

Journeying Together

Shalom Mennonite Church

December 12, 2019

WORSHIP

Our relationship with God
Chair: Linda Showalter

Last Sunday, Dec 8

On the second Sunday of Advent, we read Isaiah 11:1-10 and Matthew 3:1-12, which both describe the same future reality from radically different perspectives. This forces us to consider what we are really saying when we pray for peace and justice on earth.

This Sunday, Dec 15

"I Stand at the Door" (Rev 3:20). This Advent, as we prepare to open the door of our lives to let Jesus in, may we take comfort in God's presence, as we journey toward the coming Reign. Scriptures: Isaiah 35 – a journey in the wilderness - and James 5: 7-11 – a treatise on patient endurance; Psalm 146 – a song of assurance.

Next Sunday, Dec 22

Next Sunday is the fourth Sunday of Advent, which means that we have been waiting for Christ's coming for many weeks now, and it has still not happened yet. Waiting on God for such a long time can push us toward darkness and despair, so how are we supposed to sustain our faith in these extended periods? Passages like Isaiah 7:10-16 and Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 suggest a radical answer: that God invites us to *question* Him during these times.

COMMUNITY LIFE

Relationships at Shalom
Chair: Linda Kandel

Calendar

Sun. 9:30am Worship
11:00am Sunday School

Sat, Dec 14 – Christmas Banquet – Caroling at 5:30; Meal and program at 6:30

Mon, Dec 16 – Roving Office at Southeast Starbucks, 9605 E Washington St

Thurs, Dec 19 – Meal, 6:30pm; Bible study, 7-8

Christmas Banquet, Dec 14

Caroling @ 5:30

Appetizers @ 6:15

Meal @ 6:30

Menu: Potato Bar, salad, pie

Looking forward to a lovely evening!

Christmas Day Lunch

The Showalters are inviting anyone who has no plans on Christmas Day to join them for lunch at their home. Please let them know so they can plan.

PASTORAL TEAM SEARCH COMMITTEE (PTSC)

Chair: Jeanne Smucker

Over the last two months, the Search Committee has received two MLIs (Ministerial Leadership Inventories). However, prior to our being able to consider them, both applicants withdrew their applications for the position. Indiana-Michigan Conference continues to assist us in seeking interested applicants. At this time, there are a very limited number of people who would be willing to relocate for a half-time position. Please continue to pray for the leadership and the congregation's discernment around our congregation's pastoral needs.

DISCIPLING

Growing in our relationships
Chair: Martha Yoder Maust

Adult Schedule

December adult education sessions will focus on vulnerable children, remembering that Jesus was born in a place that was dangerous for children.

12/15 Jeanne will share about being a child advocate

12/22 and 12/29 – No SS

Upcoming classes for early 2020

"Beyond the Grave" Sunday School Class, January 12 to February 23 - In Philippians 1:21, Paul famously stated: "For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." This statement captures a universal Christian belief: that Christ offers us life after death. However, beyond this basic affirmation, there is widespread disagreement among Christians about what the afterlife will be like, who will get in, what will happen when Christ returns, and how much we can really know about these matters. If you have questions about these subjects and/or you are prepared to have an honest discussion with others at Shalom about what we believe and why, please consider taking this Scripture-focused class that will be led by Pastor Brian.

Shalom Orientation Class - Are you new to Shalom (or newish), do you have an interest in joining our church, or do you just want to more about Mennonites or how our church works? If there is enough interest, Pastor Brian will offer a "Shalom Orientation" class during Lent, from Sunday, March 1 to Sunday, April 12. If you are interested in this, either talk to Brian in person or email him at brian@shalommennonite.com so that he can make preparations to teach the class.

OUTREACH

Relationships beyond Shalom
Chair: Brad Yoder

Resources for the Stress of Christmas and Trauma/PTSD:

With all the seasonal hype about having a merry Christmas, it's easy to feel stressed and/or depressed this time of year. The reality of ordinary life rarely matches the advertisements of Hallmark-style happiness, and grief, seasonal affective disorder, and financial pressures to overspend make things worse. This month's insert from the Anabaptist Disabilities Network titled *Avoiding a Blue Christmas* (by J. E. Misz, LCSW, MDiv) has great tips on good self-care to deal with the added expectations of the holidays under these headings:

1. God rest ye merry people all
2. The bleak midwinter
3. Bring us some figgy pudding
4. Don't mourn in lonely exile here

Read the entire suggestions here

<https://gallery.mailchimp.com/fc4d1d6b69c4ca3>

[b7c360527d/images/00e6f28d-0a2e-49eb-a6e6-250b7a558e9a.jpg](https://www.anabaptistdisabilitiesnetwork.org/Pages/default.aspx) or download the document attached to this issue of Journey Together.

The November **Connections** Newsletter from Anabaptist Disabilities Network focuses on PTSD in adults and children. A wealth of resources are cited for the following topics: Trauma and Theology, Trauma and Scripture, Trauma and Pastoral care, General Books on Trauma, and Trauma-Informed Care for Congregations including curriculum and a book on children, youth, and trauma. In addition, a perceptive article on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) looks at the increased likelihood of ACEs in children of minority groups and of unsafe urban neighborhoods.

Click <https://www.anabaptistdisabilitiesnetwork.org/Pages/default.aspx> to read **Connections** at this link or read the paper copy on the bulletin board by the nursery.

-Joyce Troyer

Sharing Space

Relief kits are the focus for the Sharing Space in December. Contents (NEW items only):

- 4 large bars bath soap (leave in wrapper)
- Shampoo (1 or 2 bottles, totaling more than 20 oz.; place in resealable plastic bag)
- 4 large bars laundry soap (such as Fels Naptha, Sunlight, or Zote brands)
- 4 adult-size toothbrushes (in manufacturer's packaging)
- 4 new bath towels (medium weight, dark or bright colors; approx. 29in x 60in)
- 2 wide-toothed combs (6-8in)
- 1 nail clipper (good quality)
- 1 box adhesive bandages (min 40, assorted)
- Sanitary pads (THIN; 1 or 2 packages, min 28 pads total)

ADMINISTRATION

Congregational support systems
Chair: Laura Harms

IRS Rules Regarding End of Year Giving

Please make note of this change to Shalom's practice on end-of-year donations for 2019. We will only be able to accept 2019 donations in the calendar year of 2019. Donations must be either

- post-marked by Dec 31, 2019 if mailed

- or handed in (offering plate, Treasurer mailbox, handed to Treasurer) by Dec 31, 2019

A check dated with a 2019 date, received in 2020, will be attributed to 2020 offerings.

Minutes

[Worship Commission met on Dec 7 and their minutes can be found here.](#)

Offer made on home near church

The house just west of the church came up for sale rather suddenly last week. Offers to purchase it had to be submitted by midnight on December 11th. With time running short, I rounded up several folks from Shalom to join me in submitting an offer. If our offer is the one selected, it is our intention to first make it available for purchase by Shalom if the church wants it. If not, we will fix it up and sale it to a nice family. You can see the listing here <https://property.mibor.com/listing/6050-E-32Nd-Street/5de54310a9b05b79c1a0f25f>
- Frank Kandel, Pastor for Administration

Menno Expressions

This publication of First Mennonite Church will now be published electronically. A PDF version has been attached but it does not provide as good viewing as receiving the email directly. To sign up to receive it as an email:

MennoExpressions@indymenno.org

Reflections On Pilgrimage

“Advent,” which means “coming,” launches the Christian liturgical year on December 1 with a series of weeks when people of faith prepare spiritually for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. While historically Mennonites did not commemorate this or other seasons of the liturgical calendar, it has become increasingly common for Mennonite congregations to adopt some of the seasonal traditions already practiced for centuries by many other Protestant denominations as well as Catholics and Orthodox Christians. Among these is the lighting of candles on a wreath.

We have had an Advent wreath at Shalom for quite a few years. On each of the four Sundays leading up to Christmas we light one or more candles. Besides creating a warm glow, what is the meaning of this ceremony?

The historical origins of the Advent wreath are murky. It may have roots in a pre-Christian Germanic ritual of lighting candles placed in a wreath to express hope for the coming light and warmth of spring in the midst of the “bleak midwinter.”* Sometime during the Middle Ages, Christians adapted this practice into their spiritual preparation for Christmas which, like Lent, originally involved self-examination, meditation on the scriptures and the coming (first and second) of Christ, penance, prayer, and service. The wreath and candles provide a visual and tactile reminder of the significance of this holy season.

To the question “What do the wreath and diversely-colored candles symbolize?” you will receive multiple and varied answers. Usually, there are four candles--one for each week--and sometimes a fifth in the center for Christmas Eve. Usually, three of the candles are purple or violet, one is pink or rose, and the fifth is white. Don’t be surprised, though, if you visit a church where some candles are blue or red. If you attend Orthodox worship, there will likely be six candles in green, blue, gold, white, purple, and red! At Shalom we use the most common combination: three purple, one pink, and one white (the Christ Candle) in the center of the wreath.

Similarly, the meanings of the candles may vary. Purple is the liturgical color of both royalty and penitence. The three purple candles typically symbolize hope, waiting/ expectation, love, peace, faith, light, and/or repentance. The pink candle symbolizes joy and is typically lit on the third Sunday to represent a pause from the solemnity of the first two weeks to rejoice that the celebration is immanent. The white (symbolic color of purity) candle at the center represents Christ, the “light of the world” who is at the center of this occasion and our lives.

Lighting the candles progressively--one the first week, two the second, and so on until all five are lit on Christmas Eve--enhances the anticipation and assurance of hope as the darkness increasingly fades and the light gradually grows brighter--a reminder that the victorious light of Christ overcomes the darkness.

This progressive lighting reminds me of lighting the Hanukkah menorah, beginning with one on the first night, two on the second, and so on

until all eight nights of candles are lit, plus the “shamash” (Aramaic for “minister”) candle that is lit every night and used to kindle all the others. Here, too, the light grows brighter and brighter with every passing night. And just as lighting the menorah is a ritual done by families in their own homes, some families have home advent wreaths and involve the children in its lighting as a way to learn the deeper spiritual truths of the Christmas season.

Additional meaning comes with the round shape of the wreath--everlasting life and God's eternity and infinite love--and the greens which represent life and resurrection.

As we kindle the candles this year, may their beauty and light fill our hearts with hope, faith, joy, peace, and love as we reflect repentantly and wait expectantly for the One who has come, is here, and yet will be born anew within and among us!

*from poem by Christina Rossetti, “In the Bleak Midwinter” we sing as a Christmas carol

-Pastor Sabrina Falls

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