

LISBON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
December 20, 2020 The Fourth Sunday of Advent
“At Home Worship”

Call to Worship

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

As we gather for prayer and praise, 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 coming in that time which is to come.

Opening Prayer Emmanuel – God with us, let your face shine upon us, we pray, that we might know your presence and rest in your love. Once again we gather in this holy season finding comfort and strength as we worship, as we rejoice in the promise revealed in the birth of your Son, our Savior, whose coming we joyously await. Amen.

Scripture Reading *“Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the end of the earth!”* Read Isaiah 42.1-10

Prayer of Confession Gracious God, we confess there are times when we are possessive and proud of the spiritual gifts with which you have blessed us. And yet our Christian experience is so immature compared with Christ’s glory yet to be revealed. Forgive us when we glory in our gifts rather than wait expectantly for your glory to be further revealed. Help us prepare ourselves to be faithful disciples until his day becomes our blessing. In our Savior’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 Rise in joy and hope for God will lift you up and fill you with good things. God’s mercy is true, and in Christ we are forgiven and redeemed. Glory be to God in the highest.

Scripture Reading *“...to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever!”* Read Romans 16.25-27

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 *“Here I am, the servant of the Lord.”*
Read Luke 1.26-38

Meditation “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.” If you or I heard these words, it wouldn’t matter what the angel said next; we’d already be a bit nervous for, first of all, an angel was speaking to us, and secondly, the knowledge that one has found favor with God implies that something else is about to be revealed. And sure enough! That was exactly the case for Mary, the beautiful young woman who takes center stage at this wonderful time of year. Imagine what she must have been thinking and feeling when she heard the angel say, *“...you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”* In our modern-day jargon, Mary might have said, “Yea, right!” But that was not her response, not

at all. She did wonder how it would be physically possible for her to give birth to David's ancestor but, in the face of her doubt, the angel assured her with some of the truest words in all of Scripture: *"For nothing will be impossible with God."* That assurance sustained Mary in her day and has done so for millions upon millions of people ever since. Nothing, absolutely nothing, is impossible with God. That's a promise to hold onto!

Mary grasped that immediately and thus her response, *"Here am I, the servant of the Lord."* "In an immense step of faith and hope, she accepts her call," writes one commentator, "somehow makes peace with not knowing, and willingly gambles on love." And look what comes to pass! God uses an ordinary person like Mary and the extraordinary happens. From her, the Savior of the world is born and, further, through his ministry, death, and resurrection, the world is saved. Extraordinary, to be sure.

We love Mary because she hears the call of God and responds with selflessness. She doesn't say, "What's in it for me?" She simply says, "Yes." Mary models faith, obedience, servanthood, discipleship, and hospitality! And all of this in simple setting of a manger, surrounded by animals and shepherds, angels and wise men. But that's how God works, isn't it? Choosing the ordinary for the extraordinary, choosing the humble to make uncomfortable the strong, choosing the simple to confound the wise. The Great Reversal, as we thought about in last week's meditation. All because what is impossible for us is, truly, possible for God. That's the basis of our faith and I take great comfort in that. I hope that, in this holiest of times in the Christian year, you do, too, as we give thanks for Mary, the handmaid of 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 you 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.



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