

From Your Pastor:

HOPE AS A STRATEGY

As the coronavirus continues to weigh heavily on our hearts and minds, it's very important for us to stay informed on all the latest developments. The State of Maine is incredibly fortunate to have Dr. Nirav Shah as the director of the state's Center for Disease Control. His weekday news conferences are delivered with a sense of concern but also calm as he shares the serious, updated information.

I was listening in one day recently when, in response to one reporter's question, Dr. Shah said, "Hope is not a strategy that we can rely on." His words made me stop and reflect. In the scientific world, of course, hope is not a strategy. Science is based on real facts and figures, on what can be quantitatively measured.

Our faith, in contrast, is totally based on hope – on the hope that God is in control, that God does not cause this suffering, and that God's everlasting love and grace gives us strength to see it through.

Just as scientists review data collected over the decades to draw conclusions and make sound predictions, so can we look over the centuries of Christian history and see evidence of God's people living with hope in even the worst of circumstances. We are living in one of those instances now. We are anxious, we are concerned, and we are taking measures to keep ourselves and those we love safe. And in the midst of it all, hope is our strategy. Prayer is our comfort. God is our deliverer.

Easter Sunday will be here soon and, even though we will need to worship in our own homes, the reason for our celebration has never changed: Christ is Risen, risen indeed! God declares that death will never have the last word for those who believe. Instead, we live without fear, grateful for the gift of new life that comes to us in the Resurrected Christ.

Hope IS our strategy. Our God is with us.

Be well and be comforted by the God in whose love we are always together, no matter where we find ourselves.

God's blessings,

Pastor Elizabeth



LAY LEADER REPORT

Hello to all of you, God's beloved church. I hope this finds you well. Remember that you are surrounded by God's love and peace. God will take care of us, just as God always has. The following article is from the United Methodist Women's Lenten meditations. Although Lent will be over by the time this is published, I hope you will find it helpful.

Exodus 17:1-7 From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was not water for the people to drink. 2 The people quarreled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?" 3 But the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" 4 So Moses cried out to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." 5 The Lord said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

LENT

Third Sunday in Lent: Is the Lord Among Us or Not?

by Andrea Reily Rocha Soares

Exodus 17:1-7

In the recent months and weeks, anxiety has found its way into our lives as never before. As we struggle to pay the bills with our low-wage jobs, we are surrounded by the fear of our own deportation or of loved ones. We see our health being jeopardized as we take care of family members with no affordable health care. As the environment gives signs of its fragility, we experience floods, tornados, earthquakes and fires. And in addition to all of that, we are now living in a frightening stage of a possible coronavirus pandemic. We feel tired, drained, fearful; we feel anxious. The world has become a scary place for many of us; it has become a place of injustice, of hate, of loneliness. During a time such as this, how can we know for sure that God continues to be among us? Is the Lord with us or not?

When the Israelites set on a journey of liberation, they were not fully aware of what was ahead of them. Just a few days in, the whining started, "Oh, if we had just stayed in Egypt..." They started facing some difficulties and challenges. Deep within their hearts, they were struggling with what looked like a contradiction between the promise of God—a land of flowing milk and honey—and the actual reality—the lack of water. Despite their anxiety, God opted to reveal God's self one more time. God gave water to the thirsty people! And it was at the same place, Horeb, where God first called Moses for that journey. It was a sign that God continued to take care of the Israelites as God had been doing with Moses.

During this season of Lent, as we search for a sign that God is concerned with us and all our

LAY LEADER CONTINUED

most basic needs, let us remember who we are and who God is. And in a time such as this, God meets us where we are, in the midst of our anxiety, and God takes us to the sacred place where we can experience God's presence and grace once again. Yes indeed, the Lord is with us in this journey!

Rev. Andrea Reily Rocha Soares is a United Methodist Women Regional Missionary in Latin America.

As we move from Lent into Palm Sunday and Easter let us take time to remember to celebrate what God has done for us.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” John 3:16

Jesus is the proof that God loves us and will not leave us without comfort. Praise God! Wave your palms! Shout Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! And a few days later...He is Risen! Alleluia! Praise God!

God's Peace to You All,
Sue White

AFTERNOON CIRCLE

Until further notice, we will not be meeting for our monthly lunch. Stay tuned, we'll be on track whenever possible.

Carolyn

EVENING CIRCLE

Like all Church meetings, the April 7th meeting of the Evening Circle has been canceled. We pray that this will be over soon, and we can resume our time together.

Blessings to all,
Carolyn Jones

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

<u>Newsletter Finance Information - as of March 2020</u>		
Annual Budget Amount for Operating Expenses	\$	126,855.34
Monthly Budget Amount for Operating Expenses	\$	10,571.28
Total March Income	\$	4,791.00
Total March Expense	\$	10,020.68
Total YTD Income	\$	17,972.30
Total YTD Expense	\$	27,292.51

WORSHIP INFORMATION

Hello all you remote worshippers. Our lives have certainly changed! Because of social distancing we have made a few changes to our worship plans.

Since we have not been able to rehearse, our Palm/Easter pageant will be postponed until next year. Liz Doyle has done a wonderful job writing this, so we surely want to do it. We have a whole year of anticipation!

I have ordered palms in case we need them for Palm Sunday. If we don't use them on that day, we will certainly use them for church decor. By ordering them, we are supporting the florist, Pauline's Bloomers, in this difficult time.

Before all the changes caused by Covid 19 we decided not to do the cross of flowers this year. The reasons were the expense and lack of space with the pageant going on. We would appreciate your feedback on this decision. Do you love the cross of flowers, or would you be ok with something different?

Some people have donated money for the cross of flowers. You could still donate to the church and have your loved one on the memorial list. Since we don't know if we will have church on Easter, you have the option of donating the money to the church you would have used to buy lillies, and putting your loved one's name on the memorial list. Of course, if we do have church on Easter, you are welcome to bring your lillies in. (and have your loved one on the memorial list.)

We are hopeful that we can be together for Addie's Earth Day presentation. This is a great way to show support for her. Pray that we can be together that day.

God's Peace,
Sue White

E GIVING

BIG NEWS!! Lisbon UMC NOW HAS AN ONLINE DONATION link on the website!

The much-anticipated "online donation" option has been created! Just in time for the current state of events. As Trudy and Pastor have written, the social distancing due to the Corona virus (COVID-19) and the cancellation of in-church services has caused a financial setback for the church budget. If you wish to continue your financial support of the church and like the idea of online transactions, visit the church's website: www.lisbonumchurch.org

The software and processing is provided by GivePlus, a Vanco product. Payments can be made using a credit/debit card or ACH withdrawal from checking or savings accounts. You can donate as a guest or set up a personal profile to make donations on a one-time only basis or, to make it really easy, as a recurring transaction: weekly, bi-weekly or monthly! You'll find the "Donation button" on the Home page is a picture that says "*Thankful - Grateful - Blessed*" -- because we ARE!

You can contact Monica McCusker: lumc.pr@gmail.com with any questions or problems with making a donation.

Celebrate Life and may God's Peace be with you,

Monica McCusker, 207-754-9569

SPECIAL EASTER OFFERING

This is the time of year when I draft an Easter letter which is sent to you, LUMC's members and friends, to give you thanks for your ongoing support of our church. The church leadership is grateful for your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness for Jesus Christ.

We won't be sending out that special Easter offering envelope this year. However, you have received the letter from our Finance chairperson, Trudy Duval, reminding you that the church's ongoing expenses continue even when we aren't there to put our offerings into the plate in worship.

We appreciate the offerings being mailed to the church right now; if you wish, please add a special Easter offering into your contribution. Thank you for your generosity.

Pastor Elizabeth



**Lisbon United
Methodist Church**

14 School Street
Lisbon Falls, Maine 04252
(207)353-4982

Sunday Worship Service

Sunday Worship

9:30 a.m.

***Experienced people are ready to provide
nursery care for infants.***

Please speak with a greeter.

Office Hours: Monday 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Thursday 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Other times available by appointment

Friday is the Pastor's Sabbath day

Office Phone Number: 353-4982

Parsonage Phone Number: 407-4406

Important Contacts:

Pastor: Rev. Elizabeth J. Bachelder Smith

pastor@lisbonumchurch.org

Organist & Choir Director: Debbie Greim

576-8527 dmusicnote@myfairpoint.net

Lay Leader: Sue White

sdwhite071154@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor: Erica Soiett

212-3713 esoiett@roadrunner.com

Custodian: Shane Soiett

212-8316 ssoiett@roadrunner.com

Public Relations & Web Info: Monica McCusker

754-9569 public_relations@lisbonumchurch.org