

# Journeying Together

Shalom Mennonite Church

December 23, 2020

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

Chair: Linda Showalter

**Last Sunday ((12/20))** we studied the apocalyptic writings of the Older Testament, which involve disorienting images of supernatural creatures and global events. Although these passages may seem strange to us, they pave the way for a new concept to emerge in the Bible - that of powers and principalities - which shaped the hopes and expectations that the Jewish people had for their Messiah.

**This Sunday (12/27)**, we join the angels and shepherds in celebrating the birth of the Messiah! After having spent so much time waiting and hoping for this to happen, on Sunday, our challenge will be to accept the message that salvation is here today.

**Next Sunday (1/3)**, J.E. Misz - a poet, licensed therapist, and converted Mennonite - will be speaking on the theme of blessings. (J.E. was Brian's roommate at Duke Divinity School and quite was influential in his own journey to the Mennonite Church.)



Christmas  
Eve  
Service

Everyone is invited to a virtual **Christmas Eve service** of Scripture and carols on Thursday at 7:00pm. When we meet in person we often end our Christmas Eve service by lighting candles together so please feel free to bring your own candle to light during the closing song if you wish.

For anyone interested in watching the *Voices Together* Dedication Launch Event, the recording of the worship portion is now available. Click [here](#). There was also a time of Q & A with the Mennonite Worship and Song Committee; that can be seen by clicking [here](#). There are no new updates on when our hymnals will be delivered, but according to the Q & A, shipping has begun.

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

Chair: Herb Troyer

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



#### **Thursday, December 24**

7 pm - Christmas Eve service on Zoom



#### **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  
2 pm – Facing Hard Questions: How historically reliable are the gospels?

### **Sunday, January 17**

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  
No Facing Hard Questions

### **Sunday, January 24**

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  
2 pm – Facing Hard Questions: Topic to be announced

### **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).*

Fri, Dec 25 – Carol Bither

Wed, Dec 30 – Becky & Mike Wigginton, 1978

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

Chair: Martha Yoder

A copy of the material presented in Carol Bither's "Pandemic" Sunday School class is attached.

**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**

*We are taking a break from our normal daily reading assignments, but I am offering these supplemental readings from the Apocrypha for those who want to learn more about the historical context behind the Bible's story. To read from the Apocrypha for free, go to [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com) and look up these references in the NRSV version.*

Monday – 3 Maccabees 1-3, Sirach 24

Tuesday – 3 Maccabees 4-5, Sirach 25-26

Wednesday – 3 Maccabees 6-7, Sirach 27-28

Thursday – 4 Maccabees 1-3, Sirach 29-30

Friday – 4 Maccabees 4-5, Sirach 31-33

Saturday – 4 Maccabees 6-7, Sirach 34-35

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

Chair: Brad Yoder

A newsletter from Natasha Diener is attached, as well as a Resourcing Christian Education International fund-raising form for Natasha.

December's *Hoosiers Concerned about Gun Violence* newsletter is attached.

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

Chair: Joyce Troyer

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

Chair: Jeanne Smucker

## **ADMINISTRATION**

Chair: Mike Wigginton

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- ***Thank You:*** We appreciate the many cards and notes of sympathy in the month since Timothy's death. Over the years, Shalom has been a place where Tim felt loved and cared for. Whenever he could, Tim wanted to make music. He was very happy when the piano was available for him to release his cares in his music. As Tim struggled over the last eighteen months, many of you prayed and spent time with him. We are ever so grateful. Thank you. Carol & Sam
- 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 [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**

### The Disruption of Christmas

Although we think of the first Christmas as a picturesque scene filled with loving visitors and caring angels, it was certainly not how Mary pictured it. Luke chapter 2 tells us that the census of Caesar Augustus forced Mary and Joseph to travel to Bethlehem. That means that they were probably planning on staying in Nazareth until Mary gave birth. And so, in all likelihood, Mary had already made quite a few preparations *in Nazareth* for this delivery. Perhaps she had already had some conversations with the local midwife about what they would do when her water broke. Perhaps she had started working on a nursery where Jesus could live in comfort. Perhaps she was looking forward to having her mom hold her hand through the process. The census disrupted all of that. Now, Joseph - a person who had never been through childbirth himself - was the only one at her side. Without her

midwife around, Mary's life was in even more danger than before, as it was very common for women to die in childbirth during that time. And hardest of all, she would be separated from her friends and family.

Likewise, for many of us, this Christmas is not going the way we had imagined it. Perhaps we too have had our plans disrupted, face threats to our health, or will be separated from our families. The pandemic has disrupted our lives, and for some of us, has inflicted grave and permanent damage on our families. But it is at times like this when it is especially important to pay attention to the story. The Christmas story is *not* about a perfectly choreographed childbirth that was calm and peaceful from beginning to end. It is a story that demonstrates that God is with us even when life is unpredictable, disappointing, and painful. I doubt Mary would have chosen to have shepherds - or even gift-bearing Magi - visit her on Christmas if that meant she could not be with her Nazareth friends and family members. But those shepherds served as a reminder that God would watch over her wherever she went and would find surprising ways to support her. Likewise, this may not be the Christmas we wanted, but the central message is as true as ever: God is with us. May you sense God's presence and experience God's peace wherever you find yourself this Christmas.

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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