

***JOURNEYING TOGETHER***

***A weekly email newsletter of Shalom Mennonite Church***

***\*\* To view graphics and a more colorful version, open the attached pdf file. \*\****

***DECEMBER 25, 2024***

## CALENDAR

Mon, January 13: \*BRO @ Northwest Panera, 9236 N Michigan Rd  
Tue, January 14: Commission Chairs Zoom meeting, 6:30 pm  
Thu, January 16: Community Life Commission Zoom meeting, 6:00 pm  
Mon, January 20: \*BRO @ Greenwood Panera, 789 US Highway 31 N, Greenwood, IN  
Tue, January 21: 500-year anniversary of the Anabaptist movement Zoom service, 7pm  
(see announcement)  
Mon, January 27: \*BRO @ Downtown Panera, 430 N Mass Ave  
\*BRO: Brian's Roving Office

## ADMINISTRATION

Mike Wigginton (chair), Andrew Martin, Dan Rosenberger  
Pastoral Representative: Craig Oury

## COMMUNITY LIFE: RELATIONSHIPS AT SHALOM

Linda Showalter (Chair), Bethany Martin, Beverly Smith  
Pastoral Representative: Craig Oury

## Celebrations!

Wed, December 25 – Carol Bither  
Fri, December 27 – Bob Love  
Mon, December 30 – Becky & Mike Wigginton, 1978

## DISCIPLING: GROWING IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS

Carol Bixler (chair), Wilma Bailey, Carol Bither  
Pastoral Representative: Brian Bither



### **Christmas Reading Program for ages 5 – 9**

Congratulations to Lexie and Layla who completed reading 5 books and got to pick out their nativity! Others are close behind!

### **Children's Classes**

#### **Hall Monitor:**

Jan. 5: Joann Buerge  
Jan. 12: Joann Buerge  
Jan. 19: Bob Love  
Jan. 26: Linda Showalter

#### **Teachers:**

2-yr old class - Abri Hochstetler and Carol Weaver will co-teach  
Pre-K and K – Beverly Smith will teach with Joyce Troyer as a substitute  
Elementary - Frank Kandel and Rod Maust will co-teach  
Youth - Jeanne Smucker and Brad Yoder will teach

### **Adult Sunday School Classes:**

December 29: Seasonal singing - all ages  
Beginning in January we will be celebrating 500 years of Anabaptism. The Bible study class will pick up on beliefs and practices that formed the Mennonite Church.  
January 5 – Salt & Light: Session #6 (page 32) Matt 28:16-20; Confession of Faith Articles 9-11 /  
Shalom Orientation class by Brian Bither  
January 12 – Salt & Light: Session #7 (page 38) John 15:9-17; Confession of Faith Article 18 /  
Shalom Orientation class by Brian Bither  
January 19 – 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Sunday - Salt & Light: Session #8 (page 44) Luke 22:14-23;



**OUTREACH: RELATIONSHIPS BEYOND SHALOM**

(chair), Chuck Dunn, Becky Wigginton  
Pastoral Representative: Brian Bither

**SPIRITUAL GIFTS DISCERNMENT TEAM**

Angie Buller  
VAT Representative: Nizeet Deiter; Pastoral Representative: Craig Oury

As we are starting a new year here at Shalom thank you to everyone who has agreed to serve on our commissions. We do have one spot that is yet to be filled. Please be praying for the right person who is willing to serve as chair of the Outreach Commission.

**VISION AND ACCOUNTABILITY TEAM (VAT)**

Frank Kandel (Chair), Nizeet Deiter (Vice-Ch) Sam Bixler, Charity Bauman, Grace Rhine  
Pastoral Representatives: Brian Bither, Craig Oury

**WORSHIP: OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**

Brittany Bither (chair), Justin Hochstetler, Jeanne Smucker  
Pastoral Representative: Brian Bither

**Last Sunday (12/22)**, Brian wrapped up "The Need for a Savior" Advent series by considering "The Need for a Liberator," which became especially apparent in the wake of the fall of Babylon. Jeremiah 42 and Luke 4 will serve as guiding texts.

**This Sunday (12/29)**, Craig will bring the message.

**Next Sunday (1/5)**, Craig will bring the message.

**This week's prayer list:**

- Church: Today, we are praying for **Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship**, which is a Mennonite church in Goshen, Indiana that is a part of our conference. They have asked for prayer that they may discern how best to live into their call to be Christ's loving, healing, and caring presence to people who feel targeted or abandoned by national, state, and community leaders.
- Organization: We are also praying for **Indiana AID**, which is a volunteer group that supports immigrants detained in the state of Indiana by visiting them, bearing witness to their experiences, and providing resources to them and their families. (Contact: Brian Bither)

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Pastor Brian will be on vacation from Tuesday, December 31 to Sunday, January 5. Please direct any pastoral concerns to Pastor Craig during that time.

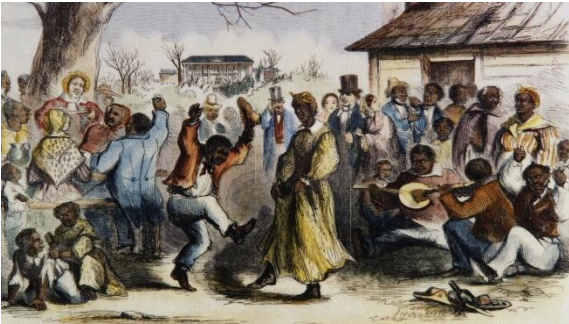
**January 21, 2025 at 7pm** - Next January, we will cross the 500-year anniversary of the Anabaptist movement, which began when Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, George Blaurock, and several others defied the orders of Zurich City Council to baptize their newborn babies and instead baptized one another as adults, which they understood as a voluntary decision to commit their lives to Jesus. Shalom will be celebrating this milestone later in the year, but for anyone who wants to celebrate on the exact day, College Mennonite Church will be broadcasting a special service which you can watch by registering at [this link](#).



## CHRISTMAS FROM PERSONS OF COLOR PERSPECTIVE

Christmas, a time of joy, family, and festivity, holds a special place in the hearts of people, worldwide. Its celebration in Black communities, however, carries layers of history, culture, and resilience that paint a unique picture of this beloved holiday.

The story begins in Africa, where pre-Christian winter festivities celebrated community, harvest, and the bonds of kinship. These traditions, deeply rooted in communal storytelling, music, and dance, formed the bedrock of African culture. However, the transatlantic slave trade in the 17th and 18th centuries brought millions of Africans to the New World, where they encountered Christmas as a Christian holiday.



During slavery in the Americas, Christmas provided a rare respite for enslaved Africans. Plantation owners often granted them time off, and it was one of the few occasions they could gather freely, albeit under watchful eyes. These gatherings were not just social events, but acts of resistance and preservation of African culture, as slaves infused their African heritage into Christmas through song, dance, and storytelling.

The emancipation of slaves in the 19th century marked a significant shift. Black communities began to blend their traditions with American Christmas customs. This integration saw the birth of unique practices like the 'John Canoe' parades, which combined African masquerade traditions with Western holiday elements, exemplifying the blend of cultures (also known as Junkanoo or Jankunu).



The Harlem Renaissance in the early 20th century further reshaped the Black Christmas experience. This cultural movement celebrated Black identity and creativity, influencing how Christmas was celebrated.

Churches and community centers became hubs for concerts, plays, and readings that narrated the Black experience, often weaving in themes of hope and liberation into the Christmas narrative.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement used Christmas as a platform for activism and raising awareness about racial inequality. Leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. highlighted the juxtaposition of the Christmas message of peace with the ongoing struggle for civil rights, adding a profound depth to the holiday's significance in Black communities.



Today, Christmas in Black households often blends traditional Christian elements with African and African-American cultural practices. Kwanzaa, celebrated from December 26th to January 1st, has also emerged as a holiday that honors African heritage and values, often observed alongside Christmas. These celebrations are not only festive occasions but also times for reflection on the past and hope for the future.

The history of Christmas from a Black perspective is a tapestry of struggle, resilience, and joy. It is a narrative that goes beyond mere celebration, embedding itself in the broader context of cultural and historical memory. As we deck the halls and gather around our tables this

Christmas, let us remember and honor the rich, diverse, and profound ways this holiday has been celebrated in Black communities throughout history.

Other practices:

Trinidad and Tobago may be known for soca and calypso, but during the holiday period, the islands are transformed into a bastion of spirited folk melodies known as *parang music*.



*Winneba Fancy Dress Festival:* This even in Ghana is a dynamic and culturally significant celebration, known locally as Kakamotobi. Its rituals have deep historical roots and showcase the fusion of African and European influences. Its origins lie in colonial Ghana, when Dutch settlers would wear masks and costumes to New year's Eve parties. Those costumes often represented fanciful or scary characters.

More on Junkanoo, also known as Januknu and John Canoe: This is a celebration that dates back to the 1700s. the name is said to have been based on the legendary figure "John Canoe," revered West African chief. This lively festival is a symbol of cultural identity in the Bahamas, but the holiday is also observed in various forms in Belize, Jamaica and South Carolina.

Junkanoo originated with enslaved Africans who were granted three days off each year: Christmas, Boxing Day (December 26), and New Year's Day. These occasions gave them the opportunity to exalt in their heritage, their spiritual beliefs, and the heroes from their homeland.



Even after the abolition of slavery, Junkanoo lore persisted and evolved. The holiday became a vital part of Bahamian culture and spread to other regions where African traditions were prevalent. The celebration is characterized by colorful and elaborate costumes, vibrant music featuring instruments like goatskin drums and cowbells) and spirited dancing. Participants often spend months creating their costumes, which are visually striking and exemplify fine craftsmanship.

<https://stlargusnews.com/the-history-of-christmas-from-a-black-perspective/>  
<https://www.essence.com/holidays/black-holiday-celebrations-beyond-christmas/>



Need something? Have something to give away?

### ROUTINE INFORMATION

**“SHARING OUR LIVES” weekly power point:** We invite photo submissions of events / hobbies / interests in your lives. Send pictures to Linda Showalter at [lindashowalter52@gmail.com](mailto:lindashowalter52@gmail.com) by noon on Saturday. It will run before and after the service.

#### **BULLETIN INFORMATION:**

- Send announcements to Linda Showalter at [lindashowalter52@gmail.com](mailto:lindashowalter52@gmail.com) by Friday, 10 am.
- **Bulletins** are now attached with the Zoom link for those who are worshipping on Zoom. A link will continue to be sent out each week. If you have a prayer request or announcement you would like to share, **type your request live into the chat** feature on zoom and someone on the tech team will read it to the congregation at church.

**JOURNEYING TOGETHER** is compiled by Linda Showalter each week. Send information to [office@shalommennonite.com](mailto:office@shalommennonite.com) by 5 pm on Wednesday.

**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](mailto:office@shalommennonite.com) or [bixlersc@gmail.com](mailto:bixlersc@gmail.com).

**CRAIG OURY** is managing our Zoom calendar, church calendar, and uploads minutes on the church website. If you need to schedule a meeting using the church zoom account or have minutes to upload, you can email the office at [office@shalommennonite.com](mailto:office@shalommennonite.com) or [craig@shalommennonite.com](mailto:craig@shalommennonite.com).

**BUILDING USEAGE:** If you want to use the building for a meeting or event, please check the online calendar first to be sure it's open, then email Craig at [office@shalommennonite.com](mailto:office@shalommennonite.com) so he can add your item to the calendar. It's helpful to include the contact person and which parts of the building you expect to use.

**YOUTUBE CHANNEL:** In addition to our podcast, Shalom has a Youtube Channel. 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 [youtube.com/@shalommennonite55](https://youtube.com/@shalommennonite55).

**VIDEO RECORDINGS** (MP4) of our Zoom worship services are available online. A link to the worship service recordings is on the Member's page of our website.

Journeying Together is a weekly email newsletter of Shalom Mennonite Church:

6100 E 32nd St, 46226; (317) 549-0577 [shalommennonite.com](http://shalommennonite.com)

Pastors: Brian Bither, (317) 332-7320; Craig Oury, (301) 302-3181

Vision & Accountability Team: Nizeet Agular, Charity Bauman, Sam Bixler, Frank Kandel, Grace Rhine,  
Pastors Brian Bither, Craig Oury