

# LISBON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

March 21, 2021 The Fifth Sunday of Lent

“At Home Worship”

## Call to Worship

“I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. May my meditation be pleasing to God, for I rejoice in the Lord.” - Psalm 104:33-34

**Opening Prayer** Almighty God, you invite us to celebrate this new day, a day full of new possibilities. As your Holy Spirit breathes new life within us, may our connection with you and with one another be renewed – even in these days of being physically distant from one another. We come before you as your beloved people, O God. We come with open hearts and minds, ready to worship the One who gives us wisdom, guidance, and truth. Amen.

**Scripture Reading** “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” Read Jeremiah 31:31-34

**Prayer of Confession** Based on Psalm 51

*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;*  
**According to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.**

*Against you, you only, have I sinned and done that which is evil in your sight.*

**Create in me a new heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.**

**Time of Silent Confession** In this season of reflection and repentance, let us bring to God the confessions of our hearts.

**Words of Assurance** The God we serve is the God of life, the God of hope, the God of new beginnings. This we trust and, by

this, we live in the new life given us in Jesus Christ by God’s mercy and grace. Thanks be to God.

**Scripture Reading** “...he became the source of eternal salvation...” Read Hebrews 5:5-10

**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.*

**A Lenten Prayer** Loving God, we worship you in this season of Lent, knowing that you are a God of steadfast love and grace. Carry us, we pray, out of our fears and doubts into the glorious message of your saving love and constant presence. Bless us with your truth and wisdom, that we might be a blessing to others, revealing your promises to others through our words and our actions. You shower our lives with your peace, peace which comes to us through our relationship with your own Son, Jesus Christ. Hear us now as we pray the prayer that he taught us...

## The Lord’s Prayer

**Scripture Reading** “Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also...” Read John 12:20-33

**Meditation** In the middle of today’s gospel reading we hear Jesus proclaim, “Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” This sentence – which we have read many times on our journeys of faith – struck me this time around and sent me “googling” on my computer. Surely we all learned about how seeds grow way back in elementary school but it’s good to have a refresher course every now and then. What I was especially curious about was this seed dying concept that Jesus talked about; the article I found online outlined the steps in

germination: *“All seeds are not created equal; they differ in shape, size, color and requirements for survival. Some seeds have a harder seed coat than others, which takes more time to soften before bursting open.”* Add to this, factors such as seed depth, temperature of the soil, and water. There are lots of variables before new life begins and much fruit results.

This description of seeds and the maintenance they require to truly be on a path to growth reminds me of us as human beings. We, too, are not created equal in that it takes many variables for us to be firmly on the path to growth and life and those variables differ among us. Just as seeds respond to soil and water and, when above the ground, to sunlight, so do we as individuals respond to the working of God’s Spirit within us in different ways. Again, like seeds, some of us have harder “seed coats” than others and it takes a while for the Holy Spirit to work within us; others are like softer seed coats that respond to the Spirit sooner. Some of us have temptations with which to wrestle; others may have made choices which have moved us far away from how Christ would have us live. But, the good news is that God understands that and loves each one of us for who we are, no matter how long it takes us to figure it out, to “die that we might live.”

God showed how much God loves us by creating a new covenant with the Hebrew people; Jeremiah proclaimed it: *“But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* Saving us is God’s idea; all we need to do is trust God enough to follow the example of Jesus and to go where the Spirit leads. Then we will experience what it truly means to die to ourselves and live for Christ. Thanks be to God!

**Words of Benediction** As you continue your Lenten journey, lift up your eyes to the Lord. The One who sent Jesus Christ as salvation for all the world will never desert us. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in, from this time on and forevermore.



## *The Fifth Sunday of Lent*

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