

December 24, 2023
Advent 4: "War on Christmas!"

FORT COLLINS MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP

300 E. Oak Street, Ft. Collins, CO 80524

Worship: 10:00 AM

Pastor: Steve Ramer

Cell: 970-412-7510



SEASON OF ADVENT

During Advent we are called to wait for the coming of God's Chosen One; the One who will help birth a new world, the world that God desires. We are simultaneously giddy with excitement and filled with anxiety since so many of the details still need to be worked out. But like intrepid investigative reporters, during our time of preparation, we must seek to uncover the who, what, where, when, and how of this great and radical Advent hope!

1. GATHERING

Musical Prelude (Geoff)

Call to Worship (based on Isaiah 40)

Leader: "Comfort, give comfort to all of my people," says our God.

People: "Speak softly and tenderly to those who are suffering and without hope."

L: For the families of nearly 20,000 dead (almost 10,000 are children) under the rubble of Gaza, for those held hostage, and for those in the West Bank who also face settler retaliation.

P: A voice cries out from the wilderness, "Get ready, make the way clear for the arrival of God's Peace!"

L: "Let us fill every valley and level every mountain so that God's justice can bring an end to all war."

P: When every nation finally sees the glory of the LORD, they will bend their wills to make true peace!

L: So let us climb to the mountain tops and shout at the top of our lungs, "the Prince of Peace is on his way!"

P: The Chosen One comes with comforting strength to save us from ourselves.

L: For the One who is coming is our Good shepherd, the One who gathers his lambs into his arms, carrying them close in his bosom as he leads his flock in the ways of true peace.

Opening Prayer (based on Psalm 85)

O Chosen One of God, come to us and restore us again. Time after time you have forgiven our mistakes and failures, so please forgive us one more time. For things are a real mess down here and we really need your comforting words of peace. Surely our salvation is at hand! Certainly, steadfast love and faithfulness will meet and righteousness and peace will kiss like lovers do.

Congregational Singing (Geoff)

Welcome and Passing of the Peace

Leader: May the peace of Christ be with you.

People: And also, with you.

All: Let us offer one another signs of peace, reconciliation, and love.

“Martin Luther King Jr. was not just a man of peace. He was a radical pacifist, and so he was against war across the board.” — Cornel West

*“If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.”
— Mother Teresa*

2. HEARING GOD’S WORD

Scriptures: Luke 1:46b-55

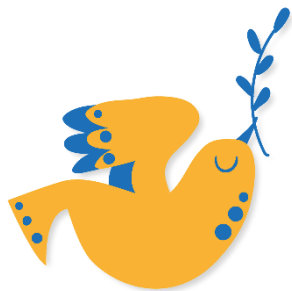
And so Mary declared, “From deep in my soul I extol my Lord and my spirit soars because of the God who Saves me; for God has shown me consideration, not forgetting the lowly status of his servant.

And because of this, from now on, every generation will congratulate me; for the Mighty One has done mighty things for me and Holy is God’s name! Mercy will be shown to those who fear God in every generation; for God’s arm is strong enough to send the arrogant fleeing, taking their private schemes along with them.

The Mighty One has brought down the powerful from their thrones, while simultaneously lifting up the very lowest ones. God has filled the hungry with the best of everything, while simultaneously sending the rich away empty handed.

The Mighty One comes to the aid of those who seek to serve the Lord, showing mercy just as was promised to our ancestors and is also promised to their descendants forever.”

SERMON: “The War On Christmas!” (Steve)



Once again wars will rage on Christmas. But then, most of Jesus’ birthdays sadly have included such an ignoble distinction. This year, a great catastrophe has descended upon the peoples of the land where Jesus was born. Church leaders in Bethlehem and across the Holy Land have decided to cancel Christmas this year due to the ongoing Israeli invasion of Gaza, as well as the increased violence against Palestinians in the Occupied West Bank. Perhaps we should take a step back and consider the true meaning of Christmas and the hope it brings . . . even in the midst of war.

3. RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD

Christmas Songs (Geoff)

Offering & Music (Geoff)

Joys and Concerns (everyone)

Sending (based on Isaiah 9)

For those folk who stumbled around in the dark - they have seen the light! And for those who lived long in places of deep darkness — on them light is shining. Rejoice oh people of God and be filled with joy just like

those who celebrate the arrival of the harvest, or just like thieves do when they divide their booty! For all the army boots of all those stomping warriors, and their helmets and their guns shall finally be destroyed forever. Why? Because a child has been born for us, who has the power to make it happen. His names include, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. And His rule will never end, and in his kingdom, there shall be endless peace.

“I see the world being slowly transformed into a wilderness; I hear the approaching thunder that, one day, will destroy us too. I feel the suffering of millions. And yet, when I look up at the sky, I somehow feel that everything will change for the better, that this cruelty too shall end, that peace and tranquility will return once more.”

— Anne Frank