

For the **fourth Sunday of Advent**, the group took on what is one of the ultimate mysteries of the Christian faith: that God took on human flesh and blood and became **truly human!** Our theme text comes from the Gospel: Luke 1: 30b-31: *Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.*

The Theme is: the conception of a human being

*The **Biblical group*** zero'd in on the idea of conception. In the book of the prophet Hosea, the failure to conceive was viewed as disobedience to God. In Genesis, whenever "conception" is discussed, the texts speak of how childbirth is painful because of original sin. In the book of Ruth, it speaks of how God is a participant in the conception process, with the emphasis on how the gift of a child is a gift of God! When Scripture claims "before I formed you in the womb, I knew you", it is saying that God is central to the creative process! So, the word or concept of conception is a mixed on, as far as the biblical texts are concerned.

*The **Language Group*** found that "conception" speaks of "a beginning, a new start". The group found it significant that in the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, there was NO reference at all to "conception"!

*The **Scientific Group*** spent some time discussing how science can easily describe the biological processes of conception, it has NO category for "immaculate conception"! If the biological process was what is termed **parthenogenesis** then Jesus would have been a female! Do these texts suggest that God is, in fact, a participant, somehow, in the conception and birthing process!?! (As the Biblical group discovered, that is precisely what the Scriptures suggest!)