

# LISBON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

September 13, 2020 Kingdomtide

“At Home Worship”

## Call to Worship

*The earth is the Lord's. Everything in creation belongs to God.*

**Lift up your eyes; see the mighty works of the Lord!**

*All who hope in the Lord will be called children of God.*

**Lift up your hearts; receive the gracious gifts of the Lord!**

*This is the hour for worship and praise.*

**Lift up your voice; praise the Lord with all your heart!**

**Opening Prayer** Awesome God, we join with creation in proclaiming your glory. All around us are examples of your power and majesty; all around us are examples of your abiding love and grace. We pray this day for the strength and courage to enter faithfully into your covenant that we may open our hearts, our souls, and our lives in grateful praise. Thank you for the gift of Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

**Scripture Reading** “*Bless our God, O peoples, let the sound of God's praise be heard.*” Read Psalm 66

**Prayer of Confession** Spirit of the Living God, forgive us, we pray, when we cling to old habits that keep us from embracing the fullness of life you want for us. Open our eyes to hear your Word; broaden our minds to understand your truth; strengthen our hearts to trust your ways. Restore us and renew us, O God, that we may again hear and respond to your presence in our lives. Amen.

**Time of Silent Confession** *Our loving God invites us to share the confessions of our hearts that we may know the comfort and peace of forgiveness.*

**Words of Assurance** All you who seek God, and who have set your hope on Jesus Christ, hear the good news: we have received forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God's grace. As forgiven and beloved children of God, we set our hope on Christ, and live for the praise of his glory.

**Scripture Reading** “*...each of us will be accountable to God.*”  
Read Romans 14.1-12

**Remembering our Joys and Concerns in Prayer** *We come to worship with many concerns upon our hearts but also joys in our lives. You are invited to share them with God in this time of silence.*

**Prayer** Patient and loving God, we come before you in a spirit of prayer this morning. Strengthen our faith, we ask, so that, in this time of unknowing, we may live as people who wait with hope and expectation. Help us be people who trust your promise shared with us in Jesus Christ, the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. Set our hearts and minds on you that we may know your constant presence and everlasting love. In Jesus' name, we pray as he has taught us.....  
**The Lord's Prayer**

**Scripture Reading** “*...forgive your brother or sister from the heart.*” Read Matthew 18.21-35

**Meditation** “*...and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.*” We know these words well. We also know that they are easy to say.....but much, much harder to do! In fact, it is one of the most difficult practices of Christian discipleship (i.e. prayer, worship, Scripture reading, doing good). I like this thought: “Forgiveness is a hard road to walk, but it is the way to life and life abundant. Forgiveness is the way of Jesus, the way of the cross.” Yes, it's a hard but a necessary road; it is a way of life.

In our recent readings from Matthew's gospel, Jesus has been explaining how it is that the Christian community – which began

with his very own disciples – should live together, how we should work out our concerns and differences. This explanation led Peter – that loveable and most vocal of the disciples – to ask a question about forgiveness. Peter understood the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation among Jesus’ followers. How can we get along and witness together for the gospel if we don’t put a priority on forgiveness?

Peter offered an answer to his own question, thinking that seven times was an exaggeration, a way of showing Jesus how serious he was about this gift of love and grace. But Jesus took Peter’s exaggeration to another level. “No just seven times,” he told them, “but seventy times seven.” In other words, one can’t forgive enough. To infinity and beyond!

Jesus call to infinite forgiveness was not solely for the purpose of creating a restored community. In fact, it might have had more to do with the person doing the forgiving than the one who was forgiven. When we ourselves forgive another for the wrong that has been done to us, we begin to find a sense of peace within our own lives. Forgiveness is a grateful response to what God has done/is doing/will continue to do for us. Forgiving others completes the circle, if you will. God, ourselves, others – all in right relationship, all reconciled to one another as a gift of God’s abundant grace, mercy, and love.

In preparing to write this meditation, I read this story: A woman had been injured quite seriously in a car accident. She had gone through many hardships in her recovery and was quite bitter toward the driver who hit her. She also felt guilty over her inability to forgive. “Then one day,” she said, “I realized that forgiveness is not a duty; it is the answer. When we forgive, the grace comes to heal our hearts.” Lord, help us to forgive.

**Words of Benediction** God leads us into a new day on a new path. Every act of kindness to the least of God’s children is a kindness done to Christ. May we rejoice in the chance to make a difference in God’s world.



Lisbon United Methodist Church  
welcomes, nurtures, and serves  
all people  
with the love of Christ.