

December 8, 2024

“Opening Hearts: What Do We Ask For?”

FORT COLLINS MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP

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

Worship: 10:00 AM

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SEASON OF ADVENT: Together on the Journey!

One of our Mennonite songbooks evokes wonderful images of voices blending in praise as we travel together on a path toward a deeper understanding of faith. The road can be smooth for stretches but also includes rough patches that challenge or discourage. But if we pay attention, we may notice God’s guiding hand directing us.

Second Sunday of Advent: Opening Hearts: What Do We Ask For?

God generously pours out the Holy Spirit on all who are humble and seek God’s ways. By keeping our eyes on God as we journey, despite the turmoil around us, we open the door for the flowing movement of God’s Spirit.

1. GATHERING

Musical Prelude

Call to Worship (Steve)

Leader: Let us return to the Lord with all our hearts.

People: With our whole heart?

Leader: The hurting and hurtful part? The bleeding and empty part?

People: The sewn-up-tight-don’t-come-in heart part?

All: With our whole heart, with all our hearts we come to worship the Lord God,

Leader: whose merciful compassion, abundant patience, and faithful forgiving love meet us in our need.

Opening Prayer (Steve)

“Nations, like stars, are entitled to eclipse. All is well, provided the light returns and the eclipse does not become endless night. Dawn and resurrection are synonymous. The reappearance of the light is the same as the survival of the soul.”
— Victor Hugo

Congregational Singing (Cathy)

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.

Candle lighting



Reader 1: We know God to be merciful and compassionate,

Reader 2: patient and full of faithful love,

Reader 1: ready to forgive.

Reader 2: Created in God's image, we yearn to reflect these same attributes in our hearts and lives.

Candle lighting (first two Advent candles are lit)

All: We open our hearts to receive the Spirit, to become more like our loving God.

2. HEARING GOD'S WORD

Scriptures: Joel 2:1-2, 12-13 & 28-29

Joel 2:1 Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near — 2 a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness spread upon the mountains a great and powerful army comes; their like has never been seen before, nor will it likely ever be seen again.

12 But there is still time, says the Lord, to return with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; 13 rend your hearts instead of your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for God is always gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and our God does not punish us.

28 Then, "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh" says our God; "your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. 29 Even upon slaves, men and women, in those days, I will pour out my spirit."

Sermon: "Repentance as Returning!" (Steve)



Church seasons such as Advent gift us with a framework to collectively reflect and repent—to turn around—that is, re-turn to the Lord. Once our hearts are opened and cleansed of debris and extra baggage, the Holy Spirit is waiting to be poured into our hearts the loving nature of God. But don't be surprised when you receive even more than was asked for!

3. RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Congregational Singing (Cathy)

Response

Joys and Concerns

Offering & Music

"We are all visitors to this time, this place. We are just passing through. Our purpose here is to observe, to learn, to grow, to love ... and then we return home."
— Australian Aboriginal Proverb

Sending (Steve)

May you leave here renewed by the Holy Spirit,
blessed by God to be a blessing,
with an open heart for Jesus our Lord. Amen within our hearts. — Amen

"Most of us need time to work through pain and loss. We can find all manner of reasons for postponing forgiveness. One of these reasons is waiting for the wrongdoers to repent before we forgive them. Yet such a delay causes us to forfeit the peace and happiness that could be ours." — James E. Faust