for this practice Wesley commented, "Why should the devil get all the good tunes?"
- When I was a teenager, "contemporary" Christian music began to use many of the instruments and stylistic approaches of contemporary rock and roll music. Many older and more traditional believers warned that this music would harm young Christians and lead the church down a worldly path. However, the gradual acceptance of a greater variety of music styles has opened the way for new and beautiful expressions of praise, including lighting effects and interpretive dance. Contemporary worship

may use the mechanics of non-Christian music, but makes it heavenly by using Christian lyrics and scripture verses set to the music. It is no longer “rock music” but Christian “praise music.”

When people gather in Trumbull Hall on Wednesday evenings, they are using the mechanics of an ancient health practice. This graceful physical movement has been retooled with Christian background music, scripture, and prayer.

Below is the message from Jenny:

Etna Baptist offers Christian Yoga as a creative way to build our community and support physical, mental, and emotional well being. It aims to help all people see themselves the way God sees us – beloved, accepted, and worthy of the sacrifice Christ made for us. When we ourselves feel healthy, whole, and at peace, we are better equipped to live blessed, and be a blessing to others and serve a world in need. It is much like the adult putting the airplane oxygen mask on him or herself first before he or she can help the child.



When doctors prescribe yoga for their patients, schools offer yoga for children, or various companies, nonprofits, and other organizations offer yoga for their employees and recipients, they are advocating the use of yogic postures and breathing techniques as tools to reduce stress, bring relaxation, manage pain, build focus, teach self awareness, improve posture, increase strength, flexibility and mobility, and countless other proven health benefits. The Bible supports our taking care of our bodies which are vessels for the Holy Spirit. Just as a father wishes his child to be healthy and happy, our heavenly Father desires that we live a blessed life with vitality, peace, love, and joy.

For those with a spiritual desire or intention, Christian Yoga has the potential to deepen one’s prayerful life and one’s relationship with God. Yoga literally means “to yoke” or unite the body and mind. It is a moving meditation that brings awareness to one’s inner landscape and frees the mind from external noise and distractions. When we truly experience being present in the moment, we begin to notice what is before us – and what is going on inside of ourselves - in a clearer way. We may feel lighter, freer, more hopeful. We may be in a more receptive place where we can invite God’s hand in our situation. The Bible has countless verses about meditation, prayer, and being still, being quiet.

For anyone who questions the relationship Christians and yoga have to one another, Susan Bordenkircher explains it well. “[Y]oga began in India and is now part of Hinduism. However, it is not Hindu. It is a universal practice that is thousands of years old, predating Hinduism, and was not designed specific to any religion. It is considered a framework or guideline to direct people toward greater spiritual growth and physical health. Therefore, yogic principles and disciplines can be used in the context of any faith (or none at all). Easterners were simply the first to appreciate the practice’s numerous benefits and apply it to their belief system.”

Etna Baptist is offering the practice of Christian Yoga to everyone and anyone who wishes to practice self care and have fun. Peace to all!

— Jenny Voelker, *Christian Yoga instructor*

ADVENT MUSINGS 2018



Every year we celebrate the holy season of Advent, O God. Every year we pray those beautiful prayers of longing and waiting, and sing those lovely songs of hope and promise. Every year we roll up all our needs and yearnings and faithful expectation into one word: “Come!”

And yet, what a strange prayer this is! After all, you have already come and pitched your tent among us. You have already shared our life with its little joys, its long days of tedious routine, its bitter end. Could we invite you to anything more than this with our “Come”? Could you approach any nearer to us than you did when you became the “Son of Man”? In spite of all this we still pray: “Come.”

— *Karl Rahner in Watch for the Light*

LOOKING BACK

Thanksgiving Baskets



On Sunday, November 18th, Sunday School children decorated boxes to be filled with fruit, desserts and other foodstuffs. Then, some of the folk whom Pastor Mike describes as having servant souls, arranged all the goods in the baskets. Some of these helpers are shown at left: Cora Moses, Florence Pang, Maxine Wallace, Rachel Wilson and Norma Pelton. The last step was to deliver the baskets of Thanksgiving cheer to members of our church and others in the community in need of a lift this season.

Pretzel Dipping for a Good Cause

molten masses while others dipped real Pennsylvania pretzels into the melted chocolate to make one of the tastiest treats around! That was followed by laying out the treats for drying, and then packing them 14 to a bag, and tying them with a festive ribbon. Many thanks to the entire Voelker family — Marty, Jenny, Tommy and Brooke — Susan Hall, Mike Hall, Evy Huppert, Becky LaHaye, John LaHaye, Susan Johnson, Ken Conrad, Norma Pelton, Ken Pelton, Carol Edwards, Jonathan Edwards, Heidi Hoskin, Elaine Hawthorne, and Cora Moses. Proceeds from selling the delicious treats will go toward expenses of the February mission trip to the Dominican Republic.

On Saturday, December 1st, nineteen hearty souls came to Trumbull Hall to stir lots of chocolate into molten masses while others dipped real Pennsylvania pretzels into the melted chocolate to make one of the tastiest treats around! That was followed by laying out the treats for drying, and then packing them 14 to a bag, and tying them with a festive ribbon. Many thanks to the entire Voelker family — Marty, Jenny, Tommy and Brooke — Susan Hall, Mike Hall, Evy Huppert, Becky LaHaye, John LaHaye, Susan Johnson, Ken Conrad, Norma Pelton, Ken Pelton, Carol Edwards, Jonathan Edwards, Heidi Hoskin, Elaine Hawthorne, and Cora Moses. Proceeds from selling the delicious treats will go toward expenses of the February mission trip to the Dominican Republic.



Norma and John dip, and are all smiles.



Susan and Ken had their own station.



At table 3 are Ken, Evy and Pastor.

LOOKING AHEAD

Advent and Christmas



Christmas Play December 16th: Our young people (and some older ones, too) will bring us a Christmas play during worship on Sunday, December 16th. After the service, the church will share a potluck lunch. Those interested are also invited to do a cookie swap — Just bring a dozen cookies to give to others, and take home an assortment that others have brought.



Our **Christmas Eve** worship service begins at 7 p.m. This is a special service of carols, Christmas readings and candle light. At the end of the service, the lights are dimmed and everyone lights the candle they hold. We then sing “Silent Night” before wishing each other a merry Christmas and going out into the night, secure that our Savior will come.

A calendar of events follows:

December



DEC 9 AND 16~KIDS in play practice or performance, K thru 8th grade. **DEC 23 AND 30, NO SUNDAY SCHOOL.**



TUE 11~ADULT BIBLE STUDY, 7:00 PM, Trumbull Hall. **DEC 18 AND 25, NO BIBLE STUDY.**



SUN 16~POTLUCK after the service, Trumbull Hall. Bring a dish and enjoy the fellowship and good food. For those interested, there will be a cookie swap. Just bring a dozen cookies, and leave with a dozen from other bakers.



MON 17~ZUMBA CLASS, 5:45-6:45 PM, Trumbull Hall. Join Rhonda Fenton, certified Zumba instructor, for an hour of fun and all-around aerobic fitness. Combining upbeat Latin music with colorful Latin dances, "Zumba is for everyone who wants to move to music, and uses easy-to-follow routines geared to all fitness levels." Wear comfortable clothes and bring a water bottle to class. Suggested donation is \$8.00/class; those in the larger community are very welcome to participate. **Questions? Contact Rhonda at 643-5623 or rmfenton0116@gmail.com.** **DEC 24 AND 31, NO ZUMBA.**



WED 12, 19~CHRISTIAN YOGA, 7:00-8:00 PM, Trumbull Hall. **WED 26, NO CLASS.** Taught by Jenny Voelker, certified yoga instructor, Christian Yoga offers "a way to move mindfully and breathe together in a supportive, sacred space." The fall series of classes is open to all—beginners, men, women as well as those in the local community. A yoga mat is required. Cost is \$8.00/class. **Questions? E-mail Jenny at mjtbvoelker4@icloud.com.** **Note:** Jenny is taking a break during the winter, so there will **not** be classes in January and February.



THU 13, 20~CHOIR PRACTICE, 7:00-8:00 PM, Church sanctuary. **THU 27, NO CHOIR PRACTICE.**



MON 24~CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE, 7:00 PM, Etna Church. A service of carols, readings and candle light. A blessed Christmas to all!

January



MORNING WORSHIP SERVICES in January are held at 10:00 AM at the Etna Church.



THU 3, 10, 17, 24, 31~CHOIR REHEARSAL, 7:00 PM, Etna Church.



JAN 6, 13, 20, 27 SUNDAY SCHOOL as usual, all ages.



TUE 8, 15, 22, 29~ADULT BIBLE STUDY, 7:00 PM, Trumbull Hall. **TUE 1, NO CLASS.**



THU 10~CRAFT NIGHT, 6:30 PM, Trumbull Hall.



MON 21~ETNA BAPTIST MISSIONS COMMITTEE MEETING, 6:30 PM, Trumbull Hall.

February



NOTE: MORNING WORSHIP SERVICES in February are held at 10:00 AM at the Etna Church.



FEB 3, 10 SUNDAY SCHOOL as usual, all ages. **FEB 17, 24, NO SUNDAY SCHOOL**, due to school vacation.



TUE 5, 12, 26~ADULT BIBLE STUDY, 7:00 PM, Trumbull Hall. **TUE 19, NO CLASS.**



THU 7, 28~CHOIR REHEARSAL, 7:00 PM, Etna Church. **FEB 14, 21, NO CHOIR REHEARSAL.**



THU 14~CRAFT NIGHT, 6:30 PM, Trumbull Hall.



FRI 15-SAT 23~MISSION TRIP TO DOMINICAN REPUBLIC~Pastor Mike, Susan Hall, Marjorie Rose, Jenny and Brooke Voelker, Connie Timlake, Jonathan Edwards and others embark for their week at Riviera de Caribe. There, they will help with construction and teach Bible School, and help spread the word of Christ through the community. ¡Vaya con Dios!

KEEP IN TOUCH   

Visit our **church website** at <http://www.etnahanovercenterchurch.org> to find:

- The latest news;
- Upcoming events and calendar;
- Pastor Mike's sermons;
- Photos, slide shows and articles about our church members.

If you would like to receive a copy of this newsletter electronically, or if your address or other contact information has changed recently, please contact Pastor Mike at (610) 223-6204 or e-mail us at etna.hanovercenter.church@gmail.com.