



South Mecklenburg

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A Service of Worship

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

July 16, 2023

10:10 a.m., Sanctuary & Livestreamed

We Gather

Prelude *For the Beauty of the Earth* arr. Clay Christiansen

Welcome and Concerns of the Church Lindsey Odom

Moment for Mission Greg Hobby

Introit *Mothering God, You Gave Me Birth* Jean Janzen

***Call to Worship** Claire Overcash

One: Welcome to the seed-scattering station!

Many: We thought this was the church! What's this "seed-scattering"?

One: We are called to be the place where the loving, redeeming word of God is shared.

Many: Oh! We need to hear about this love.

One: Open your hearts and lives, dear friends, for God's word for you.

All: Lord, make us ready to receive your word and feel your healing presence. Amen.

***Hymn** *Come, Ye Thankful People, Come* No. 367

1 Come, ye thank-ful peo - ple, come; raise the song of har - vest home.
 2 All the world is God's own field, fruit in thank-ful praise to yield,
 3 For the Lord our God shall come, and shall take the har - vest home;
 4 E - ven so, Lord, quick - ly come to thy fi - nal har - vest home.

All is safe - ly gath - ered in, ere the win - ter storms be - gin.
 wheat and tares to - geth - er sown, un - to joy - or sor - row grown.
 from each field shall in that day all of - fens - es purge a - way;
 Gath - er thou thy peo - ple in, free from sor - row, free from sin,

God, our Mak - er, doth pro - vide for our wants to be sup - plied.
 First the blade, and then the ear, then the full corn shall ap - pear.
 give the an - gels charge at last in the fire the tares to cast,
 there for - ev - er pu - ri - fied, in thy pres - ence to a - bide:

Come to God's own tem - ple, come; raise the song of har - vest home.
 Lord of har - vest, grant that we whole - some grain and pure may be.
 but the fruit - ful ears to store in God's gar - ner ev - er - more.
 come, with all thine an - gels, come; raise the glo - rious har - vest home!

Prayer of Confession (*unison*)

Lindsey Odom

O Lord, you have searched us and known us. You know when we cultivate kindness, and our lives bear fruit that blesses the world. You know, too, when we sow seeds of discord, and our actions produce more weeds than fruit. Forgive our selfish ways. Plant within us gifts of love and mercy, so that we might live faithfully in your kingdom, bearing fruit that enriches the lives of all Your children, and bringing honor and glory to Your name. Amen.

Assurance of God's Grace

Lindsey Odom

***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

Rebecca Guzman

1. Today's parable is about different kinds of seeds and how they grow. Try [this game](#) where you can grow a plant! What does it take to grow a plant? What does a plant need? What does a person need to grow in faith? Why do you think Jesus described faith as a seed?
2. Listen to a readaloud of *The Tiny Seed* by Eric Carle. Follow the journey of seeds blowing in the wind. Many of the seeds and plants don't survive the journey though the seasons, but the tiny seed grows big and begins the cycle of life again. As you listen, imagine yourself as one of the seeds sown by the sower. What would it be like to suffer poor growing conditions versus being sown in good soil, to grow big and beautiful like the tiny seed?
3. Just like the farmer who planted seeds, we have many opportunities to learn new things every day. To grow and become wise, we should listen carefully and be curious about the world around us. To be curious about the world, go on a nature walk! Take a small basket or bag to collect interesting things you find, like leaves, flowers, or rocks. Pay attention to the colors, shapes, and textures of the objects you discover.
4. Finally, journal, considering the following:
 - a. What questions does this scripture passage bring up for you?
 - b. Who do you think the sower might be? What kind of seeds do you think they are scattering?
 - c. If the seeds are God's word, I wonder what we can do to take care of them...
 - d. I wonder what the path, rocky ground, thorny ground, and good soil might look like?

Sacrament of Baptism

Charlotte Leigh Metzler

Daughter of Jessica and Andrew Metzler, sister of Henry
granddaughter of Nancy and Charlie Metzler

Representing the Session: Nancy and Charlie Metzler

Representing the children: Claire Overcash

Baptismal Response

*Child of blessing, child of promise, baptized with the Spirit's sign,
with this water God has sealed you unto love and grace divine.*

*Child of joy, our dearest treasure, God's you are, from God you came.
Back to God we humbly give you: live as one who bears Christ's name.*

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

Prayer for Illumination

Dr. Matthew S. Brown

Reading from the Old Testament

Isaiah 55:10-13

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

Reading from the Gospels

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!"

"Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

One: This is the word of the Lord.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

Shall We Understand?

Dr. Brown

***The Affirmation of Faith** (*unison*)

from A Declaration of Faith

Lindsey Odom

Jesus announced the coming of God's kingdom and its hidden presence in the midst of the world's kingdoms. He taught his disciples to seek God's kingdom first.

We believe Christ gives us and demands of us lives in pilgrimage toward God's kingdom. Like Christ we may enjoy on our journey all that sustains life and makes it pleasant and beautiful. No more than Christ are we spared the darkness, ambiguity, and threat of life in the world.

We are in the world, but not of the world. Our confidence and hope for ourselves and other people do not rest in the powers and achievements of this world, but in the coming and hidden presence of God's kingdom.

Christ calls each of us to a life appropriate to that kingdom: to serve as he has served us; to take up our cross, risking the consequences of faithful discipleship; to walk by faith, not by sight, to hope for what we have not seen.

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer Lindsey Odom
... (*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 *Take My Life, and Let It Be Consecrated* arr. Mark Hayes
Collin Sinclair, tenor

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** Grayson Carpenter
Abundant God, thank you for all the blessings you have poured into our lives. We ask that you receive our gifts and offerings that they may become seeds of hope and love and send us out in Christ's name to sow your seeds of justice and peace. We pray that the fruit of our faith shall lead others to you. Amen.

We Go Out to Serve

***Hymn** *All Creatures of Our God and King* No. 15
(stanzas 1-4)

Unison

1 All crea-tures of our God and King, lift up your voice
 2 O broth - er wind with clouds and rain, you nur - ture gifts
 3 O broth - er fire, so warm and bright, chase off the shad -
 4 All who for love of God for - give, all who in pain

Harmony

and with us sing, Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!
 of fruit and grain. Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!
 ows of the night. Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!
 or sor - row grieve, Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!

Unison

O broth - er sun with gold - en beam, O sis - ter moon
 O sis - ter wa - ter, flow - ing clear, make mu - sic for
 Dear moth - er earth, who day by day un - folds such bless -
 Christ bears your bur - dens and your fears; so, e - ven in

with sil - ver gleam, sing prais - es! Al - le - lu - ia!
 your Lord to hear. Sing prais - es! Al - le - lu - ia!
 ings on our way, sing prais - es! Al - le - lu - ia!
 the midst of tears, sing prais - es! Al - le - lu - ia!

Unison

Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!

5 And you, most gentle sister death,
 waiting to hush our final breath:
 Alleluia! Alleluia!
 Since Christ our light has pierced your gloom,
 fair is the night that leads us home.
 Sing praises! Alleluia!
 Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

6 O sisters, brothers, take your part,
 and worship God with humble heart.
 Alleluia! Alleluia!
 All creatures, bless the Father, Son,
 and Holy Spirit, Three in One!
 Sing praises! Alleluia!
 Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

***Charge and Benediction** Dr. Brown

***Congregational Response**

All Creatures of Our God and King No. 15
(stanza 6)

Postlude *Harvest Fanfare* Gilbert Martin

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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
Lindsey Odom, Director of Youth Ministry
Collin Sinclair, soloist
Claire Overcash, Grayson Carpenter, liturgists
Fiona Mitchell, summer organ sidekick

Ushers: Andy Burke, Bob Cushman, Dan DeChant, Dick Engle, Jenny Gates, David Wooley

Welcome Team: Dana Hefner, Kathy Rasimas

The flowers in worship this morning are given by Kathleen Bearse to the glory of God and in memory of her son, Christopher Watson.

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).

Congregational Notes (as of July 13, 2023)

Remember in Prayer

- 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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smpchome.org

WELCOME!

After worship, we hope you'll join us for lemonade and cookies outside between the sanctuary and chapel buildings. Come meet friends old and new!

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

monday
JULY 17
5:30 p.m. -
7:00 p.m.

SMPC Youth's Mission Monday - All Generations Welcome!
Mecklenburg Hall

Calling all generations! SMPC Youth's Mission Monday at the church is Monday, July 17, 5:30-7:00 p.m. in Mecklenburg Hall. We will do a variety of mission projects. Pizza and cookies will be provided so please sign up so we know how much to order. Please see the registration link on Realm for a list of school supplies needed for our partner school, Smithfield Elementary. Register on Realm or with QR code. Contact: Lindsey Odom, lindsey@smpchome.org



Mission

thursday
JULY 20
10:00 a.m.

Beginning to Ring Sanctuary

Learn how to play the handbells while having tons of fun. Ages high school and up are welcome. Contact Zach Bowyer, zach@smpchome.org.

LOOKING AHEAD

Men's Evening Study Group

Tuesday, July 25, 7:30 p.m., Chapel 206

This new group meets the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of every month. We are studying the book *Courage* by Tom Berlin. All are welcome. Contact: Jon Myers, jonmyers2@gmail.com.

SMPC Youth Pool Party at the Whites'

Wednesday, July 26, 5:30-7:00 p.m. at the Whites' house, 11705 Smart Lane, Charlotte, NC 28277, Middle and High Schoolers

Please bring a salty snack or dessert to share. Pizza will be provided. Register on Realm. Contact: Lindsey Odom, lindsey@smpchome.org.

SMPC Golf Tournament

August 10, Tee Off at 1:00 p.m., Carolina Lakes Golf Club

Due to inclement weather, the SMPC Golf Tournament was rescheduled. If you are now able to join us with the new date, we'd love to have you! Registration is back open on Realm. Contact: Ron Morgan: rvmorgan943@aol.com.

SUMMER SERVICE OPPORTUNITY

The Freedom School Program

Various opportunities now through July 26, volunteer times vary, Druid Hills Elementary, 2801 Lucena Street, Charlotte, NC 28206

The Freedom School program promotes the long-term success of children in grades K-8 with limited means through a six-week summer camp focused on reading skills, character enrichment and community. All ages are welcome - please see SignUpGenius for volunteer age guidelines. Scan QR code to sign up. Contact: Doris Boyd, dorisboydcarolin@bellsouth.net.



Freedom School

SANCTUARY FUND CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Our *From Strength to Strength 2020-2025 Sanctuary Fund* capital campaign has completed its third year, and receipts on pledges are excellent! Total pledges and gifts to the five-year campaign are \$3,100,000, and we have collected \$2,200,000, or 71%. Thank you to all our families that have faithfully supported this campaign!

The goal of the From Strength to Strength campaign is to pay off our sanctuary mortgage, and our goal is within reach! To meet our campaign goal of \$3,250,000 and be debt-free in 2025, **we need additional pledges (over the remaining two years of the campaign) or one-time gifts to this campaign totaling \$150,000.**

Here is how you can join the 255 SMPC families already supporting this campaign:

- make an online gift at www.smpchome.org/give and select the "Strength to Strength" fund.
- contribute via check with "Strength to Strength" on the memo line.
- make a pledge for the remaining two years of the campaign (campaign ends 6/30/2025) online by scanning the QR code below or by emailing Mary Katheryne Zagora at mkzagora@smpchome.org.

Again, thank you to all those currently supporting this campaign. Our goal of paying for our beautiful sanctuary and being mortgage-free is in sight!

Make a Gift



Make a Pledge



FACES OF FAITH

This summer we've launched a weekly series called "Faces of Faith" where we spotlight SMPC members and learn about how their faith and involvement in the church have impacted their lives. This week is Jon Myers!

Name: Jon Myers

Family: Crystal and I met at Virginia Tech and got married right when we moved to Charlotte in 2011. We have two boys, Grayson (8) and Caeden (6).

Years at SMPC: After visiting several churches around town, we felt at home at SMPC and joined as members 8 years ago (about a month before Grayson was born).



You lead our new Men's Evening Study Group. What led you to want to connect with others in this way? I saw how meaningful and impactful Crystal's experience was participating in a women's group at church over the past several years and was seeking a similar opportunity to build community with other men at the church.



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