



**South  
Mecklenburg**  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Third Sunday after Epiphany

January 26, 2025

10:10 a.m., Sanctuary & Livestream

**We Gather**

**Prelude**                      *Great Is Thy Faithfulness*                      arr. Dan Miller

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

**Moment for Mission**                      Greg Hobby

**Introit**                      *Come, Bring Your Burdens to God*                      South African melody

**\*Call to Worship**                      Camdyn Sheeler

One: Come, all who are weary from the past week.

**Many: We come seeking rest; We come seeking comfort.**

One: Come, all who are in need of inspiration for the week ahead.

**Many: We come seeking God's truth, word, and worship that will set us on the faithful path.**

One: Come, all who are humble, open, and ready to learn.

**Many: We come as disciples, ready to listen and learn.**

**\*Hymn 39**                      *Great Is Thy Faithfulness*                      FAITHFULNESS

1 \*Great is thy faith - ful - ness, O God my Fa - ther;  
 2 Sum - mer and win - ter, and spring - time and har - vest,  
 3 Par - don for sin and a peace that en - dur - eth,

there is no shad - ow of turn - ing with thee.  
 sun, moon, and stars in their cours - es a - bove  
 thine own dear pres - ence to cheer and to guide,

Thou chang - est not; thy com - pas - sions they fail not.  
 join with all na - ture in man - i - fold wit - ness  
 strength for to - day and bright hope for to - mor - row:

As thou hast been thou for - ev - er wilt be.  
 to thy great faith - ful - ness, mer - cy, and love.  
 bless - ings all mine, with ten thou - sand be - side!

Prayer of Confession (*unison*) Rev. Lindsey Odom

**Gracious God, we are far from the people you have called us to be, but we confess that we have wandered from your light and your love. We are caught up in our self-centeredness, seeing things only in terms of how they relate to us, instead of focusing on our need of you, O' God and our need for each other. We passively accept the sufferings of the world, expecting others to stand up and work for the change we would like to see. Lord, in your strength, renew us and compel us by your invitation that we may work to pursue your justice and mercy for all people, sharing your light and your love, in ways great and small. Amen.**

Assurance of God's Grace Rev. Odom

\*Response of Praise No. 582

*Glory to God, whose goodness shines on me,*

***and to the Son, whose grace has pardoned me,  
and to the Spirit, whose love has set me free.  
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen.***

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

### **Church Family Moment**

Rebecca Guzman

1. One of the important verses from our passage is Nehemiah says, “the joy of the Lord is your strength.” We might think about joy meaning happiness, but joy in the Bible is really different. It’s a choice and an attitude, not something that happens to you. Check out this [video](#) from the Bible Project that helps us to understand what joy means in the Bible.
2. Find or create images of what joy looks like. It is a fun google search. I spent about 15 minutes this week just looking for images of joy, and it actually brought me joy as well! What does joy look like? How do you know when you see it?
3. There are a lot of coloring pages based on Nehemiah 8:10. Some of them cost a couple dollars to download, but here are a few that are free: [one](#), [two](#), [three](#). As you color, consider what it means that the joy of the Lord is your (our) strength. How is that true?
4. Journal, considering the following:
  - a) Why do you think the people wanted to hear scripture read out loud? Why do you like to hear it read out loud?
  - b) Why do you think they cried while he read it?
  - c) Why do you think Nehemiah told the people to celebrate?
  - d) How do you celebrate?



### **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. 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.*

### **Prayer for Illumination**

Rev. Odom

### **First Reading**

Philippians 3:12-14

Rev. Odom

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

### **Anthem**

*How Lovely Are the Messengers*

Felix Mendelssohn

Chancel Choir; Ann Carney, organ  
*How lovely are the messengers  
that preach us the gospel of peace.  
To all the nations is gone forth  
the sound of their words, throughout all  
the lands their glad tidings.*

**Second Reading**

Nehemiah 8:1-10

Dr. Brown

-all the people gathered together into the square before the Water Gate. They told the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had given to Israel. Accordingly, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding. This was on the first day of the seventh month. He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. The scribe Ezra stood on a wooden platform that had been made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hash-baddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. Then they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the law, while the people remained in their places. So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading. And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our Lord; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

One: This is the word of the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

**Sermon**

Regrets: Poison or Seed?

Dr. Brown

**\*The Affirmation of Faith** (*unison*) The Confession of 1967: 9.21-22

Dr. Whitney Bayer

**The reconciling work of Jesus was the supreme crisis in the life of humankind. His cross and resurrection become personal crisis and present hope for women and men when the gospel is proclaimed and believed. In this experience, the Spirit brings God's forgiveness to all, moves people to respond in faith, repentance, and obedience, and initiates the new life in Christ. The new life takes shape in a**

community in which people know that God loves and accepts them in spite of what they are. They therefore accept themselves and love others, knowing that no one has any ground on which to stand, except God's grace.

**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** *Bright and Beautiful (A Children's Suite)* arr. Mark Hayes  
Laura Black, 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**  
*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** Rue Woodard  
**Gracious God, may our collective giving result in healing, hope, and justice to those in need. Our giving is a faithful response to the Spirit of the Lord that is upon us. All praise to you! Amen.**

## We Go Out to Serve

**\*Hymn 744** *Arise, Your Light Is Come!* FESTAL SONG

1 A - rise, your light is come! The Spir - it's call o - bey;  
2 A - rise, your light is come! Fling wide the pris - on door;  
3 A - rise, your light is come! All you in sor - row born,  
4 A - rise, your light is come! The moun - tains burst in song!

show forth the glo - ry of your God, which shines on you to - day.  
pro - claim the cap - tives' lib - er - ty, good ti - dings to the poor.  
bind up the bro - ken-heart-ed ones and com - fort those who mourn.  
Rise up like ea - gles on the wing; God's power will make us strong.

The image shows a musical score for the hymn "Arise, Your Light Is Come!". It consists of four systems of music. Each system has a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are provided below each system of music.

**\*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.*

**Postlude**

*Trumpet Voluntary on "Festal Song"*

Daniel Berghout

## **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, organ

Laura Black, soprano

Camdyn Sheeler, Rue Woodard, liturgists

**Acolyte:** Jones Woodard

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

**Ushers:** Andy Burke, Bob Cushman, Dick Engle, Bjorn Hansen, Judy Jones, Carol Watkins

**Welcome Team:** Donna Brown, Donna Podgorny

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).

Our Offertory this week is sung by Laura Black, our new Ministry Associate for Children and Music! You may recall that Laura leads our children's choirs on Sunday evenings as part of our Bible and Music (BAM!) program and since Laura works with both our children's and music ministries, it seemed a natural choice that she sings "Bright and Beautiful," a medley of children's songs! Laura is an accomplished performer in both musical theatre and opera, and she is a passionate and motivated teacher with over a decade of experience working with students of all skill levels.

Interested in joining South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church? Our Session will gather to welcome new members today 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.

## SMPC STAFF

**Dr. Matthew S. Brown, Pastor**

matt@smpchome.org

**Dr. Whitney Bayer, Associate Pastor**

whitney@smpchome.org

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

lindsey@smpchome.org

**Laura Black, Ministry Associate for Children and Music**

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**Zach Bowyer, Director of Music & Organist**

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**Rebecca Guzman, Director of Spiritual Formation**

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**Adrienne Jaquith, Office and Database Manager**

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**Steve Stevenson, Facility Administrator**

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**Tammy Winchip, SMPC Preschool Director**

tammy@smpchome.org

**Mary Katheryne Zagora, Financial Administrator**

mkzagora@smpchome.org

**Church Office Hours:**

**Monday – Thursday: 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

**Friday: Closed**

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**South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church**

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smpchome.org

## WELCOME!

After worship, we hope you'll join us for lemonade and cookies 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!

### THIS WEEK'S CLASSES & EVENTS

**today**  
**JAN. 26**  
**5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.**  
**BAM! Bible and Music**  
**Narthex, Children in Kindergarten-5th Grade**  
 During BAM!, children sing, creatively engage with Bible stories, and explore various instruments in peer age groups. They occasionally sing, play instruments, or display their creations during Sunday worship. We end with a pizza dinner and free play time. Register on Realm. Contact: Rebecca Guzman, rebecca@smpchome.org.

**today**  
**JAN. 26**  
**5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.**  
**SMPC Youth at Sports Connection**  
**Sports Connection, 11611 Ardrey Kell Rd**  
 We'll bowl and play arcade games! Cost is \$25. Please bring extra spending money for food, snacks, candy, and desserts. Register on Realm. Contact: Lindsey Odom, lindsey@smpchome.org.

**tuesday**  
**JAN. 28**  
**10:00 a.m.**  
**Handiworkers Group**  
**Palmer Building, Room 104**  
 All levels of knitters, needlepointers, quilters, cross-stitchers and crocheters are invited. This group meets weekly to work on projects. Contact: Judy Jameson, jgjaxmeson@gmail.com.

**tuesday**  
**JAN. 28**  
**7:30 p.m.**  
**Men's Evening Study Group**  
**Chapel 206**  
 The group meets on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of every month. New faces are always welcome! Contact: Jon Myers, jonmyers2@gmail.com.

**wednesday**  
**JAN. 29**  
**9:30 a.m.**  
**Conversations with Dr. Matt Brown**  
**McQueen Room or Zoom**  
 We will discuss the scripture for the coming week's sermon. All are welcome! Contact Matt Brown, matt@smpchome.org, for Zoom info.

**sunday**  
**Feb. 2**  
**9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.**  
**Adult Study: 'Trust the Whisper'**  
**McQueen Room or Zoom**  
 We are in the last week of a four-week discussion on Kathy IZARD's book, *Trust the Whisper: How Answering Quiet Callings Inspires Extraordinary Stories of Ordinary Grace*. All are welcome - even if you missed the first three meetings! Contact: Melissa White, melissawhite1018@yahoo.com.

**sunday**  
**Feb. 2**  
**5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.**  
**All Church Reads and Author Talk/Reflection**  
**Sanctuary**  
 Read the book *Trust the Whisper* by Kathy IZARD and join us for an evening with Kathy IZARD. 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. Registration on Realm is appreciated but not required. Invite a friend! Contact: Rebecca Guzman, rebecca@smpchome.org.

**sunday**  
**Feb. 2**  
**5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.**  
**February BYG (Big Youth Group)**  
**Mecklenburg Hall, Middle and High Schoolers**  
 BYG is held on the first Sunday of each month during the school year. BYG provides an opportunity for youth to grow in faith and love through Bible study, small group time, good food, fun games and fellowship. Register on Realm. Contact: Lindsey Odom, lindsey@smpchome.org.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Making Space Mom's Group, Thursday, February 6, 7:30 p.m., McQueen Room** - Moms of all ages are invited to join us on the first and third Thursdays of every month for study, service and fellowship. Contact: Allison Reeves, allison.tarwater@gmail.com.

**Friday Morning Men's Group, Friday, February 7, 7:30-8:30 a.m., Chapel 206** - This group meets on the first and third Fridays of every month. They are reading the book *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Mark Comer. All are welcome. Contact: Curt Ireland, irelandcurtis00@gmail.com.

**Souper Bowl Sunday and Youth Sunday, February 9, 10:10 a.m. Worship, Sanctuary** - Sunday, February 9 will be a big Sunday at SMPC. We'll be collecting canned goods and monetary donations for Nourish Up in our annual Souper Bowl of Caring initiative, and we will be celebrating the blessings of our amazing Youth Ministry during Youth Sunday! Our Youth will lead us in worship and will be hosting an important fundraiser for its scholarship program, which helps offset the costs of the Youth Ministry, such as retreats and off-campus events. There will be so much joy and love filling our faith community - you don't want to miss it. Contact: Lindsey Odom, lindsey@smpchome.org.

**Beginner Chrismon Ornaments Class, Saturday, February 15, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., Chapel 202, Ages 10 and Up** - If you are curious about the Chrismons that adorned our tree in the narthex throughout Advent and want to learn how to make them, come to this beginner's Chrismon class! Crafting these ornaments requires a steady hand and a dose of patience - ages 10 to 100 are welcome! The cost is \$5.00 to cover materials, and you will complete a dragonfly ornament during the class. Register on Realm. Contact: Donna Brown, donnamatt89@gmail.com.

## OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

**Room in the Inn, Sundays, February 16 and March 2, Sardis Presbyterian Church** - There are spots open for food donations and volunteers to help with dinner, overnight stays or breakfast and cleanup. Sign up via QR code. *Just a thought from our Missions/Outreach Committee: February 16 is the day before President's Day and perhaps a day you have off from work, making it more doable to serve Sunday night or Monday morning?* Contact: Lindsey Odom, lindsey@smpchome.org.



**Become a Math Tutor for Smithfield Elementary School Students**

Smithfield Elementary School is in need of a few more math tutors! If you are interested in learning more about this awesome service opportunity, please complete the form linked in the QR code so that we can connect with you! Tutoring at Smithfield Elementary is a rewarding way to share your time and talents. Contact: Lindsey Odom, lindsey@smpchome.org.



## REGISTRATION OPEN FOR VBS & MISSION POSSIBLE

**Vacation Bible School, Monday, July 21-Thursday, July 24, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., VBS: Ages 3-4th grade; Mission Possible: Rising 5th and 6th Grade** - Registration is now open for Vacation Bible School: *Road Trip - On the Go with God* and *Mission Possible*, our service-focused week for 5th and 6th graders! (Hint: Spots fill up fast for Mission Possible! We recommend registering sooner rather than later!) Register on Realm. Contact: Rebecca Guzman, rebecca@smpchome.org.



## REMEMBER OR HONOR A LOVED ONE WITH THE SMPC FLOWER MINISTRY



There are several options to remember or honor a loved one with the SMPC Flower Ministry!

- Provide your own vase or arrangement of flowers
- Have a florist supply an arrangement - many nearby florists are familiar with SMPC's Flower Ministry and make it very easy!
- Make a donation to the building fund and the artificial arrangement will be displayed - any amount is appreciated, but \$50-\$100 is recommended



Find more details and sign up to reserve a Sunday via the QR code. Contact: Karen Malmut, karenmalmut@yahoo.com.