

A Special YogaKids Holiday Series

Advent Yoga for Kids

Ages: Toddler - 7 yo

Limited enrollment

~ Please call ahead to Register
or call to schedule a personalized visit ~

Call 603 616 2019

email AGTJ@msn.com

www.AngelaThomasJones.com

This special blend of *Godly Play* and *YogaKids* bring a unique approach to sharing the mystery and wonder of the Christmas season and offers a peaceful respite yet playful alternative for families during this hectic season.

Visit www.godlyplay.org to view the Advent Lesson plan as well as the theology and philosophy upon which this curriculum is based. Also visit www.yogakids.com to view this educational philosophy and research based approach to sharing yoga with children.

Angela Thomas Jones is an accredited *Godly Play* teacher and *Certified Christian Educator* www.ucc.org/education/certified/index.html as well as a *Certified YogaKids Facilitator* and *Registered Yoga Teacher* with Yoga Alliance www.yogaalliance.com. She has lead spirituality retreats and workshops throughout the USA, Alaska, and Europe for over two decades with teens, families, adults, and elders. Her approach to teaching spiritual subjects is from a pluralistic attitude. This means while her own traditions hold ultimate truth claims for herself other traditions carry theological value and importantly inform her own faith understanding.

Families are encouraged to share their own faith tradition celebrations in this series with an open heart to exploring the wonders of this season from diverse perspectives.



Angela is pictured here loading up her supplies after sharing an Advent YogaKids class at a local Littleton family home.

Her portable studio travels to schools, recreation & community centers, camps, and now to the homes of interested families. This holiday season she decided after talking with interested families to bring this special holiday series into the homes of families. She says taking the class into the home of the participants allows the class to become more personalized. She hopes this will support the families in integrating some of the things from class into their daily routines. Jones points out in the past several weeks she has visited not only families with children but retired couples and homebound elders.



This unique series integrates elements of the traditional Christmas story from the Christian faith tradition using beautifully crafted child friendly props. Each class is tailored to the theme of each story starting with meeting the characters of the holy family including sheep, a donkey, a cow, camels, an angel and a wild star. She creatively integrates yoga postures that connect with the story; ie, after introducing the shepherds who take care of the sheep in open fields and describing what it must have been like to see an unexpected bright star and an angel that talks about a new king being born who will bring peace to everyone....she guides the children through a series of postures pretending to be like sheep and mountain pose to pretend being the quiet landscape with a combination of breathing exercises to increase heart rate to experience what it might have been like to have been out in the open at night like in the story & perhaps frightened at the sound and sight of the unexpected.....all combined to

create a holistic experience combining all of the senses to connect with the story in a meaningful and fun way!

One of the children's favorite elements of the story is meeting "Jesus". Angela says she discovered a similar doll while visiting a local church and decided to make her own version and donated it to her home church. "Jesus" goes on tour with her during the Advent YogaKids series to help introduce the Christmas story. He stays with each family between classes. The doll includes a satchel with a journal for people to record their thoughts and observations of their experience with the Jesus doll. She explains this has been a very fulfilling way to integrate her own love for the arts with her own children and other families.



Another favorite element of the story is snuffing out the candles. Jones explains The *Godly Play* curriculum she uses introduces the idea of "changing the light of the candles" to celebrate and honor the place of Bethlehem, the life of the prophets, the courage of Mary & Joseph, the protective nature of the shepherds, the wisdom of the Magi, and, of course, the new light born into baby Jesus. Changing the light of the candles uses the act of snuffing out the flame as a metaphor to the endless cycle of life through transformation of physical & spirit; the flame representing physical and the smoke is spirit.

Jones explains she enjoys being welcomed into people's homes in this way because it directly connects her with the life of the people she is working with and gives her an opportunity to also learn from her students. One of the ways she ends class is asking the children & families to share a prayer or story they enjoy in their family during this time of the year. She says this allows the family to bring their own traditions into the class and supports the individual values of each family and can be a launching point for open sharing and support among parents. Jones believes it is important for families to feel connected with other families who share common concerns and recognizes topics of religion, politics, economics, and culture can often be sticky points that unfortunately end up alienating relationships. It is her hope this special Advent Series will encourage an open & hopeful dialogue about what and how we celebrate regardless of our faith orientation.

Why combine Yoga with stories about Christmas?

Angela explains yoga is an ancient practice born from India originally as a spiritual practice nearly 5000 years ago. The word “yoga” means to “yoke” or to bring together the mind & body as one. Today this ancient practice has been integrated into western culture with much focus on the physical practice of the exercises or postures called “asanas” (Sanskrit word for posture). Because of the emphasis on self-observation while moving into and out of postures, doing yoga nurtures a sense of self-awareness and encourages an internal slowing down that can provide quiet calming effects to the mind and body. The holiday can be a stressful series of rushed events leaving many of us exhausted or triggered by painful memories. Dedicating time for prayer, meditation, quiet reflection, and rest is an important element to maintain any time of the year and why not start or re-start during the holiday!

The individual practitioner brings to their practice their own perspective. Many people enjoy the benefits of using yoga postures as part of their fitness routine. Jones finds yoga to be a more gentle and direct way of working with people to help them tune into reading their own body language & symptoms. She explains a regular yoga practice helps increase the ability to recognize our own physical experience. What this means is that if we are able to better understand where an ache or a pain is coming from it will help us to describe it's qualities to our health practitioner and increase our ability to help ourselves. Jones says that if we can take the time to slow down enough to pay attention to our internal body signals we will eventually be able to connect with how our thought process and emotions play into our physical experience. Everything is connected and once we get the aches, pains, complaints, disappointments acknowledged then the path to recognizing what it is that gives us enjoyment and hope is more accessible!

Angela teaches seasonal YogaKids series and accepts individual calls for personalized tailored counseling and yoga sessions regardless of age. Contact her at 603 616 2019 AGTJ@msn.com or visit her website for more details about the services she offers www.AngelaThomasJones.com