

# Journeying Together

Shalom Mennonite Church

September 30, 2020

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

Chair: Linda Showalter

**Last Sunday (9/27)**, we took our first steps into a new historical reality that defined the Israelite experience for the rest of the Bible: the emergence of empires. The Assyrian Empire appeared in the Biblical story as the most powerful enemy that the Israelites had ever encountered, and how they responded to this threat revealed the depth of their faith. We focused on how the Northern Kingdom of Israel responded to this threat.

**This Sunday (10/4)**, Sabrina will offer a dramatic monologue entitled, "A Remnant will Return: A Dramatic Monologue," from the period of time we are studying in our Bible readings, with several passages from 2 Chronicles and Isaiah as the background for the text.

- An ADDITION needs to be made to Scripture reading assignments for *this week*. When I sent them out last week, I failed to include Isaiah 28-31 as a part of tomorrow's reading assignment (i.e. Thursday), in addition to the other texts assigned that day. Sabrina has indicated that these chapters - along with Isaiah 11 - serve as important background information for her sermon, so I encourage you to read them! ~ Brian

**Next Sunday (10/11)**, Brian will preach about the years leading up to the destruction of the temple, when the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zephaniah had the unenviable task of warning Judah about impending doom which they didn't want to face.

## **COMMUNITY LIFE:** Relationships at Shalom

Chair: Herb Troyer

### **Calendar** (*All events are Zoom meetings*)

#### **Sunday, October 4**

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

Virtual CROP Walk

#### **Saturday, October 10**

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

#### **Sunday, October 11**

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: Are any of the books in the Bible pseudigraphal - that is, falsely attributed to an author like a prophet or epistle? If so, does this change the way we understand them?

#### **Saturday, Oct 17**

6:50 pm (EDT) - Celebration 2020: MCC at 100, a livestreamed event commemorating a century of MCC's ministry

**Saturday, October 24**

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

**Sunday, October 25**

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: Many scholars believe that European anti-Semitism has its roots in Christian supersessionism - the belief that the Israelites failed in their mission as God's people and the Church had to replace them. Is there a way to understand the Biblical story without this interpretation?

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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](mailto:office@shalommennonite.com).*

Thu, Oct 1 – Brittany Bither

Thu, Oct 1 – Martha Yoder Maust

Thu, Oct 1 – Mark Stocksdale

Mon, Oct 5 – David & Sarina Falls, 1980

**DISCIPLING:** Growing in our relationships

Chair: Martha Yoder

Starting Sunday 9/27, we will have a short breakout room after worship (maybe 10 minutes?) to allow the younger children to visit with each other.

**“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 106, 2 Chronicles 33-35, Proverbs 15:8-9, 29

Tuesday: Jeremiah 1-6, Proverbs 13:12, 21:27-29

Wednesday: Jeremiah 7-10, Proverbs 19:15-16, 21:3

Thursday: Jeremiah 11-17, Proverbs 17:15, 19-21

Friday: Proverbs 20:8-12, 2 Kings 21:1-23:30, Zephaniah 1-3

Saturday: Proverbs 29:12-14, 2 Kings 23:31-37, Jeremiah 26, 35-36

**OUTREACH: Relationships beyond Shalom**  
Chair: Brad Yoder

You are invited to Mennonite Creation Care Network's virtual cookbook club! See attached.

September's newsletter from Hoosiers Concerned About Gun Violence (HCGV) is attached.

**Spiritual Gifts Discernment Team (SGDT)**  
Chair: Joyce Troyer

**Vision and Accountability Team (VAT)**  
Chair: Jeanne Smucker

**Announcements**

- Last week, a number of people from our congregation attended the funeral of Mary Swartzentruber, a longtime member of First Mennonite Church. If you would like to send letters of support to her father, you can mail them to Mel Swartzentruber at 1200 E Partridge, Apt 27, Metamora, IL 61548. He would love to hear from anyone who had connections with Mary.
- 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](mailto:office@shalommennonite.com) or [mlwiggint@sbcglobal.net](mailto: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](mailto:office@shalommennonite.com) or [bixlersc@gmail.com](mailto:bixlersc@gmail.com).
  - Send announcements for Journeying Together to [office@shalommennonite.com](mailto:office@shalommennonite.com) by 5 pm on Wednesday.

**Reflections on the Journey**

**Assyria and Judah**

Last week, we were introduced to the Assyrian Empire, the first of a series of empires to become a dominating presence in the Biblical narrative. Tragically, the powerful Kingdom of Israel was utterly destroyed by the Assyrians. But what about the smaller Kingdom of Judah? This week, our attention will shift to the south, and Sabrina will offer a dramatic monologue from the perspective of the people living in the kingdom of Judah. In preparation for her sermon, let us review the basic history of the relationship between Assyria and Judah.

The first Judahite king to encounter the Assyrians was Ahaz, who was one of the worst kings that the kingdom of Judah ever had. During his reign, the long truce that had existed between Israel and Judah broke down, and Ahaz found himself facing an alliance involving the two most powerful nations in the region of the Levant: Israel and Aram-Damascus. So what did Ahaz do? Rather than turning to God for help, he appealed to the Assyrians, who were rising in power at that time. Ahaz offered to make Judah a vassal of the Assyrians in exchange for their assistance, and King Tiglath-pileser was more than happy to use as a pretext for raiding the Levant and subduing Israel and Aram-Damascus. This alliance “saved” Judah in the short-term, but it had major political, economic, and religious consequences, and the prophets were quick to point them out.

Around the same general timeframe that Amos and Hosea were urging repentance in the northern Kingdom of Israel, the prophets Isaiah and Micah were preaching the same message in the South. They called for peace and justice in the lands, and they warned of the terrible consequences that could follow if their messages were not heeded. Perhaps this was what prompted Hezekiah, son of Ahaz and next King of Judah, to break the treaty with Assyria and begin a major reform for the exclusive worship of Yahweh. Hezekiah is regarded as one of the most faithful kings in Judah’s history, and on the basis of this faith, he made an extremely risky choice in pulling away from Assyria. The Assyrians did not take kindly to this, and they sent a mighty military force to crush Jerusalem in the same way they had crushed Samaria. They sieged the city, and although they did not breach its walls, the outlook seemed hopeless. Jerusalem couldn’t survive in isolation forever. It seemed like they would have to either surrender or fight the Assyrians. However, instead of choosing either of those, Hezekiah begged for God to intervene. Apparently, God answered the request. The text tells us “That very night, the angel of the Lord set out and struck down one hundred eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians; when morning dawned, they were all dead bodies. Then King Sennacherib of Assyria left, went home, and lived at Nineveh.” (1 Kings 19:35-36).

While this may seem like a far-fetched story with a “deus ex machina” ending, there is historical evidence to suggest that something like this really happened in Judah. Archeologists found a written record of Sennacherib’s reign inscribed on a large prism in Nineveh, which tells the same story from Sennacherib’s perspective. The prism mentions that Hezekiah defected, it explains that Sennacherib besieged him, but it doesn’t say that he conquered Jerusalem. Instead, it says “like a caged bird I shut him up in Jerusalem.” Of course, Sennacherib wanted to frame this as a victory, but this is an odd thing to brag about. It sounds as though Sennacherib besieged the city, but his army withdrew without conquering it. So what happened? Did a disease tear through the army, causing thousands to die suddenly? Was there a crisis back home that the Assyrians had to address? Or did a literal angel come through the camp and kill people? It’s not clear. What is clear is that Hezekiah turned to God for help, and Judah was spared. Personally, I consider this to be the Bible’s oldest empirically corroborated miracle.

- Brian

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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