

*How will we know...
why me*



December 24, 2023

SALEM-ZION MENNONITE CHURCH



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Advent 4: "How will we know....Why me?"

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GATHERING TO WORSHIP

Prelude – Partita on *Creator of the Stars of Night*
(David Cherwien)

Dan Graber

Welcome

Janette Epp

Call to Worship

Leader: God sent the angel Gabriel to a young woman in Nazareth named Mary. He said to her, "Greetings, favored one! God is with you."

High Voices: But Mary was perplexed by Gabriel's words,

Low Voices: and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

Leader: The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, for you have found favor with God."

People: Like Mary, we're also ordinary. Will God really work through us? (pause)

All: Together we ponder.

Song – *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*

Instrumental

Opening Prayer

* Hymn – *Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light*

VT #269

* Greeting each other

Children's Story *Away in a Manger* (VT #257)

Gwen Ortman

Sharing our Offerings – SD Network Against Family Violence
and Sexual Assault; MCC Kits: 1 hand towel

Offertory – *Fum, Fum, Fum* (arr. Richard Lind)

HEARING GOD'S WORD

Hearing the Old Testament

II Samuel 7:1-11,16

Drama

Special Music

Dan Graber and Beth Kaufman

* Hearing the Gospel

Luke 1:26-38

Sermon – "Here I Am"

Corey Miller

RESPONDING TO GOD

Hymn – *Still, Still, Still*

VT #264

Sharing and Congregational Prayer

* Sending Song – *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

VT #241

* Advent candle lighting/Benediction

Connie Friesen

L: Together we ponder.

Candlelighter: We're so ordinary. Will God really work through us?

L: Do not be afraid! Nothing is impossible with God. Go, for the mighty one has done extraordinary things, and holy is God's name!

Postlude – *Toccata on Joy to the World* (Michael Dell)

Church Calendar

Deadline for bulletin submissions is 8:30 p.m. Wednesday; salemzion@gwtc.net

TODAY

In the story of Christ's birth, God used many ordinary people to do extraordinary things. In our humility, we sometimes ask "Why me?" when God invites us to participate, but perhaps we should ask "Why **not** me?" Today we ponder how God uses average people to do kingdom things. Welcome to our worship!

The offering that we are celebrating today is for the **SD Network Against Family Violence and Sexual Assault**. From March 2023 to October 2023, emergency services funding has assisted 141 victims/survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or human sex trafficking and their 201 children with various needs to remove barriers to safety. Funds have helped purchase bus tickets to relocate to another location for safety, a security deposit for a safe and secure apartment, medical bills due to the abuse, and many other needs.

Guided thought that all are invited to write about: "**Write down a way you have shown or been shown love in an extraordinary way.**"

All the Advent bulletin covers are illustrated by Rachel Miller.

9:30am – Sunday School for all ages

10:30am – Worship Service

TONIGHT: Children's Christmas Eve program at 6:00pm. Come and celebrate the joyous story of Jesus' birth. Invite a friend or someone who needs to feel peace, love, hope, and joy this season.

THIS WEEK

Pastor Corey and Family Traveling: The Miller family will be driving to Kansas on Christmas Day to spend a few days with Nancy's family. They will return back to South Dakota late on December 28th. Any pastoral issues or needs can be brought to Gwen Ortman, our deacon chair.

Dec. 25 (Mon) – There will be NO Christmas Day worship service

Dec. 29 (Fri) – Fuente de Vida church service at 7:00pm

Dec. 30 (Sat) – Ladies' gathering at 9:00am for prayer & scripture reading

NEXT SUNDAY – Dec. 31

Next Sunday continues the Christmas season. The theme is "*How will we know.... Who knows?*" The texts will be Isaiah 61:10-62:3, Psalm 148, Galatians 4:4-7, and Luke 2:22-40. Corey and Rachel Miller will be preaching and we will be receiving "1 wide-toothed comb; 15-20 cm (6-8 in)" for MCC Hygiene Kits. We will also be celebrating communion on this first Sunday of the Christmas season and the offering will be for the Deacon Sharing Fund.

COMING EVENTS

Dec. 31 – Bridal shower for Hannah Miller in Fellowship Hall at 1:30pm

Salem-Zion Prayer Requests & News

Happenings over the past week:

- The children, youth, and their parents blessed many people this past week in offering Christmas carols.

- We learned recently that three children's books will be written for the *Anabaptism at 500* project. We look forward to getting these books and reading these faith formational stories together!

- In faith, thousands of Mennonites across the world called governing officials for a **ceasefire** in the Middle East. Oh Lord, hear our prayers as we both pray and act for peace.

Remember to praise God for:

- the amazing worship we experienced last Sunday night from our choirs. God's presence was evident in the music, in our worship, and in our fellowship.

- the joy of gathering with family and friends over Christmas.

In faith, we pray for:

- those who feel grief and deep sadness in this season. Surround each hurting one with Your healing hope.

- ceasefire in the war with Israel and Gaza. Lord, help us pray and act for peace so the killing can stop! To understand more deeply the complicated nature of the Middle East conflict, go to MCC's website for more information.

<https://mcc.org/resources/faq-mcc-and-palestine-and-israel>

New Membership Class: Starting in January (January 7th), Pastor Corey will be leading a **membership class** for those who are interested in joining Salem-Zion. Our class will run for 4 weeks and it will include hearing each other's faith stories, a session on Anabaptist/Mennonite Church tradition, a session on the history of Salem-Zion and how we work, and a session on gifts and how we share in the ministries within our church. Contact Corey if you are interested.

All ladies are invited to a **bridal shower for Hannah Miller**, engaged to Silas Driver, on Sunday, December 31 at 1:30 pm. You may bring a gift for Hannah (registry information at <https://www.target.com/gift-registry/gift-giver?registryId=c53aef50-9210-11ee-be81-cd9cfd248466&type=WEDDING>) or there will be a money basket and card available, if you prefer that option. If you have any questions please talk with Digna Miller or Elizabeth Janssen.

Praying God's Peace in Advent: "God of mercy and compassion, of grace and reconciliation, pour your power upon all your children in the Middle East: Jews, Muslims and Christians, Palestinians and Israelis. Let hatred be turned into love, fear to trust, despair to hope, oppression to freedom, occupation to liberation, that violent encounters may be replaced by loving embraces, and peace and justice could be experienced by all. Amen." - The Reverend Said Ailabouni, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Chicago, IL

Pastor Corey Miller

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