

LISBON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
November 29, 2020 The First Sunday of Advent
“At Home Worship”

Call to Worship

People of faith, prepare for the coming reign of God.

As we gather to pray and sing and listen, a spirit of anticipation and hope fills us.

The days are surely coming, says our God, when justice and righteousness will prevail.

May our worship illuminate our hearts and minds, freeing us to respond joyfully to God’s call in the days to come.

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 and hope all around us. All this we pray in the name of the One whose coming we await. Amen.

Scripture Reading *“we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.”* Read Isaiah 64.1-9

Prayer of Confession We wait, gracious God, but seldom do so patiently and not always with joyous anticipation. Forgive us when we expect the worst; forgive us when we live with , rather than kindness and love. Restore us with the gift of your grace, and fill us with the power of the Holy Spirit that we may grow into a people of peace and love. In Christ’s name, we pray. 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 We rise in joy and hope for God will lift us

up and fill us with good things. In these Advent days of watching and waiting, we know that God’s mercy is true, and in Christ we are forgiven and redeemed. Glory to God in the highest.

Scripture Reading *“God will also strengthen you to the end”*
Read I Corinthians 1.3-9

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 *“And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”* Read Mark 13.24-37

Meditation As I write these words the date on the calendar is exactly one month until Christmas Day. One month in which we will decorate, shop, wrap presents, and be busy, busy, busy. Even in the midst of a pandemic, I suspect we will try to do many of the usual pre-Christmas activities – especially as we long for something, anything that resembles normal after almost nine long months of Covid-19. We are excited that the season of Advent begins this Sunday for we are more than ready to think about all things “Christmasy.”

The Scripture readings for this first Sunday in this brand new Christian year, however, don’t sound like Christmas at all. No angels, no animals in a manger, no cuddly baby destined to be the Savior of the world. Today’s readings are far removed from the festivities of the Christmas season. That’s because this First Sunday of Advent shares a focus much different than that of December 25th. On this day we read of a darkened sun, a moon with no light, and stars falling from the skys! Wait, what??!

Mark's gospel outlines what the time will look like when Christ will come again. That also is a time of watching and waiting, just as we are doing in the season of Advent. However, instead of our anticipation of the Christ Child, we anticipate when Jesus, as our Savior, comes to usher in the Kingdom of God. Our readings of the gospel of Matthew for the weeks leading up to the start of Advent have helped us focus on the Kingdom and how, as we wait, we should be living as Jesus' faithful disciples.

Lest we think that this week's gospel is all gloom and doom, remember that Jesus shares a story in the midst of these words, the story of the fig tree. That story resembles the current scene outside our windows: the trees are bare and settling in for their winter rest. Before we know it, the buds will begin and, in due time, the leaves will blossom and we will be surrounded with newness once again. I love this resting time of year; as the earth rests, we are filled with anticipation that it will come to life in the months ahead. We can't pinpoint that exact time – as it is with the Kingdom which Jesus will bring. Therefore, we are asked to faithfully wait and love God and one another, as Christ admonishes us to do.

Philip Brooks wrote the words to a beloved carol, *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, that speaks to the Advent time of waiting to celebrate the Christ child and the waiting for God's Kingdom: *"How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given! So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven. No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in."* May the blessings of this holy time be yours as we watch and wait in faith.

Words of Benediction Our journey to Bethlehem has begun, 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 our lives as we go forth into the world of God's creation as beacons of hope, proclaiming the coming of Christ. We go with God's blessing in this holy season.



The First Sunday of Advent

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