

LISBON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
December 19, 2021 The Fourth Sunday of Advent  
“At Home Worship”

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

**Call to Worship**

*Come and worship the Lord this day.*

**Glory to God in the highest.**

*Like Mary, may our souls magnify the Lord.*

**Glory to God in the highest heaven.**

*We rejoice as we sing God’s praises for, with great hope, we  
anticipate the Christ Child.*

**Glory to our God whom we worship with great rejoicing  
this Advent morning.**

**Opening Prayer** God of expectation, fill us with hope this day. Create in us an expectation of goodness and grace. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us, that we may perceive your presence in the world and rejoice at the blessings of hope and joy all around us. All this we pray in the name of the One whose coming we await. Amen.

**Scripture Reading** *“And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.”*  
Read Micah 5.2-5a

**Prayer of Confession** Gracious God, when we hold back and give only a bit of ourselves, forgive us; when we let pride and insecurity keep us from trusting your mercy and grace, renew us. Have mercy on us, that you might restore our lives and nourish us as we grow in the love of Christ. Strengthen us to be like Mary that we, too, may give ourselves fully and completely to Christ’s work in the world. 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** In Christ Jesus, our sins are forgiven and our lives are restored. We rise in joy and hope, for God’s mercy is true, and in Christ we are forgiven and redeemed. Glory to God in the highest.

**Scripture Reading** *“And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”* Read Hebrews 10.5-10

**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.*

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

**Scripture Reading** *“Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.”* Read Luke 1.39-55

**Meditation** Ours is a culture that cherishes the extraordinary. There are so many examples we could cite – from the art world, in architecture, in literature, even in terms of the actual people whom we deem heroes and heroines. We love what goes above and beyond, what is special and never-to-be-forgotten.

And there are the two women in today’s gospel reading. There was, at the time in which they lived, NOTHING extraordinary about them. In fact, just the opposite. Elizabeth was an older woman, whom like Hannah of the Old Testament whose story we read recently, longed for a child. Then God blessed Elizabeth and her husband, Zechariah, with a pregnancy which they hadn’t anticipated. They were ordinary individuals, faithful to whatever God wanted for them in extraordinary ways.

Likewise, Mary was a young woman, betrothed to the older man, Joseph, who looked forward to beginning their married life. Again, an ordinary woman who didn't stand out in her community.....until she did! For God chose this beautiful young woman to bear the Messiah. While there had been nothing extraordinary in these persons, it was the circumstances into which God put them that created an extraordinary, never-to-be-forgotten story.

The wonder of these stories is that both women so graciously accepted that to which God called them. Elizabeth bore the one whom the world would know as John the Baptist, the forerunner to the Savior, whose meager lifestyle we've read about over the last two weeks. Mary sings God's praises in her extraordinary proclamation which history has called the *Magnificat*. And true to who she was, Mary used her praise to call for justice and grace, love and peace for the ordinary, often-overlooked people of the world.

Indeed, this story is all – in every little detail – so very extraordinary. From the announcement of the angel, Gabriel, to Mary's gracious acceptance, to the birth of the Christ Child in a manger through the presence of shepherds and then Wise Men, the Christmas story is ordinariness personified. And yet, it is a story that impacts our lives each and everyday centuries later.

And, so, as we rejoice in the celebration of Christmas and give thanks for the ordinary individuals God has chosen through the ages, how will we in our ordinariness, sing our praises to God? How will we, like Mary, proclaim, "My soul magnifies the Lord!"?

**Words of Benediction** Our journey to Bethlehem is nearly complete; 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 and bring great joy as the Christmas celebration draws near. We go forth into the world of God's creation with joyful hearts, knowing that our Messiah comes. Thanks be to God.



## *The Fourth Sunday of Advent*

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