

December 18, 2022: Fourth Sunday of Advent

“Do Not Be Afraid of ‘Inconceivable Conceptions’ ”

FORT COLLINS MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP

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

Worship: 10:00 AM

Pastor: Steve Ramer

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ADVENT THEME: Advent means “coming” and it is an active season. The primary actor is God, born in human likeness, into a real world. But the created world has its share of action with dramatic stories of angel visits, forced relocation, homelessness, and harrowing life and death escapes. We too are active as we long for light, seek hope, and try to restore a broken world. Together we cry out for restoration, watch for this restoration to take place, and join in God’s restorative process with all creation.

1. GATHERING

Musical Prelude (Stan)

A Reading of Lament (based on Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19)

Listen up God, you who claims to be our Good Shepherd.
Get up, do something. Use your mighty arm to save us!
Restore us, O God. Show your face; we really need some help!
God, are you angry with us?
You seem to satisfy our hunger with the bread of sorrow and our thirst with our tears.
Politicians accuse us of “grooming” children.
The police gun us down even though we’re unarmed.
And since gun ownership is a sacrament, we all feel hunted.
Restore us, O God of hope; may the light that shines from your face save us.
May your hand upon us chase away our fears!
Your ever presence with us will make us strong.
Restore us, O LORD God of justice; the light that shines from your face will save us!





Call to Worship (based on Isaiah 2:1-5)

Reader 1: This is the word of God that Isaiah, the crazy son of Amoz, was compelled to shout from the rooftop:

Reader 2: “Soon God’s house will be established on the top of the highest mountain; it shall be high above the hills, visible to everyone and folks from every nation will stream to it.”

People: All kinds of folks will gather and say, “Come on, giddy up, let’s climb that mountain, let’s crowd that house of God so the Divine Creator of all may teach us the true way.”

Reader 2: For it is the Divine Lover who is the final judge; it is the God of justice and peace who can truly restore, renew, and reconcile.

People: Then the people of every nation will melt down their assault rifles to make garden tools, and will convert their aircraft carriers into floating hospitals, and all those unnecessary military bases will be turned into solar farms.

Reader 1: O house of Menno, located in Ft. Collins CO, The Light of the Lord has come into your world, so be sure to walk in that light!

Opening Songs (Stan)

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.

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”

— Franklin D. Roosevelt.”

“Our heavenly Father understands our disappointment, suffering, pain, fear, and doubt. He is always there to encourage our hearts and help us understand that He’s sufficient for all of our needs.” — Charles Stanley

2. HEARING GOD’S WORD

Scriptures: Luke 1:46-56 Mary’s Song

Luke 1:46 And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,⁴⁸ for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on, all generations will call me blessed,⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name.⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are

proud in their inmost thoughts.⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.”⁵⁶ Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

SERMON: “Do Not Be Afraid of ‘Inconceivable Conceptions!’ ” (Steve)



In Luke’s introductory chapter to his Gospel, the phrase, “Do Not Be Afraid!” is uttered twice by the angel Gabriel. Gabriel announces his presence to two different individuals, prior to passing along the message of what I like to call, “inconceivable conceptions.” But what follows Gabriel’s announcement, seems truly inconceivable – the restoration of God’s original plan! God has promised to restore us and has acted in Jesus to further God’s plan of restoration. Because of God’s promise, we can act by asking for what we need and by stepping out in faith – just as Mary and Joseph did. Where do you see echoes of Mary and Joseph’s bravery around you??

3. RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD

Congregational Singing (Stan)

Response (everyone)

Joys and Concerns (everyone)

Offering & Music (Stan)



Sending (all)

Wake up! You know what time it is. The night is long gone and it’s time to get up! The flame of God’s love has come to dwell with in us! So let this restorative light burn brightly into a cold and dark world that is in desperate need of it!

Christmas Eve Service is on Saturday, December 24 at 6:30 PM!