

Journeying Together

Shalom Mennonite Church

October 28, 2020

WORSHIP: Our relationship with God

Chair: Linda Showalter

Last Sunday (10/25), we spent time dwelling on the grief that the Jews experienced in response to the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. Specifically, we looked at three different ways that the Bible responds to this tragedy: lamenting, questioning God, and calling for vengeance.

This Sunday (11/1), Gemima Trochez will continue our Story of the Bible series by preaching on the experience of Daniel and the other Jewish exiles in Babylon

Next Sunday (11/8). Brian will be preaching about the return of Jewish exiles back to Jerusalem. Although they were still under the imperial rule of a foreign power, which was not ideal, they were able to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem and resume worship in a new context.



Election Day Communion: Next Tuesday (11/3) at 7p, Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference will be offering an Election Day Communion Service. The purpose of this service is to center ourselves and our faith-community in Christ during this momentous time in our nation's history. As important as participating in the election process is, it is difficult for Christians to do so without succumbing to the spirit of partisanship and while remembering that - however this election goes - God remains sovereign over human affairs. Thus, we are hoping that Mennonites from all across the Conference will join us in re-committing ourselves to the body of Christ on this day. To attend the service, please sign-up at [this link](#). (Last week's link was broken; this one is correct.)

COMMUNITY LIFE: Relationships at Shalom

Chair: Herb Troyer

Calendar (*All events are Zoom meetings*)

Sunday, November 1

Daylight Saving Time Ends

9:30 am – 1) Brad Yoder and Kristen Metzler-Wilson will lead a study of the book *Peaceful at Heart: Anabaptist Reflections on Healthy Masculinity* edited by Don Neufeld and Steve Thomas.

2) A breakout room will be available for extended fellowship time

10:30 am – Worship Service on Zoom

2 pm – Facing Hard Questions: How historically reliable are the narratives and stories of the last part of the Older Testament?

Tuesday, November 3

7 pm - Election Day Communion via Zoom



Saturday, November 7

10 – 11 am - Baptism exploration class, using *God's Story, Our Story* by Michele Hershberger. Led by Frank Kandel and Carol Bither.

Sunday, November 8

9:30 am – 1) Brad Yoder and Kristen Metzler-Wilson will lead a study of the book *Peaceful at Heart: Anabaptist Reflections on Healthy Masculinity* edited by Don Neufeld and Steve Thomas.

2) A breakout room will be available for extended fellowship time

10:30 am – Worship Service on Zoom

Sunday, November 15

9:30 am – 1) Brad Yoder and Kristen Metzler-Wilson will lead a study of the book *Peaceful at Heart: Anabaptist Reflections on Healthy Masculinity* edited by Don Neufeld and Steve Thomas.

2) A breakout room will be available for extended fellowship time

10:30 am – Worship Service on Zoom

2 pm - Facing Hard Questions: Did religions and ideologies other than Judaism influence the development of Christianity? If so, what are the implications of that?

Saturday, November 21

10 – 11 am - Baptism exploration class, using *God's Story, Our Story* by Michele Hershberger. Led by Frank Kandel and Carol Bither.

Sunday, November 22

9:30 am – 1) Brad Yoder and Kristen Metzler-Wilson will lead a study of the book *Peaceful at Heart: Anabaptist Reflections on Healthy Masculinity* edited by Don Neufeld and Steve Thomas.

2) A breakout room will be available for extended fellowship time

10:30 am – Worship Service on Zoom

Sunday, November 29, First Sunday of Advent

No Sunday School

10:30 am – Worship Service on Zoom



Saturday, December 5

10 – 11 am - Baptism exploration class, using *God's Story, Our Story* by Michele Hershberger. Led by Frank Kandel and Carol Bither.

Sunday, December 6, 2nd Sunday of Advent

9:30 am – Adult Sunday School: we will have opportunities to talk about coping with the pandemic.

10:30 am – Worship Service on Zoom

12 noon (right after worship) - Congregational Meeting for Budget discussion and approval

Sunday, December 13, 3rd Sunday of Advent

9:30 am – Adult Sunday School: we will have opportunities to talk about coping with the pandemic.

10:30 am – Worship Service on Zoom

Sunday, December 20, 4th Sunday of Advent

9:30 am – Adult Sunday School: we will have opportunities to talk about coping with the pandemic.

10:30 am – Worship Service on Zoom

Sunday, December 27, Christmas Sunday

No Sunday School

10:30 am – Worship Service on Zoom

Sunday, January 3

No Sunday School

10:30 am – Worship Service

Celebrations

To help alleviate the isolation felt during the pandemic, we have decided to celebrate birthdays and anniversaries in *Journeying Together*. If you do not want your birthday to be listed, email office@shalommennonite.com.

Sat, Oct 31 – Bethany Martin

Sun, Nov 1 – Brad Yoder

Sun, Nov 1 – Katy & Reuben Maust, 2014

Tue, Nov 3 – Delicia Bravo Wigginton

Conversation about current politics: If you would like to be a part of an informal conversation about current events related to politics, let Wilma Bailey know. One more conversation has been scheduled for November 5 at 7 p.m.

DISCIPLING: Growing in our relationships
Chair: Martha Yoder

“Story of the Bible” Assigned Reading

Throughout our “Story of the Bible” sermon series, we will recommend daily readings at home. Next week’s readings are:

Monday: Psalm 74, Ezekiel 40-42
Tuesday: Psalm 134, Ezekiel 43-46
Wednesday: Psalm 138, Ezekiel 47-48, Ezra 1-2
Thursday: Haggai 1-2, Ezra 3-4, Proverbs 17:7-8, 23-26, 29:24
Friday: Ezra 5-7, Proverbs 22:12, Psalm 126
Saturday: Ezra 8-10, Proverbs 17:18, 21:9-11

OUTREACH: Relationships beyond Shalom
Chair: Brad Yoder

Mennonite Mission Network

Peter Wigginton and Delicia Bravo and their family continue to work and minister in Quito, Ecuador, where the Covid pandemic has stimulated some creative projects, including a 4-language and 6-country song of benediction that you can hear at <https://www.mennonitemission.net/video/Virtual-hymn>

This weekend is the virtual Anabaptist Andean Gathering, (conferences from Colombia, Ecuador, Perú and Venezuela). It was supposed to be held in Quito this weekend, but been postponed for February (tentatively). Instead, some virtual workshops will be held. You are welcome to participate if you understand Spanish. In any case, hold them in your prayers. These countries were already facing significant economic challenges before the pandemic hit. The schedule is at <https://www.facebook.com/encuentroandinoanabautista/> (they are an hour earlier than we are, so the first session starts at 9:00 our time) and here is the zoom link <https://MCUSA.zoom.us/j/92307291873>

At the Elkhart office, longtime leader Stanley Green resigned at the end of July and was replaced by Mike Sherrill. Dr. Sherrill is an ordained minister, educator, scholar, administrator, and leader with 25 years of global experience who has been the director of Asia and Middle East for Mission Network since 2017. ~ Martha

Click [here](#) to read Hoosiers Concerned About Gun Violence October 2020 Newsletter.

Click [here](#) to read November 2020 Prayer Newsletter from Indiana-Michigan Conference.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS DISCERNMENT TEAM (SGDT)
Chair: Joyce Troyer

VISION AND ACCOUNTABILITY TEAM (VAT)
Chair: Jeanne Smucker

When the new structure for Shalom was initiated in 2017, an interim organizational structure was developed with the understanding that it would be revised and refined during the first years of implementation. Last year, a task force surveyed the congregation and the commissions about how the new structure was working and what modifications were recommended. It concluded that the new structure has been successful at facilitating our responsiveness to the Holy Spirit and our effectiveness at fulfilling our mission in many ways and also that there are some aspects of it that were not working very well. Following the review, the taskforce along with the VAT has been developing a modified version of the structure that retains the best elements of the 2017 version while making some amendments to address its weaknesses.

After getting feedback about this, the VAT hopes to have the modified version of the new structure ready for congregation input by late January or February. We acknowledge that processing the structure virtually will be challenging and we hope to provide adequate time for input from the whole congregation since this affects how we function as a church. We value your ongoing prayers and support during this process.

In addition to this, Shalom has experimented with a deacon model of pastoral care during the pandemic that has gotten positive feedback, and it has been proposed that we incorporate this as a permanent part of our structure so that the deacon ministry can continue even after the pandemic has ended. The VAT plans to seek congregational input about this deacon ministry when we are able to again meet in person.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Gathering safely:** The ad hoc committee on gathering safely has reviewed the current Covid data. Cases in Indiana and in central Indiana have been rising again the past 2-3 weeks, and Indiana has hit some new record highs. While Governor Holcomb has not added new restrictions, it seems clear that gathering together (especially indoors) with people not of our households is the best way to spread the virus. Based on this, and in consultation with the Commission Chairs who met on 10/20, we are recommending no in-person services through the end of December. We will continue to monitor the data, and should there be a significant improvement before then, we would act on that information.

Since eating together requires removing masks, it is even less safe for us to eat together, so there will not be a Thanksgiving meal or a Christmas banquet at the church.

You are still welcome to make use of the church grounds for family or small group gatherings with masks and safe distancing. We also encourage you to think of other ways to reach out to each other (phone calls, Zoom calls, etc.) so we can support each other through these difficult times. ~ Martha

- 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 [here](#)!

- **Video recordings** of our Zoom worship services are located online with our normal worship service recordings. A link to this location is on the Member's page of our website.

- **Please note:**

- 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 mlwiggin@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.
- Send announcements for Journeying Together to office@shalommennonite.com by 5 pm on Wednesday.

Reflections on the Journey

Ancient Empires and the Rock of Ages

One of the reasons that it is difficult for the average reader to understand the Older Testament is because the social and political context of the land of Israel went through several dramatic changes from the time of David to the time of Esther, and although the OT makes references to this history, it never actually spells it out. So for those who would like some additional context, here it is:

Assyria (720s BCE to 609 BCE) – The first “superpower” to emerge in the Near East was the Neo-Assyrian Empire. It’s difficult to assign a start date to Assyria’s reign, because it slowly accumulated power over the centuries with several periods of expansion and decline. But the first King to really encroach on Israel’s independence was Tiglath-Pileser III (first mentioned in 2 Kings 15:29). He gained control of both Israel and Babylon in the 720s.

Babylonia (609 BCE to 539 BCE) – Babylon was one of many nations that Assyria had conquered, but when Assyria went through a period of civil war, the Babylonians took advantage of the situation. Their leader, Nebuchadnezzar (first mentioned in 2 Kings 24:1) conquered Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, in 612 BCE. It then went even further than Assyria had in tightening its control over the region, destroying Jerusalem in 586 BCE. Of all the empires mentioned here, Babylon actually had the shortest reign, but during that brief time, it became a symbol of the Powerful Pagan State, a symbol that is extended throughout the Bible from Genesis 11:9 all the way to Revelation 18:21.

Persia (539 BCE to 331 BCE) – To the east of Mesopotamia, two other nations whom the Assyrians conquered – and then the Babylonians inherited – were Media and Persia. Out of Persia, a new conqueror emerged – Cyrus the Great (who is “first” mentioned in Isaiah 44:28 and 2 Chronicles 36:22) – who overthrew his Babylonian overlords, defeated the Medes and convinced them to join him, and then conquered Babylon in 539. In contrast to the Assyrians and Babylonians, the Persians had a policy of religious and cultural tolerance. They allowed conquered people to live in their homelands and practice their local religions, so long as they were supportive of their Persian overlords – a policy that made them popular with the Jews.

Greek Rule (320s BCE) and Maccabean revolt (160s BCE) – The Persians ruled for two centuries until they were overthrown by the figure widely recognized as the greatest military leader of all time: the Macedonian-Greek king, Alexander the Great. This event is not explicitly mentioned in the Older Testament because it occurred in the era that Biblical scholars called the “Intertestamental Period” (the time between the OT and the NT), but the book of Daniel describes it in apocalyptic language. Daniel 8:5-14 describes a “savage male goat” (Alexander) who defeated a great ram (Persia), but whose kingdom then fractured into four parts - corresponding to the breakup of Alexander’s empire into four major kingdoms. One of those, the Seleucid (Greek) kingdom (the “little horn”) inherited rule over Judea (“the beautiful land”) and desecrated the temple, leading to the famous Hasmonean or “Maccabean” revolt. Amazingly, this revolt was successful, leading to Israel’s last period of independence in ancient times, and though it is not described in our Bibles, these events left a big impact on the NT.

Roman Empire – During the period of Hasmonean independence, the Greek empire(s) were systematically being defeated by an even greater power from the West, the Roman Empire. After about 100 years of independence, a conflict emerged between two factions in Hasmonean Israel

ving for power, and both parties sought help from the Romans. Rome exploited the opportunity by selecting the ruler whom they thought would be the most cooperative with their aims: Herod. Soon it became clear that Herod was a puppet and the Romans were really running the show, and eventually Rome officially annexed Israel.

The Rock of Ages – As Nebuchadnezzar foresaw in his dream, each empire – though seemingly invincible during its own day – was eventually conquered by another, a pattern that continued well after the New Testament ends and carries into our own day. And yet, somehow, the people of God have remained faithful through all of these changes, under the leadership of Jesus Christ, the Rock of Ages.

~ Brian

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