





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

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

Dr. Whitney Bayer

**Great God, as we prepare to behold the birth of Jesus again, we are mindful of how we have failed to receive the fullness of that gift. The story points us to your glory, yet we struggle to join in the song of praise and thanksgiving. We are distracted and confused, so focused on things of little significance we overlook the good news of great joy that you have prepared. Tell us again that the Savior is born. Tell us again that we are forgiven. Tell us again that our lives can be abundant in faith, hope and love because of what you have given us in Jesus Christ. 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. Check out this [video](#) that illustrates the story for today. What do you notice when watching the story this way?
2. What do you think an angel looks like? The Bible has lots of descriptions of angels that don't match the way we usually draw them! Sometimes, it says they have four faces and four wings, or sometimes it seems like they look like people without wings. In some places, it says that angels look like interlocking golden wheels! Draw a picture of what you think an angel looks like. Nobody really knows, so you can't get it wrong.
3. Listen to this [version](#) of the song that Mary sings. What do you notice about her song? What does she say? What does it mean?
4. Journal, considering the following:
  - a. What is the relationship between Mary and Elizabeth?
  - b. Who is the baby that Elizabeth will give birth to?
  - c. Why do you think Mary decided to go visit Elizabeth?
  - d. Who is an "Elizabeth" in your life?



### **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**

Micah 5:2-5a

Dr. Bayer

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; 5 and he shall be the one of peace. If the

Assyrians come into our land and tread upon our soil, we will raise against them seven shepherds and eight installed as rulers.

**Anthem**

*Gabriel, Archangel Bright*

Daniel Burton

Chancel Choir

*Gabriel, archangel bright, brighter than the sun is light,  
from Heaven to earth he took his flight. Letare ("Let us rejoice"):  
Let us rejoice! In Naz'reth, that ancient town, knelt he full humbly  
down, and said to Mary, "God is with thee." Letare: Let us rejoice!  
"Hail Mary, full of grace, God is with thee, ever was, He hath in  
thee reserved a place." Letare: Let us rejoice! Fear not, nor count  
the cost, blest in thee the Holy Ghost to save the souls that were  
forlost. Letare: Let us rejoice!*

**Second Reading**

Luke 1:39-45

Dr. Matthew S. Brown

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

One: This is the word of the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

**Sermon**

Confidante

Dr. Brown

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

The Apostles' Creed

Rev. Odom

**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**

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**                    *Blest Mary Walks Amid the Thorn*    arr. Todd Marchand  
Joanna Alford, soprano

*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**                    Lindsey Odom

**Holy One, this Advent season we wait with love, and we give with love. Love for you, O God, and love for all of our neighbors. Receive our gifts and offerings, and use them to create hope, peace, joy, and love within your creation.**

## **We Go Out to Serve**

**\*Carol 110**                    ***Love Has Come***                    BRING A TORCH



1 Love has come: a light in the dark - ness!  
 2 Love is born! Come, share in the won - der.  
 3 Love has come and nev - er will leave us!

(D) (Bm7) (Em) (A7) (D)  
 F Dm7 Gm C7 F



Love shines forth in the Beth - le - hem skies. See, all  
 Love is God now a - sleep in the hay. See the  
 Love is life ev - er - last - ing and free. Love is

(A) (D) (Bm) (D) (A) (G) (D)  
 C F Dm F C Bb F



heav - en has come to pro - claim it; hear how their song of  
 glow in the eyes of his moth - er; what is the name her  
 Je - sus with - in and a - mong us. Love is the peace our

(Em7) (F#7) (G) (A) (Bm) (A7)  
 Gm7 A7 Bb C Dm C7



joy a - ris - es: Love! Love! Born un - to you, a  
 heart is say - ing? Love! Love! Love is the name she  
 hearts are seek - ing. Love! Love! Love is the gift of

(D) (A) (G) (A) (D) (A) (A7) (Dsus) (D)  
 F C Bb C F C C7 Fsus F



Sav - ior! Love! Love! Glo - ry to God on high.  
 whis - pers. Love! Love! Je - sus, Em - man - u - el.  
 Christ - mas. Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

**\*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'"*

Hakanpää

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## 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  
Joanna Alford, soprano

**Acolytes:** Caroline Trimmer, Graham Trimmer

**A/V Team:** Mary Katheryne Zagora, Michael Zagora

**Ushers:** Richard Franseen, Curtis Guy, Kara Guy, Donna Podgorny, Bob Williamson, Michael Zagora

**Welcome Team:** Dana Hefner, Wells Hefner, Jennifer Hurlburt, Kasia Hurlburt

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 Adrienne Jaquith, Office and Database Manager, [adrienne@smpchome.org](mailto:adrienne@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, January 26 at 11:30 a.m. To learn more, contact Dr. Whitney Bayer, Associate Pastor, [whitney@smpchome.org](mailto:whitney@smpchome.org) or 980-265-2835.

### **Congregational Notes** (as of December 19, 2024)

#### **Remember in Prayer**

- Laura Schelhammer and her family, as Laura's father, George Wolf, entered the Church triumphant on December 10.
- Susan Hicks and her family, as Susan's mother, Joyce Shellabarger, entered the Church triumphant on December 13.
- Cathy Janney and her family, as Cathy's mother, Betty Wooten, entered the Church triumphant on December 16.
- All those involved in the continued hurricane recovery efforts.
- All those living with uncertainty in the Middle East.
- All those affected by the conflict in Ukraine.
- Our mission partners in Bayonnais, Haiti, amid the chaos that has enveloped their country.

To join the prayer chain or send a prayer request:

[prayer@SMPChome.org](mailto:prayer@SMPChome.org)



**South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church**

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PO Box 79321, Charlotte, NC 28271

[smpchome.org](http://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!

### THIS WEEK'S CLASSES & EVENTS

today

DEC. 22

6:00 p.m.

8:00 p.m.

**SMPC Christmas College Party**

**The Wheelers' House, 7019 Turning Point Ln., Charlotte, NC 28277**

SMPC college students are invited to join us for an evening of

Christmas fun, food and fellowship! Sign up on Realm or let Lindsey

know you're coming. Contact: Lindsey Odom,

[lindsey@smpchome.org](mailto:lindsey@smpchome.org).

### JOIN US FOR CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24, SANCTUARY AND LIVESTREAM**

**3:00 p.m. - Family Worship** - Lively, family-friendly worship for all ages. Messages are geared toward a younger audience but are relevant for teens and adults and will include a children's nativity! Childcare is provided for ages 4 and under.

**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.

Shop the Alternative Gift Market online! Scan the QR code!



### SERVE IN THE NEW YEAR!

**American Red Cross Blood Drive, Saturday, January 4, 2025,**

**8:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m., The Commons** - The need for blood is imperative right now! Please consider signing up to donate blood (via QR code) or volunteer. Find more information on our website under Serve Our Community. Contact: Bill Ramsey, [bill.john.ramsey@gmail.com](mailto:bill.john.ramsey@gmail.com).



**Room in the Inn - Sundays, January 12, February 16 and March 2, Various Times and Opportunities, Sardis**

**Presbyterian Church** - There are spots open for food donations and volunteers to help with dinner, overnight stays or breakfast and cleanup. Contact: Lindsey Odom, [lindsey@smpchome.org](mailto:lindsey@smpchome.org).

**Tour Nourish Up's New Hunger Hub - Thursday, January 16, 10:00 a.m., Nourish Up, 901 Carrier Drive, Charlotte, NC 28216**

**(meet at SMPC at 9:00 a.m. to carpool)** - We will tour and learn about Nourish Up (formerly Loaves & Fishes and Friendship Trays) whose mission is to nourish our neighbors with food and compassion. Register on Realm or via QR code. Contact: Donna Brown, [donnamatt89@gmail.com](mailto:donnamatt89@gmail.com)



### COMING IN 2025! ALL CHURCH READS 'TRUST THE WHISPER' BY KATHY IZARD

**All Church Reads and Author Talk/Reflection - Sunday, February 2, 5:00-6:30 p.m., Sanctuary** - Read the book *Trust the Whisper* by Kathy Izard and join us for an evening with Kathy (pssst! *Trust the Whisper* might make a great Christmas present for your loved one!)! After sharing the story behind the book, Kathy will answer questions and lead a short "Find Your Whisper" exercise. Children are also invited to a special program with Director of Spiritual Formation Rebecca Guzman featuring Kathy's children's book, *Grace Heard a Whisper*. Casual reception to follow. All are welcome!

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Dear South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church Family,

It is with a mix of deep gratitude and bittersweet emotions that we announce the retirement of Nancy Metzler, director of hospitality and connection at South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church. For almost 20 years, Nancy has faithfully served on staff, embodying all that we stand for at SMPC - warmth, hospitality, generosity and a steadfast commitment to welcoming all into the life of our church.



Nancy has been the friendly face and invaluable resource for visitors, prospective members, and new members alike. Through her guidance, countless individuals have felt seen, valued, and seamlessly integrated into our church family. Whether coordinating small groups to ensure that everyone has a place to belong or overseeing hospitality efforts that make our church gatherings special, Nancy's dedication has left an indelible mark.

Her tireless efforts have been the driving force behind cherished traditions such as Lunch on the Grounds, celebratory cake after worship, and the Women's Advent Tea. Alongside the Hospitality Committee, Nancy has made each event—and so many others—an opportunity for connection, joy and shared faith.

In addition to her many contributions, Nancy and her husband, Charlie, were integral to the idea, construction, and installation of SMPC's beautiful new columbarium, which has provided a meaningful space for reflection and remembrance that will serve the congregation for generations to come.

While Nancy's retirement marks the end of a remarkable chapter, she is not going anywhere! She and Charlie have been church members since 1996 and will continue to be active participants in our faith community. In retirement, Nancy looks forward to spending more time with her daughter and son-in-law, Elizabeth and James, recent newlyweds who live in St. Louis, MO; her son and future daughter-in-



law, John and Jennifer, who live in Apex, near Raleigh; and son and daughter-in-law, Andrew and Jessica with grandchildren Henry and Charlotte, who not only live in Charlotte but are members at SMPC. She and Charlie also plan to travel (first up are Portugal and Spain in April!) and enjoy a "wide open" calendar!

We are profoundly thankful for her ministry, her leadership and her unwavering Southern hospitality.

Nancy's retirement is effective Friday, December 31. As we work to hire Nancy's replacement, please contact Associate Pastor Whitney Bayer, [whitney@smpchome.org](mailto:whitney@smpchome.org), with any questions regarding membership or hospitality.

Please join us in celebrating Nancy's incredible contributions to SMPC. We are honoring her with cake after worship TODAY (don't worry – Nancy is not ordering her own retirement cake!). Let us come together to express our gratitude and send her into retirement with all our love and blessings.

Janet Morgan, Chair, Personnel Committee