

JOURNEYING TOGETHER

Shalom Mennonite Church

January 19, 2022

WORSHIP: Our relationship with God

Chair: Brittany Bither

Last Sunday (1/16), Brian preached from John 2 about Jesus' first miracle of turning water into wine

This Sunday (1/23), Wilma will be preaching from Nehemiah 8:1-12 and Luke 4:14-21.

Next Sunday (1/30), Craig will be preaching from

COMMUNITY LIFE: Relationships at Shalom

Chair: Herb Troyer

CALENDAR

Jan. 16-Feb. 27, During Sunday School, we will be discussing sexual orientation, gender identity, and the church. See more background under "Announcements" below.

(Note: The outline for this class has been updated.)

Jan. 16 Introduction to the Repentance Resolution and this class

Jan. 23 Overview of the gay rights movement and the church's response

Jan. 30 New understandings of gender and sexuality

Feb. 6 Brief review of Biblical texts and interpretations

Feb. 13 The Mennonite history behind the Repentance Resolution

Feb. 20 Group conversation about our thoughts, beliefs, and experiences

Feb. 27 Goal-setting: When we return to this conversation, what might next steps be?

Attached to Journeying Together is a summary of the points from the first session. All sessions are being recorded and can be found in the Members section of the website.

Also attached is some of the material we will be looking at on Sunday as part of the ongoing focus on LGBTQIA issues in Sunday School. Please study the attached material, so that we can concentrate on other material still being developed. Thank you. Brad Yoder

Celebrations

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

Hoosiers Concerned about Gun Violence January Newsletter is attached

Christian Theological Seminary is having a dialogue, "Walk in My Shoes", about racism in Christianity on Thursday, January 20, 12:00-1:30PM. Outreach Commission encourages Shalom members to participate if possible by registering in advance.

Christian Theological Alumni Series
Walk in My Shoes: A Dialogue on Race and the Church

January 20, 2022, 12pm-1:30pm

The dialogue on race in the United States is more polarized than ever before. Much of that polarization is a result of a lack of understanding of what it means to "walk in another person's shoes" and to empathize with the journey of others that look different than ourselves. Join us as we have a candid conversation about how our individual journeys impact the dialogue on race and the church.

Moderator:

- **April Ervin**, Director of Alumni Relations and Annual Giving, CTS

Panelists:

- **Dean Leah Gunning Frances**, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty, Associate Professor of Christian Education and Practical Theology
- **Dr. Courtney Buggs**, Assistant Professor of Homiletics, Assistant Director of the PhD in African American Preaching and Sacred Rhetoric Program
- **Kerry Connelly**, Writer, Mystic, Coach, Author of "Good White Racist", CTS Alumna 2020
- **Rev. Sunil Kotian**, Associate Pastor, North United Methodist Church, CTS Alumnae 2021
- **Rev. Dr. Ricky McCray**, Pastor, The Way Church, CTS Alumnae 2013 and 2019

[Register here.](#)

SPIRITUAL GIFTS DISCERNMENT TEAM

Chair: Joyce Troyer

The Sunday school class on Spiritual Gifts Discernment will begin on March 6. If you have interest in discerning your spiritual gifts prior to then, or if you prefer a format other than a group class, please contact Joyce Troyer at troyers_hj@hotmail.com.

Vision and Accountability Team

Chair: Cheryl Martin

About a year and a half ago, the Safely Gathering Committee was formed to advise the church about the physical risks of meeting in person and ways that we could minimize them. They have done a wonderful job studying the data and keeping the congregation informed about these risks. However, as time went on, the burden of deciding whether the church is open or not gradually fell into their lap, and after some discussion in recent weeks, we've clarified that it should actually be the VAT's responsibility to make that decision, based in part on the Safely Gathering Committee's recommendations.

In light of this, the VAT surveyed the congregation regarding meeting in person or virtually. The VAT met

on Wednesday January 5 to discuss the results of the congregational survey. Of the persons who responded (about 62% of the congregation), about 80% were in favor of starting to meet in person again. However, as you are all aware, and as some mentioned in their comments in the survey, there is a large Covid surge currently which makes in person meetings seem too dangerous for now. Based on the input from various national and international organizations, it appears that the surge may be shorter than previous ones. After much discernment and discussion, the decision was made to set a target date for meeting in person as the first of March. This is a target and will be continually evaluated based on the situation closer to that time. The target may need to change. Additionally, decisions will be made regarding how best to keep the congregation safe when meeting in person such as mask requirements, vaccinations, etc. Those decisions will be conveyed at that time. In the meantime, VAT encourages everyone to be fully vaccinated.

VAT wants to affirm the Safely Gathering Committee for their diligence in planning for safety for the congregation. Many commented in the survey that they appreciated the hard work of the committee and wanted to convey that to them. The committee will continue to advise the VAT as new information becomes available. We want to thank them for their hard work these many months.

For those in the congregation who would like more in person contact, some small groups are meeting in person. You could talk to Herb Troyer about this option if you so desire.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Repentance Resolution: As mentioned at church this past Sunday, our church belongs to a larger church network called the Mennonite Church USA, and this May, MCUSA's delegate body is going to discuss a resolution called "A Resolution for Repentance and Transformation" (linked [here](#)) and decide whether to vote on it at that meeting. (CORRECTION: An earlier version of this announcement said that the Resolution would come to a vote at the July 2023 Mennonite Convention. While that is a possibility, there is also a chance that the Delegate Assembly will put it in effect by the end of May. ~ Brian)

This resolution is unlike anything that has come to the Mennonite Church conventions before. It addresses the subjects of Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation, asking the church to repent for its past mistreatment of LGBTQ+ individuals, calling on us to abolish church policy that prohibits LGBTQ+ exclusion, and demanding LGBTQ+ representation on all future boards and programs sponsored by MCUSA.

Shalom Mennonite Church has never taken an official stance, one way or the other, on LGBTQ+ issues, nor have we had much teaching or conversation about these issues. In light of this development, Shalom's leadership teams have decided that it is time for us to broach these issues through a Sunday school class in January and February and some congregational conversations around that same time. We are not planning on making any statements or taking any action during this first phase of our discernment, but we invite everyone to prayerfully participate so that we can hear the Holy Spirit guide us as a body. In the spring, we will shift our attention to the anti-racism audit, but we intend to come back to the Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation conversation before the summer of 2023 with some goals that will be shaped by our conversations in January and February.

Gemima and daughters: About \$500 are needed to provide February monthly support to Gemima. Gemima continues to search for employment with support from Melanie (both in completing applications and with transportation to interviews). After finding a position last fall, she was unable to attend her first day of work due to contracting Covid. She has healed from Covid and is ready to start employment once she is offered a position.

Dear Shalom Family,

My mother-in-law (Chris's mom) is in need of a female who can help out with caregiving from 6 pm to 9:30 pm on Saturday, Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday and/or Thursday. This will be a paid position, if you would like more information please contact me either by email (deiteraguilar@gmail.com) or phone (443-801-2675).

Blessings,

Nizeet Deiter

In addition to our podcast, Shalom 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 compiles *Journeying Together* each week. You can continue to send information to office@shalommennonite.com by 5 pm on Wednesday. Craig 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.

REFLECTIONS ON THE JOURNEY

Overcoming the Fear of Shame

"I sought the Lord, and the Lord answered me; the Lord delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to the Lord are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame." – Psalm 34:4-5

As I mentioned in the Sunday school class this past Sunday, one of the reasons why conversations about sexual orientation and gender identity are so hard is because for many of us, they provoke feelings of shame. Perhaps we experience same-sex attraction or question our gender, and we are afraid of what people would think if they found out about it. Perhaps we are uncomfortable talking about sex in general, and these conversations trigger that discomfort and insecurity. Perhaps we are afraid that people – even close friends of ours – will judge us or become angry with us if they learn what we really believe on these issues. These are real and valid fears. If we want to have meaningful conversations on this subject, we need to acknowledge these feelings and work through them. Only then will we be able to have meaningful conversations in which we can both listen and share with each other.

Unfortunately, there is no easy way to address these feelings. The only way to get past shame is to go through it – to face what it is you fear head-on and discover whether there is acceptance on the other end. This doesn't mean that we need to announce everything private or embarrassing that we experience through a megaphone. There are people with whom it is unwise to share too much about ourselves, and each one of us needs to decide whom those people are. But for the relationships that we truly value – which hopefully includes members of our church family – the only way to achieve the deep sense of trust and security that we want with them is to take the risk sharing the truth with them. Jesus himself made this point when he proclaimed, "The truth shall set you free." (John 8:32)

When we do this, there is no guarantee that people will react in the way that we'd like them to react. Often times, people are surprisingly gracious, but not always. There are times when we are judged or punished by the very people whom we wanted to trust. There is only one

exception to this: God. God offers us *unconditional* love. God loves us *as we are*. God sees the intention of our hearts, and those who trust in God will “never be put to shame.” This promise is repeated many times over in the Bible. What does it mean?

When we find love and acceptance in one place, it can serve as an anchor to guide us through rough waters. When we know that God sees us, accepts us, and loves us, then we can face the storm of exposure and judgment without being sunk by it. And if God’s people *a/so* accept us, that only deepens our security and gives us more strength to be truthful in even more hostile waters.

May God grant each of us wisdom and courage as we brave these conversational waters with the hope of truth, reconciliation, and acceptance on the other side. ~ Brian

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

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