



# South Mecklenburg

## PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

**A Service of Worship**

**Second Sunday of Advent**

**December 10, 2023**

**10:10 a.m., Sanctuary & Livestreamed**

### **We Gather**

**Prelude**      *Zimbelstern - Prelude on "Prepare the Way, O Zion"* Paul Fey

**Welcome and Concerns of the Church**                      Dr. Matthew S. Brown

**Introit**    David Wood

*Light a candle bright and tall  
For the peace we wish to know.  
Peace on earth for great and small  
God's good news to us bestow.  
Shine within our hearts today  
Come, O peace, to us, we pray.*

### **Call to Worship**

Lighting of the Advent Candle – PEACE  
Francis, Sharon, Graeme, Emily and Fiona Mitchell

Reader: . . . "Prepare the way," she whispers, "for God is coming to  
make all things new."

**All:**      **So we gather to light a candle, because this might be the  
spark we need: Peace, here with us.**

**Hymn**                      *Comfort, Comfort Now My People*                      No. 87

1 "Com - fort, com - fort now my peo - ple; tell of peace!" So says our God.  
 2 For the her - ald's voice is cry - ing in the des - ert far - and near,  
 3 Straight shall be what long was crook - ed, and the rough - er plac - es plain.

"Com - fort those who sit in dark - ness mourn - ing un - der sor - row's load.  
 call - ing us to true re - pen - tance, since the reign of God is here.  
 Let your hearts be true and hum - ble, as be - fits God's ho - ly reign.

To my peo - ple now pro - claim that my par - don waits for them!  
 O, that warn - ing cry o - bey! Now pre - pare for God a way.  
 For the glo - ry of the Lord now on earth is shed a - broad,

Tell them that their sins I cov - er, and their war - fare now is o - ver."  
 Let the val - leys rise in meet - ing and the hills bow down in greet - ing.  
 and all flesh shall see the to - ken that God's word is nev - er bro - ken.

**Prayer of Confession** (*unison*)

Rev. Lindsey Odom

**God of love, pour your grace into our lives. Forgive our wandering ways and guide us along your paths of peace. When we forget the reason and purpose of this season, lead us back to you. Lead us up to that high mountain of faith and hope that we might truly proclaim: "Here is our God!" In your holy name, we pray. Amen.**

**Assurance of God's Grace**

Rev. Odom

**Response of Praise**


*Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
 and the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains.*

*Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.*

## **We Hear and Respond to the Word**

Church Family Moment

Rebecca Guzman

1. Let's think about shepherds today! There are shepherds in the story of Jesus' birth, and there is also the image of God as a shepherd in the passage from Isaiah. Think about the shepherd-like ways God takes care of us-- provides food, walks with us in the dangerous places, rescues us when we get into trouble, etc. One of the ornaments on our Chrismon tree is of a shepherd's crook to remind us of this special relationship we have with God. Maybe you will make a shepherd's crook ornament. You can also use this QR code or [link](#) to learn more about the Chrismon ornaments on our tree at SMPC!  

2. Sing the first hymn we sang today again after you have read the passage. How does it help us to understand what the scripture is saying to us? If you are worshiping from home, you might want to use [this link for a youtube video](#) of the hymn.
3. Listen to a [readaloud](#) of *Come On, Rain!* by Karen Hesse. In the story, the people are waiting for rain. We are also waiting during this Advent season. When the rain finally comes, the people are so joyful they are overcome, just like we will be at Christmas! What is it like waiting for Christmas? Do you ever feel like Christmas Day will never come?
4. Journal, considering the following:
  - a. I wonder why Isaiah would tell the people of God this lesson. What do you think?
  - b. I wonder what Isaiah means by saying, "Prepare the way of the Lord?" What do you think?
  - c. According to Isaiah, who should the people of God put their trust in? Why do you think Isaiah would tell them this?
  - d. Who are some people that help you prepare the way for Jesus?

#### **Children's Liturgy**

Rebecca Guzman

*As the children four years old through third grade gather for Children's Worship, the congregation is invited to sing (hymn no. 114 stanza 3):*

***Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay  
close by me forever and love me, I pray.  
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,  
and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.***

**Congregation: God be with you there.**

Children: God be with you here.

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

#### **Prayer for Illumination**

Rev. Odom

#### **First Reading**

2 Corinthians 1:1-5

Rev. Odom

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God that is in Corinth, including all the saints throughout Achaia: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who

consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ.

**Anthem**                      *Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus*                      arr. Robert Hobby  
Chancel Choir

*Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;  
from our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;  
dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.*

*Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king;  
born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all-sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne.*

*Rule in all; hope of all. Come, expected Jesus. Come.*

**Second Reading**                      Isaiah 40:1-11                      Dr. Brown

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

**One:**      This is the word of the Lord.

**All:**      **Thanks be to God.**

**Sermon**                      Comfort                      Dr. Brown

**The Affirmation of Faith** (*unison*)                      The Apostles' Creed  
Dr. Whitney Bayer

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer Dr. Bayer  
... (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 *Angels We Have Heard on High* Sandra Eithun  
Chancel Ringers

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

Doxology ***Advent Doxology*** R. G. Huff  
***Praise to God, the One who made us.***  
***Praise to Christ, the soon-born Son.***  
***Praise the Spirit, ever with us. Praise the Godhead, Three in One.***  
***Clear a path! Prepare the way! Advent leads to Christmas Day!***

Prayer of Dedication Lily Claire Jacobus  
Holy One, this Advent season, we wait in peace. For we have left behind us a time of fear and uncertainty, and we raise our heads because we know our redemption is coming near. May our gifts be dedicated to help heal the brokenness of our world and to welcome Jesus into the world once again. In Christ, we pray. Amen

## **We Go Out to Serve**

Hymn *Prepare the Way, O Zion* No. 106



1 Pre - pare the way, O Zi - on, your Christ is draw - ing near!  
 2 He brings God's rule, O Zi - on; he comes from heaven a - bove.  
 3 Fling wide your gates, O Zi - on; your Sav - ior's rule em - brace,



Let ev - ery hill and val - ley a lev - el way ap - pear.  
 His rule is peace and free - dom, and jus - tice, truth, and love.  
 and ti - dings of sal - va - tion pro - claim in ev - ery place.



Greet One who comes in glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry.  
 Lift high your praise re - sound - ing, for grace and joy a - bound - ing.  
 All lands will bow re - joic - ing, their ad - o - ra - tion voic - ing.



O blest is Christ who came in God's most ho - ly name.

**Charge and Benediction**

Dr. Brown

**Benediction Response**

R. G. Huff

***Go, all ye faithful! All who know the Savior.***

***Carry the message far beyond these walls.***

***Hold forth the Christ-light. Conquer every darkness.***

***Go forth, O Church of Jesus! Proclaim the One who frees us!***

***Speak peace! Reach out in mercy, in kindness, and love.***

**Postlude** *Toccata on "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen"* Jason D. Payne

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*The Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy is adapted from the work of Karen Ware Jackson.*

## **Worship Service Notes**

### **Leading Worship this Morning**

Dr. Matthew S. Brown, Pastor

Dr. Whitney Bayer, Associate Pastor

Rev. Lindsey Odom, Associate Pastor of Youth & Missions/Outreach

Zach Bowyer, Director of Music & Organist

Rebecca Guzman, Director of Spiritual Formation

Chancel Choir

Chancel Ringers

Lily Claire Jacobus, liturgist

**A/V Team:** Brad Alford

**Ushers:** Aaron Eberhardt, Adeline Bayer, Jake Zagora, Colin Lee, Will Glover

**Welcome Team:** Donna Brown, Jack Hess

The flowers in worship this morning are given by Linda Nagle Hanson to the glory of God and in memory of her late husband, Russell T. Hanson, Jr.

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](mailto:nancy@smpchome.org). Also, find us on Instagram: [@southmeckpres](https://www.instagram.com/southmeckpres) and Facebook: [@southmecklenburgpresbyterian](https://www.facebook.com/southmecklenburgpresbyterian).

**A note to parents:** We are so delighted that you and your children are here! Children are an integral part of our faith community, and we strive to support parents during worship. Here are some helpful things to know:

- Children are welcome in worship. We understand that means wiggles!
- We provide blue worship totes in the Narthex to help children engage in worship. Please return the totes after the service.
- There is a nursery located in the Palmer Building with dedicated staff who are happy to keep your infant - three year old safe.
- Children's Worship is provided for children ages 4 through 3rd grade. The children gather after the Church Family Moment and return after the sermon. During this time, they will explore the story interactively and engage with their peers.
- A glider and changing table are available in Room 301 for mothers who wish to have privacy while nursing.
- During worship, the service is broadcast to the parlor, where there is more space to move around if your little one becomes restless.

Interested in joining South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church? Our Session will gather to welcome new members on Sunday December 17 at 11:30 a.m. To learn more, contact Nancy Metzler, Director of Hospitality and Connection, [nancy@smpchome.org](mailto:nancy@smpchome.org) or 980-265-2839.

### **Congregational Notes** (as of December 6, 2023)

#### **Remember in Prayer**

- Gwen and Mark Volker and their family as Gwen's mother, Carol Matherne, entered the Church triumphant on December 3.
- Tom Robinson, as he recovers from surgery.
- All those caught in the crossfire of warfare in Israel and Gaza.
- 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](mailto:prayer@SMPChome.org).



# South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church

8601 Bryant Farms Road, Charlotte, NC 28277, 704-544-0404

PO Box 79321, Charlotte, NC 28271

[smpchome.org](http://smpchome.org)



## WELCOME!

After worship, we hope you'll join us for lemonade and cookies in Coffee Grounds (located in the narthex). 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!

### CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SERVICES

Sunday, December 24, 10:10 a.m. (Family), 5:00 and 8:00 p.m. (Candlelight Communion). Childcare provided for all services.



Find more information on [smpchome.org/advent](http://smpchome.org/advent) or via the QR code.

### THIS WEEK'S CLASSES & EVENTS

today  
**DEC. 10**  
6:00 p.m.

#### A Festival of Carols Sanctuary and Livestream

Join us for a special worship service led by members of the SMPC Music Ministry along with chamber orchestra and children's nativity. Bring a friend! Childcare provided. Contact: Zach Bowyer, [zach@smpchome.org](mailto:zach@smpchome.org).

monday  
**DEC. 11**  
10:00 a.m.

#### An Unlikely Advent: Adult Bible Study McQueen Room or Zoom

More information and register on Realm. Contact: Rebecca Guzman, [rebecca@smpchome.org](mailto:rebecca@smpchome.org).

tuesday  
**DEC. 12**  
10:00 a.m.

#### Handiworkers Group Room 104, Palmer Building

Knitters, needlepointers, quilters, cross-stitchers and crocheters are invited - all levels! Contact: Judy Jameson, [jgjameson@gmail.com](mailto:jgjameson@gmail.com).

tuesday  
**DEC. 12**  
1:00 p.m. -  
2:30 p.m.

#### A Caregiver's Journey McQueen Room

Finding meaning and purpose as you care for a loved one with Alzheimer's or dementia. Facilitated by Kathy Garner (Alzheimer's Association). Contact: Whitney Bayer, [whitney@smpchome.org](mailto:whitney@smpchome.org).

tuesday  
**DEC. 12**  
7:30 p.m.

#### Men's Evening Study Group Chapel 206

The group meets the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of every month. Contact: Jon Myers, [jonmyers2@gmail.com](mailto:jonmyers2@gmail.com).

wednesday  
**DEC. 13**  
9:30 a.m.

#### Conversations with Matt Brown McQueen Room and Zoom

We will discuss the scripture for the coming week's sermon. Contact: Matt Brown for the Zoom ID#, [matt@smpchome.org](mailto:matt@smpchome.org).

thursday  
**DEC. 14**  
9:00 a.m.

#### Shelter Ministry Mecklenburg Hall

This ministry meets to fill empty medicine bottles with body wash for Roof Above. Empty Rx vials are always needed. Contact: Carol Morgan, [morgancc43@aol.com](mailto:morgancc43@aol.com).

thursday  
**DEC. 14**  
9:30 a.m.

#### Men's Breakfast Group Big View Diner, 6637 Lancaster Hwy

This group meets on the second and fourth Thursdays each month to enjoy breakfast and conversation. Contact: Bob Tyler, [Btyler@unitedskates.com](mailto:Btyler@unitedskates.com).

thursday  
**DEC. 14**  
7:30 p.m.

**Making Space Mom's Group**  
**Chapel 206**

We are studying *Bible Stories for Grownups*. Moms of all ages are invited! Contact: Allison Reeves, [allison.tarwater@gmail.com](mailto:allison.tarwater@gmail.com).

friday  
**DEC. 15**  
7:30 a.m. -  
8:30 a.m.

**Friday Morning Men's Group**  
**Chapel 206**

The group meets on the first and third Fridays of every month. They are studying the book *The Genius of Jesus: The Man Who Changed Everything* by Erwin Raphael McManus. All are welcome. Contact: Curt Ireland, [irelandcurtis00@gmail.com](mailto:irelandcurtis00@gmail.com).

saturday  
**DEC. 16**  
5:30 a.m.

**Center of Hope Breakfast**  
**Meet in the Church Parking Lot**

There are a few more slots available to donate breakfast items or serve. We'd love to have you! Items due to the church by Thursday, December 14. Contact: Bob Williamson, [bobwill31@hotmail.com](mailto:bobwill31@hotmail.com).



saturday  
**DEC. 16**  
times vary

**SMPC/Salvation Army Kettle Bell Ringing**  
**Belk SouthPark Mall, Times Vary**

This is a great volunteer opportunity for families & friends. If you would like to donate to the Salvation Army, go to [salvationarmycarolinas.org](http://salvationarmycarolinas.org). Contact: Terry Gaines, [terryg@carolina.rr.com](mailto:terryg@carolina.rr.com).



Sun. Dec. 17  
9:00 a.m. OR  
Mon. Dec. 18  
10:00 a.m.

**An Unlikely Advent: Adult Bible Study**  
**McQueen Room or Zoom**

Register on Realm or via QR code. Contact: Rebecca Guzman, [rebecca@smpchome.org](mailto:rebecca@smpchome.org).



sunday  
**DEC. 17**  
11:15 a.m.

**Christmas Bible Trivia Fun**  
**After 10:10 a.m. Worship, Sanctuary**

Grab a smartphone and a couple of buddies and let's have some fun testing out your knowledge of the Biblical account of Jesus' birth. Hot cider and cookies to follow. Contact: Rebecca Guzman, [rebecca@smpchome.org](mailto:rebecca@smpchome.org).

sunday  
**DEC. 17**  
4:30 p.m. -  
6:30 p.m.

**Ugly Christmas Sweater Bowling, 4th and 5th Graders**  
**Spare Time, 9600 Pineville-Matthews Rd**

We'll bowl, play arcade games, and eat pizza! This is a drop off event and the cost includes bowling, shoes, a \$10 arcade card, pizza and a drink. Wear your ugliest Christmas sweater! Register on Realm. Contact: Rebecca Guzman, [rebecca@smpchome.org](mailto:rebecca@smpchome.org)

sunday  
**DEC. 17**  
5:00 p.m. -  
6:30 p.m.

**Youth Christmas Caroling**  
**Legacy Heights, 11230 Ballantyne Trace Ct, Middle and High Schoolers**

Drop off and pick up will be at Legacy Heights. Please bring a dozen of your favorite cookies (nut-free) to share with the rest of the youth group. Register on Realm. Contact: Lindsey Odom, [lindsey@smpchome.org](mailto:lindsey@smpchome.org).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**The Longest Night**, A Service of Consolation and Hope for Those Who Have Experienced Loss, Tuesday, December 19, 5:30 p.m., Sanctuary or Livestream

## ALTERNATIVE GIFT MARKET OPEN ONLINE

You can still shop the Alternative Gift Market online! Scan QR code for more. Contact: Donna Brown, [donnammatt89@gmail.com](mailto:donnammatt89@gmail.com).

