

Journeying Together

Shalom Mennonite Church

February 1, 2018

WORSHIP

Our relationship with God

Last Sunday Jan. 28: I enjoyed our worship service last week. It was nice to be connected to the service at so many levels.

1. The quiet times allowed me to really connect with God during prayer.
 2. The slow pace allowed me time to connect with words in the songs we sang
 3. Once a month to conduct a simple worship service is beneficial in so many ways. Less structured, relaxed & meaningful.
- After experiencing a busy week, looking forward to a simpler worship service is good.
– Barbara Abebe

This Sunday Feb. 4: We will begin our study of confession by looking at its roots in the ancient sacrificial system and considering it as a practice of truth-telling. The purpose of confession is not to humiliate the confessor but to come the confessor come to terms with the truth about the world and him/herself. Our focus will be on Leviticus 4-7 and 1 John 1:5-9.

Next Sunday Feb. 11: We will continue our study of confession by considering it as a path to atonement. Our focus will be on Leviticus 16 and 1 John 1:9-2:6.

Ash Wednesday: We will be hosting an Ash Wednesday service here at Shalom Mennonite Church on **Wed., Feb. 14** at 6:30pm. We invite you to come to this joint service, co-lead by First Mennonite Church, to inaugurate the season of Lent.

COMMUNITY LIFE

Relationships at Shalom

Fellowship Meal THIS Sunday:

This week join us for a fellowship meal following Sunday School. No special instructions; just bring a favorite dish to share!

Calendar

Sun. 9:30am Worship
11 am Sunday School

Feb. 4: Fellowship Meal
Feb. 14: 7am Morning Breakfast Group
Feb. 15: 6:30pm Meal/Bible Study
Feb. 24: 8:30am Indiana-Michigan Conference
Southern Region Delegate Session
Feb. 28: 7am Morning Breakfast Group
Mar. 1: 6:30pm Meal/Bible Study

DISCIPLING

Growing in our relationships

Catholic Economics Sunday School:
The Adult Sunday School class reading Catholic Economics will discuss chapters 6 and 7 on Feb. 4. - Wilma Bailey

Richard Foster's Celebration of Discipline:
Discipling Commission has purchased a dozen copies of Richard Foster's Celebration of Discipline for your use. They will be in the library, but will not be part of the regular library catalog, so they do not need to be checked out or checked back in. Feel free to take a copy, read what interests you, then return it when you are done. – Martha Maust

Do you have a favorite verse?

In connection with finding your favorite bible verse (see last week's journey newsletter) look for posters in the fellowship hall colored by Melanie, Jackie, and Lorraine Hernandez.

Some of my favorite verses are found in Psalms 36:5,6,9.

- The quilt in front of the church is based on verse 5-6: Your unfailing love, O LORD, is as vast as the heavens; your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the ocean depths.
- The quilt in the basement landing honors verse 9: For you are the fountain of life, the light by which we see.

If you are looking for an uplifting website on spirituality and simplicity, look for emilypfreeman.com. Good reading and photography. – Ruth Penner

Milepost #320: **The Discipline of Confession**

As we enter the second month of 2018, we also move our attention to our second spiritual discipline for the year: confession. For me personally, this is a move into more familiar territory. As many of you know, I was raised in the Free Methodist Church, and while the Free Methodists did not put much emphasis on the discipline of simplicity, they did encourage confession. Ever since I was a teenager, I was encouraged to join accountability groups or partnerships in which the participants talked honestly about our spiritual successes and failures, as we encouraged each other in our walks with God. Although some of these accountability groups were more helpful to me than others, they have on the whole proved to be one of the most important sources of encouragement and moral transformation in my life.

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, expected everyone who joined his movement to participate in a “band” of five to ten believers, with whom they would meet regularly and practice confession. He offered these bands a list of questions to work through each week that guided their conversation, which included questions such as, “Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart?” “Has no sin, inward or outward, dominion over you?” and “Do you desire to be told of your faults?”

Of course, these questions could be quite intimidating at first, but as the groups became more comfortable with each other, the degree of trust grew over time, as did the moral progress of the participants. Indeed, one report suggests that the average person who participated in Wesley’s bands experienced total liberation from the sins and doubts that plagued them after participating in one for two and a half years. This attests to the wisdom of James 5:16, “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed.”

That being said, there are some concerns about confession that we must take seriously before jumping into it. When considering accountability partners, it is important to look for people who are trustworthy, with whom you are comfortable and yet who will speak truthfully to you, and with whom it is appropriate to engage in such intimate sharing. It is possible for confession to become harmful if any of these factors are missed, so careful discernment is necessary.

When done well, confession is a life-giving experience, and I would encourage us all to seek some form of spiritual accountability as a way of practicing confession in February. Such a relationship doesn’t have to be as intense as Wesley envisioned, as it can be limited to just one area of growth, focusing on lighter issues before engaging heavier ones. In any case, I pray that we can all experience the forgiveness of Christ through the compassionate listening of another human being in the experience of confession.

- Brian Bither

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

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Please submit information by Thursday, 12pm, to Abri Hochstetler: abri.houser@gmail.com