



# South Mecklenburg

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

**A Service of Worship**

**Third Sunday of Advent**

**December 17, 2023**

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

## **We Gather**

**Prelude** *Sussex Carol Gallop* Simon Peberdy

**Welcome and Concerns of the Church** Rev. Lindsey Odom

**Introit** David Wood

*Light a candle bright and tall  
For the Joy this season brings.  
Joy like fountains brimming full.  
Through our world now let it ring!  
Shine within our hearts today  
Come, O Joy, to us, we pray.*

## **Call to Worship**

Lighting of the Advent Candle – JOY

Phil and Marsha Eatherton; David, Kari, Grace, and Ryan Wooley

**Reader:** . . . “My soul magnifies the Lord,” she whispers, “and my Spirit rejoices in God my savior.”

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

**Hymn** *My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout* No. 100



1 My soul cries out with a joy - ful shout that the  
 2 Though I am small, my God, my all, you  
 3 From the halls of power to the for - tress tower, not a  
 4 Though the na - tions rage from age to age, we re -



God of my heart is great, and my spir - it sings of the  
 work great things in me, and your mer - cy will last from the  
 stone will be left on stone. Let the king be - ware for your  
 mem - ber who holds us fast: God's mer - cy must de -



won - drous things that you bring to the ones who wait.  
 depths of the past to the end of the age to be.  
 jus - tice tears ev - ery ty - rant from his throne.  
 liv - er us from the con - quer - or's crush - ing grasp.



You fixed your sight on your ser - vant's plight, and my  
 Your ver - y name puts the proud to shame, and to  
 The hun - gry poor shall weep no more, for the  
 This sav - ing word that our fore - bears heard is the



weak - ness you did not spurn, so from east to west shall my  
 those who would for you yearn, you will show your might, put the  
 food they can nev - er earn; there are ta - bles spread; ev - ery  
 prom - ise which holds us bound, till the spear and rod can be



name be blest. Could the world be a - bout to turn?  
 strong to flight, for the world is a - bout to turn.  
 mouth be fed, for the world is a - bout to turn.  
 crushed by God, who is turn - ing the world a - round.

*Refrain*



My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the



fires of your jus - tice burn. Wipe a - way all tears, for the



dawn draws near, and the world is a - bout to turn.

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

Dr. Whitney Bayer

**Gracious God, long ago you sent Christ to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, and to proclaim liberty to the captives. You then asked us to go and do the same for we are the church of Jesus Christ. Forgive us, we pray, for we have not continued**

to share the good news. We have focused on ourselves and neglected to help others. Help us to continue to share the healing and loving words of Christ and to love our neighbors as ourselves. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Assurance of God's Grace

Dr. Bayer


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. If you are here in person today, we hope you'll stay after worship for our Christmas Trivia! You can see how much you know about what the Bible says about the birth of Jesus. If you are worshipping online, here is a QR code where you can play at your own pace. 
2. Today is the Advent Sunday of Joy! Make some joyful art. Write the word "JOY" very large in the center of a piece of paper. Maybe you will use bubble letters. Then, fill the rest of your paper with joyful decorations. This also works if you are staying in the sanctuary for worship! You can use the boards in the worship bags to make art. If you use paper, hang up your art somewhere that you will see it to remind you that Advent is a time for joy.
3. Sing [Joy to the World!](#) The very first verse reminds us why we should be joyful during Advent. Joy is not the same as happiness. Joy is something that we can choose. We can't always choose to be happy, but we can always choose to find some joy, even in very sad times.
4. Journal, considering the following:
  - a. Who did those sent by the religious authorities think John might be? Who does John say that he is? (John 1:23)
  - b. Who does the writer of the Gospel of John say that John the Baptist is? (John 1:6-8)
  - c. Why do you think God needed John the Baptist to prepare or "make straight the way of the Lord"? To stay awake, be alert, be ready?
  - d. What are some ways that you choose joy?

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**

Dr. Bayer

**First Reading**

Genesis 1:1-3

Dr. Bayer

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

**Anthem**

*Every Valley*

John Ness Beck

Chancel Choir; Ann Carney, piano

*Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain made low,  
and the crooked made straight, and the rough places plain,  
and all flesh shall see it together.*

*For the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,  
and all flesh shall see it together;*

*For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Amen.*

**Second Reading**

John 1:6-8; 19-28

Dr. Matthew S. Brown

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' " as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

One: This is the word of the Lord.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

**Sermon**

Witness

Dr. Brown

**The Affirmation of Faith** (*unison*) *The Confession of 1967 — 9.35-9.37*

Rev. Odom

Wherever the church exists, its members are both gathered in corporate life and dispersed in society for the sake of mission in the world.

The church gathers to praise God, to hear God's word for humankind, to baptize and to join in the Lord's Supper, to pray for and present the world to God in worship, to enjoy fellowship, to receive instruction, strength, and comfort, to order and organize its own corporate life, to be tested, renewed, and reformed, and to speak and act in the world's affairs as may be appropriate to the needs of the time.

The church disperses to serve God wherever its members are, at work or play, in private or in the life of society. Their prayer and Bible Study are part of the church's worship and theological reflection. Their witness is the church's evangelism. Their daily action in the world is the church in mission to the world. The quality of their relation with other persons is the measure of the church's fidelity.

**Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer** Rev. 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** *Noel Nouvelet* arr. Raymond H. Haan  
Laura Schelhammer, flute

*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 McAnally  
**Holy One, this Advent season we wait in joy, and we give with joy. Joy for all you have given us; Joy because of your sacred promises. Receive our gifts and offerings, and use them to spread your joy in our world. Amen.**

## **We Go Out to Serve**

**Hymn** *Longing for Light, We Wait in Darkness* No. 314  
*(stanza 1: all; stanza 2: high voices; stanza 3: low voices; stanzas 4-5: all)*



1 Long-ing for light, we wait in dark-ness. Long-ing for  
 2 Long-ing for peace, our world is trou-bled. Long-ing for  
 3 Long-ing for food, man - y are hun - gry. Long-ing for  
 4 Long-ing for shel - ter, man - y are home-less. Long-ing for  
 5 Man - y the gifts, man - y the peo - ple, man - y the



truth, we turn to you. Make us your own,  
 hope, man - y de - spair. Your word a - lone  
 wa - ter, man - y still thirst. Make us your bread,  
 warmth, man - y are cold. Make us your build - ing,  
 hearts that yearn to be - long. Let us be ser - vants



your ho - ly peo - ple, light for the world to see.  
 has power to save us. Make us your liv - ing voice.  
 bro - ken for oth - ers, shared un - til all are fed.  
 shel - ter - ing oth - ers, walls made of liv - ing stone.  
 to one an - oth - er, mak - ing your king - dom come.



Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the



dark - ness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your



church gath - ered to - day.

**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**

*Danse Festivale on "Adeste Fidelis"*

Marko Hakanpää

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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

Ann Carney, piano

Laura Schelhammer, flute

Lily McAnally, liturgist

**A/V Team:** Brad Alford

**Ushers:** Phil Eatherton, Curtis Guy, Kara Guy, Jon Myers, Donna Podgorny, Bob Williamson.

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).

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 13, 2023)

### Remember in Prayer

- Jodi Rumford and Danielle and Daniel Webb and their family, as Jodi's husband and Danielle's step-father, Sam Rumford, entered the Church triumphant on December 12.
- Mary Lou Gebhardt, as she recovers from surgery.
- Sara Tezzi, as she 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

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

## WELCOME!

After worship and Christmas Bible trivia, we hope you'll join us for hot cider 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, Sanctuary and Livestream**

### 10:10 a.m. - Family Worship

Lively, family-friendly worship for all ages. Messages are geared toward a younger audience but still relevant for teens and adults. Childcare for ages 4 and under is provided.

### 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. - Candlelight Communion

Traditional worship services with handheld candles and communion. We will be joined by the Youth Choir and Youth Ringers at 5:00 p.m. and the Chancel Choir at 8:00 p.m. Childcare for ages 4 and younger is provided at both services.



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

## THIS WEEK'S CLASSES & EVENTS

today  
**DEC. 17**  
after  
worship

### Christmas Bible Trivia Fun Sanctuary

Stay after worship today, 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)

today  
**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)

today  
**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).

monday  
**DEC. 18**  
10:00 a.m.

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

This is our last meeting of this Bible study. More information and register on Realm. Contact: Rebecca Guzman, [rebecca@smpchome.org](mailto:rebecca@smpchome.org).



tuesday  
**DEC. 19**  
10:00 a.m.

### Handiworkers Group Room 104, Palmer Building

Knitters, needlepointers, quilters, cross-stitchers and crocheters are invited - all levels! After this gathering, we will take a break for the holidays and resume on January 9. Contact: Judy Jameson, [jgjameson@gmail.com](mailto:jgjameson@gmail.com).



**tuesday**  
**DEC. 19**  
**5:30 p.m.**

**The Longest Night  
Sanctuary and Livestream**

A special worship service for those who have experienced loss of any kind. Contact: Whitney Bayer, whitney@smpchome.org.

**thursday**  
**DEC. 21**  
**12:30 p.m.**

**Food for Thought Book Group  
McQueen Room**

Join us to celebrate Christmas! Bring a treat to share. We are reading *Before I Called You Mine* by Nicole Deese. Contact: Kathy Paquette, khesspaquette@aol.com.

**ALTERNATIVE GIFT MARKET OPEN ONLINE**

**You can still shop the Alternative Gift Market online! Scan QR code for more.** Contact: Donna Brown, donnamatt89@gmail.com.



**JOY TO THE WORLD!**

On Sunday, December 10, we celebrated the Christmas season as a church family with A Festival of Carols. What a joy to witness our talented Chancel Choir, Chancel Ringers, Youth Choir and Youth Ringers, along with a festival orchestra and the cutest children's nativity, recount the promise of the Messiah through song and scripture. Thank you to SMPC member Tom Schellin for capturing the night in this beautiful photo. We are so blessed to have vibrant Music, Youth and Children's Ministries. Thank you to all who participated and all who attended both in person and via livestream!



You can still watch Festival of Carols online and share it with family and friends! Simply scan the QR code.

