

# Journeying Together

Shalom Mennonite Church

December 2, 2020

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

Chair: Linda Showalter

**Last Sunday (11/29)** was the first Sunday of Advent, and we spent time reflecting on the longing for the Messiah that developed among the Jews during the exile. Our daily Bible readings engaged the books of Joel and Isaiah as they depicted the Messiah as the one who brings vindication through judgment.

**This Sunday (12/6)** is the second Sunday of Advent, and we will celebrate by joining another congregation - East Goshen Mennonite Church - in the first of two joint worship sessions. Brian will be preaching about the hopes that emerged not only for a Jewish Messiah, but for a Messiah who could save the whole world.

**Next Sunday (12/13)** is the third Sunday of Advent, and we will again join East Goshen Mennonite Church, with their church planning the service and Pastor Naomi Yoder preaching the sermon.

**No Christmas caroling** is being planned this year. Instead, you are invited to participate in a Christmas Eve service on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Time to be announced.

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

Chair: Herb Troyer

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

### **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**, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent

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

9:30 am - Elementary school children (Kindergarten through 6th grade) are invited to log into a children's breakout room

10:30 am – Joint Worship Service with East Goshen on Zoom

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

No Facing Hard Questions

### **Sunday, December 13**, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent

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

9:30 am - Elementary school children (Kindergarten through 6th grade) are invited to log into a children's breakout room

10:30 am – Joint Worship Service with East Goshen on Zoom

No Facing Hard Questions

### **Sunday, December 20**, 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent

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

9:30 am - Elementary school children (Kindergarten through 6th grade) are invited to log into a children's breakout room

10:30 am – Worship Service on Zoom

2 pm – Facing Hard Questions: Did the virgin birth really occur, and if so, what are the theological

implications?

**Thursday, December 24**

Christmas Eve service on Zoom. Time to be announced

**Sunday, December 27**, Christmas Sunday

No Sunday School

10:30 am – Worship Service on Zoom

No Facing Hard Questions

**Sunday, January 3**

No Sunday School

10:30 am – Worship Service

No Facing Hard Questions

**Sunday, January 10**

9:30 am – Adult Sunday School: *The Bible Unwrapped: Making Sense of Scripture Today*, led by Emily and Tim Ludden

10:30 am – Worship Service on Zoom

**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).*

Sun, Dec 6 – Jim Martin

Sun, Dec 6 – Joyce Troyer

**DISCIPLING: Growing in our relationships**

Chair: Martha Yoder

**Children's Sunday School:** For the first three Sundays in December, we will be trying a children's Sunday school Zoom model that has been used in other congregations. Elementary school children (Kindergarten through 6th grade) are invited to log into a children's breakout room at 9:30 for a short session (likely not longer than 30 minutes). After the three sessions, we will check back with parents about whether this was a useful model for their children. Martha, for Discipling Commission

**Adult Sunday School beginning January 10:** Emily and Tim Ludden will be leading an adult class on *The Bible Unwrapped: Making Sense of Scripture Today* by Meghan Larissa Good. Feel free to buy your own copy from any source and send your receipt to Bob Love if you would like Shalom to pay you back. If you would like me to order the book for you, please let me know by December 28.

**"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 67, Daniel 7-9

Tuesday: Proverbs 11:7-8, Daniel 10-12, Ezekiel 38-39

Wednesday: Proverbs 12:24-27, Zechariah 1-4

Thursday: Proverbs 12:17-22, Zechariah 5-8

Friday: Proverbs 11:23, 14:19, Zechariah 9-13

Saturday: Zechariah 14, Proverbs 13:16-18, Malachi 1-4

**About the readings:** With the exception of the Psalms and Proverbs that we haven't read yet, this week's reading assignments bring our study of the Older Testament to a conclusion. I'm not going to be preaching about these texts until two Sundays from now (12/20), so if you want to wait until next week to read them, you can. Starting next week, we are going to have a four-week break from daily Scripture reading assignments so that we can focus on the seasons of Advent and Christmas and

give ourselves a chance to catch up on portions we may have missed. However, just in case there are people who have not missed any of the daily reading assignments and would like to have some guidance during this break, I am going to offer a plan for reading through the "apocryphal" books of 1-4 Maccabees and Ecclesiasticus. Although these books are not authoritative to Christians in the same way that the rest of our Scriptures are, they offer great insight into the historical period that occurred between the Old and New Testaments, and many Christians through the centuries have found them to be inspiring supplements to our Holy Scriptures. More on this next week!

### **OUTREACH: Relationships beyond Shalom**

Chair: Brad Yoder

The following material is provided for your information in preparation for our congregational meeting on Sunday, December 6th. In addition to adopting a Shalom budget for 2021, we will be making a decision about distributing excess funds we have available from this year. (See the attached proposal, and information about the organizations being considered for extra funding.)

All of this material has been in the newsletter the past two weeks, but two changes have been made to the proposal this week: 1) we have learned that Natasha Diener will no longer be continuing to teach in Bolivia after the end of this school year, so she is no longer seeking support. So that \$1,000 has been removed from the proposal, and 2) enough materials have been given for hurricane/flood relief in Honduras to fill six barrels instead of four (thanks to all who contributed!), so we are recommending to increase that support from \$800 to \$1,200.00 (\$200/barrel). That reduces the total for the proposal from \$22,500 to \$21,900.00.

If you have questions before the meeting on Sunday, contact Brad Yoder. Thank you for thoughtfully and prayerfully considering how we share our resources to minister to people every day in our community, and around the Earth. ~ Brad Yoder

### **SPIRITUAL GIFTS DISCERNMENT TEAM (SGDT)**

Chair: Joyce Troyer

### **VISION AND ACCOUNTABILITY TEAM (VAT)**

Chair: Jeanne Smucker

Along with updating the church structure to match current practices, the VAT has updated the Church Safety Policy and the Sexual Misconduct Policy to reflect the fact that we no longer have a Pastor-Elder Team. According to the new policy, any reports are to be made to the chair of the VAT or to one of the members of the VAT. The complaint or report will then be handled as previously outlined in the policies.

### **ADMINISTRATION**

Chair: Mike Wigginton

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Thank you for your support during this difficult time. We know that you are grieving with us. We would like to have a memorial service and hope that it will be possible to meet in person next year. Carol & Sam Bixler
- Celebrate Advent with Mennonite Church USA's **2020 Advent at Home devotional**, "We Wait for Jesus." The free annual guide for home-based worship provides daily and weekly Scripture readings, prayers and activities for individuals and families observing the season of anticipation leading to the birth of Jesus. Download it here: [mennoniteusa.org/resource/advent-at-home](https://mennoniteusa.org/resource/advent-at-home).

- In this season of giving, Mennonite Church USA invites you to support the peace initiatives of the church by donating to the **#BringThePeace fund**, a fund that supports work and projects where needed most in the denomination. [Mennoniteusa.org/give/](https://mennoniteusa.org/give/)
- Please email the church office if you haven't received *Journeying Together* by Thursday morning.
- 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 [mlwigginton@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mlwigginton@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**

#### Imagining Advent

In recent months, our nanny has started making big calendars on posters for our kids, so that they can count down the days to our next major event. This has been a powerful reminder for me of how much calendars shape us. Their whole lives are influenced by these calendars. Last month, the calendar counted down to November 16, the day when we planned to rent an RV and drive it down to South Carolina to celebrate my grandmother's 100th birthday. As soon as that calendar went up, it became the focus of nearly everything we did. My daughters got excited about making cards for Great-Grandma for her big birthday. At dinner, we got lots of questions about what South Carolina was like. For play time, we often built pretend RVs to simulate the experience. For me, this reinforced how important Advent is. When we make Christ's coming the focus of our lives, it shapes the way we think, work, and play.

It also occurred to me that my kids were only influenced by the calendar to the extent that they were interested in it. Riding in an "RV" didn't mean anything to them until their mom showed them pictures of an RV and encouraged them to imagine what it would be like to travel in one. When we talked about who we would see and what we would do in South Carolina, it brought the concept to life. Likewise, in order to be shaped by the season of Advent, it's not enough to put a calendar up: we should really think about what it is we are waiting for God to do.

In what ways do you long for Christ's coming? Do you know people who are lonely and suffering who need Christ's intervention? Are there problems with our society that trouble your soul? Is there a struggle in your life from which you learn for liberation? Do you find yourself worrying about the prospect of death? I encourage you to bring these concerns to the forefront of your mind and imagine

what it would mean for Christ to come and bring healing to them. Then, let those hopes be the focus of your yearnings and your prayers during Advent. Then we - like little children - may find ourselves genuinely excited when Christ does show up in our lives and our world.

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)

Pastor: *Brian Bither*, (317) 322-7320

Vision & Accountability Team: Jeanne Smucker, Cheryl Martin, Carol Bixler, Rod Maust, Thad Wilson, Brian Bither