

## JOURNEYING TOGETHER

Shalom Mennonite Church

January 5, 2022

### WORSHIP: Our relationship with God

Chair: Brittany Bither

**Last Sunday (1/2)**, we experimented with a different type of virtual worship experience, in which Brian lead us in a discussion of Ecclesiastes 3:1-13 and we broke into small groups a few times in the service to worship through conversation.

**This Sunday (1/9)**, Craig will look 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 will also partake in communion.

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

### COMMUNITY LIFE: Relationships at Shalom

Chair: Herb Troyer

### CALENDAR

**Sunday, January 9** at 9:30a - Sunday School class: The Bible Project, led by OlaJowon Turentine. Communion during the worship service.

**Jan. 16-Feb. 27**, During Sunday School, conversations about sexual orientation, gender identity, and the church. See more background under "Announcements" below.

Jan. 16 Introduction to the Repentance Resolution being considered by Mennonite Church USA

Jan. 23 Brief review of Biblical texts and interpretations

Jan. 30 Overview of the gay rights movement and the church's response at large

Feb. 6 Introduction to postmodern gender theory and "third wave" feminism

Feb. 13 The Repentance Resolution in context

Feb. 20 Sharing our thoughts and feelings

Feb. 27 When we return to this conversation, what might next steps be?

### Celebrations

Sun, Jan 9 -- Jim Showalter

Tue, Jan 11 -- Phoenix Dunn

### 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

**Brad Yoder testified** at the State House to the House Public Policy Committee at 1:30 about House Bill 1077, which would eliminate gun licensing in Indiana. A copy of Brad's testimony is attached. A similar bill passed the House last year, but died in the Senate.

### **Thank You for Your Support and Prayers**

Dear Shalom Mennonite Church Members.

The past couple of months you have heard me speak about and request prayers regarding the war in Ethiopian's northern region. The war continues and extreme devastation the war has caused is beyond belief. The number of displaced people is estimated to be over 2.5 million, the famine and poverty situation is getting worse by the day.

Many Ethiopians in the U.S and around the world are pulling their resources to help the people in the war affected region. I hav'e spoken to the staff at MCC here in the states, as well with those on the ground in Ethiopia. The MCC staff informed me that they are already working at finding resources to help with the crisis. They also suggest sending donations through the MCC office in Goshen.

Today, I am coming to ask you to continue to pray for peace, and as you are able to give money to support those affected by the war. Please donate. If you are willing and able to donate, please do so by writing your cheque to:

### **MCC Great Lakes Region**

**1013 Division Street**

**Goshen, IN 46239**

**Please write in the Memo Section "Ethiopia (Tigray Crisis)"**

Or you can also read more on how to donate posted by MCC Canada in the attached link.

[donation page for Tigray, Ethiopia relief](#)

Thank you,  
Zenebe Abebe

## **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

## **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.

**Funds** to support Gemima and daughters: Gemima has received support for the month of January but the funds are low to continue the support in February and beyond. If you would like to help, you can send donations to Shalom noting Hernández/ Trochez on the memo. Funds are not tax deductible.  
Thank you, Laura Harms

**Wigginton-Bravo newsletter** is attached

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

### Epiphany

*When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Matthew 2:10-11 NRSV*

Epiphany literally means manifestation or revelation. It is not a word we use too often, but when we do use it, we use it in the sense of coming to understand something. After working hard on something and when we finally see the way to complete a task or a problem, we say I had an epiphany. It's when you finally understand or comprehend something. In comics and cartoons, although they don't say they had an epiphany, it is often symbolized by drawing a light bulb over a character's head. It is when the light comes on. Epiphany is an important understanding of who God is. Epiphany is a continuation of the celebration of God with us, the birth of Jesus. Because it is the revelation of the savior to gentiles, and often the text we use to talk about Epiphany is Matthew 2, the Magi coming to Jesus. Light is the image we use for Epiphany, it was a light (a star) that led the Magi to Jesus.

I was recently reminded of this story about Albert Einstein. One day Albert Einstein woke up and suddenly came up with  $E=MC^2$ . He just woke up one day and it came to him. He had an epiphany. He had a bright idea. And he immediately knew it was true. Well although this is true, it is not the entire story.

One such riddle he posed to himself was this: If a person was flying in space at the speed of light (ala Superman) with their arm fully outstretched holding a facial mirror, what would they "see" in the mirror? Would they see their face? Would it be bigger or smaller than if they were stationary? Would it be distorted in any way? Would light waves have time to bounce off their face, hit the mirror, and bounce back to their retina which was also moving at the speed of light? And what if an observer was watching all this from the ground. What would they see?

This was the riddle that eventually led Einstein to  $E=MC^2$ . What made Einstein different, however, is that he refused to give up until he solved the riddle. He didn't stay with this riddle for just a week or two, as you or I might have done. He didn't give up after a month went by without an answer. He didn't even quit after a year or two of racking his brain.

He stuck with the riddle until he figured it out. He stuck with this riddle for... **TEN YEARS!**

That's right...ten years, from 1895-1905! He pondered this riddle almost every day. He discussed it with his friends. He explored it with his colleagues. He even discussed it with the greatest scientific minds of his time. No one could come up with the answer.

But the great thing about Einstein was that he didn't give in like most people would have done. He didn't say "that's enough time spent on that one...let me go on to bigger and better things." No, he stayed with the question he originally posed. He resisted the temptation to accept an incomplete answer...any answer...just to bring the process to a close. He maintained his integrity and curiosity throughout. And when the answer finally came, he knew it was correct.

After years and years of struggling with this problem, he finally had an insight that changed the course of modern civilization.

The magi were not some ordinary people who randomly looked up in the sky and saw a star and decided to follow it. The magi knew stars, they studied them. They did not on a whim say, oh that star is important, let's follow it! It came after years of preparation and commitment to this study to have this epiphany. As Einstein was committed to the study of physics and mathematics, the magi were committed to the study of stars. Magi understood stars. Magi looked for and understood signs in the sky. A special star (or comet?) made sense to them. In addition, the text tells us that they came from the east and that they saw the star in the east (or at its rising). The sign came to them where they were. God got their attention in a way that they understood and in the place where they were at.

On this Epiphany may we be dedicated to looking for God among us. May we continue to look for the light of God among us. May we continue along no matter what obstacles appear before us or how long it takes us to find. -- Craig

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

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