



JOURNEYING TOGETHER
A weekly email newsletter of Shalom Mennonite Church

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

DECEMBER 17, 2025

CALENDAR

Sun, December 21:

9:30am: Worship Service;

11am: Congregational Meeting (2026 Budget, 2026 VAT Proposal to Shalom Mennonite Church – see VAT) and Hymn Sing;

12pm: Christmas Dinner

No children's classes

2 pm: Caroling at Barbara L's, 5 pm (see CLC)

Sun, December 28: There will be no Sunday school

Thu, January 8: Shalom Sister Lunch @ His Place, 11:30 am (see CLC)

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)

Wed, December 17: Aliyah Wigginton
Sun, December 21: Sheila and Solomon Abebe, 1997
Mon, December 22: Frank Kandel

Join us at Barbara Longoria's (2339 S State Rd 135, Apt 102, Greenwood, IN) on **Sunday, December 21** at 5 pm for visiting and caroling.



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

The next Shalom Sisters Lunch will be on **January 8** since the 1st is New Years Day. We will meet at His Place, 6916 East 30th Street at 11:30 am. In February, we'll make reservations for The Bosphorus and try again! All women are welcome.



DISCIPLING: GROWING IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS

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

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 21: No Sunday School
December 28: No Sunday School

Adult Education: There will be one adult Sunday school for the month of December.

December 21: 2026 Budget, 2026 VAT Proposal to Shalom Mennonite Church, Christmas hymn sing

December 28 will be no Sunday School.

OUTREACH: RELATIONSHIPS BEYOND SHALOM

(chair), Becky Wigginton
Pastoral Representative: Brian Bither

A recent email thread expressing gratitude concerning gifts that were sent to Family Promise by caring volunteers and donors. Please accept the expression of gratitude to Shalom Mennonite Church members.

Thank you!
Solomon

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

There will be a congregational vote on the **2026 Plan Proposal** immediately following the Congregational Budget Meeting **this Sunday, December 21**.

This proposal applies **to 2026 only** as we continue, as a church, to discern our congregational needs, how best to support our pastoral leadership, and the shape of future pastoral leadership.

As a reminder, this will be **one vote** that includes the following items:

1. **Adjusting Pastor Craig's role** from 50% pastoral and 25% administrative to **75% pastoral duties**, supported by increased congregational responsibility for administrative tasks. Under this plan, Pastor Craig would largely be taking on the pastoral responsibilities Brian previously held and would serve as the primary church contact, including receiving and managing church mail.
2. **Authorizing the VAT** to pursue an interim pastor for the period **May–December 2026**.
3. **Approving a one-year exception to the Shalom Bylaws**, allowing:
 - o Pastor Craig to attend only three commission meetings, as well as the VAT meeting and the Commission Chairs Team meeting.
 - o Shalom to operate with a pastoral team of one for part of the year, with support from the congregation.

The full **2026 Plan Proposal** is attached for your information.

WORSHIP: OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

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

The Shalom Mennonite Worship Commission invites you to complete this brief questionnaire, linked below, **by Sunday, January 4, 2026**. The responses will provide the commission with information from the congregation regarding several aspects of the worship services at Shalom. If you would like a paper version of the questionnaire, there are printed copies available at the church. Any completed paper questionnaires should be submitted to the Worship Commission mailbox. Thank you!

[Worship Commission Questionnaire Linked Here](#)

A QR code that leads directly to the online form is attached.

Last Sunday (12/14) Craig brought the message from Isaiah 55.

This Sunday (12/21) Craig will bring the message from John 1:6-8, 19-28.

Next Sunday (12/28) Craig will bring the message from John 1:10-18.

This week's Prayer List

Church: *Hudson Lake Mennonite Church, New Carlisle, IN*

Pastors: Marcia Carpenter and Marcella Hershberger

We praise God for the continued ability that zoom provides us to reach beyond the confines of our building. We request prayers for our members who face increasing limitations that come with aging.

Organization: *Mennonite Disaster Service* is an organization that strives to be the hands and feet of Jesus to those affected by disasters by rebuilding homes and organizing and empowering volunteers in the U.S. and Canada. (Contact: Jim Showalter)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Don't forget to sign the Voices Together for Brian! It's in Andrew and Melissa's mailbox.

PERSON OF COLOR BIO



IMMIGRANTS

During the season of Advent, many Christians turn toward quiet reflection and preparation for Christmas. But in several Southern California congregations with large immigrant communities, that sacred anticipation is shadowed by a looming sense of fear.

For worshippers like Mike, an Iranian asylum-seeker who attends a West Los Angeles church, the weeks leading up to Christmas feel less like a spiritual refuge and more like a time of apprehension. He fled Iran after converting to Christianity. "I kept this secret, my faith as a secret, for like 12 years," he said.

Mike arrived in Los Angeles 18 months ago and says he has tried to build a life rooted in community and respect for his new home. But a series of immigration enforcement actions in the region — including the June arrests of two men outside a nearby church with a large Iranian membership — has shaken him. "Even church is not safe because it's a public place," he said. "They can get there and catch you."

The Department of Homeland Security says enforcement actions at churches require secondary approval and are expected to be rare. Still, the concern is real inside Mike's congregation, where church leaders asked that the name of the church not be published. A significant number of Iranian parishioners worship there, and the pastor often invites them to pray in Farsi during services. Lately, fewer take her up on the offer.

"It's part of the heartbreak of these days," the pastor said. "They feel like they have to be apprehensive about it — not even wanting to speak in their own language here." She said the fear is especially painful during Advent, a season she describes as a time to prepare to "give thanks for this God we have who wants to be with us."



East of Los Angeles, at Baldwin Park United Methodist Church, Pastor Toña Rios (a native of El Salvador) unzips a red tent pitched in the middle of the sanctuary. For years, the church took in newly arrived immigrants, providing a place to sleep while they looked for work and housing. The tent remains as a reminder of that welcome — and of the fears many congregants now carry. Rios estimates that about 80% of her church members are immigrants and says many don't have legal status.

"A lot of them say, 'Don't open the door. Just close the door,'" she said. Rios urges a different posture, especially during Advent. She uses the tent to help her congregation imagine being the ones who offer shelter, not shut others out. "It is very hard," she said. "But Jesus is going to be born in our heart. That's why we need to be prepared."

For longtime church member Royi Lopez, the sense of vulnerability goes beyond immigration status. Lopez is a U.S. citizen but says she often feels targeted because she is Latina. Many of her relatives are undocumented, and she worries constantly about them.

"What if on my way to church, they catch us?" she said. "On a daily basis, we're scared of going to the school, to work, to church, to even the grocery store."

Lopez says that during Advent, these fears remind her of the Christmas story itself — of Mary and Joseph searching for somewhere to stay, turned away again and again until somebody finally took them in. "Even though so many doors were closed, somebody opened a door," she said.



That theme of welcome runs through the hymn chosen for every Sunday of Advent at Baldwin Park United Methodist Church, "All Earth is Hopeful." Its lyrics speak of a world longing for liberation, where people labor to "see how God's truth and justice set everybody free."

- 1 All earth is hopeful, the Savior comes at last!
Furrows lie open for God's creative task:
this, the labor of people who struggle to see
how God's truth and justice set ev'rybody free.
- 2 People of Israel, you heard the prophet tell:
"A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel";
she conceived him, "God with us,"
our brother, whose birth
restores hope and courage to children of this earth.
- 3 Mountains and valleys will have to be prepared;
new highways opened, new protocols declared.
Almost here! God is nearing, in beauty and grace!
All clear ev'ry gateway, in haste, come out in haste!
- 4 We first saw Jesus a baby in a crib.
This same Lord Jesus today has come to live
in our world; he is present, in neighbors we see
our Jesus is with us, and ever sets us free.

ALL EARTH IS *Hopeful*

Spanish text and tune © 1993 and tr. © 1995 Centro de Pastoral Litúrgica.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wYeiQ4xXcak&list=RDwYeiQ4xXcak&start_radio=1
(includes Spanish)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uNvhv8Vr9Po&list=RDuNvhv8Vr9Po&start_radio=1
(English only)

Article: edited from <https://www.npr.org/2025/12/01/nx-s1-5608377/during-advent-immigrant-congregations-find-hope-shadowed-by-fear>



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

Jacob Martin is wondering if there is any job or work he can do for anyone in the community for money.

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 worshipping 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.

Brian Bither 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 Usage: 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 Brian 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.

<p>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</p>
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