JOURNEYING TOGETHER

A weekly email newsletter of Shalom Mennonite Church

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

DECEMBER 10, 2025

CALENDAR

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
Also, a congregational vote on the 2026 Plan Proposal (attached)
Wed, December 17: Wild Church @ Virginia Fairbanks park, 10 am (see announcement)
Sun, December 21: 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)

Thu, December 11: Julie Sanders
Thu, December 11: Abigail Deiter
Sat, December 13: Sam Bixler
Wed, December 17: Aliyah Wigginton

Shalom's annual Christmas Dinner will be **Saturday, December 13**. Appetizers will be available starting at 5:30 pm with dinner following at 6. Everyone is welcome!

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.

Shalom
Sisters

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 14: Joann
December 21: Joann
December 28: No Sunday School

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

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

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:
    - Pastor Craig to attend only three commission meetings, as well as the VAT meeting and the Commission Chairs Team meeting.
    - 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. It can also be accessed from this link: *2026 Plan Bulletin Announcement*

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 (12/7) J.E. Misz brought the message, "Metaphorically Speaking" from Revelation 21:1-7, 22-27; 22:1-5
This Sunday (12/14) Craig will bring the message from Isaiah 55.
Next Sunday (12/21) Craig will bring the message.

This week's Prayer List

- **Church:** *Hopewell Mennonite Church* is a Mennonite Church in Kouts, Indiana that is a part of Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference. Joel Short, Pastor
- **Organization:** *Mennonite Central Committee* is a worldwide ministry of Anabaptist churches, which shares God's love and compassion for all in the name of Christ by responding to basic human needs and working for peace and justice. (Contact: Zenebe Abebe)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

Wild Church will meet on **Dec. 17 at** 10 a.m. at the Virginia Fairbanks park (100 acres at Newfields). Going west on 38th Street from Michigan Road, turn right at the sign for White River Parkway East. Go halfway around the circle. Turn right. Park in the new parking lot. We will continue the discussion of seeds that we started in the 1st Corinthians class. Bring a few seeds that you have
at home and a chair.

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

Advocate for the elimination of capital punishment: Earlier this fall, in response to Governor Braun's call for public comment on the issue of capital punishment in Indiana, some of us wrote letters urging him to abolish it. On **Tuesday, Dec 16, at 10:00 am**, those who have written or plan to write letters to Governor Braun about this issue are invited to join a group of folks from First Friends Meeting and several other congregations to deliver the letters in person to Braun's office. Although a meeting with the governor or his staff was requested several times, no response was received, so the group is going without acknowledgement from his office. The group will gather after entering (and going through the metal detectors) on the **east side of the Statehouse**.

They are eager to have us join whether or not you are bringing a letter with you. If you would like to attend or want more info, contact Jim Donahue at jdonahue@indy.rr.com.

To Becky and "Peace Path" Team,
Thank you so much for all your work making your Spirit & Place Festival such a special treat. I hope you continue working together to bring attention to the absolutely beautiful space you have. It is definitely a community treasure. Thank you for sharing it with us.
Erin Kelley, IU Spirit & Place Coordinator

INDIANA UNIVERSITY
SPIRIT & PLACE

PERSON OF COLOR BIO

TAYLOR HARRIS

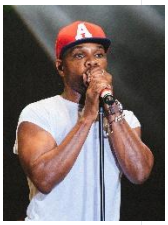
Author of This Boy We Made: A Memoir of Motherhood, Genetics, and Facing the Unknown

I came to Advent as an Umbros-wearing ‘90s kid, sitting in the pews of a predominantly Black cathedral in Ohio, waiting for someone to light a candle so the show could go on. Advent was a long yellow light leading up to Christmas, a ritualistic slowing down led by dudes in robes that reminded me my Christmas presents were close but just out of reach.

The only church tradition that kept my attention back then was the Christmas pageant. That’s when Mary, always embodied by a Black woman in a leotard and flowy skirt, danced across the stage to “Go Tell It on the Mountain” and my silly cousin, cast as an innkeeper, yelled at Joseph to go away while trying to keep a straight face. One year my grandfather, who’d served as Ohio’s first Black state highway patrolman, played the role of a magi, marching to the beat through the darkness of the center aisle.

I’m learning more about Advent as I near 40. I find myself looking back on Christmas at the cathedral with a new appreciation. For the meaning behind the rituals and liturgy, sure. It turns out the pink and purple candles aren’t just mismatched. They symbolize hope, faith, joy, and peace. And the waiting is intentional. It’s a designated time to sit in the mess and mystery of what it means to be human. To feel frail and uncertain, sad and disappointed. Angry at the imbalance of injustice to healing. We wait for the time when things will be made right.

But also, after 20 years of attending nondenominational and evangelical churches, I’m even more interested in the ways we, as Black parishioners, were integral to that church’s rendering of Christ’s birth. There was no cosmic story, no arrival of the Messiah, without us. No nativity scene worth beholding without our faces, bodies, and voices. We were central to the mystery and the hope. Not bystanders, nor passersby, nor stand-ins for a white or colorblind Jesus. The priest didn’t just pluck a brown-skinned baby from the pews every winter to play Jesus. Throughout the year, a tapestry of a Black Jesus with an Afro hung above the altar, and our church had a gospel choir that sang Kirk Franklin songs, along with a minister of music who got down on the organ. When our white priest wanted to paint an image of Mary and Jesus, he asked my oldest sister to be the model. Do you know what it’s like to see your sister, your fierce protector and advocate, as the mother of God? It orients you to the cosmos in a way some Christians will have you believing is sinful or divisive. It reminds you that no matter what anyone says, you have never been an afterthought.



I am thinking about Advent now, as a mother of three Black children, wondering how I can shape my babies in both humility and *enough-ness*. Humility because *Ain’t nobody Jesus but Jesus.* And enough-ness because the world will threaten to break their spirits if they won’t part with themselves, swallow themselves, hide themselves.

As a Black mother, I’ve come to see Advent as both a home and a calling. On one hand, I am keenly aware of my personal lack and my need for Jesus. I feel at home in acknowledging the uncertainty of life, how little control I actually have as a mere human. On the other hand, I sense a deep calling to help my children understand they are not incidental to the story of Jesus coming to earth, and neither is their skin.

There's so much I can't promise my children, so many stories I cannot revise. But this Advent, as my family waits, we can tell the story central to our faith. And we can do it in the fullness of who we are.
Edited from https://time.com/6240465/advent-christmas-black-christian-whiteness/

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 jobs or work he can do for anyone in the community for money.

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