

## **JOURNEYING TOGETHER**

Shalom Mennonite Church

January 12, 2022

### **WORSHIP: Our relationship with God**

Chair: Brittany Bither

**Last Sunday (1/9), Craig** looked at Isaiah 43:1-7, written to a people in exile reminding them of their experience of God's love while anticipating God's leading for them now. We also had Communion

**This Sunday (1/16)**, Brian will be preaching from John 2 about Jesus first miracle of turning water into wine.

**Next Sunday (1/23)**, Wilma will be bringing the message.

### **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?

### **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](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

**The Eastside Creation Care Network (ECCN)** held its bimonthly meeting by Zoom on

Saturday, January 8<sup>th</sup>.

Becky and Mike Wigginton and Brad Yoder participated. Wigginton's reported that Shalom is continuing to collect bottle caps toward getting more furniture for the Dagne Assefa Park. We are also continuing to work toward eliminating invasive species on our property, with a major effort during our workday in November.

Northview Church of the Brethren reported that they are including 'a green moment' in each worship service, to keep environmental issues on the mind of their members.

Downey Avenue Christian Church reported that they have a set of 10 large barrels that other congregations may borrow for large gatherings such as festivals, to collect recyclable materials. They also participate in a medical mission program which involves collecting and donating medical equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers, orthopedic boots, and breathing devices. These can be taken to Downey Avenue.

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church is printing environmental articles in their monthly newsletter. They are working to eliminate disposable dishes and tableware from their kitchen. Father Rick is very committed to environmental issues, and has celebrated a Green Mass for the parish. They are collaborating with other parishes in the Diocese to plan educational events together. Archbishop Thompson will be celebrating a Green Mass at St. Peter and Paul Cathedral soon.

Hoosier Interfaith Power and Light is very active with the Indiana General Assembly this month. Youth from a group called Confront the Climate Crisis have been working for over a year to address the following issues: 1) protecting our wetlands, 2) safeguarding water supplies from coal ash, 3) making rooftop solar more affordable and accessible, 4) keeping children safe from toxic lead exposure and supporting anti-pollution efforts.

### **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 be consider whether to bring a resolution called "A Resolution for Repentance and Transformation" (linked [here](#)) to the denomination for a vote at the July 2023 convention. 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.

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!](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 compiles *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 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

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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