

LISBON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
December 12, 2021 The Third Sunday of Advent  
“At Home Worship”

*“I bring you good news of great joy for all the people”* Luke 2.10

**Call to Worship**

*Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice!*

**With joyful hearts, we come to worship God and draw  
living water from the wellspring of God’s salvation.**

*With music and prayer, we return to a home of love.*

**With loud shouts of joy, we return to our God.**

*Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice!*

**Opening Prayer** Ever-present God, we thank you for gathering us together this day. As we worship you, send your Spirit to dwell within us, we pray. Bless us to be your people in this holy season – a people of justice and love, that the world may know your presence and experience your saving grace. With joy and hope, we pray in the name of the One whose coming we await. Amen.

**Scripture Reading** *“Rejoice and exult with all your heart,  
O daughter Jerusalem”* Read Zephaniah 3:14-20

**Prayer of Confession** Author of life everlasting, remind us once more, we pray, that your good news carries more than the hope of your blessing in our lives; it carries the expectation that we will amend our ways. It is not enough to praise you with our lips; we must also love you with our actions: by sharing our wealth, by showing mercy to the needy, and by protecting the weak and defenseless. In these things you are praised. Help us to prepare for your Son’s birth by embracing the ones he loved; help us to be a people of great joy. 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** God desires that all may live in fullness of life. When our sins are confessed, God comforts us. God longs for all people to come to repentance, that they may see the glory of God revealed in our Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Scripture Reading** *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice!”* Read Philippians 4.4-7

**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.*

**An Advent Prayer** (insert) and **The Lord’s Prayer**

**Scripture Reading** *“I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming.”* Read Luke 3.7-18

**Meditation** Back in the 1980s I did the research required to document my ancestry and proudly prove that I am, indeed, a twelfth generation ancestor of Dr. Samuel Fuller of the *Mayflower*. What I have always found most fascinating about this lineage is that, up until my maternal grandmother, every relative was a man and so carried the Fuller name through nine generations. Is that unique? I have no idea but I think it’s kind of cool! Ancestry is important to some of us who have spent time delving into it. We like to call on those in our past who just may give us a degree of notoriety (at least in our own minds).....like the people to whom John the Baptist was talking near the Jordan River.

John did not come to share a warm and fuzzy message of love; today’s gospel reading clearly shows the difference between him and Jesus, who embodied God’s love for all of us. Rather John

came to call people to repentance, to help them prepare their lives for the coming of God's Son. His language was stern, referring to the people as a "brood of vipers," certain that they would try to call on their ancestry as descendants of Abraham to prove their place in history.

But nothing could have been less important to John than that. "Do not begin to say to yourselves, John implored them, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham." In other words, so what? Who cares that you are Abraham's ancestors? As one commentator says, "(John) admonishes them to verify the genuine nature of repentance by their fruits, not their roots." He continues on to assure them that their racial heritage means nothing to God and even offers the stern warning that every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown in the fire.

And, rather than recoil at such a threat, the people gathered around John at the Jordan "get it." They understand what he is trying to teach them; concerned for their own lives and faith, they actually ask him, "What then should we do?" Oh, the rejoicing that must have happened when that question was asked!

And so John instructs them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." And he shared similar advice with the tax collectors and soldiers, calling them all to a life of generosity and concern for others, a life that would prove to God that they not only heard John's call to repentance but acted upon it! That, too, is our choice as we continue to prepare our hearts and our lives for the Christ Child. Will we say that we have repented of our sins OR will we show that, indeed, we have? May it be so!

**Words of Benediction** Our journey to Bethlehem continues in this holy season of Advent, and soon God's glory will be fully revealed. We watch, we wait, and we anticipate Christ's coming into our lives. May the light of God's glory shine brightly in your lives. We go forth into the world of God's creation as bearers of joy, proclaiming the coming of Jesus Christ. We go with God's blessing in this holy season.



## *The Third Sunday of Advent*

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