

## JOURNEYING TOGETHER

Shalom Mennonite Church

May 19, 2021

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

Chair: Grace Rhine

**Last Sunday (5/16)** we entered the final section of the Bible's Story, Act VII, by engaging the book of Revelation. There, John warns Christians to be on guard against the "Beast" - which seems to represent the spiritual forces of empire and domination - so that we will not be seduced by them but will stand firm on the last day.

**This Sunday (5/23)** Frank Kandel will deliver the sermon as we take a break from our Story of the Bible series.

**Next Sunday (5/30)** we will read the final chapters of the Bible, which offer a beautiful picture of life everlasting for the people of God, and this will conclude our Story of the Bible series.

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

Chair: Herb Troyer

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

#### **Sunday, May 23**

9:30 am - Adult Sunday school, Dismantling Institutional Racism in Congregations - Wilma Bailey, Frank Kandel  
10:30 am – Worship service via Zoom

#### **Sunday, May 30**

9:30 am - Adult Sunday school, Dismantling Institutional Racism in Congregations - Wilma Bailey, Frank Kandel  
10:30 am – Worship service via Zoom  
2 pm - FHQ: What hard questions do *you* still have about the Bible and the story it tells?

#### **Sunday, June 6**

9:30 am - Adult Sunday school,  
10:30 am – Worship service via Zoom

**Note:** The last FHQ session, May 30, will be an open session in which you are encouraged to bring your own questions, concerns, and doubts to the group. It would be especially helpful if you could email them to Brian in advance at [brian@shalommennonite.com](mailto:brian@shalommennonite.com)!

#### **Celebrations**

Thu, May 20 – David Falls  
Tue, May 25 – Donald Sanders

### **DISCIPLING: Growing in our relationships**

Chair: Martha Yoder

#### **“Story of the Bible” Assigned Reading**

Last week was the last week of assigned reading for the Story of the Bible series! However, the final sermon in the series will be preached on Monday, May 30 because Pastor Brian will be on vacation on Monday, May 23. Pastor Brian would love to hear from you if you have been following the weekly reading assignments (more or less) to hear how the experience has been for you. You can email him at [brian@shalommennonite.com](mailto:brian@shalommennonite.com).

## **OUTREACH: Relationships beyond Shalom**

Chair: Brad Yoder

See the attached commission minutes.

Hoosiers Concerned About Gun Violence's May newsletter is attached.

**Toddler Table for Shalom's Playground:** We will partner with Green Tree Plastics in Evansville, Indiana to participate in their ABC Partnership program for children to learn about recycling plastics.

Outreach has chosen an 8 foot Toddler Table as the project goal. Sorting and weighing of caps and lids will begin as in-person Sunday school classes resume.

Go to [www.greentreeplastics.com](http://www.greentreeplastics.com) to read about the ABC Partnership program.

Toddler Table dimensions: Height 18.75 inches, seat height 10.75 inches, item width 34 inches, item weight 207 pounds, color grey (to match our GTP adult bench), required cap weight 200 pounds, cost \$250.

We already have some donated bags of caps and lids stored at Shalom.

Attached is a list of Acceptable Caps and Lids. Please continue to save these types of plastics!

We have our friends at Northview Church of the Brethren donating to our goal as they did to help us get our bench. Ramona Thornburg brought a car load to Shalom recently. Jim Martin met her at Shalom to unload and store those plastics. Thank you, Jim! If you have been collecting and need to move a large bag to Shalom, call Jim to arrange a date and time to meet him at Shalom. ~ Marilyn Teel

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The **Gathering Safely Committee** reviewed the survey results. 65% of those who responded said yes, and there were a number of helpful comments. We reviewed current cases in Central Indiana and current CDC guidance, and decided that we could start hybrid worship services on June 13 (to give commissions time to prepare). Here's how it will look:

- About 20 persons or households will be able to participate each Sunday. Every other pew has been roped off to keep a 6-foot distance, and one person or household will be able to sit at each end of each open pew. Tech personnel, preacher, and worship leader may sit in the front pews. There are chairs in the back that could be used for unexpected guests or ushers.
- Martha will work with Tim on a sign-up process, as not all those who said "yes" can be accommodated all at once. Details to come later.
- We will mask and distance while indoors. Preacher and worship leader may remove masks while in the pulpit if they have been fully vaccinated (last dose of the series at least 2 weeks earlier) so that their faces can be seen and their speech understood on Zoom.
- Initially, at least, there will not be Sunday school. Laura Harms, who is our children's ed coordinator, is working on an outdoor activity for kids 2 years old and up during part of the worship service.
- Since we have unvaccinated persons among us, and since singing transmits more virus than speaking, we will not sing while indoors. We may hum (while masked), clap, stand and move, or play a rhythm instrument during the recorded music. If Worship Commission chooses, a final song could be sung outside, with unvaccinated persons keeping masks on.
- After worship, we will exit promptly, and do our chatting outside.
- Anyone who feels ill should stay home, even if they have signed up to attend.
- Safely Gathering Committee will continue to review the cases in the community and make adjustments as needed.

Martha Yoder Maust, for the Safely Gathering Committee

Pastor Brian will be on vacation from Tuesday, May 18 to Tuesday, May 25. If you need to reach someone during that time, please contact Jeanne Smucker, the chair of the VAT, at [jmrsmucker@outlook.com](mailto:jmrsmucker@outlook.com).

Everyone is invited to attend First Mennonite's *Conversion to Solar Power* celebration Saturday, May 22, from 3 – 5 pm. There will be native tree and plant giveaways, live music, electronics recycling drop-off, children's activities, education about solar, electric vehicles. Bring lawn chairs, and please wear a mask. See the attached poster.

- 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!](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEn30AED17Q_ReooskuxUXA!)

- **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.
- 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 [mlwiggin@sbcglobal.net](mailto: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](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**

#### Justification

For our last week of the Story of the Bible series, I have us reading from Romans 1-8, which is considered by many to be the apostle Paul's *magnum opus*, his greatest theological work. Indeed, just the scope of this material is impressive: Paul begins this work by addressing creation, he then covers the fall of humanity and the calling of Abraham, and he eventually ends on a beautiful note in the eighth chapter in which all of creation (not just humanity) is redeemed and love conquers all. This is the Story of the Bible in a nutshell.

You may notice that Paul spends a lot of time in Romans talking about justification, which for many Christians is the central meaning of salvation. Such Christians will point to verses like Romans 6:23 to argue that the punishment for sin is death, and then point to passages like Romans 10:9 to argue that believing in Christ serves as a justification or pardon for sin. While this is not entirely wrong, it can push people to operate in exactly the opposite way than the way in which Paul intended in writing Romans.

It's important to remember the context of this letter: Paul was writing, as a Jewish Christian, to a community of Jewish Christians in Rome, and he was defending his belief that the Gentiles should be included in the community of faith without having to undergo circumcision or adhere to other aspects of the law. One of the main objections that Paul confronts to this belief is that the Bible makes it clear that God will judge all of humanity at the end of history, and specifically, God will judge us according to how well we have adhered to the law of Moses. From the perspective of his detractors, the exemptions that Paul grants the Gentiles trivializes the law and doesn't take sin seriously enough.

But Paul insists in this epistle that he takes both sin and the law very seriously. He acknowledges that the law is holy and just (7:12), and that sin leads to death (6:21). However, he rejects a legalistic notion that anyone who does their best to follow the law of Moses will be saved. First, he cites the Psalm that declares that "there is no one righteous, not even one" to defend this point, but he goes on to argue that sin is not just a violation of the law but is a spiritual force that has power over us. Consequently, no one can be saved just by "obeying the law" because we lack the power to do it. We needed Christ to free us from spiritual captivity in order to live in the way that pleases God.

But what about the judgment? Does it just disappear? No, it's not that God no longer holds us accountable, but God offers us a new standard by which we can be judged: how much we are entrusting ourselves – through faith – to Christ. Thus, our faith in Christ is what will "justify" us in the end, not following a particular set of rules. As powerful as this message is, the verses in Romans can be extracted in such a way as to produce a different formula for justification, just one that looks to Romans as the legalistic standard by which God judges rather than the Pentateuch. But Paul's point is that we need the Spirit of Christ living within us to overcome the power of sin, and we can trust that God will not judge us by our past mistakes but by our life in the Spirit if we do this.

While justification has been overemphasized at times in the past, we should overcorrect this by neglecting the power or importance of this message. There are people who live with a tremendous amount of guilt and shame for what they have done, and the idea that God will not judge them for their past actions if they die to their old selves (with Christ) and live in an entirely new way is good news. Christ's death and resurrection is not a legal formula for winning a pardon in God's court as much as it is a way of getting out under the oppressive powers of guilt and sin and finding God again in reconciliation. May we cherish this individual aspect

of salvation while remembering that salvation is also something bigger: God redeeming and restoring all of creation. ~ 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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