

LISBON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
December 13, 2020 The Third Sunday of Advent
“At Home Worship”

Call to Worship

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

We gather to celebrate the coming of the Light.

We gather to celebrate the Prince of Peace.

With praise and worship we continue to prepare our hearts and lives for the coming of the Christ Child.

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

Opening Prayer Ever-present God, we thank you for gathering us together this day from wherever we are. 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 “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.*”

Read Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

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. 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 longs for all people to come to repentance, that they may see the glory of God revealed in our Savior, Jesus Christ. When our sins are confessed, God comforts us. Glory be to God in the highest!

Scripture Reading “*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances.*” Read 1 Thessalonians 5:13-24

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 “*He came to testify to the light.*”

Read John 1:6-8, 19-28

Meditation We are not a people known for our ability to wait for much of anything. We love immediate gratification. We want what we want when we want it! So slow speeds on our computers, long lines such as we experienced at the beginning of the pandemic, slow-moving elevators – we want none of it. We complain that we have to “hurry up and wait.”

In his first letter to the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul offered some important suggestions as those to whom he wrote waited (just as we are still waiting) for the return of Christ. In some of the most beautiful words of his letters, Paul encourages the faithful to be just that: faithful - faithful in rejoicing always,

praying without ceasing, giving thanks in all circumstances, not despising the words of the prophets, and holding fast to what is good. That sounds like a good plan for “active waiting,” one that we would do well to imitate. After all, we don’t know where we are in the arc of God’s plan for the Kingdom so just idly waiting, which we don’t do well anyway, seems pointless.

What we do know is what that plan will look like. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed what scholars call “God’s great reversal” or, in other words, that time when our world will be “turned upside down in the most remarkable, unpredictable, and spectacular ways,” writes one author. Isaiah spelled it out clearly: good news will be shared with the oppressed, the brokenhearted will be bound up, liberty will be proclaimed to the captives, and prisoners will be released. We tend to take these words literally and perhaps that is how it will be but they may have a deeper, more figurative meaning as well. Do you know someone oppressed by a job that they struggle with or a health concern that doesn’t let them lead a full life? Someone broken by undue stress? Someone held captive to addictive behaviors or mental illness? Someone imprisoned by homelessness? Those are all very difficult situations.

But, there is good news. God’s greatest Christmas miracle is that, through a tiny infant born in a manger, God’s steadfast love is with the least and the lost, the poorest and the saddest. We help this great miracle of God’s steadfast love transform the world, just as Isaiah prophesied, when we live this calling and proclaim this message. John the Baptist came to do just that, paving the way for the Messiah. Now it is our turn to share the good news of God’s love in acts of kindness and compassion. Today God is asking: what are we waiting for?

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 our world and bring us great joy in the days ahead.



The Third Sunday of Advent

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