



A Service of Worship

Third Sunday in Lent

March 23, 2025

10:10 a.m., Sanctuary & Livestream

We Gather

Prelude *Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child* arr. Marianne Kim

Welcome and Concerns of the Church Dr. Whitney Bayer

Introit *Jesus, We Are Here* Patrick Matsikenyiri

***Call to Worship** Harrison Rose

One: Wrap yourselves in the healing love of God!

Many: We seek God's presence in our lives.

One: Know that God continually surrounds us with patience and persistence.

Many: Even though we have not produced the "fruits" of hope that God seeks, yet God forgives and heals our weakness.

One: Rejoice! Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised!

Many: We will turn our lives again to the Lord, to serve and seek God's presence. Amen.

***Hymn 415** *Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needed* RESTORATION

1 Come, ye sin - ners, poor and need - y, weak and wound-ed,
2 Come, ye thirst-y, come, and wel - come; God's free boun - ty
3 Come, ye wea - ry, heav - y lad - en, lost and ru - ined
4 Let not con - science make you lin - ger, nor of fit - ness

sick and sore; Je - sus read - y stands to save you,
 glo - ri - fy, true be - lief and true re - pen - tance,
 by the fall; if you tar - ry till you're bet - ter,
 fond - ly dream; all the fit - ness he re - quir - eth

Refrain
All

full of pit - y, love, and power.
 ev - ery grace that brings you nigh. I will a - rise and
 you will nev - er come at all.
 is to feel your need of him.

go to Je - sus; he will em-brace me in his arms. In the

arms of my dear Sav - ior, O there are ten thou - sand charms.

Prayer of Confession (*unison*) Dr. Bayer
Merciful God, we confess that we have been quick to judge others and slow to make changes in our own lives. We confess that we have focused on others' shortcomings instead of reforming our own. Turn us, O Lord, from these ways that lead to perishing. Lead us, O Lord, in your ways that lead to abundant life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Assurance of God's Grace Dr. Bayer

***Response of Praise** No. 447

We are forgiven. We are forgiven.
Thanks be to God. Thanks be to God.
(sing twice)

We Hear and Respond to the Word

Church Family Moment

Rebecca Guzman

1. The *Good for Nothing Tree* by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso is based on this passage from Luke. In it, a young girl plants a fig tree. Others tell her it's no good because it's taking too long to grow. But she waits, cares for it, and finally enjoys the fruit. This is a beautiful reminder that good things take time. You can watch the book trailer [here](#) and hear from the authors in this [interview](#).
2. Make a simple fig snack together! Toast a slice of whole grain bread. Spread a little cream cheese or nut butter. Add sliced fresh or dried figs, then drizzle with honey. As you enjoy your snack, talk about how figs—and people!—need time and care to grow.
3. Create a flower craft to remind you that everyone blooms when they are ready. Cut out a large flower shape from colored paper. In the center, write something you are learning or hoping for. On the petals, add encouraging words like “Keep going!” or “Be patient!” Decorate your flower and hang it somewhere to remind you that growing takes time.
4. Journal, considering the following:
 - a. Why did the gardener want to give the fig tree more time?
 - b. How does it feel when someone is patient with you?
 - c. What is something you are waiting or hoping for right now?
 - d. How can you be patient and kind with yourself and others this week?



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. 399):

God welcomes all, strangers and friends;

God's love is strong and it never ends.

(sing twice)

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

Isaiah 55:1-9

Dr. Bayer

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and

come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Anthem *We Shall Walk through the Valley* arr. Undine Smith Moore
Chancel Choir

We shall walk through the valley in peace.
We shall walk through the valley in peace.
If Jesus Himself shall be our Leader,
We shall walk through the valley in peace.
There will be no trials there.
There will be no trials there.
If Jesus Himself shall be our Leader,
We shall walk through the valley in peace.

Second Reading Luke 13:1-9 Dr. Matthew S. Brown

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did." Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, "See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?" He replied, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.' "

One: This is the word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Sermon Urgency and Patience Dr. Brown

***The Affirmation of Faith** (*unison*) The Confession of 1967 - 9.32-33
Rev. Lindsey Odom

The life, death, resurrection, and promised coming of Jesus Christ has set the pattern for the church's mission. His human life involves the church in the common life of all people. His service to men and women commits the church to work for every form of human well-being. His suffering makes the church sensitive to all human suffering so that it sees the face of Christ in the faces of persons in every kind of need. His crucifixion discloses to the church God's judgment on the inhumanity that marks human relations, and the awful consequences of the church's own complicity in injustice. In the power of the risen Christ and the hope of his coming, the church sees the promise of God's renewal of human life in society and of God's victory over all wrong. The church follows this pattern in the form of its life and in the method of its action. So to live and serve is to confess Christ as Lord.

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 *Seasonal Suites: Lent II* Alan Hommerding
Ann Carney, recorder; 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 or texting SMPC to 73256.

***Lenten Doxology** FINLANDIA
*O suffering Jesus, in these forty days.
We view your sorrow, share in your distress.
Our Lenten songs are filled with muted praise;
Yet by your passion, we are truly blessed.
Praise to our God, and praise to you, the Son!
Praise to the Spirit, our God, Three in One.*

***Prayer of Dedication** Elise Ullman
Generous God, as we travel this Lenten journey, allow us to walk beside Jesus as he makes his journey into Jerusalem. As we offer our gifts this morning, may it be our way of saying we won't turn away from the problems and conflicts of this world; but like Jesus, we will walk toward them, and devote our gifts and offerings towards the good of all God's people. Amen.

We Go Out to Serve

***Hymn 800** *Sometimes a Light Surprises* SALLEY GARDENS



1 Some - times a light sur - pris - es the child of God who sings;
 2 In ho - ly con - tem - pla - tion we sweet - ly then pur - sue
 3 It can bring with it noth - ing but he will bear us through
 4 Though vine nor fig tree nei - ther their longed - for fruit should bear,



it is the Lord who ris - es with heal - ing in his wings;
 the theme of God's sal - va - tion and find it ev - er new;
 who gives the lil - ies cloth - ing will clothe his peo - ple, too;
 though all the fields should with - er, nor flocks nor herds be there,



when com - forts are de - clin - ing, he grants the soul a - gain
 set free from pres - ent sor - row, we cheer - ful - ly can say,
 be - neath the spread - ing heav - ens no crea - ture but is fed;
 yet God the same a - bid - ing, his praise shall tune my voice;



a sea - son of clear shin - ing to cheer it af - ter rain.
 "Let the un - known to - mor - row bring with it what it may."
 and he who feeds the ra - vens will give his chil - dren bread.
 for while in him con - fid - ing, I can - not but re - joice.

***Charge and Benediction**

Dr. Brown

***Congregational Response**

No. 547, stanza 2

"Go, my children, sins forgiven, at peace and pure.

Here you learned how much I love you, what I can cure.

Here you heard my dear Son's story; here you touched him, saw

his glory. Go, my children, sins forgiven, at peace and pure."

Postlude

Recessional in C

John Dixon

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, recorder; Laura Schelhammer, flute

Harrison Rose, Elise Ullman, liturgists

Acolytes: Caroline Brown, Savannah Brown

A/V Team: Mary Katheryne Zagora, Michael Zagora

Ushers: Andy Burke, Linda Nagle Hanson, Gwen Volker, Jim Williams, Michael Zagora

Welcome Team: Keith Bernhardt, Donna Brown

With thanksgiving for her faithful service in our midst, excitement and blessings for this new chapter in her ministry, and prayers for Whitney, Daniel, Adeline, and Oliver Bayer, the Session has called a brief Congregational Meeting for Sunday, March 30 at the conclusion of worship, so that we may act on Whitney's request to conclude her call at South Mecklenburg so that she may accept the call to serve as pastor of Rumson Presbyterian Church in Rumson, NJ. A reception for the Bayers will take place immediately following the meeting.

In celebration of Women's History month, we will hear music by women composers every Sunday in March. Today, we will hear Marianne Kim's arrangement of "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" as our prelude and Undine Smith Moore's arrangement of "We Shall Walk Through the Valley" as our anthem. Marianne Kim is a Chicago-based composer, pianist, and organist known for her work in classical, jazz, gospel, and contemporary church music. She performs with major ensembles, teaches at multiple universities, and serves as principal organist at Christ Church of Oak Brook. An award-winning composer with over 400 published works, she is also an organ editor for Beckenhorst Press. Undine Smith Moore (1904 – 1989), the "Dean of Black Women Composers", was an American composer and professor of music in the twentieth century. Moore was originally trained as a classical pianist but developed a compositional output of mostly vocal music—her preferred genre. Much of her work was inspired by black spirituals and folk music.

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. 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.
- 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 today at 11:30 a.m. To learn more, contact Melissa White, Director of Hospitality and Connection, melissa@smpchome.org or 704-887-7488.

Congregational Notes (as of March 20, 2025)

Remember in Prayer

- All those affected by conflict, displacement, and unrest around the world and at home.
- Our mission partners in Bayonnais, Haiti, as they navigate the chaos and challenges engulfing their country.

To join the prayer chain or send a prayer request:

prayer@SMPChome.org.

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

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Melissa White, Director of Hospitality and Connection

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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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PO Box 79321, Charlotte, NC 28271

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**
MAR. 23
5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.
- BAM! Bible and Music**
Meet in Narthex, Children in Kindergarten-5th Grade
 During BAM!, children sing, creatively engage with Bible stories, and explore various instruments in peer age groups. Pizza is served. Register on Realm. Contact: Rebecca Guzman, rebecca@smpchome.org.
-
- tuesday**
MAR. 25
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, jgjameson@gmail.com.
-
- tuesday**
MAR. 25
7:30 p.m.
- Men's Evening Study Group**
Chapel 206
 The group meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of every month. New faces are always welcome! Contact: Jon Myers, jonmyers2@gmail.com.
-
- wednesday**
MAR. 26
9:30 a.m.
- Conversations with Dr. Matt Brown - Special Guest!**
McQueen Room or Zoom
 Dr. Matt Brown will be out of the office next Wednesday, but we are still meeting! We will welcome friend of SMPC Rev. Tom Robinson who will lead a study. All are welcome! Contact Matt Brown, matt@smpchome.org, for Zoom info.
-
- wednesday**
MAR. 26
11:40 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
- SMPC Preschool Annual Hop-A-Thon**
SMPC Playground
 Children have 1 minute to hop inside a hula hoop! Sponsors can donate per hop or a set amount. Funds raised go to the school's facilities. Ten percent goes to Haitian students. Donate at smpchome.org > Give. Fund: Other; Memo: Hop-A-Thon. Contact: Tammy Winchip, tammy@smcphome.org.
-
- thursday**
MAR. 27
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.
-
- thursday**
MAR. 27
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
- "From Wilderness to Glory" - Lenten Adult Study**
Chapel 204 or Zoom
 Join us Thursdays OR Sundays (or go between the two!) for a seven-week Lenten study of *From Wilderness to Glory* by N.T. Wright. Register on Realm. Contact: Melissa White, melissa@smpchome.org.
-
- sunday**
MAR. 30
9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.
- "From Wilderness to Glory" - Lenten Adult Study**
McQueen Room or Zoom
 Join us Sundays or Thursdays (or go between the two!) for a seven-week Lenten study of *From Wilderness to Glory* by N.T. Wright. Register on Realm. Contact: Melissa White, melissa@smpchome.org.
-
- sunday**
MAR. 30
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
- Believing and Belonging**
McQueen Room
 For visitors, new members and anyone who would like to know more about being Presbyterian and SMPC. Lunch will be provided and childcare available. Register on Realm or via QR code. Contact: Melissa White, melissa@smpchome.org.



UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL BYG (Big Youth Group), Sunday, March 30, 5:00-6:30 p.m., Mecklenburg Hall, Middle and High Schoolers - BYG (Big Youth Group) 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.

Community Culinary School of Charlotte Lunch, Tuesday, April 1, 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., 9315 D Monroe Rd, Charlotte, NC 28270 - Join us for lunch at the Chef's Table at Community Culinary School of Charlotte (CCSC) and learn more about their mission! Cost is \$20 plus optional gratuity. Register on Realm. Contact: Donna Brown, donnamatt89@gmail.com.

Making Space Mom's Group, Thursday, April 3, 7:30 p.m. Chapel 206 - 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, April 4, 7:30 a.m., Chapel 206 - This group meets on the first and third Fridays of every month. They are reading Green Lights by Matthew McConaughey. All are welcome. Contact: Curt Ireland, irelandcurtis00@gmail.com.

Third Thirty: A Candid Spiritual Exploration of Realities and Challenges We Face in the Years 60-90 - Monthly beginning Sunday, April 6, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., The Commons - This 12-week study will meet one Sunday a month over a light lunch after worship. Come to as many sessions as your schedule allows! These gatherings will create space for open discussion of some of the issues facing us as we navigate these decades of our lives. More information and register via QR code or Realm. Contact: Melissa White, melissa@smpchome.org.



SMPC Youth Mission Project Night - Easter Meal Kits and Egg Hunt, Sunday, April 6, 5:00 p.m.-6:30 p.m., Mecklenburg Hall, Middle and High Schoolers - We'll make Easter Meal Kits and making Easter cards for students at our partner school, Smithfield Elementary, and have an Easter Egg Hunt. The Easter Egg Hunt will be limited to just SMPC Youth. Register on Realm. Contact: Lindsey Odom, lindsey@smpchome.org.

HOLY WEEK AT SMPC

Palm Sunday, Sunday, April 13, 10:10 a.m., Sanctuary & Livestream



Maundy Thursday Supper & Communion, Thursday, April 17, 6:00 p.m., Mecklenburg Hall - Join as we continue our journey through Holy Week. We will share supper and communion and remember our Lord's gathering with His disciples on the night of His arrest when they broke bread together. Register on Realm or via QR code. Contact: Melissa White, melissa@smpchome.org

Good Friday Tenebrae Service, Friday, April 18, 7:30 p.m., Sanctuary & Livestream - Scripture, Taizé Music, and Extinguishing Candles

EASTER SUNDAY WORSHIP - APRIL 20

9:00 AM - CHANCEL CHOIR & CHANCEL RINGERS

11:00 A.M. - CHANCEL CHOIR, CHANCEL RINGERS, YOUTH CHOIR & CHILDREN'S CHOIR

Sanctuary & Livestream | Childcare provided for ages 3 and under



SMPC'S HYMN MADNESS



Just like March Madness, we've put beloved hymns head-to-head in a bracket-style tournament. We're now voting in Round 2! Round 1: *The Thrilling Thirty-Two* winners and Round 2: *The Sacred Sixteen* voting are on our website or via QR code! Voting each week ends at noon on Wednesday, and winners will be announced each Thursday in the weekly email and on social media, so make sure you're following us on Facebook (@southmecklenburgpresbyterian) and Instagram (@southmeckpres)! We will crown the "Heavenly Hymn" champion on Easter Sunday and sing the winning hymn as a congregation on Sunday, April 27!

