

Journeying Together

Shalom Mennonite Church

September 13, 2018

WORSHIP

Our relationship with God

Last Sunday, September 9:

We took the time to reflect on what God has been doing in and through us in the past year and what God may yet be calling us to do. Each of the five commissions shared about some of the work that God in their respective areas of oversight, and the congregation was invited to find new ways to participate in Shalom's ministries.

This Sunday, September 16:

We will resume our focus on the spiritual discipline of worship. Brian will engage the question, "What should we do if we find it difficult or uncomfortable to worship?" by considering the idea that worship is not really something that we make ourselves do, but it is something that springs out of us - in one form or another. Acts 17:13-34 is the key text.

Next Sunday, September 23:

Next Sunday is Peace Sunday. Following the lead of Mennonite World Conference, we will focus on the theme, "A renewed peace church welcomes the stranger." Brian will preach on the subject of Christian Internationalism.

COMMUNITY LIFE

Relationships at Shalom

Game Time Small Group:

You can still join the Game Time group by coming to our first session scheduled for Sunday, Sept. 30 from 4:30-6:30, right before the 5th Sunday hymn sing. In addition to playing games, we'll use this first session to establish guidelines and schedules for future meetings. Bring a little \$ for pizza. If you enjoy games, it's not too late to get involved!

Calendar

Sun. 9:30am Worship

11:00 am Sunday School

Sept 16 – Fall Festival, 5-7pm

Sept 20 – Meal, 6:30 pm, Bible Study, 7-8 pm

Sept 26 – Morning Breakfast Group @ Ill.

Food Emporium, 7am

Sept 30 – 5th Sunday Hymn Sing (ready for HWB #432), 6:30-8pm

Oct 7 – Potluck after church

Oct 20 – Sexual Assault Awareness Training @Shalom, 9:30-11:30am

Oct 21 - CropWalk

Nov 3 – Church Retreat @ Jameson Camp

Nov 17 – Fall Clean-Up, 8-12

Church Retreat:

Shalom Mennonite Church Fall Retreat will be November 3, 2018. Dan Hess will lead us as we discover our stories:

An informal seminar on story telling

— stories for fun

— stories for meaning

Whether you are a skilled story teller or not,

whether you are verbal or quiet,

whether you are somewhat bashful or

outgoing —

you will enjoy our time together at Shalom Retreat.

More information will be coming as we get closer to the retreat!

Save the Date:

Fall Clean-Up will be held on Nov. 17 from 8-12. (rain date of Dec. 1) More details to come!

Living Things Team:

Our grounds need our care and attention! A Living Things Team is forming to coordinate maintenance of our green spaces. The Living Things Team will convene under the umbrella of the Administration Commission and alongside the Building Team to plan for grounds care, implement projects, and inspire participation. Please consider giving leadership and service to Shalom by caring for our grounds. Contact Laura to be a part of the team. harms.laura@gmail.com

Mel & Mary Swartentruber:

Many of you know and love Mel and Mary Swartentruber who have been backbone attenders of First Mennonite for many, many years. Their daughter, Sheila Patrick, has asked me to share this with people at Shalom:

Mary has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease and needs more care than Mel can provide as time goes on. They are moving to the facility in Illinois that is administered by their son, Keith, and will be there after September 26. The move is confusing to Mary, so don't call, etc.,.... but all of them would welcome cards, memories and love to be sent to their new address AFTER Sept. 26.

Mel and Mary Swartzentruber
1299 E. Partridge
Apt. 27
Metamora, IL, 61548
-Thanks, Mary Albrecht

DISCIPLING

Growing in our relationships

September Sunday School Schedule:

Starting Sept 9, there will be two adult classes:

--Jeanne and Wilma will lead a discussion of the Pathways study guide, part of Mennonite Church USA's Journey Forward process. The study guide is available at:
http://mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Pathways_Study_Guide_Final.pdf

This class will meet in the adult classroom downstairs.

--Kim will facilitate a sermon discussion class at the back of the sanctuary.

OUTREACH

Relationships beyond Shalom

Fall Festival:

For **Fall Festival on Sunday, September 16, 5-7 p.m.** we are inviting the Thriving Thursday kids and everyone in the neighborhood to join us for an evening of Fun, Food, & Fellowship. This event provides not only a good opportunity for us to get to know our neighbors better, but also a time when the neighbors can become better acquainted with each other. At Fall Festival we plan to chronicle the highlights from Thriving Thursdays and to dedicate the new 100% recycled park bench for our playground. In the event of rain, the Festival will be held in the Fellowship Hall.

Crop Walk:

The annual Greater Indianapolis CropWalk to help stamp out hunger, locally and globally, is scheduled for Oct. 21. Mary Albrecht will again be the contact person. We encourage you to support this as you have for many years. Please consider walking. Put out the word for donors and the reason why you walk. If you are unable to physically take part, please donate to a walker!! Last year, we had 10 walkers and raised \$3,255. Your participation envelopes will be available beginning this Sunday, Sept. 16 from Mary Albrecht.

Giving Corner:

For September we are starting a new project with Teachers Treasures. A wish list can be found on their website: <http://www.teacherstresures.org/>

My Coins Count:

Children will be collecting change from the congregation for Mennonite Central Committee's "My Coins Count" program. We have a large water jug to fill before the Relief Sale in September.

ADMINISTRATION

Congregational support systems

VAT Congregational Representative

Selection:

Rod Maust has accepted the congregation's nomination for VAT CR. He begins his three year term immediately and joins Brad Sommer (chair), Jeanne Smucker (vice chair), Wilma Bailey, and Carl Rhine on the VAT.

-submitted by Joyce Troyer

Milepost #528 – Proper Images for God

Many of the Bible's instructions and commands are focused on worship. For example, out of the Ten Commandments, the first four commandments don't discuss interpersonal ethics at all, even though this tends to dominate our ethical discussions in the church today. Instead, they teach God's people how to worship God properly. Clearly, worship is important to God, and therefore God asks us to worship in a conscientious way. For example, in the second commandment, God says, "You shall not make for yourself an idol," which could also be translated, "You shall not make for yourself an image."

For a long time, I did not understand what the second commandment was all about. I assumed that it was forbidding the Israelites from worshipping the gods of other religions – such as Baal or Zeus. But that is not the main concern here. Instead, the second commandment warns God's people not to make an idol or image of *their own* God. This was apparently a strong temptation for them – they wanted to be able to see or imagine this mysterious God whom they were following. In fact, before Moses made it down from Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments in his hands, they Israelites had created a golden calf and declared, "This is your god, who brought you out of Egypt." Now, this may have been well-intentioned, but by worshipping this calf and calling it God, they misrepresented who God is, which both dishonored God and caused harm to the community.

The problem of idolatry is still a major issue for God's people today. Although we don't tend to worship physical idols, we all have a tendency to project false images and conceptions onto our understanding of God – often times without realizing that we are doing it. One of the subtlest ways that we engage in idolatry today is by envisioning God as male. Of course, when we stop to think about it, we acknowledge that God is not male for God is spirit, and therefore cannot be any more male than female. Nevertheless, when we continuously worship God in overwhelmingly male terms, we start to think of "maleness" as a characteristic of God, which creates the false impression that it is somehow holier or more complete than "femaleness."

As a pastor, I have made a point to use gender-neutral language as much as possible so that I don't encourage this misconception. Whenever possible, I have avoided referring to God with male pronouns or relying too much on male metaphors. But this has negative effects as well. By only referring to God as "God," it makes it harder for us to relate to God, it makes me feel like I'm walking on eggshells in every sentence I speak, and it puts me at odds with the Bible, which unapologetically uses human metaphors to describe God all of the time. After all, we have to have *some way* to think about God.

Fortunately, the Bible gives us a way out of this dilemma because, as it says in Genesis 1:27 – we are made in God's *image*. Consequently, human pronouns and metaphors can be used to help us imagine and relate to God. That being said, the very same passage that proclaims this truth – Genesis 1:27 – emphasizes that *both* males and females reflect God's image. So if we are going to use one, then we ought to use the other, lest our image of God becomes distorted.

Consequently, rather than trying to avoid using any kind of gendered pronoun or metaphor, I have made a personal decision to alternate back-and-forth between male and female imagery and pronouns for God in my sermons. Without making it a big point or agenda about this in the sermons themselves, I plan to use She/Her language on Sept 16

and He/Him language on Sept 23 when appropriate, and to continue alternating henceforth. I realize that this may be jarring or uncomfortable for some of us at first, but I am hopeful that this practice will ultimately help us identify some false images we have developed about God and to worship God more fully as the Spirit who transcends gender, and yet is revealed in it.
-Pastor Brian Bither

Do you have some thoughts to share about this month's spiritual discipline? The Pastoral Team invites you to share your thoughts as one of the weekly milepost entries. Please email Sabrina, Frank, or Brian to explore this further.

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

Pastoral Team: Brian Bither, (317) 322-7320, brian@shalommennonite.com; Frank Kandel, (309) 532-2859, kandel93@gmail.com; Sabrina Falls, (317) 902-9495, sabrinafalls@outlook.com
Vision & Accountability Team: Brad Sommer, Jeanne Smucker, Wilma Bailey, Carl Rhine, Kim Johnson, Brian Bither

Please submit information by Thursday, 12pm, to Emily Fox: office@shalommennonite.com