

JOURNEYING TOGETHER

Shalom Mennonite Church

March 17, 2021

WORSHIP: Our relationship with God

Chair: Grace Rhine

Last Sunday (3/14), we engaged Jesus' teaching about his second coming, which weaved together many of the Messianic themes of the Older Testament in a unique way and taught us to see the present as an age of reconciliation

This Sunday (3/21), Wilma Bailey will deliver the sermon

Next Sunday (3/28), is Palm Sunday, when we will celebrate one of the most important events in Jesus' life: his arrival in the temple, where he confronted the corrupt religious and economic forces of his day and laid claim to being the Jewish Messiah.

Lenten 2021 Resources

For the season of Lent 2021, we are offering two Lenten resources for you to use at home:

1. A Lenten Guided Prayer resource, offered each week during the 6 weeks of Lent (see attachment)
2. A "Lent at Home" guide from MCUSA that includes ideas for at-home rituals during Lent and Holy Week, including ideas for activities to do as a family unit. The link here will take you to a website where you can download the guide:

<https://www.mennoniteusa.org/resource-portal/resource/lent-at-home/>

Calendar (*All events are Zoom meetings*)

Sunday, March 14

- 9:30 am – Adult Sunday School: *The Bible Unwrapped: Making Sense of Scripture Today*, Emily & Tim Ludden. READ: Chapters 23-26, Storytime (Genesis) TOPIC: How to read the Bible through the lens of Jesus and suspending judgment
- 10:30 am – Worship service via Zoom

Sunday, March 21

- 9:30 am – Adult Sunday School: *The Bible Unwrapped: Making Sense of Scripture Today*, Emily & Tim Ludden. READ: Chapters 27-29 TOPIC: How do we read the Bible today?
- 10:30 am – Worship service via Zoom

Sunday, March 28

- 9:30 am – Adult Sunday School: *The Bible Unwrapped: Making Sense of Scripture Today*, Emily & Tim Ludden. READ: Chapters 30-33, Storytime (Acts) TOPIC: How to read the Bible with discernment
- 10:30 am – Worship service via Zoom

Friday, April 2

7 pm – Good Friday service.

Sunday, April 4

- 9:30 am – Adult Sunday School: *The Bible Unwrapped: Making Sense of Scripture Today*, Emily & Tim Ludden. READ: Chapters 34-36, Storytime (Job), Conclusion TOPIC: Convictions, disagreement, and uncertainty
- 10:30 am - Worship service via Zoom

Sunday, April 11

2 pm - FHQ: Does Jesus' great commission ask Christians to convince the peoples of the world to leave their own beliefs, practices, and cultural traditions?

Sunday, April 25

2 pm - FHQ: What do we make of the discrepancy between the New Testament description of healing miracles - which the apostles performed frequently - and the relative absence of healing miracles today?

Sunday, May 2

2 pm - FHQ: How should we respond to Biblical passages that seem to tolerate - if not defend - the institution of slavery?

Sunday, May 16

2 pm - FHQ: In light of all of the false prophecies regarding the end of the world, how are we supposed to read and interpret the book of Revelation?

Sunday, May 30

2 pm - FHQ: Can we still believe in the imminent return of Christ and the final judgment when two thousand years have passed and it has not happened yet?

Celebrations

Sat, Mar 27 –Marilynn Teel

Sun, Mar 28 –Jerry Tee

DISCIPLING: Growing in our relationships

Chair: Martha Yoder

"Story of the Bible" Assigned Reading

During our "Story of the Bible" sermon series we recommend daily readings at home. Next week's readings are:

Monday - Psalm 118, Mark 11-12

Tuesday - Matthew 21-23, Proverbs 6:12-19, 17:26

Wednesday - Psalm 27, Luke 19-20

Thursday - Psalm 45, John 12-13

Friday - John 14:1-15, 17, Proverbs 17:17, 22:17-21, 24:13-14

Saturday - Psalm 133, John 15:18-17:26

OUTREACH: Relationships beyond Shalom

Chair: Brad Yoder

Here is the link to The Hoosiers Concerned March newsletter.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1T_UGUn81tGQg0Qq809NdLrl1aw7Pxi0-/edit

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Pastoral Search Team is pleased to report that the congregation's vote to call Craig Oury as co-pastor was greater than 85% in favor. After receiving these results, we contacted Craig. Although he is enthusiastic about the call, he also wants a week to process his decision and inform his congregation. We appreciate the thoughtful and prayerful discernment of all the members and ask for your ongoing prayers as we move forward and as we continue to seek God's guidance in our plans and dreams for the future. - The Pastoral Search Team (Jeanne Smucker, CoraLyn Turentine, Carol Bixler, Linda Kandel and Herb Troyer)

While we work ourselves through the sometimes tumultuous month of March and also a tumultuous year dealing with a pandemic, it is important to keep a positive eye on the future. Spring and Easter are right around the corner, and vaccines will hopefully provide a return to normal soon. Our students are eager to return to full in-person classes and gatherings, as I'm sure your congregants are as well. God is still working in the world through many amazing followers. I would like to share with you the link below to our annual Staley Lecture. These lectures are presented as part of our Convocation series and are always free and open to the public. This year, Convocation has been held in an online format, which gives me the opportunity to share this with you.

The speaker this year was Dr. Wilma Ann Bailey, Professor Emerita at Central Theological Seminary. She spoke on "Biblical Laments in the Age of COVID." Click the following link to see the video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHVBcr4_djA – Bethel College.

Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference (IMMC) is seeking a part-time pastor for the Conference Pastoral team. If you are energized by working with pastors and leaders, visioning a new future for the Conference, dismantling racism, supporting diversity, and listening for God's call for the church, we would love to hear from you. The job description is posted on the [MMC website](#). Applications will be accepted through March 26th. Please submit applications and/or questions to the search committee: immsearchcommittee@gmail.com

- 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 at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEn30AED17Q_ReooskuxUXA

- **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 Zoom scheduling, church calendar, and uploads minutes to the church website. To schedule a meeting using the church account or if you have minutes to post, email office@shalommennonite.com or mlwiggin@sbcglobal.net.
- Sam Bixler manages our church directory, email address list, and telephone number list. Email changes or additions to office@shalommennonite.com or bixlersc@gmail.com.
- Send announcements for Journeying Together to office@shalommennonite.com by 5PM Wednesday.

RELECTIONS ON THE JOURNEY

Enduring to the End of the Pandemic - As the weather is getting warmer, an increasing number of people are getting vaccinated, and businesses are announcing their plans to re-open. I've observed a palpable sense of excitement among the people whom I've seen in the past few weeks, and this is perfectly understandable. After a long winter, it's starting to feel like we can see the light at the end of the tunnel of this pandemic. Thank God for that! However, we are not out of the woods yet. The majority of Americans have not been vaccinated. New variants of the virus are still developing. People are still dying. Yesterday alone, more than a thousand people died of COVID-19 in the United States.

In light of this, a verse from our main Scripture text last week has been on my mind: "The one who endures to the end will be saved." (Matthew 24:13) Here we have an encouragement to "finish strong." It's always hard to persevere or endure, but even more so when the end is in sight and it's tempting to take our foot off the pedal for a little bit. This is why Jesus emphasized enduring to the end. In our case, that means continuing to social distance, wear masks, and abstain from group activities as much as possible until it is safe for everyone involved.

Ok, ok – I confess, I am taking this passage out of context. The “end” that Jesus is speaking about is his return, not the end of the pandemic. However, I don’t think it is an inappropriate use of this concept. Scripture is filled with lessons like this about persevering, which can apply to many different situations. As James says, “My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance; and let perseverance have its full effect so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.” (James 1:2-4, emphasis added). The pandemic we are experiencing certainly constitutes a trial, and we are in a moment that calls for perseverance, so we would do well to heed any Scriptural lessons that help us do this.

Or perhaps I should just speak for myself: I am finding myself more reluctant to put on the mask, more ready to take risks, more tempted to “break the rules.” And there are situations when it may be appropriate or necessary to do so. However, I try to keep in mind that the “rules” are not set arbitrarily to control us, but they are designed to protect people. So let us remain vigilant until the very end, doing our best to keep this virus from spreading while still taking advantage of the safe opportunities that spring and summer bring.

Early in the pandemic, Shane Claiborne made a comment that has stuck with me: “Wouldn’t it be great if churches were the last places to reopen because of how obsessed we are with loving our neighbors and protecting the most vulnerable?” I’m not sure if I want Shalom to be the last place to reopen, but I appreciate the sentiment here: our caution is an expression of our love, so let us endure in this “to the end” out of love for the most vulnerable among us. ~ **Brian**

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

Pastor: *Brian Bither, (317) 322-7320*

Vision & Accountability Team: Jeanne Smucker, Cheryl Martin, Carol Bixler, Rod Maust, Thad Wilson, Brian Bither