

## JOURNEYING TOGETHER

Shalom Mennonite Church

December 8, 2021

### WORSHIP: Our relationship with God

Chair: Brittany Bither

**Last Sunday (12/05)**, 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.

**This Sunday (12/12)**, is the third Sunday of Advent, Sabrina will be preaching continuing the MennoMedia Advent theme "Dare to Imagine" with the focus this week on "God's Song." The Advent candle for this Sunday is Joy. Scripture Texts: Psalm 137:1-4, Zephaniah 3:8-20.

**Next Sunday (12/19)**, is the fourth Sunday of Advent. Brian will preach the final sermon in the "Dare to Imagine" series about "Daring to Imagine God's Face," with Psalm 80 and Luke 1 as Scripture texts.

### COMMUNITY LIFE: Relationships at Shalom

Chair: Herb Troyer

### CALENDAR

**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 **this Sunday (12/12)**, 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](mailto: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. **Update: As of 12/8, we still have at least 3 rooms left for anyone who wants to join this experience, so please email Brian if you are interested!**

\*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**

Sat, Dec 11 – Julie Sanders

Mon, Dec 13 -- Sam Bixler

Tue, Dec 14, 2018 -- Carlos Reyes & Gemina Trochez

Wed, Dec 15 -- Reuben Maust

## **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](mailto: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

Do you know your spiritual gifts, passions and personal style? One option for this discernment process is to participate in the Sunday school class for this purpose that will begin Sunday, January 9. At this time it is anticipated the class will occur via Zoom at 9:30 am during Shalom's regular Zoom Sunday school time.

The class format will be similar to a small group that meets during the Sunday school time slot. I (Joyce) will present some content, but the majority of the class time will be sharing personal life stories and responses to these stories. The duration of the class will depend on the total number of participants.

The text we'll be using is Network Participant's Guide (2005) by Bruce Bugbee and Don Cousins. The church library has these books to borrow. If you prefer to buy your own, it's available on Amazon and from a number of new and used book sellers. (On 12/5/21, Better World Books showed 4 copies in "Used very good" condition" for \$3.98 with free shipping.) But it isn't necessary to have or even read the book if you don't find reading helpful.

As long as Shalom is meeting via Zoom, the class will be 9:30-10:30 on Zoom. When Shalom returns to meeting in person, the worship service will be at 9:30 and Sunday school will follow. If Shalom returns

to meeting in person for worship and Sunday school while we are having this Sunday school class, we'll keep a hybrid Zoom option for those unable to attend in person.

Please email me ([troyers\\_hj@hotmail.com](mailto:troyers_hj@hotmail.com)) if you wish to attend, have questions, or would like information on alternative methods of discerning your spiritual gifts.

Joyce Troyer

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Vacation**

Pastor Craig will be on vacation from Monday December 13 through Sunday December 19. Please contact Pastor Brian if you have any concerns during that time at [Brian@shalommenote.com](mailto:Brian@shalommenote.com)  
Also Mike Wigginton will be compiling Journey Together for December 15 send him any newsletter info for next week at [mlwiggint@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mlwiggint@sbcglobal.net)

### **Caroling for Clean Energy with the Sierra Club Beyond Coal Campaign**

What: Join us as we sing carols for clean energy outside AES Indiana's Headquarters in advance of the utility creating a 20-Year Energy Plan which will act as a roadmap for how the utility will meet our energy needs for decades to come. We will be calling on AES Indiana to end coal-burning to power Marion County and rapidly transition to 100% renewable energy and energy efficiency. Learn more about the issue from our [fact sheet](#).

When: Saturday, December 11, 2021 at 1:00 pm EST, the event will conclude no later than 2:00 PM EST

Where: 1 Monument Circle, Indianapolis, IN 46204 outside of AES Indiana's headquarters (the building with the light displays on the side)

**Safety: Facemasks and social distancing will be required for this event**

**RSVP Link:** <https://forms.gle/HBxzYe96etMjzmjH7>

*Please note:*

- Press are invited to attend this event so be camera ready! Sierra Club will ask you to sign a photo release form upon arrival.
- **A race** is occurring in White River State Park that begins in the morning and ends at 1:00 PM, so please plan to be parked and on-site in time for our event to begin
- We will NOT be entering the building
- We cannot block public access to the sidewalk
- Invite people to join our petition online at [sc.org/getmovingaes](https://sc.org/getmovingaes) \*this link is case sensitive
- Follow Beyond Coal on social media: [facebook.com/IndianaBeyondCoal](https://facebook.com/IndianaBeyondCoal) & [twitter.com/INBeyondCoal](https://twitter.com/INBeyondCoal) & [instagram.com/indianabeyondcoal](https://instagram.com/indianabeyondcoal)
- **Important:** Due to COVID and weather considerations, please be sure to RSVP for the event to receive any notices of changes or cancellations.

**Dear Shalom Mennonite Church,**

Greetings in the name of Christ. Thank you for your donation to Mennonite Central Committee which will be used to help those who are suffering around the world.

Item(s): 10 School Kits

In many places where MCC works, sewing skills open doors to additional income that can help a family make ends meet. Sewing kits are often given through MCC-supported programs that teach sewing or tailoring and provide the tools to make and mend clothing or to begin a business.

### **Give gifts of comfort and joy with MCC!**

Delight your loved ones and share God's love with our global neighbors this Christmas. Choose from unique gifts such as goats, clean water, fruit trees, books and many more. Give at [mcc.org/delight](http://mcc.org/delight) or call 888.563.4676.

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!](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](mailto:office@shalommennonite.com) or [bixlersc@gmail.com](mailto:bixlersc@gmail.com).

Craig Oury is now compiling *Journeying Together* each week. You can continue to send information to [office@shalommennonite.com](mailto: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](mailto:office@shalommennonite.com) or [craig@shalommennonite.com](mailto:craig@shalommennonite.com).

## REFLECTIONS ON THE JOURNEY

### Expecting the Unexpected

The season of Advent is a time when we draw from many different parts of the Bible: we remember the people of Israel during their time in exile, the prophets who spoke of a coming Messiah, and Jesus' teachings about his return. But at the center of Advent is the story of Mary, the woman who actually conceived, gave birth to, and nurtured the Messiah. When Mary receives the news that she will conceive in Luke 1, she answers God's call with a resounding, "Let it be!" This simple yet profound Scriptural passage has inspired Christians around the world for thousands of years.

Although the Bible doesn't tell us much about Mary's background, I suspect that she was a person who regularly came to God in prayer. Like most of us, I imagine that she prayed over everyday matters such as food and health and relationships. Once she was engaged to Joseph, I would guess that she prayed about their marriage: that God would bless them with everything they needed to raise a godly and happy family. And as a faithful Jew living in the Roman empire, she probably prayed for the liberation of Israel as well. We know from Mary's prayer later in the chapter that she certainly had those bigger issues of justice and national redemption on her mind.

On the other hand, I am certain that Mary never expected that God would answer these prayers *through her*, and certainly not by making her conceive while she was still a virgin. In fact, God's plan to make her conceive the Messiah almost certainly disrupted Mary's plans: It would impact her wedding, her marriage, her thoughts about how she would spend the next few years, and almost every relationship that she had - based on how they would respond to this highly unusual pregnancy. For most of us, I dare say that this would be distressing, but as

a devout follower of Yahweh, Mary understood that real change required drastic and life-altering action from God. Her faith compelled her to expect the unexpected. Because of this attitude, Mary was able to say "Yes" to God, even in the face of this overwhelming announcement that she would conceive the Son of God.

Many of us pray for God to intervene in our lives - which is a good thing to do! - but the question is, if God were to answer our prayers, how would we respond? Our instinct is to want to take any new opportunity to consider how it would "fit" into our pre-constructed life plan, weighing the pros and cons of taking it on like one would weigh a social or business opportunity. But if we really want God to intervene in our lives and our world, this will probably take more than a small adjustment to our schedules. God may suddenly call on us to make a big change. Not every opportunity for something different comes from God, but if we are faithful in prayer and we remember Mary's example, so we can keep our eyes open to whatever work God is doing and say "Let it be" when the Spirit tells us that the time is right. ~ Brian

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

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Brian Bither

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