

1 How firm a foun - da - tion, ye saints of the Lord,
 2 "Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dis - mayed,
 3 "When through the deep wa - ters I call thee to go,
 4 "When through fi - ery tri - als thy path - way shall lie,
 5 "The soul that on Je - sus hath leaned for re - pose,

is laid for your faith in God's ex - cel - lent Word!
 for I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;
 the riv - ers of sor - row shall not o - ver - flow;
 my grace, all suf - fi - cient, shall be thy sup - ply;
 I will not, I will not de - sert to its foes;

What more can be said than to you God hath said,
 I'll strength - en thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
 for I will be near thee, thy trou - bles to bless,
 the flame shall not hurt thee; I on - ly de - sign
 that soul, though all hell should en - deav - or to shake,

to you who for ref - uge to Je - sus have fled?
 up - held by my righ - teous, om - nip - o - tent hand.
 and sanc - ti - fy to thee thy deep - est dis - tress.
 thy dross to con - sume, and thy gold to re - fine.
 I'll nev - er, no, nev - er, no, nev - er for - sake."

Prayer of Confession (*unison*)

Rebecca Guzman

Before God and God's people, we confess that we have been reluctant to speak out clearly, naming the injustice we see and declaring God's vision. Before God and one another, we confess our reluctance to receive our calling as God's people, made by God and chosen as witnesses to God's dream of justice and joy. Remind us, God, that you have made us for your service and recharge us with your Word. Renew us, God. Grant us courage to live out your Way of peace and grace. We ask it in Jesus' name; Amen.

Assurance of God's Grace

Rebecca Guzman

***Response of Praise**

Gloria Patri

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Amen. Amen.

We Hear and Respond to the Word

Church Family Moment

Kathy Graham

1. In the book *Ruby Finds a Worry*, Ruby finds herself accompanied by a Worry – a small yellow creature who starts small but begins to grow. The Worry becomes enormous. In the letter from Peter today, he also talks about worries. Peter knows that the Christians to whom he is speaking have many worries. Peter is living in this time and he offers God’s people encouragement in these hard times. Peter commands them to cast all their anxieties and worries on God because God cares for them. This suffering will come to an end and God will restore, support, and strengthen them. Would these words encourage you if you were suffering or having trouble? What words would you remember and repeat to yourself?
2. Today is the closest Sunday to “Ascension Day,” which was on Thursday. On Ascension Day, we remember how Jesus ascended into heaven. Before he goes, he leaves the disciples with instructions about how to live and how to carry on his ministry. In some ways, it seems like Jesus “passes the baton” to the disciples when he ascends into heaven. Have a relay race today and think about what it means to “pass the baton.”
3. Check out some art from the story of Jesus’ ascension into heaven. Various artists have tried to envision what it looked like. How would you draw the story? What do you notice about each artist’s depiction?
4. Journal, considering the following:
 - a. What do you do when you feel worried?
 - b. What questions do you still have about Jesus’ ascension into heaven (Acts 1:1-11)?
 - c. What does it mean for us that Jesus has ascended into heaven? What’s our job now?

Children’s Liturgy

Kathy Graham

As the children four years old through third grade gather for Children’s Worship, the congregation is invited to sing (hymn no. 19):

***God of great and God of small, God of one and God of all,
God of weak and God of strong, God to whom all things belong,
Alleluia, alleluia, praise be to your name.***

Congregation: God be with you there.

Children: God be with you here.

The children will return to join their families following the sermon.

Anthem

God Is Our Refuge

Allen Pote

Chancel Choir; Kyle Gavagan, trumpet

*God is our refuge and strength;
A present help in times of trouble.
Though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea,
Though the waters roar and foam, we will not fear.
Come and behold the work of the Lord,
The awesome acts of God.
He is in the midst of his people, in all the earth.
He is the word, we are his hands, he will lead us.
He is the air, we are his song,
We will celebrate his presence all the day long.
He is the rain, we are the stones, he will cleanse us.
He is the air, we are his song,
We will celebrate his presence all the day long.*

Prayer for Illumination

Dr. Brown

Reading from the Old Testament

Psalm 68:4-10

Sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to him who rides upon the clouds — his name is the Lord— be exultant before him. Father of orphans and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. God gives the desolate a home to live in; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity, but the rebellious live in a parched land. O God, when you went out before your people, when you marched through the wilderness, the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain at the presence of God, the God of Sinai, at the presence of God, the God of Israel. Rain in abundance, O God, you showered abroad; you restored your heritage when it languished; your flock found a dwelling in it; in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy.

Reading from the New Testament:

1 Peter 4:10-12; 5:5b-11

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen. Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. And after you have suffered

for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.

One: This is the word of the Lord.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

Surprised by Strength

Dr. Brown

*The Affirmation of Faith (*unison*) *The Confession of 1967 - 9.23*

Rebecca Guzman

The new life does not release people from conflict with unbelief, pride, lust, and fear. They still have to struggle with disheartening difficulties and problems. Nevertheless, as they mature in love and faithfulness in their life with Christ, they live in freedom and good cheer, bearing witness on good days and evil days, confident that the new life is pleasing to God and helpful to others.

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer

Rebecca Guzman

. . . (*unison*) Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Offertory

All Creatures of Our God and King arr. M. Cabaniss

Kyle Gavagan, trumpet

As an alternative to the traditional offering plate, you may support the ministry of SMPC by giving online at www.smpchome.org/give or texting SMPC to 73256.

*Doxology

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him,
all creatures here below; praise him above ye heavenly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

*Prayer of Dedication

Landon Gwyn

Loving God, Scripture tells us to cast our cares on you because you care for us. In faith and trust, we present these gifts, these tithes, and these offerings to you. Bless and multiply them to meet the needs of your beloved children. Inspire each of us to live as Christ's witnesses today and ever more. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

We Go Out to Serve

*Hymn

Soon and Very Soon

No. 384

1 Soon and ver - y soon we are going to see the King.
 2 No more cry - ing there: we are going to see the King.
 3 No more dy - ing there: we are going to see the King.
 4 Soon and ver - y soon we are going to see the King.

Soon and ver - y soon we are going to see the King.
 No more cry - ing there: we are going to see the King.
 No more dy - ing there: we are going to see the King.
 Soon and ver - y soon we are going to see the King.

Soon and ver - y soon we are going to see the King.
 No more cry - ing there: we are going to see the King.
 No more dy - ing there: we are going to see the King.
 Soon and ver - y soon we are going to see the King.

Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, we're going to see the King!

Charge and Benediction

Dr. Brown

Congregational Response

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place, I can feel his mighty power and his grace. I can hear the brush of angels' wings, I see glory on each face. Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place. Amen.

Postlude

Partita on 'How Firm a Foundation' Alfred V. Fedak
 V. Trumpet Tune; VII. Finale

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Worship Service Notes

Leading Worship this Morning

Dr. Matthew S. Brown, Pastor

Zach Bowyer, Director of Music and Organist

Rebecca Guzman, Director of Spiritual Formation

Kathy Graham, liturgist

Nate Gravender, Landon Gwyn, liturgists

Kyle Gavagan, trumpet

A/V Team: Chris Wilcox, Joe Wilcox

Deacon/Elder of the Day: Dick Engle

Ushers: Bob Cushman, Dan DeChant, Gena DeChant, Jenny Gates, Curtis Guy, Kara Guy

Welcome to South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church! If you are joining us in person or online, are a first-time visitor, a long-term member, or anything in between, we are glad that you are worshiping with us and we want to stay connected with you. To receive our emails, sent on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, contact Nancy Metzler, Director of Hospitality and Connection, nancy@smpchome.org. These emails contain a weekly devotion and information about upcoming worship services and church activities. Also, find us on Facebook: [@southmecklenburgpresbyterian](https://www.facebook.com/southmecklenburgpresbyterian) and Instagram: [@southmeckpres](https://www.instagram.com/southmeckpres).

Interested in joining South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church? Our Session will gather to welcome new members on Sunday, May 21 at 11:30 a.m. To learn more, contact Nancy Metzler, Director of Hospitality and Connection, nancy@smpchome.org or 980-265-2839.

Congregational Notes (as of May 18, 2023)

Remember in Prayer

- Whitney, Daniel, Adeline, and Oliver Bayer and their family, as Whitney's father, Michael Salter, entered the Church triumphant on May 16.
- Tammy and Joel Winchip and their family, as Joel's father, Joel P. Winchip, entered the Church triumphant on May 13.
- Janet Dunlap as she recovers from surgery.
- All those affected by the conflict in Ukraine.
- Our mission partners in Bayonnais, Haiti.

To join the prayer chain or send a prayer request:

prayer@SMPChome.org.



South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church

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PO Box 79321, Charlotte, NC 28271

smpchome.org

WELCOME!

After worship, we hope you'll join us in the narthex for cake and punch to celebrate the retirement of SMPC Preschool's Carol Watkins and Mary Lynn Rawls!

Registry pads are located on your pew. Please sign and pass to your neighbor and perhaps speak to someone you haven't met! If you would like more information about SMPC or have prayer concerns, please complete a Welcome Card located in the pew rack.

THIS WEEK'S CLASSES & EVENTS

sunday
MAY. 21
5:00 p.m.
-6:30 p.m.

BAM! Bible and Music
Ages Kindergarten-5th Grade, Narthex
Let's celebrate a fun year of BAM! Children sing, engage with Bible stories, and explore various instruments in peer age groups. Pizza will be served. Please register on Realm by Friday, May 19. Contact: Rebecca Guzman, rebecca@smpchome.org.

sunday
MAY 21
5:00 p.m.
-6:15 p.m.

Youth Summer Kickoff Event at the Bartholomew's Middle and High Schoolers, 402 Marvin Road, Waxhaw
Join us for fun and fellowship! A devotion, swimming, sand volleyball, basketball, a trampoline, corn hole and other outdoor games - you don't want to miss it! We'll have pizza for dinner and a special dessert treat. Please bring a lawn chair and a bathing suit and a towel if you plan to swim. Register on Realm. Contact: Lindsey Odom, lindsey@smpchome.org.

tuesday
MAY 23
10:00 a.m.

Handiworkers Group
Palmer Building 104
All knitters, needlepointers, quilters, cross-stitchers and crocheters (beginners, experts, and anything in between) are invited. Contact: Nancy Metzler, nancy@smpchome.org.

tuesday
MAY 23
7:30 p.m.

Men's Tuesday Evening Study Group
Chapel 206
This group meets the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. All are welcome. Contact: Jon Myers, jonmyers2@gmail.com.

wednesday
MAY 24
9:30 a.m. &
6:30 p.m.

Conversations with Dr. Matt Brown
Zoom (9:30 a.m. or 6:30 p.m.) or Chapel 206 (9:30 a.m. only)
Join us as we discuss the scripture for the coming week's sermon. We welcome new participants. Contact for the Zoom ID#: Dr. Matt Brown, matt@smpchome.org.

thursday
MAY 25
9:30 a.m.

Men's Breakfast Group
Big View Diner, 6637 Lancaster Hwy, Charlotte, NC 28277
This group meets on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month to enjoy breakfast and conversation. All are welcome. Contact: Bob Tyler, Btyler@unitedskates.com.

Scan the QR code to view
this week's bulletin online.



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Looking Ahead

Beginning to Ring!

Learn how to play the handbells while having tons of fun. Ages high school and up are welcome. We are organizing the schedule now. Please contact Zach Bowyer, zach@smpchome.org.

SMPC Golf Tournament

Thursday, June 22, Carolina Lakes Golf Club

For all levels, men, women and youth! We'll warm up beginning at 12:00 p.m. and have a Captain's Choice Scramble with a shotgun start at 1:00 p.m. Cost to play: \$50 per person, includes range balls & prizes. Register on Realm. Contact: Ron Morgan, rbmorgan943@aol.com.

Vacation Bible School

Monday, July 24 - Thursday, July 27, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Ages 3-Rising 6th grade (Rising 5th and 6th graders participate in a concurrent program, Mission Possible)

Ready for some fun with the ultimate hero team? Hero Hotline VBS invites children to answer the call to serve God together. There will be an extended day option this year. Register on Realm. Contact: Rebecca Guzman, rebecca@smpchome.org.

Thank you, Carol and Mary Lynn!

After worship today, we will celebrate SMPC Preschool Director **Carol Watkins** and SMPC Preschool Financial Administrator **Mary Lynn Rawls**, who will retire in June.

With a combined nearly 50 years of service, Carol and Mary Lynn are the backbone of our amazing preschool. The pair, who started together in 1999, have led our preschool with love and integrity through the ups and downs of three decades (including the pandemic years!). They've made a difference in the lives of thousands of children and countless families in our community.

Congratulations to Carol and Mary Lynn on such exceptional careers and thank you for everything you have done for our church family! We hope everyone can join us for cake and punch in the narthex after worship today!

