May 18, 2017 ***Listening and Learning***Milepost 61

In last Sunday’s sermon on the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), Frank Kandel noted the value placed on listening to and learning from other congregations with differing perspectives. This is one of the reasons we relate with other congregations in Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference.

Frank gave several examples of where Shalom individuals have been enriched by participating in ministries sponsored by other congregations (e.g. Muncie, First, etc.), and mentioned how pastors benefit from relating with other pastors. Individuals at Shalom network well with individuals from other congregations, in specific ministries:

IndyCan, Creation Care, etc.

Our nation’s default mode tends to ignore lessons learned by other nations. Wealth and power contribute significantly to this attitude. Health care is just one of many examples. Virtually all other nations consider health care for its citizens a right, not a privilege. And most have figured out how to provide quality health care for all, at significantly lower costs. Listening to and learning from other nations is off the radar screen for most in our nation.

Our parents were wise in teaching us: “Just because everyone is doing it, doesn’t make it right!” On the other hand, sometimes the majority has figured out what works well, and to ignore it just because it’s the majority, doesn’t make sense either!

How intentional is Shalom, *as a congregation*, in listening to and learning from *other congregations* as we make major decisions?

-Gary Martin