

JOURNEYING TOGETHER

Shalom Mennonite Church

August 11, 2021

WORSHIP: Our relationship with God

Chair: Grace Rhine

Last Sunday (8/8), Brian drew from Psalms and Ephesians to highlight the importance of examining ourselves as a church community, which means having hard conversations on topics such as racism.

This Sunday (8/15), Brian will be discussing systemic racism as one of the "spiritual forces of evil" that Ephesians tells us to struggle against in Ephesians 2:1-6 and 6:10-17.

Next Sunday (8/22), Craig will be bring the sermon. He will be preaching from Psalm 34 and how the psalm touches on fear.

COMMUNITY LIFE: Relationships at Shalom

Chair: Herb Troyer

CALENDAR

All of Brian's Roving Office Hours have been canceled until further notice.

Sunday, August 15 10:30 am Worship service on Zoom only, no in person gathering

Saturday, August 21

4:30PM Informal memorial service and tree planting for Tim Bixler.

Sunday, August 22

2 pm Dagne Assefa Public Park dedication

Sunday, August 29 10:30am Worship service on Zoom, with communion.

Celebrations

Fri, Aug 13 – Jackie Hernandez

Wed, Aug 18 – Brian Bither, 1985

Wed, Aug 18 – Zenebe & Barbara Abebe, 1979

DISCIPLING: Growing in our relationships

Chair: Martha Yoder

Children's Church: Volunteers needed for when we resume in person worship for Children's Church. Email Laura if you are willing to help:

harms.laura@gmail.com

Sunday School: No word yet on when Sunday School might start but I'd like to know if you are interested in teaching when that becomes a possibility again. We may have up to 4 classes: 2's and 3's; PreK/K; Early Elementary; Youth. To show your interest for Children's Church or Sunday School email Laura at

harms.laura@gmail.com

Help needed with children's toy bags: Something that helped my kids (Laura) get through worship when they were little were personalized toy bags that they could use at their seats in the pews during the service. Carol Stocksdale was one of the volunteers on the initial project years ago and has agreed to help again. Is there someone willing to work with Carol to dig through the existing stash of toys, make a few purchases, clean toys, and assemble bags? We'd like to have these bags ready for fall either when Sunday School starts up again or when weather stops us from going outside for Children's Church. Please reach out to Carol to coordinate a time - csstocksdale@gmail.com

Dismantling Racism Process

The Commission Chairs of Shalom Mennonite Church are proposing that Shalom hire Widerstand Consulting to perform an antiracism audit on our church. Widerstand is a nonprofit organization with ties to the Mennonite Church whose curriculum was used in a Sunday school class that was recommended by Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference and taught here at Shalom. Their mission is to help white institutions become anti-racist, which is also a mission that our congregation adopted last year. One of the tools they offer to facilitate this is an anti-racism audit, which is a deep evaluation of our church culture, history, and policies to determine what racial barriers may be present within our congregation. The cost of this audit is \$5000.

On Sunday, September 5, there will be a discussion after the church service about this proposed audit, which all are invited to attend. Frank Kandel and CoraLyn Turentine will facilitate a discussion that invites questions about why we are pursuing this and solicits congregational feedback. The following Sunday (5/12), there will be a congregational vote after church about whether to move forward with this audit. If you consider Shalom to be your home church, whether you are a newcomer or longtime member, we strongly ask you to consider participating in this discussion and subsequent vote.

OUTREACH: Relationships beyond Shalom

Chair: Brad Yoder

Outreach Commission, on behalf of Shalom, recently contributed \$250.00 from the Outreach budget to a fundraiser for Family Promise. Shalom continues to work cooperatively with First Mennonite Church to provide shelter for needy families in the Indianapolis area.

This work has been particularly challenging during the past 18 months. Federal assistance through the Care Act has been very helpful (which all of us as taxpayers contribute to). We are very grateful to Solomon Abebe for leading Shalom's participation with Family Promise.

An important social justice issue in a nation with democratic government 'of the people, by the people, and for the people' is the right to vote. During much of US history, people of color and women were systematically excluded by an electoral system controlled by wealthy, white, Protestant, land-owning men. Significant progress was made when the Fifteenth Amendment to the US Constitution (1870) gave Black men the right to vote, and the Nineteenth Amendment (1920) brought women's participation. During the Jim Crow era (1890-1965) many laws and practices systematically kept people of color from voting, especially Black people in the South, and Indigenous people in the West. After years of vigorous protests, the Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965. This law was very effective in increasing voter access until crucial provisions requiring US Justice Department approval for changes in state voting laws were struck down by the US Supreme Court in 2013. Since the 2020 election, state legislatures have introduced over 400 bills in 49 states which would use various ways of restricting people's access to voting. 18 states have passed 30 of these bills, making it much more difficult to vote in some states by eliminating or limiting early voting, Sunday voting, mail voting, ballot drop-boxes, and promoting voter-list purging.

Two bills are being considered by Congress, to undo the restrictions on voting brought about by the new state laws: 1) the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act would restore to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the requirements that states with discriminatory voting practices clear any new voting laws with the US Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. It would require transparency about changes in voting hours and polling places. It requires that multilingual voting materials be available, and extends access to voting for Indigenous people.

2) The For the People Act goes beyond the John Lewis Act to update the voting infrastructure, limit the impact of 'dark' (anonymous) money in elections, end partisan gerrymandering, and strengthen ethics rules.

What seems likely to happen is that some combination of these two bills will be taken up seriously by Congress in the next few months. It will be important for us to communicate with Senators Mike Braun and Todd Young and our Congressional representative as things move forward. We'll keep you informed as things develop.

Brad Yoder, for Outreach Commission

Arlington Woods Neighborhood Association Community Cleanup

Please see attachment for information on neighborhood cleanup

Sharing Corner: School Kits for Mennonite Central Committee: Contents (NEW items only)

- 4 spiral or perforated-pages notebooks (8.5 in x 10.5 in and 70 sheets)
- 8 new unsharpened pencils
- 1 ruler (flat, good quality; must indicate 30 cm; inch markings optional)
- 12 colored pencils (in packaging)
- 1 large eraser
- 2 new black or blue ballpoint pens
- 1 small **all metal** pencil sharpener, one or two holes. **All metal** sharpeners can be found online at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or [Bazic.com](https://www.bazic.com) or in the art supply section of retail stores like Staples. Plastic case pencil sharpeners are not accepted because these are poor quality and do not last as long. **If you cannot find all metal sharpeners** please pack the kits without them and we will add the sharpeners

SPIRITUAL GIFTS DISCERNMENT TEAM

CHAIR: Joyce Troyer

SGDT is grateful for all who use their gifts to serve Shalom in so many ways!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Crop Walk

It's that time of year again to think about participating with the Crop Hunger Walk!! Due to COVID the walk will be virtual again in October; the walk is 3 miles. As people sign up we will decide if we want to meet up to walk as a group or individually. You need to register online to walk with Shalom Mennonite church. Ask for your donations to help stop hunger as the donations go to people around the world to stop hunger.

<https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2021/event/indianapolisin>

Please email me at Juliekins7182@hotmail.com if you have any questions! – Julie Sanders

Memorial Service

Please join us Saturday August 21 at 4:30PM for an informal memorial service and tree planting for Tim Bixler. Tim attended Shalom for many years and was lost to gun violence in 2021. More details to follow.

Park Dedication

On Sunday, August 22 at 2pm, we will be hosting a dedication ceremony at Shalom to mark the establishment of "Dagne Assefa Public Park" which is named after the founding pastor of our church. This will be a socially distanced event which will be held outdoors on the church grounds. Specific plans and safety policies for this event are still being developed, so please pay attention to announcements on Sunday and in next week's Journeying Together for more information.

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_ReooskuxUXA!

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.

PLEASE NOTE: You can only watch the first 60 minutes of a recording while online at this site. However you can watch the **entire recording if you download it** onto your computer/tablet and then watch it from the downloaded MP4 file. Be aware that these files are 300MB - 12000MB in size. First click on the recording and then the download (direct download) function is at the top right. When finished watching, delete that downloaded MP4 file from your computer/tablet so you gain back that space. -Jim

Mike Wigginton manages our Zoom calendar, church calendar, and uploads minutes on the church website. If you need to schedule a meeting using the church account or you have minutes for him to upload, you can email the office at office@shalommennonite.com or mlwiggint@sbcglobal.net.

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 now compiling *Journeying Together* each week. You can continue to send information to office@shalommennonite.com by 5 pm on Wednesday.

REFLECTIONS ON THE JOURNEY

Stereotypes and their Histories

In my sermon last week, I talked about racial stereotypes and the harm that they perpetuate against people of color. But for some of us, a question may be lurking in the back of our minds: What if the stereotypes are generally true? Let's consider the "good stereotypes" as an example. Doesn't it seem to be true that African Americans are more naturally athletic than other races or that Asian Americans are better at math than most other races? Of course, there are exceptions to these rules, but isn't it possible that people's ethnicity gives them some kind of natural advantage or disadvantage?

First, I want to clarify that there really is no such thing as a "good stereotype." Stereotypes always detract away from the agency of the people they describe, which is harmful whether it describes a positive or negative trait. For example, Serena Williams is widely acknowledged to be the best tennis player of all time, but her success is sometimes attributed to her race, as if it gives her an unfair advantage over her competitors. In reality, Serena is the best tennis of all time because of her dedication and training, strategic intelligence, and yes, athletic abilities – but they are not derived from her race or ethnicity. Conversely, for African Americans who are not athletic, the stereotype that they *should be* good athletes makes them feel inadequate simply for having a different set of gifts and skills.

But let's return to the main question. Is it possibility that ethnicity gives people some kind of natural advantage or disadvantage over others in various areas? Unless you are talking about skin conditions like the ability to get sunburned, the answer is no. Race is not a real scientific category. Race was fabricated as a way of dividing people into groups; it doesn't represent true genetic or biological difference. This means that no one has a

biological advantage over others due to their race, so rather than asking whether the stereotype is true, the question we should ask is, "Where did this stereotype come from?"

As it turns out, stereotypes always have histories. For example, the notion that Asians are naturally better at math than other people comes from a racist immigration policy that prevented most Asians from coming to the United States. However, our country made exceptions to this policy for doctors or scientists - people who tended to be good at math. Thus, a disproportionate representation of Asian parents with skills in math immigrated to the United States, and not surprisingly, many of their children followed in their footsteps. However, this reflects the hard work of those particular families - both the parents and the children - not a natural advantage that nature conveys to people of Asian descent. Moreover, for Asians who are not gifted at math, this stereotype holds them to an unfair standard that makes them out to be flawed when they are simply gifted differently.

If we ever find ourselves having a hard time shaking our belief in a stereotype, let's make an effort to learn the history behind it. This can help us correct our perceptions and learn to judge people more fairly. ~ Brian

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

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