

# Journeying Together

Shalom Mennonite Church      May 20, 2020

**WORSHIP:** Our relationship with God  
Chair: Linda Showalter

**Last Sunday (5/17)**, we read the story of the Fall in Genesis 3-11, which demonstrated how a small deviation from God's will - when not immediately corrected by looking to the "Conductor" - could spiral into a violence that consumed the whole world. This completed Act I of our Story of the Bible series.

**This Sunday (5/24)**, Wilma Bailey will use the story of Job as a backdrop to a discussion of how we are experiencing the coronavirus. Job suffers tremendous losses: family, health, income and friends along with a feeling that God has betrayed him. He does not know why. An invisible hand seems to be against him. The coronavirus has also created tremendous losses of life, productivity, security, jobs and economic instability. How can we spiritually cope? The scripture text will be Job 1:13-22.

**Next Sunday (5/31)**, we will begin Act II of our Story of the Bible Series: The Calling of a Chosen People. We will consider what God was doing when She called Abram and Sarai to create a new nation, and how this Nation would become the third major character in the Bible's story.

**COMMUNITY LIFE:** Relationships at Shalom  
Chair: Herb Troyer

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

**Sunday, May 24**

9:30a – 1 & 2 Kings SS class

10:30a – Worship Service on Zoom – Wilma Bailey

*No Facing the Hard questions session*

**Sunday, May 31**

9:30a – 1 & 2 Kings SS class

10:30a – Worship Service on Zoom – Brian will preach on "God's vision for a New People"

2p – Facing the Hard Questions – Was Abram's relationship with God unique? To what degree does God reveal truth to people outside of the Judeo-Christian tradition?

**Sunday, June 7**

10:30 a – Worship Service on Zoom – Brian will preach on "Wandering and Wrestling in Canaan"

**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).*

Today, May 20 – David Falls

Next Wednesday, May 27 – Lexie Bither and Carlos Reyes

**Note from Natasha Diener:** see attached letter

Hello Shalom family,

I just wanted to send you my update letter and to let you know that I am doing well in Bolivia despite the conflicts happening here. I will be going to the States in December and hope to see you again soon! Natasha Diener

**DISCIPLING: Growing in our relationships**  
Chair: Martha Yoder

**“Story of the Bible” Assigned Reading**

Throughout our “Story of the Bible” sermon series, we will recommend daily readings at home. Next week’s readings are:

**Monday:** Job 11, Genesis 12-13, Psalm 105

**Tuesday:** Job 12:1-13:19, Genesis 14-15, Psalm 111

**Wednesday:** Psalm 17, Job 13:20-14:22, Genesis 16-17

**Thursday:** Job 15, Genesis 18-19, Psalm 11

**Friday:** Job 16, Psalm 12, Genesis 20-21

**Saturday:** Job 17, Genesis 22-23, Psalm 40

**Facing the Hard Questions sermon discussion**

As a corollary to our “Story of the Bible” sermon series, Brian will host a sermon discussion class at 2p on Sundays that will wrestle with the critical questions about the Bible in light of modern insights into science, history, and ethics. These sessions may be recorded and posted on the internet.

*\*\* There will be no “Facing the Hard Questions this week. \*\**

**Discipling Commission** met by Zoom to think together about how to help Shalom grow in love of God, each other, and others during this time of physical distancing. Here are some of our reflections:

--It does not seem that more screen time would be helpful to our children and youth, many of whom are already spending a lot of time online for school. We would welcome any ideas you might have about how to keep them connected during the summer.

--We would like to spend time during the adult Sunday school hour (currently 9:30-10:25) hearing from each other. Would you like to share about your work? Your family traditions? Your faith journey? Email or call Martha Yoder Maust with ideas.

--Since this is our year to focus on the Story of the Bible, we would also welcome offers to share a favorite Bible text and why it has been important to you. This could include songs inspired by Bible texts. Have you memorized a favorite book or chapter? We would love to hear you recite it.

--There may be some Sundays in which we will not have anyone scheduled to share, and if that is the case, we will all enjoy a little more Sabbath rest. We will keep you informed in the Journeying Together.

Thanks in advance for your input, Martha Yoder Maust

**OUTREACH: Relationships beyond Shalom**  
Chair: Brad Yoder

**Family Promise update:** See attached document.

We just spoke with **Peter and Delicia** about their work in Ecuador during the pandemic. This article from Mennonite Mission Network describes some of the adaptations that the Quito Mennonite Church is making during this time. The needs are great. Please keep them in your prayers.

<https://www.mennonitemission.net/news/Transforming-bags-of-groceries-into-bread-of-God>

Also, see the attached letter from Peter and Delicia.

### **Thank you**

We at Mennonite Central Committee want to express our appreciation to the Shalom congregation for continuing to support the work of MCC, especially during this unusual spring. Our centennial year is turning out quite different than expected, as many relief sales were forced to cancel and thrift shops being temporarily closed, leading to significant budget losses for MCC, forcing significant adjustments of priorities and changes in regional and international programming. Your solidarity during these days of uncertainty gives us hope that the critical work of our partners internationally will be able to continue, particularly as the COVID-19 crisis significantly impacts under resourced communities around the world. Here is a short video to share our gratitude: <https://youtu.be/EujEaiqCYc>  
Les Gustafson-Zook, Constituent Relations Coordinator, MCC Great Lakes

### **ADMINISTRATION: Congregational support systems** Chair: Laura Harms

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](#)!

Mike Wigginton is now managing our Zoom calendar and uploading 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 him at [mlwigginton@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mlwigginton@sbcglobal.net).

Send announcements for Journeying Together to [office@shalommennonite.com](mailto:office@shalommennonite.com) by 5 pm on Wednesday.

### **Reflections On Pilgrimage**

#### **Learn the Land**

On the very first day of the Old Testament class I took in seminary, I was stunned when the professor told the class that we needed to learn the basic geography of ancient Israel for a quiz by the end of the week. To clarify, this was not just going to be a multiple-choice quiz. She informed us that we would each be given a blank sheet of paper that Friday, and we would be expected to draw a map of Israel from scratch. Now, for someone like me who is both terrible at drawing and is a perfectionist, this assignment was quite daunting. But I got through it, and once we actually started reading the Older Testament, I immediately saw how wise my professor was to insist that we learn some geography right away.

Next week, we will enter "Act II" of the Story of the Bible sermon series by reading the story of Abraham and Sarah, which is not just a story about people, but also a story about land. Their story begins in Genesis 12:1: "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the *land* I will show you" (emphasis added). Upon hearing this command from God, Abraham immediately started his sojourn into unknown territory, and the readers of the Bible are therefore introduced to the

land – and not just to one land, but to many lands –including the land of Canaan, the Negev, the hill country between Bethel and Ai, and the wilderness of Paran.

Unfortunately, for most American readers, these places are completely unfamiliar to us. Therefore, our eyes tend to skip right over these references without giving any thought to it when we are reading Genesis. However, by doing this, we miss out on a lot of meaning and messaging in the Bible, and there are simple things we can do to fix that.

One might start by writing down or circling all the place names that are unfamiliar. Sometimes, just looking up these locations on a map can help you understand the whole story better. For example, in Genesis 14, we are told about a war between King Amraphel *of Shinar*, King Arioch *of Ellasar*, King Chedorlaomer *of Elam*, and King Tidal *of Goiim* **against** King Bera *of Sodom*, King Birsha *of Gomorrah*, King Shinab *of Admah*, King Shemember *of Zeboiim*, and the unnamed king of Zoar in *the Valley of Siddim*. (It's worth noting that a "king" in these times usually referred to the local ruler of a city and its surrounding countryside). If you look up the cities of the first four kings – Shinar, Ellasar, Elam, and Goiim – then you will discover that these are all in or near Mesopotamia, which was the wealthiest and most powerful region of the ancient world. By contrast, the cities of the next five kings were all located in the region of the Jordan valley – which was *not* a powerful region in ancient times. Then, if you look up the Valley of Siddim, you'll realize that the more powerful kings were coming all of the way from Mesopotamia to invade the region and plunder it. Doesn't that give the story a different feel?

At other times, the place names are important because of events that will happen in them later. For example, when the mysterious King Melchizedek blesses Abraham after fighting off the Mesopotamian invaders, we learn that Melchizedek is the King of "Salem." If you were to google "Salem" or look at a footnote in your Bible, you would learn that it is the old name for the city of Jerusalem. Thus, this encounter foreshadows the religious importance that city would have as the religious center for Abraham's descendants many centuries later.

I know that some of us have more time than others to explore these things, but even doing a simple activity like scribbling a name down or circling it can help your eyes focus on it a little more. Who knows? Maybe that place will get mentioned in a sermon, and you'll be glad you made a note of it. Whatever you can do to learn anything the geography of Israel, I guarantee that it will enhance your Bible reading experience many times over.

- Brian Bither

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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Please submit information by Wednesday, 5 pm, to [office@shalommennonite.com](mailto:office@shalommennonite.com)