

JOURNEYING TOGETHER

Shalom Mennonite Church

December 1, 2021

WORSHIP: Our relationship with God

Chair: Brittany Bither

Last Sunday (11/28), we begin the Advent season, during which we will be “daring to imagine” the good news of Jesus Christ again. Brian will be preaching from Jeremiah 33 about how we should act as agents of hope as the world waits for Christ.

This Sunday (12/05), is the second Sunday of Advent, which has the theme of peace. Brian will be continuing the Leader series by “daring to imagine God’s embrace” in light of Malachi 4:1-3.

Next Sunday (12/12), is the third Sunday of Advent, Sabrina Falls will bring the message.

COMMUNITY LIFE: Relationships at Shalom

Chair: Herb Troyer

CALENDAR

Sat, November 20, from 9 am-noon, Fall work day at the church. Fellowship will be serving a lunch outside for our Fall Workday. So come and work up a hunger!

Sun, December 5, Congregational Budget Approval Meeting on Zoom after worship.

Sun, December 5, During the Sunday School Hour (9:30) congregation discussion about safely gathering

Sun, December 12 at 10a - Singing at Shalom* (see note below)

Sunday, December 19 at 10a - Singing at Shalom* (see note below)

Sunday, December 26 at 10a - Singing at Shalom (see note below)

Singing at Shalom - Starting on December 12, the Worship Commission is going to offer three opportunities for "Singing at Shalom," in which people will be invited to come into the sanctuary at 10am on Sunday mornings - wearing masks and socially distanced - for 15 minutes of singing Advent hymns and Christmas carols. This singing will NOT be a part of the Zoom worship service (which will continue as usual) and it will not be recorded. At 10:15, when the singing has ended, all participants will go into separate rooms of the church to close the doors and watch the Zoom service from a computer or phone. Then, once the service ends, all participants will go outside, where they can socialize with others with masks and/or distance or go home. This plan has been tentatively approved by the Safely Gathering Committee.

We do not yet know whether we can accommodate everyone who wants to do this at Shalom, and we anticipate that we may face some challenges the first week. However, if it works well enough, we will offer it again on December 19 and December 26. If you would like to participate, please email Brian at brian@shalommennonite.com by Thursday, December 9. Please tell him (1) the names of everyone in your pod who would like to participate, (2) whether you have a portable device with Zoom capabilities that you feel comfortable running yourself, and (3) if you have any special needs (can't do stairs, need a certain type of chair, etc.). Then, on Friday, December 10, Brian will email everyone who signed up with instructions and a room assignment.*

*A pod is a group of people who have agreed to mask and socially distance around everyone except for other members in their group. A pod may consist of 2-3 households who follow these rules together, a single household, or a single individual. If you have questions about who is in your pod, feel free to contact Brian and/or the Safely Gathering Committee.

Celebrations

Mon, Dec 6 – Jim Martin

Mon, Dec 6 -- Joyce Troyer

DISCIPLING: Growing in our relationships

Chair: Martha Yoder

Last spring we had a Sunday school class on Dismantling Institutional Racism in Congregations, using an online curriculum from Widerstand Consulting. You should have received an email in March inviting you to participate in Niche Academy, which provided the structure for our participation. If you would like to review any of that material, or if you would like to see their material on how to do a congregational audit, your username is your email address and your old password should still work. If you have lost your password, you can click on "forgot password" to create a new one. If you need help, email Martha Yoder Maust at yodermaust@gmail.com and I can send you a new invitation. We have access to this material until the end of February.

OUTREACH: Relationships beyond Shalom

Chair: Zenebe Abebe

SPIRITUAL GIFTS DISCERNMENT TEAM

Chair: Joyce Troyer

SGDT is grateful for all who serve Shalom! At this time, the official positions for the church year are filled, but volunteers are always needed and appreciated. Although the pandemic limits what we can do in person, the work of the church continues. If you are interested in an area of service, please contact Joyce Troyer (troyers_hj@hotmail.com), Frank Kandel (kandel93@gmail.com), or Raphael Edou (raphaedou@gmail.com).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Safely Gathering Committee was created by the Commission Chairs in 2020. We want to have an open conversation with the congregation to explain how we have been making decisions and talk about challenges going forward. This conversation is scheduled for 9:30 AM on December 5.

Here are some of the resources that we have been using:

1. Local data from <https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/2393.htm>
2. County cases per 100,000 population per day from <https://globalepidemics.org/key-metrics-for-covid-suppression/>
3. Centers for Disease Control individual advice at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/index.html>

as well as (months ago) some pages on community organizations that were taken down when the Delta variant became prominent.

4. Advice for churches at

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2021/january-web-only/church-reopening-vaccine-coronavirus-covid-advice.html>

5. Resources from The Hymn Society, especially an updated document prepared by church leadership of several denominations in June 2021 at

<https://thehymnsociety.org/covid-19/> (scroll down a few lines to find the updated one), especially pages 8 and 9.

6. Specifically about singing, a resource from Sing! The Center for Congregational Song

<https://congregationalson.org/covid-congregational-song-update-may-18-2021/>

7. Various studies of singing and masks, including

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02786826.2020.1812502>

As of 11/16, Marion County is at 26.3 cases/100,000 population/day.

Martha, for Safely Gathering Committee

Deacons

The deacon program, which was formed last year in the wake of the pandemic, consists of seven deacons who maintain caring relationships with every adult who regularly or semi-regularly attends Shalom (except for those who have asked to be exempted). Eventually, Shalom will have a congregational discussion to determine whether we want to adopt this program as a permanent part of our church structure, but for now, as the pandemic continues to disrupt our church life, the VAT has decided to renew it at least until the spring. Because there have been some changes in both the number of deacons and the membership of the church, some people who were previously assigned to the care of one deacon have been transferred to another. Each Shalom attendee who did not opt out of the program should expect contact from your deacon sometime in the next month either to introduce themselves to you or reaffirm the relationship. If you have questions about who your deacon is or want to opt out of the program, you can email Brian at brian@shalommennonite.com.

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Advent Devotional

Mennonite Church USA is once again offering its **free Advent at Home devotional**. Written by Talashia Keim Yoder, pastor of Christian Formation at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana, the 2021 guide follows the theme of Leader magazine and is appropriate for all ages. Download your copy here. <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/adventathome>

In addition to our podcast, Shalom now has a **YouTube channel**, and many of our Zoom Sessions including the sermons in the "Story of the Bible" sermon series and the "Facing Hard Questions" sessions - can be found there. This is an easy way to share the good news with church members past and present, visitors and newcomers, and even outsiders. Check it out at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEn30AED17Q_ReoskuxUXA!

Video recordings (MP4) of our Zoom worship services are available online. A link to the worship service recordings is on the Member's page of our website.

Sam Bixler manages our church directory, email address list, and telephone numbers. You can email changes or

additions to the office at office@shalommennonite.com or bixlersc@gmail.com.

Craig Oury is now compiling *Journeying Together* each week. You can continue to send information to office@shalommennonite.com by 5 pm on Wednesday. Craig is now managing our Zoom calendar, church calendar, and uploads minutes on the church website. If you need to schedule a meeting using the church zoom account or have minutes to upload, you can email the office at office@shalommennonite.com or craig@shalommennonite.com.

REFLECTIONS ON THE JOURNEY

Isaiah 40:21-23 NRSV

Have you not known? Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?
It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
and spreads them like a tent to live in;
who brings princes to naught,
and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

We are given a wonderful metaphor by Isaiah here, he compares us to grasshoppers. The people of the earth are like grasshoppers. For some reason this really struck me.

Grasshoppers are interesting creatures. While they have wings, just like eagles, they can't soar like eagles. Yet grasshoppers can really jump. If people could jump like them, we'd be able to leap more than 40 yards. Being compared to a grasshopper may seem like a demeaning description of people whom God creates in God's image. We, after all, like to think of ourselves as far greater than little green critters.

It is no secret that humans are completely different than grasshoppers or any other sort of insect. The grasshopper obviously has a different view of the world than we do.

Yet, we are like grasshoppers, compared to God, compared to the one who sits atop the world. The image of being enthroned atop of the world creates a different perspective. Creates the image being able to see more. Just as the grasshopper can only comprehend just a little about who these humans are, we can only comprehend some of who God is. A quote from the Mennonite Confession of Faith:

We humbly recognize that God far surpasses human comprehension and understanding. We also gratefully acknowledge that God has spoken to humanity and related to us in many and various ways. We believe that God has spoken above all in the only Son, the Word who became flesh and revealed the divine being and character.

Isaiah is speaking this to the people, saying we cannot completely understand God, yet God has spoken to humanity and relates to us in many and various ways. As we have entered into Advent I am again reminded of how big God is. With so much hurt throughout the world, I need this reminder that God is seeing a much bigger picture of the world than I am able to and in turn as a mere grasshopper I am not able to see even a fraction of what it is that God is doing in the world. I need this reminder and this hope during this season of Advent. God is big and God comes in ways we often do not anticipate and this grasshopper needs that reminder. -- Craig

Journeying Together is a weekly email newsletter of Shalom Mennonite Church: 6100 E 32nd St, 46226; (317) 549-0577 shalommennonite.com

Pastors: Brian Bither, (317)-332-7320; Craig Oury, (301) 302-3181

Vision & Accountability Team: Cheryl Martin, Carol Bixler, CoraLyn Turentine, Frank Kandel, Mark Stocksdale
Brian Bither
