



**South
Mecklenburg**
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A Service of Worship

Fourth Sunday in Lent

March 30, 2025

10:10 a.m., Sanctuary & Livestream

We Gather

Prelude *Partita on "Nettleton": III. Reflection* Jeffrey Blersch

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

Introit *Jesus, We Are Here* Patrick Matsikenyiri

***Call to Worship** Adeline Bayer

One: God rejoices at our presence here today,

Many: and welcomes us home with a celebration.

One: We come from different places bringing different needs,

Many: and God's love accepts and provides for us all.

One: God, help us extend your extravagant welcome,

Many: and share the gift of true Christian hospitality.

***Hymn 475** *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing* NETTLETON

1 Come, thou Fount of ev-ery bless-ing; tune my heart to sing thy grace;
 2 Here I raise my Eb - e - ne - zer; hith-er by thy help I'm come;
 3 O to grace how great a debt - or dai - ly I'm con-strained to be!

streams of mer - cy, nev - er ceas - ing, call for songs of loud-est praise.
 and I hope, by thy good plea-sure, safe-ly to ar - rive at home.
 Let that grace now, like a fet - ter, bind my wan-dering heart to thee.

Teach me some me - lo-dious son - net, sung by flam-ing tongues a-bove;
 Je - sus sought me when a strang-er, wan-dering from the fold of God;
 Prone to wan - der, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love;

praise the mount! I'm fixed up - on it, mount of God's un-chang-ing love!
 he, to res - cue me from dan-ger, in - ter-posed his pre-cious blood.
 here's my heart; O take and seal it; seal it for thy courts a - bove.

Prayer of Confession (*unison*)

Rev. Lindsey Odom

God, we come to you today recognizing that we have gone astray and feel lost. We have upheld our own interests first, to the detriment of others. We have abandoned our efforts to bring about justice. We admit that we are prone to try to hide our sins, to keep our mouths closed, and hope we are not found out. But there is no place to hide from you, O' God. Remind us that you delight in forgiving us and in granting us grace. You are glad when we confess our failings and our needs. We ask that you forgive us for times when we have lost our way and teach us the way we should go. Deliver us from our sinfulness, and

draw us near, we pray. Shower your mercy upon us. Find us and lead us safely home to faithfulness. Amen.

Assurance of God's Grace

Rev. Odom

*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. Watch the Story Together:** Jesus tells about a son who leaves home, makes mistakes, and returns hoping to be forgiven. His father runs to welcome him and throws a big celebration! Watch the story here: [The Prodigal Son Video](#).
- 2. Imagine the Next Morning:** What do you think breakfast was like the next day? Try writing or acting out a short conversation between the father and his two sons. What would they say? How might they start to move forward as a family?
- 3. Play the Welcome Home Relay:** Choose someone to be the Welcomer (like the father). Everyone else lines up as Travelers. When the Welcomer calls, "Come home!", the first Traveler runs to them for a big welcome hug with a scarf or towel. Then switch roles! Afterward, talk about how it felt to be welcomed. How can we welcome others with joy today?
- 4. Journal and Wonder Together:**
 - a. I wonder what it was like to be the younger son...
 - b. I wonder what it was like to be the father...
 - c. I wonder what it was like to be the older son...
 - d. Who do you feel like in the story today?



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

Rev. Odom

First Reading

Luke 15:11-24

Rev. Odom

Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands." ' So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

Anthem

Softly and Tenderly

arr. Joel Raney

Chancel Choir; Ann Carney, piano

Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling,
calling for you and for me;
see, on the portals he's waiting and watching,
watching for you and for me.
Come home, come home;
you who are weary come home;
earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,
calling, O sinner, come home!
Why should we tarry when Jesus is pleading,
pleading for you and for me?
Why should we linger and heed not his mercies,
mercies for you and for me?
O for the wonderful love he has promised,
promised for you and for me!
Though we have sinned, he has mercy and pardon,
pardon for you and for me.

Second Reading

Psalm 126

Dr. Whitney Bayer

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." The Lord has done great things for us, and we

rejoiced. Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the watercourses in the Negeb. May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

One: This is the word of the Lord.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon Armloads of Blessing Dr. Bayer

***The Affirmation of Faith** (*unison*) A Brief Statement of Faith PC(USA)
Dr. Brown

We trust in God, whom Jesus called Abba, Father. In sovereign love God created the world good and makes everyone equally in God's image, male and female, of every race and people, to live as one community. But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator. Ignoring God's commandments, we violate the image of God in others and ourselves, accept lies as truth, exploit neighbor and nature, and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care. We deserve God's condemnation. Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation. In everlasting love, the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a covenant people to bless all families of the earth. Hearing their cry, God delivered the children of Israel from the house of bondage. Loving us still, God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant. Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child, like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home, God is faithful still.

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer Dr. Brown

. . . (*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 *Remembering* John Behnke
Gaudete Ringers

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 Oliver Bayer

Loving God, as we offer these gifts, we are reminded of your boundless love and mercy. Just as you welcome us home with open arms, may these offerings reflect our desire to serve others and bring them closer to your embrace. Bless these gifts, that they may help reconcile, heal, and restore lives, bringing glory to your name. Amen.

We Go Out to Serve

***Hymn 314** *Longing for Light, We Wait in Darkness* BE OUR LIGHT

(refrain: all each time; stanza 1: all; stanza 2: low voices;
stanza 3: high voices; stanza 4: voices only; stanza 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.

Refrain

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

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

Congregational Meeting

Dr. Brown

***Charge and Benediction**

Dr. Bayer

***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 *Variations on "Nettleton": Chorale, IV. Toccata* Albert Travis

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

Gaudete Ringers; Helen Castle, Gayle Ireland, co-directors

Ann Carney, piano

Adeline Bayer, Oliver Bayer, liturgists

A/V Team: Kari Case

Ushers: Bob Cushman, Mitchell Davis, George Elledge, Mary Elledge,
Curtis Guy, Jonathan Mangels

Welcome Team: Keith Bernhardt

With thanksgiving for her faithful service in our midst, excitement and blessings for this new chapter in her ministry, and prayers for Associate Pastor Dr. Whitney Bayer and her family, the Session has called a brief Congregational Meeting for today 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 sing Bernadette Farrell’s “Christ, Be Our Light” as our closing hymn. Farrell is a renowned composer of worship music whose beloved songs are sung by Christian denominations worldwide. Beginning her career in the 1970s, she draws inspiration from scripture and social justice themes. Originally from West Yorkshire and now living in London with her husband, composer Owen Alstott, Farrell also works as a community organizer advocating for housing, fair wages, and healthcare.

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 on Sunday, April 27 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 27, 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

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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 outside. 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. 30 5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.	APRIL BYG (Big Youth Group) 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.
tuesday APR. 1 10:00 a.m.	Handworkers 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 APR. 1 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Community Culinary School of Charlotte Lunch 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.
wednesday APR. 2 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.
thursday APR. 3 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 <i>From Wilderness to Glory</i> by N.T. Wright. Register on Realm. Contact: Melissa White, melissa@smpchome.org.
thursday APR. 3 7:30 p.m.	Making Space Mom's Group 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 APR. 4 7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	Friday Morning Men's Group Chapel 206 This group meets on the first and third Fridays of every month. They are beginning a new book, <i>Amazing Grace</i> by Bruce Hindmarsh All are welcome. Contact: Curt Ireland, irelandcurtis00@gmail.com.
saturday APR. 5 8:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Spring Campus Workday SMPC Campus Many hands make light work! Join us as we get our beloved church campus spruced up for spring! We will have a second workday on Saturday, April 12, 8:00-19:30 a.m. Come to one or both Saturdays! Contact: Collin Sinclair, collinbsinclair@gmail.com.
sunday APR. 6 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 <i>From Wilderness to Glory</i> by N.T. Wright. Register on Realm. Contact: Melissa White, melissa@smpchome.org.

sunday
APR. 6
11:30 a.m. -
12:30 p.m.

Third Thirty: A Candid Spiritual Exploration of Realities and Challenges We Face in the Years 60-90 - 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! More information and register via QR code or Realm. Contact: Melissa White, melissa@smpchome.org.



sunday
APR. 6
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.

sunday
APR. 6
5:00 p.m. -
6:30 p.m.

SMPC Youth Mission Project Night - Easter Meal Kits and Egg Hunt, 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.

UPCOMING EVENTS

A Caregiver's Journey, Tuesday, April 8, 1:00-2:30 p.m., McQueen Room - Finding meaning and purpose as you care for a loved one with Alzheimer's or dementia. Contact: Kathy Garner, kathygarner15@gmail.com

Men's Evening Study Group, Tuesday, April 8, 7:30 p.m., Chapel 206 - This group meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of every month. New faces are always welcome! Contact: Jon Myers, jonmyers2@gmail.com.

Shelter Ministry, Thursday, April 10, 9:00 a.m., Mecklenburg Hall - This group meets on the second Thursday of every month to fill empty medicine bottles with body wash for Roof Above. They are always in need of body wash and Rx vials (please, no shampoo or conditioner!) Contact: Carol Morgan

Men's Breakfast Group, Thursday, April 10, 9:30 a.m., 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.

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



Round 2: *The Sacred Sixteen* winners and Round 3: *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!

