

Journeying Together

Shalom Mennonite Church

December 9, 2020

WORSHIP: Our relationship with God

Chair: Linda Showalter

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

This 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.

Next Sunday (12/20) we will be studying 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.

No Christmas caroling is being planned this year. Instead, you are invited to participate in a *Longest Night Service* on the 21st and a *Christmas Eve service* on the 24th.

Longest Night Service: The Christmas holidays can be difficult when our personal experience of life doesn't match the "holiday spirit" projected around us, especially when we grieve the loss of loved ones. 2020 has been a year of challenges and grief in many forms for varied reasons. A Longest Night service is one Christian tradition to companion those of us who seek hope and restoration in the healing love of God.

On Tuesday, December 21, at 7:00 pm, Shalom will have a Longest Night service on the eve of the winter solstice, the night we literally have the longest period of darkness during the year. This will be meditative with time for reflection. You will be invited to light one or more candles if desired to commemorate different categories of losses. As this will be virtual via Zoom, if you wish to light candles (or flashlights), please have these supplies nearby prior to the beginning of the service. The service will be recorded so it can be accessed at another time if the 7:00 time is not convenient for you. Please invite others who may be interested. If you wish to post on social media, tell friends to message you for the link to attend rather than posting the direct link to maintain security. ~ Joyce

The Voices Together dedication launch celebration will take place via Zoom this Sunday, December 13, from 5 – 7 pm. It will include a time to worship with new songs and resources, hear stories, and offer blessings for *Voices Together* and all who receive it. After this time of worship there will be an overview of the process of creating Voices Together and a time for questions with committee members. This event is free but registration is required to receive the Zoom link. Go to <http://voicestogetherhymnal.org/digital-launch-registration/> (click on "your answer" to put your information in).

COMMUNITY LIFE: Relationships at Shalom

Chair: Herb Troyer

Calendar (*All events are Zoom meetings*)

Sunday, December 13, 3rd 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, 4th 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?

Monday, December 21

7 pm - Longest Night Service on Zoom.

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

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.

Fri, Dec 11 – Julie Sanders
Sun, Dec 13 – Sam Bixler
Mon, Dec 14 – Carlos Reyes & Gemina Trochez, 2018
Tue, Dec 15 – Reuben Maust

This month, Amber Goodloe is finishing her nursing training and will receive an RN degree on December 17. The Community Life Commission offers Amber our congratulations for this impressive achievement! For anyone who would like to send a card or blessing to Amber, you can mail it to her at 7948 Welchwood Dr, Indianapolis, IN 46260

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

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.

Monday: 1 Maccabees 1-2, Sirach 1-2

Tuesday: 1 Maccabees 3-5, Sirach 3

Wednesday: 1 Maccabees 6-8, Sirach 4

Thursday: 1 Maccabees 9-11, Sirach 5-6

Friday: 1 Maccabees 12-13, Sirach 7-9

Saturday: 1 Maccabees 14-16, Sirach 10

OUTREACH: Relationships beyond Shalom

Chair: Brad Yoder

SPIRITUAL GIFTS DISCERNMENT TEAM (SGDT)

Chair: Joyce Troyer

VISION AND ACCOUNTABILITY TEAM (VAT)

Chair: Jeanne Smucker

ADMINISTRATION

Chair: Mike Wigginton

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- In the past month, Indiana AID had been following a couple of cases of individuals who were facing the threat of detention or needed help in other ways, but fortunately, neither of the individuals ended up facing the threat that they feared. Once these cases wrapped up, we made the decision to cease active operations until early in 2021, since it is unlikely that we will make much progress during the holiday season and a change in executive branch administrations, especially with the rise in COVID-cases making visitations impossible. However, we are continuing to keep the phone line and email open and check those regularly in case an emergency comes through.
- 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 or mlwiggins@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 or bixlersc@gmail.com.
- Send announcements for Journeying Together to office@shalommennonite.com by 5 pm on Wednesday.

Reflections on the Journey

Deuterocanonical Books

Very few Christians today question whether a particular book of the Bible should be considered part of our Holy Scripture or not, because for the most part, that issue has been settled. Everyone knows what the 66 books of the Protestant Bible are, and if you aren't sure, you can find a list printed on a table of contents in the front. However, this was not always true. From about 300 BCE to at least 300 CE, there was a lot of debate about which writings should be considered the authoritative words of God. Some people even began producing lists that identified which books were "canonical" – meaning a divinely inspired and essential part of God's Story. These lists could be helpful as people tried to discern what to trust and what to be skeptical about.

However, we should be careful about how we interpret this "canonization" process. It's not a black-and-white matter of some books being "true" while others were "false." There were a number of writings that were highly respected within the faith community but which did not quite have the same status as the most trusted books of the laws, prophets, gospels, etc. The early church called these books "deuterocanonical," and I actually find that to be a very helpful concept. To call a writing deuterocanonical was to indicate that it is not quite as authoritative as the official books of the Bible are, but it is widely regarded as insightful, influential, or important to the faith community. I think it is natural for deuterocanonical books to emerge in every age and sector of Christianity. For example, we might consider texts like Palmer Becker's "What is an Anabaptist Christian?" and Dr. Martin Luther King's "Letter to Birmingham Jail" to be *deuterocanonical* texts for us today. We don't give them the same status as our Holy Scriptures, but we cherish and revere what these writings have to say.

We are taking a break from our Story of the Bible daily readings so that folks can catch up on what they missed and/or focus on Advent & Christmas devotionals, but for those who are still longing to keep the daily reading up, I am going to offer some reading assignments from books that have long been seen as "deuterocanonical" by the Christian tradition: 1-4 Maccabees and the Wisdom of Ben Sirach (also known as Ecclesiasticus). To be clear, I *do not* put these books on the same level as the Old and New Testaments, but I think we can learn a lot from them, especially for the historical and theological context they provide. The books of 1-4 Maccabees (which are separate books, not different volumes in the same series) describe the conquest of Alexander the Great and the subsequent struggles of the Jewish community under Greek rule, leading to the brief period of independence. These are the books that introduce the religious festival of Hanukkah, which Jewish people still celebrate today and which happens to begin tomorrow night. The Wisdom of Ben Sirach (also known as Ecclesiasticus) is similar to the book of Proverbs, but it shows some of the theological development that occurred between the time of Malachi and Matthew. If you are so inclined, I encourage you to read these texts and to be open to what they have to say.

For those interested, here are two ways you can access these books. (1) You can find them online by going to biblegateway.com and typing the reading assignment in the search bar where you'd normally type the Scripture reference (e.g. "1 Maccabees 1-3" instead of "1 Kings 1-3"). (2) If you would prefer to read a hard copy, we have at least three copies of the "New Oxford Annotated Bible" in our church library, which contain these books in them. I am not going to preach on these books on Sunday mornings because I believe that the Scriptures hold a special status for us that should be honored

from the pulpit, but I am happy to dialogue with you about anything you read or find in these interesting and even edifying texts.

~ Brian

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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