JOURNEYING TOGETHER

A weekly email newsletter of Shalom Mennonite Church

** To view graphics and a more colorful version, open the attached pdf file. **

DECEMBER 3, 2025

CALENDAR

Thu, December 4: Shalom Sisters Lunch @ The Bosphorus Café, 11:30 am (see CLC)
Sat, December 6: Jim Martin's 80th Birthday Party 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM
Thu, December 11: Mennonite Action pitch-in meal and training @ First Mennonite Church, 5:45-8:45 pm (see announcement)
Sat, December 13: Christmas Dinner, 5:30 pm appetizers, 6 pm dinner (see CLC)

Sun, December 14: Congregational Budget Meeting after Sunday School, 12 pm
Sun, December 28: There will be no Sunday school on Dec.28 (the Sunday between Christmas and New Years).
Sun, February 8: Game Night @ Shalom; details to come
Sat, February 21: Arlington Woods Neighborhood gathering, 11 am – 3:30 pm
Sat, October 3, 2026: Annual Retreat @ Jameson Camp

ADMINISTRATION

Mike Wigginton (chair), Andrew Martin, Dan Rosenberger
Pastoral Representative: Craig Oury

COMMUNITY LIFE: RELATIONSHIPS AT SHALOM

Linda Showalter (Chair), Bethany Martin, Beverly Smith
Pastoral Representative: Craig Oury

Celebrations! (Wednesday – Wednesday)

Sat, December 6: Jim Martin
Sat, December 6: Joyce Troyer
Tue, December 9: Rachel Maust

Shalom Sisters Lunch is **tomorrow**, **Thursday**, **December 4** at 11:30 am, and will meet at The Bosphorus Istanbul Café. The Bosphorus is located at 935 S East St. All women are welcome.

Shalom's annual Christmas Dinner will be **Saturday, December 13**. Appetizers will available starting at 5:30 pm with dinner following at 6. A sign-up sheet is posted for volunteers to bring lasagna (meat and vegetarian), and pies for dessert. Bread and salad will be provided. Everyone is welcome!

Christmas Day invitation: Tis the season for gatherings! Anyone without Christmas Day plans is welcome to join us for lunch on the 25th. Depending on the amount of people, we'll meet at our house or in the fellowship hall. Sign up on the back window. Jim & Linda

Watch for plans to visit Barbara Longoria and also do some caroling for her.

DISCIPLING: GROWING IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS

Cheryl Martin (chair), Wilma Bailey, Matt Bauman
Pastoral Representative: Brian Bither

Reading Program is back on track! Several children picked out a sugar skull after reading up on *Day of the Dead*. Lena was the first one to pick out her prize after reading 5 "regular" books. *You have until the end of December – 4 weeks!*

Children's Education
For the 2s-3s class, it would be great to have one more teacher to share dates with Abri in 2026.

Hall Monitor:
December 7: Linda S
December 14
December 21
December 28: No Sunday School

Adult Education: There will be one adult Sunday school for the month of December.
December 7 will be in charge of the VAT as announced last Sunday.
December 14 will be a Christmas hymn sing.
December 21 is antiracism Sunday.
December 28 will be no Sunday School.

OUTREACH: RELATIONSHIPS BEYOND SHALOM

(chair), Becky Wigginton
Pastoral Representative: Brian Bither

SPIRITUAL GIFTS DISCERNMENT TEAM

Jim Showalter (Chair), Angie Buller

VAT Representative: Andrew Martin; Pastoral Representative: Craig Oury

VISION AND ACCOUNTABILITY TEAM (VAT)

Nizeet Deiter (Chair), Andrew Martin (Vice-Ch) Sam Bixler, Charity Bauman, Abri Hochstetler
Pastoral Representatives: Brian Bither, Craig Oury

WORSHIP: OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Melissa Walsh Martin (chair), Justin Hochstetler, Jeanne Smucker
Pastoral Representative: Brian Bither

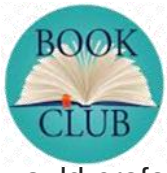
Last Sunday (11/30) This Sunday was the start of Advent. Monica Miller preached from Isaiah 2:1-5, "Hope Reforged."
This Sunday (12/7) J.E. Misz will bring the message, "Metaphorically Speaking" from Revelation 21:1-7, 22-27; 22:1-5
Next Sunday (12/14) Craig will bring the message.

This week's Prayer List:

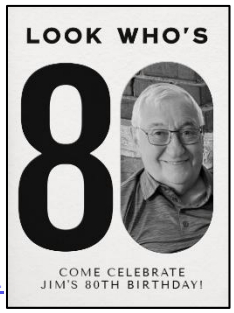
- **Church:** *LightHouse Fellowship Church* is the new name for Grand Marais Mennonite Church. It is a small Mennonite church in Grand Marais, Michigan, which is on the southern shore of Lake Superior, and is a member of Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference.
- **Organization:** *Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary* is the MCUSA affiliated seminary in North America, whose work in Anabaptist theological education is rooted in the saving power of the life, death, resurrection and ongoing ministry of Jesus Christ, the Word of God. (Contact: Wilma Bailey)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Pastor Craig will be on vacation December 1-7.



Shalom Book Club: A few people have expressed interest in a Shalom Book Club where we can read books about theology, biblical studies, or other topics of relevance to the church. In the initial blurb for it, a fairly regular meeting schedule was proposed. If you would be interested in joining a book reading group but would prefer to meet only once a month, please reach out to Andrew Martin to gauge if there is more interest.



Jim Martin's 80th Birthday Party: **Saturday, December 6**, 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM
RSVP at https://www.evite.com/event/01E5IVZJAYVVHMVKUEPQWULXOTKORA/
Help us celebrate Jim Martin's milestone birthday! Join us for cake and ice cream, a light supper and lots of laughs together as we honor the man we all love and know as Jim, Mr. Martin, Dad, Grandpa, Brother, Uncle Jimmy...and maybe a few more!*
The party is come-and-go, and children are welcome.
Can't come in person? Join us by Zoom at:
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88482376422?pwd=PooTplaYSrcXZbYeffnApPffrmhSc1.1
Meeting ID: 884 8237 6422, Passcode: 045635
*No gifts, please.

The Mennonite Action training tour is coming to Indianapolis!

Right now, the genocide in Gaza rages on as authoritarianism kidnaps our neighbors off streets in the U.S. So many of us are horrified and want to do something, but we don't

know how. That's why we're bringing training, tools, and frameworks to help our communities respond in courage to our historical moment, "discerning the times" as we're called to do (Matthew 16:3).

And we're thrilled to share that Indianapolis is a stop on the To Build Our Courage tour. We want YOU, your friends, and your congregation to join us on **December 11th, 5:45-8:45pm**. More details to follow. We'll dive into trainings on noncooperation, grassroots organizing, and mutual aid, in addition to spending time worshiping in prayer and song. And we'll of course enjoy a meal together somewhere in there too.

Register at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSevxrFdQ_9S4ADB5qgmKDynmIaOwmhDdVXu7paYm1DRPWbaDw/viewform today, and invite a friend to join you. Whether you're brand new to Mennonite Action or have been with us since the beginning, this training is for YOU– and will leave you with a better understanding of how we can work together to resist a genocide and an authoritarian takeover.

We can't wait to see you there!
In Peace,
Mennonite Action

PERSON OF COLOR BIO

The Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow has always been bothered by Advent's emphasis on the imagery of light and darkness. For at least the last decade, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) pastor has been urging people to be thoughtful in how they use the language — often equating light with good and dark with bad — during the liturgical season of Advent.

"The idea that darkness is inherently bad needs no reinforcement, so let's let go of the confining imagery and embrace creative reimagination."
The conversation about that Advent imagery of dark and light — and how readily it can be associated with skin color — is one many Christians are having years into a racial reckoning for both the church and the country, sparked by the murders of George Floyd and other Black people in 2020.

And, Reyes-Chow said, it seems like more Christians are listening — or at least, fewer Christians are objecting as loudly as they once did in the comments on his social media posts. Reconsidering the language and imagery Christians use at Advent isn't about "banning words," Reyes-Chow said, but about expanding Christians' understanding of God and how God speaks to them.

"I just think that this is a liberating time, and so why let ourselves be, in some ways, still bound by this imagery that is not liberating for many people? In fact, it's more confining," he said.
There are several reasons why the imagery of light and darkness comes up so much during the season of Advent — including in the lyrics of the best-known Advent hymns, like "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel": "O come, thou Dayspring from on high / And cheer us by thy drawing nigh: / Disperse the gloomy cloud of night / And death's dark shadow put to flight."

Part of it is simply meteorological. The dark winter nights stretch longer during Advent in the Northern Hemisphere, said the Rev. Wil Gafney, an Episcopal priest and professor of Hebrew Bible at Brite Divinity School. And, as some point out in defense of the imagery, it appears in the Bible, including many of the Scripture passages read during Advent: "The light shines in the darkness,

and the darkness has not overcome it."

But the context in which the writers of Scripture composed those metaphors is very different from the context in which they are read today, according to Gafney, who has been translating Scripture for more than 20 years.

In Western Christianity, she said, all those things come together in a church that profited from slavery and has for centuries misrepresented holy peoples as white. It associates the language and imagery of whiteness with "virtuous things to be admired" and presents the language of darkness as "virtually always negative."

"We are hearing in praying language, which is innocent, the ancient use of metaphors for light and dark and shadow. But we are hearing it in a world and in a church that is deep in white supremacy and often has the images of white supremacy on the wall," she said.
That context changes the way those words are received and understood, perpetuating the evils of white supremacy and institutionalized racism, Gafney said.

"I think any and all spiritual symbols can be used for good or bad," said the Rev. Steven Charleston, the former Episcopal bishop of Alaska and author of the book "*Ladder to the Light."*

To Charleston, dark and light aren't in competition but mutually interdependent. That's what makes Advent's message of light in the darkness so universal. For many Indigenous peoples in North America, the dark winter months are a time of regeneration and rest, of "deep spiritual awareness" when sacred stories are shared that aren't told at any other time of year, said Charleston, who is Choctaw.

Darkness is a place where new life is formed, he said. You cannot be born without darkness. You cannot take root. You cannot have light. It's not something to fear or to deny, but to embrace and live into, he said.

Positive imagery of darkness also can be found in Scripture.

Authors Sharei Green and Beckah Selnick point out a number of those images in familiar stories in the picture book "*God's Holy Darkness*." They name what they describe in the book as "the beauty and goodness and holiness of darkness and blackness and night." Selnick said the idea for the book came to her after reading a Living Lutheran column titled "*God's Beautiful Dark Works*" by her mother, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Maybe it was because she had a toddler at the time, but all of the images of darkness in Scripture read to Selnick like a children's book — the kind of book she wants her two children to read.

When Selnick approached Green with the idea for "*God's Holy Darkness*," knowing it was a story she as a white woman couldn't tell by herself, Green said she tried to think of what she would've needed to read when she was a young Black girl. Even now as an adult, Green said, seeing God depicted with dark, flowing locks by the book's illustrator, ELCA Program Director for African Descent Ministries Nikki Faison, moves her to tears. It makes her believe, she said, "I, too, am made in the image of God."

Last year, Reyes-Chow abandoned the imagery altogether at the congregation he was pastoring. With everything happening in the world at the time, he didn't want to perpetuate the idea that darkness was bad in any way, he said. This Advent, he's taking a further step. A

decade into urging his fellow Christians not to center whiteness in their observance of Advent, Reyes-Chow realized he was doing that very thing.

Literally.

When he pulled out his Advent wreath this year, he realized he had placed the traditional white candle at its center — “the LAST one, the BEST one, the MOST IMPORTANT ONE,” the one symbolizing Jesus, whose birth Christians celebrate at Christmas, he wrote. Inspired by a conversation with an associate who mentioned placing a black candle at the center of his Advent wreath, Reyes-Chow replaced his with one that is dark brown and urged others to consider what might happen if they did the same.

Some churchgoers may object that the Christ candle should be white when Scripture describes Jesus as the “light of the world,” he wrote. But it makes sense to him, he continued, when Jesus himself — who Christians believe was born thousands of years ago in what is now the West Bank — would have been dark-skinned.

“The thing is, the light is not generated by the color of the candle but from the light that that candle gives to the world,” Reyes-Chow wrote. “Candles of all colors can be a light to the world, even black and brown ones.”

https://religionnews.com/2022/12/07/amid-racial-reckoning-christians-reconsider-the-language-of-dark-and-light-at-advent/

Have something to give away? Need something? Skills needed or to share? Tools needed or to share?

Beverly Smith has some knitting needles that need a new home. The sizes were measured with a Susan Bates guide and are from left to right as follows: Long gold single point pair size 15; Green single point pair size 8; Orange double point pair size 10; blue double point pair size 5; Green double point pair size 4; and Green (plastic) double point set of 4 size 8. Let Beverly know if you would like these and she will deliver them to church the following Sunday.

ROUTINE INFORMATION

“SHARING OUR LIVES” weekly power point: We invite photo submissions of events / hobbies / interests in your lives. Send pictures to Linda Showalter at lindashowalter52@gmail.com by noon on Saturday. It will run before and after the service.

BULLETIN INFORMATION:

- Send announcements to Linda Showalter at lindashowalter52@gmail.com by Friday, 10 am.

- **Bulletins** are now attached with the Zoom link for those who are worshiping on Zoom. A link will continue to be sent out each week. If you have a prayer request or announcement you would like to share, ***type your request live into the chat*** feature on zoom and someone on the tech team will read it to the congregation at church.

JOURNEYING TOGETHER is compiled by Linda Showalter each week. Send information to office@shalommennonite.com by 5 pm on Wednesday.

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 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.

BUILDING USEAGE: If you want to use the building for a meeting or event, please check the online calendar first to be sure it's open, then email Craig at office@shalommennonite.com so he can add your item to the calendar. It's helpful to include the contact person and which parts of the building you expect to use.

YOUTUBE CHANNEL: In addition to our podcast, Shalom has a Youtube Channel. 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 youtube.com/@shalommennonite55.

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.

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: Chair Nizeet Agular Deiter, Vice-Chair Andrew Martin
Congregational Reps: Charity Bauman, Sam Bixler, Abri Hochstetler
Pastoral Rep: Craig Oury