



# TREES

by Joyce Kilmer

I think that I shall never see  
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest  
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,  
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in summer wear  
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;  
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a tree.

## *JOURNEYING TOGETHER*

### *A weekly email newsletter of Shalom Mennonite Church*

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

**APRIL 22, 2026**

#### **CALENDAR**

Thu, May 7: Shalom Sisters Lunch @ The Bosphorus, 11:30 am (see CLC)

Thu, May 7: Eastside Creation Care Network (see Outreach) will be touring Recycle Force,  
816 N. Sherman Drive, 2:30 pm

Sat, October 3, 2026: Annual Retreat @ Jameson Camp

#### **ADMINISTRATION**

Mike Wigginton (chair), Andrew Martin, Carl Rhine

#### **COMMUNITY LIFE: RELATIONSHIPS AT SHALOM**

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

**Celebrations!** (Wednesday – Wednesday)

Thursday, April 23: Tania Goodloe

Sunday, April 26: Mike Wigginton



The next Shalom Sisters Lunch will be at The Bosphorus, 935 S East St., Thursday, May 7<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 am. The Bosphorus is Indiana's and Indianapolis' first and only Turkish restaurant. All women are welcome.

### DISCIPLING: GROWING IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS

Cheryl Martin (chair), Wilma Bailey, Matt Bauman  
Pastoral Representative: Craig Oury

### OUTREACH: RELATIONSHIPS BEYOND SHALOM

(chair), Becky Wigginton  
Pastoral Representative:



**May 7 at 2:30 pm**, Eastside Creation Care Network will be touring Recycle Force, 816 N. Sherman Drive. RecycleForce is a 501(c)(3) committed to reducing crime through employment and job training while improving the environment through electronics recycling. Since 2006, RecycleForce has safely recycled more than 100 million pounds of electronic waste and recycles up to 97% of everything that comes through its doors.

See the new attached letter from Peter and Delicia.

### SPIRITUAL GIFTS DISCERNMENT TEAM

Jim Showalter (Chair), Angie Buller  
VAT Representative: Andrew Martin

### VISION AND ACCOUNTABILITY TEAM (VAT)

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

We are grateful to share that the VAT has approved Pastor Craig's sabbatical plans for July 1 through December 1. Please see *the attached document* for additional details.

Regarding the interim pastor, we have sent the offer letter and are continuing conversations with our prospective interim pastor.

Please keep Pastor Craig in your prayers during this season, that his strength may be renewed and that he may rise on wings like eagles. Please also pray that God would guide us clearly as we continue moving forward in the process of securing an interim pastor.

### WORSHIP: OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Melissa Walsh Martin (chair), Justin Hochstetler, Jeanne Smucker  
Pastoral Representative: Craig Oury

**Last Sunday (4/19)** Craig brought the message from Luke 24:13-35.

**This Sunday (4/26)** Craig will bring the message from Luke 24:36-44.

**Next Sunday (5/3)** Craig will bring the message.

**This week's Prayer List**

- **Church:** *Wildwood Mennonite Church* is a congregation in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan which is an active member of Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference
- **Organization:** *Anabaptist Disabilities Network* is an organization that connects and supports people who have disabilities, their families, and faith communities to create a culture of belonging for everyone (Contact: Joyce Troyer)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **Mennonite Action Hiring Executive Director**

Mennonite Action co-founders Nick Martin and Adam Ramer are transitioning out of the organization. With the help of hundreds of volunteers, Mennonite Action grew from an idea to a movement organization with 5 staff and dozens of chapters across the United States. Nick and Adam feel that now is a good time to pass the mantle on to new staff leadership.

To keep this movement growing into the future, Mennonite Action has decided to hire an Executive Director. Please help us find great candidates by passing on the application to your networks. To view the application or to apply, you can visit

[mennoniteaction.org/executivedirector](http://mennoniteaction.org/executivedirector)

~ Sabrina

## PERSON OF COLOR BIO



Margie Richard grew up in the historically African American neighborhood of Old Diamond in Norco, Louisiana, in a house just 25 feet away from Shell Chemicals plant's fence line. Years later, she would lead the front line of a long, hard-won battle to hold Shell accountable for the devastating health problems in her community. Richard, whose campaign has been hailed as a landmark environmental justice victory, holds the distinction as the first African American to win the Goldman Environmental Prize.

Four generations of Richard's family have lived in Old Diamond, a neighborhood within the southern Mississippi River region known as "Cancer Alley." Old Diamond is plagued with reportedly high rates of cancer, birth defects and other serious health ailments among the 1,500 residents who lived on the four-square blocks sandwiched between the Shell plant and a Motiva oil refinery owned by a Shell subsidiary. More than a third of Norco's children suffer from asthma or bronchitis. Richard's sister Naomi died at age 43 from sarcoidosis, a rare bacterial infection. The disease typically strikes one in a thousand people, yet Richard knows of at least three other neighbors who suffer from the same sickness.

Shell has been a fixture in Norco since 1929. Over the years, the plant has grown to the size of nine football fields. The corporation has steadily bought out property from neighboring residents, many of whom were descendants of slaves and sharecroppers who farmed the land in the days before the Civil War. Other families simply fled to escape the health hazards associated with living in Old Diamond. Most of the ones who stayed were trapped by socio-economic conditions and other family responsibilities.

According to Richard, the defining event in her decision to become an activist occurred in 1973 when a Shell pipeline exploded, knocking one house off its foundation and killing an elderly woman and a teenage boy who was mowing the lawn. Richard recalls dashing out of her mother's house one block away and spotting a body lying beneath a sheet and the 16-year-old boy, then still alive, covered with raw burns and bubbling blisters. In 1988, another major industrial accident killed seven workers and released 159 million pounds of toxins into the air. Richard got in the habit of sleeping in her clothes so she could be ready to jump out of bed and run for her life if needed.

In 1989, Richard, then a middle school teacher, founded Concerned Citizens of Norco to seek justice from Shell in the form of fair and just resettlement costs for her family and her neighbors. Over the next 13 years, Richard led a community campaign that was equal parts hard science, grassroots organizing and media savvy. She joined forces with environmentalists and researchers to release a report that showed that the Shell refinery in Norco releases more than 2 million pounds of toxic chemicals into the air each year.

In addition to serving as a community representative on a high-level EPA regulatory committee, she took her battle to the courts, acting as plaintiff in a high profile but ultimately unsuccessful class action suit against Shell. She has organized press conferences and local "bucket brigades," empowering her neighbors with specially outfitted plastic buckets so they could monitor hazardous air pollutants on their own as well as educational workshops sponsored by Xavier University's Deep South Center for Environmental Justice.

Richard also has a sharp eye for political theater. At one point she had a web camera installed on her trailer home to broadcast live feeds of the refinery spewing petro-chemical byproducts. While speaking at an international environmental conference in Holland, Richard approached Shell officials and invited them to take a sniff from a bag of Norco air.

Her untiring efforts have attracted powerful allies including U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters and helped spur an investigation by the EPA that faulted Shell for failing to ensure plant safety and for falsifying its emissions reporting, a practice confirmed by a company whistleblower. Throughout the campaign, Richard, who the local media called Norco's "chief rabble-rouser," faced stiff resistance from Shell officials who aggressively discouraged her group from seeking outside counsel and refused to hold open meetings with community members.

"There were times I thought it was an impossible task," Richard recalled. "I remember standing in my yard thinking, 'Lord, will there ever be hope?' But a little voice within me kept saying, 'If we don't tell them, how will they know?'"

In 2000, thanks largely to Richard's efforts, Shell agreed to reduce its emissions by 30 percent and improve its emergency evacuation routes. Shell also agreed to pay voluntary relocation costs for residents who lived on the two streets closest to the plant. But Richard and Concerned Citizens turned up the heat, leading to a meeting at the Shell offices in Norco where they secured a \$5 million community



development fund and full relocation for all four Old Diamond streets. Since the agreement was brokered in 2002, Shell has bought about 200 of the 225 lots at a minimum price of \$80,000 per lot.

In addition to being the first community relocation victory of its kind in the Deep South, Richard's success in Norco was an inspiring example for activists nationwide battling environmental racism in their own backyards. People of color are more likely than whites to live near areas polluted by industrial plants; seventy-one percent of African Americans live in counties that don't meet federal air pollution standards. As a consequence, studies show that black people suffer disproportionately from respiratory and other environmental ailments. Community protest against these conditions produced a uniquely American brand of activism that is equal parts civil rights and environmentalism. Richard stood at the forefront of this important social justice movement.

"Every time we as black Americans stand up for what is right, they say it's for greed of money. It's a fight for longevity," Richard said. "If we don't put a face to it, we can't make change. Truth and justice for the betterment of life, the environment and government is the stairway to upward mobility."

After passing her presidency of Concerned Citizens to another member, Richard became an activist-at-large. She continued to work with Shell on an initiative to improve community and environmental health and safety in Norco. She also advised other communities battling corporate pollution including the African American neighborhood of Westside in Port Arthur, Texas, which borders a refinery owned by Premcor, one of the nation's largest independent oil refineries. Port Arthur has the highest rates of respiratory illness in the state; more than 20,000 children in the area are exposed to toxins that can cause cancer, learning disabilities and birth defects, according to a recent study.

Richard's activism has also taken her abroad. In 2002, she spoke at the World Summit on Sustainable Development and met with citizen groups in South Africa struggling with contamination from industrial run-off. She has also participated in international delegations to Royal Dutch/Shell's annual general meeting in London where she pressured the corporation to take responsibility for its dirty industrial practices and the medical costs associated with treating environmental illness.

"Whether she's on the steps of the U.N. or in Nigeria, or in her own front yard, she is not intimidated by whatever circumstances she is faced with," said Maura Wood of the Sierra Club's regional office in Louisiana. "She sets out to get the message of her community out to the world."

<https://www.goldmanprize.org/recipient/margie-richard/>



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

## ROUTINE INFORMATION

Send email to [office@shalommennonite.com](mailto:office@shalommennonite.com) for the following:

- **Church calendar** (Grace Rhine)
- **To upload minutes** on the church website. (Carl Rhine)
- **Zoom** (Grace Rhine)
- **Announcements for Journeying Together**, by 5 pm on Wednesday (Linda Showalter)
- **New/update church directory, email address list, or telephone numbers**, managed by Sam Bixler ([bixlersc@gmail.com](mailto:bixlersc@gmail.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 the church office so your item can be added to the calendar. It's helpful to include the contact person and which parts of the building you expect to use.

**“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](mailto:lindashowalter52@gmail.com) by noon on Saturday. It will run before and after the service.

### Bulletin Information:

- Send announcements to [at lindashowalter52@gmail.com](mailto: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.

**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](https://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 [office@shalommennonite.com](mailto:office@shalommennonite.com)

Pastor: 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