



A Service of Worship
Third Sunday of Advent
December 14, 2025
10:10 a.m., Sanctuary & Livestream

**Please rise in body or in spirit.*

We Gather

Prelude *O Come, O Come Emmanuel* arr. Mazzoni

Welcome and Concerns of the Church Dr. Sandy Hull
The Lord be with you. **And also with you!**

Moment for Mission Jeana Lee

Introit *While We Are Waiting, Come* WAITING (CASON)
While we are waiting, come; while we are waiting, come.
Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel, while we are waiting, come.

Call to Worship

Lighting of the Advent Candle – JOY
Andrew, Whitney, Bryson, Hayden, and Austin Gann

One: We draw near to the God who waits with grace, filling us with hope, peace, and joy in every season. Let us pray together:

All: **Joyous God, we delight in the joy found in your presence, a fullness of joy that the world cannot give nor take away. This joy is a blessed assurance, sealed with your love by the promised birth of your son. Fill us with your joy, so that it can be made known to all and shared. Amen.**

***Hymn 82** *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus* HYFRYDOL



1 Come, thou long - ex - pect-ed Je - sus, born to set thy peo-ple free;
2 Born thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child and yet a king,



from our fears and sins re - lease us; let us find our rest in thee.
born to reign in us for - ev - er, now thy gra-cious king-dom bring.



Is-rael's strength and con-so - la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art;
By thine own e - ter - nal Spir - it rule in all our hearts a - lone;



dear de - sire of ev - ery na - tion, joy of ev - ery long-ing heart.
by thine all - suf-fi - cient mer - it raise us to thy glo-rious throne.



Prayer of Confession (unison)

Rev. Melissa White

Merciful God, we confess that we often stray from your loving presence, focusing on our own priorities instead of being guided by your will. We give in to selfish desires instead of caring for the needs of others. Lost in the busyness of projects and tasks, we forget to seek your companionship. Forgive us for our pride and preoccupation, Lord. Cleanse us of our sins and purify our hearts, as we submit ourselves to you in humble reliance on your grace. Amen.

Assurance of God's Grace

Rev. White

*Response of Praise

No. 113

*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. **Story Connection:** God's grace brings new life to the earth and to all who are broken or weary, but we have to wait! In [The Curious Garden](#), a boy named Liam discovers a hidden, struggling garden in the middle of a lifeless city. As he cares for it, the garden begins to grow, spread, and fill the city with beauty. Sara Anne Berger at Storypath invites us to think about how God is doing the same with us and our world. ([Storypath Source](#)).
2. **Craft:** Make a simple paper chain to count down the days until Christmas. Cut strips of paper, write or draw something you are waiting or hoping for on each one, and loop them together. Each day, tear off a link and say a short prayer thanking God for being with us as we wait. As the chain gets shorter, we are reminded that joy is drawing near.
3. **Game:** Place a small object inside a bag or box and slowly open it bit by bit while everyone guesses what it might be. When it is finally revealed, talk about how waiting helps us pay attention — and how James invites us to wait with steady hearts because the Lord is near. You may want to play several rounds with different objects.
4. **Wonder Together:**
 - a. I wonder where you have seen something "blossom" in your life this year.
 - b. I wonder why God invites us to wait patiently in this season.
 - c. I wonder what our family can do this week to bring joy to someone who is waiting.



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

Rev. White

First Reading

Isaiah 35:1-10

Rev. White

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Anthem

We're Waiting for You, Lord

W. Clifford Petty

Chancel Choir; Mark Janney, soloist

We're waiting for you, Lord, to come by here.

*Oh, we've been waiting, anticipating,
waiting for you, Lord, to come by here.*

Come, O come, Emmanuel, come by here.

And ransom captive Israel, come by here.

Come, O Wisdom, from on high, come by here.

To us, the path of knowledge show, come by here.

Come, O Branch of Jesse's stem, come by here.

From every foe, deliver them, come by here.

Come by here, my Lord, come by here.

*Oh, we've been waiting, anticipating,
waiting for you, Lord, to come by here.*

Second Reading

James 5:7-10

Dr. Hull

Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

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

The Apostles Creed

Rev. Lindsey 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 *Change Ring Prelude on "Divinum Mysterium"* Fred Gramann
Chancel 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.

***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**

Lilliana Smigiel

Holy God, source of our hope and giver of our peace, you meet us in our waiting and steady us with your quiet strength. Take these gifts, and our lives, and use them to shine your light into places shadowed by worry or fear. By your Spirit, make us people who share your peace in all we do. In the name of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, we pray, Amen.

We Go Out to Serve***Hymn 100**

Canticle of the Turning STAR OF THE COUNTY DOWN



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

***Charge and Benediction**

Dr. Hull

***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 *Toccata on "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen"* Jason D. Payne

Worship Service Notes

Leading Worship this Morning

Dr. Sandy Hull, Transitional Pastor

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

Rev. Melissa White, Parish Associate for Congregational Care & Connection
Zach Bowyer, Director of Music & Organist
Rebecca Guzman, Director of Spiritual Formation
Chancel Choir
Mark Janney, tenor and guitar
Lilliana Smigiel, liturgist

A/V Team: Brad Alford, Luke Estes

Ushers: Dan DeChant, Gena DeChant, Dick Engle, Frank Graham
Evan Mangels, Carol Watkins

Welcome Team: Donna Podgorny, Donna Ramsey, Bob Williamson

The Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy is adapted from *Wait for the Lord*, an Advent Candle Liturgy written by Dr. Montisa Anntoinette Watkins and Rev. Shavon Starling-Lewis.

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 worshipping 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 and Facebook: @southmecklenburgpresbyterian.

Interested in joining South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church? Our Session will gather to welcome new members Sunday, December 28, at 11:30 a.m. To learn more, contact Rev. Melissa White, Parish Associate for Congregational Care and Connection, melissa@smpchome.org or 704-887-7488.

Congregational Notes (as of December 11, 2025)

Remember in Prayer

- Joyce Highsmith as she is hospitalized while recovering from pneumonia.
- Scott Snyder, as he is hospitalized and recovering from surgeries.
- Savannah Boyes as she recovers from surgery.
- All those affected by conflict, displacement, and unrest around the world and at home.
- Our mission partners in Bayonnais, Haiti, that God's peace, protection and justice may prevail amid the crisis, chaos, and despair engulfing their country.

To join the prayer chain or send a prayer request:

prayer@SMPChome.org

SMPC STAFF

Dr. Sandy Hull, Transitional Pastor

sandy@smpchome.org

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

lindsey@smpchome.org

Rev. Melissa White, Parish Associate

melissa@smpchome.org

Laura Black, Ministry Associate for Children and Music

laura@smpchome.org

Zach Bowyer, Director of Music & Organist

zach@smpchome.org

Rebecca Guzman, Director of Spiritual Formation

rebecca@smpchome.org

Adrienne Jaquith, Office and Database Manager

adrienne@smpchome.org

Cheryl Perry, Director of Communications

cheryl@smpchome.org

Steve Stevenson, Facility Administrator

steve@smpchome.org

Dr. 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.

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South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church

8601 Bryant Farms Road, Charlotte, NC 28277, 704-544-0404

PO Box 79321, Charlotte, NC 28271

smpchome.org

WELCOME!

After worship, we hope you'll join us for lemonade and cookies near Coffee Grounds. Come meet friends old and new! Registry pads are located in your pews. Please sign and pass to your neighbor and perhaps introduce yourself to someone new!

THIS WEEK'S CLASSES & EVENTS

today
DEC. 14
6:00 p.m. -
7:30 p.m.

Festival of Carols Sanctuary and Livestream

A special worship service led by the SMPC Music Ministry. Music enhanced with Scripture. Childcare provided. Contact: Zach Bowyer, zach@smpchome.org.

monday
DEC. 15
10:00 a.m. -
11:00 a.m.

Advent Adult Study - "Calling All Angels" McQueen Room or Zoom

Note: This study also meets on Sundays, 9:00-10:00 a.m. in McQueen Room or Zoom. Participants can go to either day on any week! Join this four-week study as we reflect on the surprising ways angels appear in Scripture and what their presence reveals about God's message of hope, peace, joy, and love. Register on Realm. Contact: Rebecca Guzman, rebecca@smpchome.org.

tuesday
DEC. 16
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
DEC. 16
5:30 p.m.

The Longest Night Service Chapel

A special service of consolation for those who have experienced any type of loss. Contact: Melissa White, melissa@smpchome.org.

wednesday
DEC. 17
9:30 a.m. -
10:30 a.m.

Pastor's Wednesday Morning Bible Study McQueen Room or Zoom

Transitional Pastor Dr. Sandy Hull leads this study that meets weekly to discuss the Scripture for the coming Sunday. All are welcome! If you would like to join by Zoom, please contact Adrienne Jaquith, adrienne@smpchome.org.

thursday
DEC. 18
12:30 p.m.

Food for Thought Book Group 12:30 p.m., McQueen Room

The group is reading *Christmas at the Little Paris Hotel* by Rebecca Raisin. All book lovers are welcome! Contact: Kathy Paquette, khesspaquette@aol.com.

thursday
DEC. 18
7:30 p.m.

Making Space Mom's Group Chapel 206

This group meets on the first and third Thursday of every month. Moms of all ages are invited for fellowship and study. Contact: Allison Reeves, allison.tarwater@gmail.com.

friday
DEC. 19
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 reading *Imagine Heaven* by John Burke. Contact: Curt Ireland, irelandcurtis00@gmail.com.

saturday
DEC. 20
9:30 a.m.

Bag Lunches for Roof Above
Drop Off in Front of Mecklenburg Hall
Every month we donate 100 bag lunches to our neighbors in need at Roof Above. Please consider donating this month! Simply scan the QR code.
Contact: Julie Durham, julierdurham@gmail.com.



saturday
DEC. 20
times vary

Salvation Army Bell Ringing
Belk, SouthPark Mall
Last Saturday to ring! Children under 18 years old must be accompanied by an adult. Sign up via QR code. Contact: Terry Gaines, terryhgaines@gmail.com.



saturday
DEC. 20
5:15 a.m. -
9:15 a.m.

Center of Hope Breakfast
Meet at SMPC at 5:15 a.m.
On the third Saturday of each month, SMPC preps, cooks and serves breakfast for guests at the Center of Hope. They are back to the church around 9:15 a.m. Food donations are due Thursday, December 18. Monetary donations are always welcome. Sign up via QR code. Contact: Bob Williamson, bobwill31@hotmail.com.



sunday
DEC. 21
12:00 p.m. -
3:00 p.m.

Youth Gift Wrapping Fundraiser
Mecklenburg Hall
Bring your gifts and wrapping paper or choose from some of our wrapping paper and let SMPC Youth wrap them for you! Proceeds offset costs and provide scholarships for our summer youth trips. \$5 per gift. We would love wrapping paper donations! Please drop them by the church office. Please note: We will not have gift boxes.
Contact: Rebecca Guzman, rebecca@smpchome.org.

YOU ARE INVITED! *Christmas*

Christmas Eve Worship
Wednesday, 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!

5:00 p.m. - Candlelight Communion

Traditional worship services with handheld candles and communion. We will be joined by the Youth Choir and Youth Ringers.

8:00 p.m. - Candlelight Communion

Traditional worship services with handheld candles and communion. We will be joined by our Chancel Choir.

Children are always welcome in the sanctuary, and childcare for ages 4 and younger is provided at all services.

Invite a friend!

SERVE WITH ROOM IN THE INN NEXT YEAR

We partner with two other churches to help with dinner, overnight stays, breakfast, and cleanup. Room in the Inn is an initiative led by Roof Above. Upcoming dates to serve in 2026 are January 7, February 15 and March 1 at Sardis Pres. Contact: Amy Matthews, amymatthews1117@gmail.com. Sign up at smpchome.org/serve-our-community.

SMPC PRESCHOOL REGISTRATION UPDATES!

Registration for the 2026-2027 school year at SMPC Preschool opens in January. Before registering a child, all families must meet with the director and tour the school. If you are interested in Fall 2026 enrollment for a 2 yr old-TK child, now is the time to tour (before the school breaks for Christmas!). Contact SMPC Preschool Director Tammy Winchip, tammy@smpchome.org, visit the preschool's website (www.smpcpreschool.org).

All-Church RETREAT

Created for Community

**All are invited to deepen their faith through rest,
renewal and community
FRIDAY, MARCH 6-SUNDAY, MARCH 8
Montreat, NC
Register on Realm**

This retreat is designed for all ages. For young elementary or younger children, we will provide a separate children's option during study sessions. Older children will stay with the group.

Registration & Costs

- Deposit: \$65 per person (covers all four meals)
- Room Costs: \$250-\$310 for the weekend (collected later)
- Financial Assistance: Available upon request

SMPC Staff Lead: Rebecca Guzman, rebecca@smpchome.org; Retreat Planning Committee: Steven Ritchie, Frank Graham, Joel Winchip, Jeana Lee, Ruby Robinson

Friday, March 6

Schedule

- Arrival (dinner on your own beforehand)
- Community-building activities as people arrive
- Welcome and introductions
- A brief "Created for Community" teaser
- Fellowship with snacks, dessert, and beverages

Saturday, March 7

Morning

- Light morning movement/icebreaker
- Session 1 with Retreat Leader Rev. Dr. Laura Cunningham:
 - What makes community? What breaks community?
 - Scriptural stories of broken and restored community
 - Small groups engage creative storytelling or drama
 - Regather to crowdsource: "What makes community happen?"

Afternoon

- Lunch together
- Choose-your-own outing (sign-ups)
 - Hike up Lookout Mountain
 - Playground time
 - Black Mountain shopping
 - Arts & crafts
 - Photo scavenger hunt
 - Coffee + reading / quiet rest

Evening

- Dinner
- Session 2 with Dr. Cunningham: exploring how Christ creates new community
- Campfire with guitar (options still being explored)
- Optional games, music, crafts, or fellowship



Sunday, March 8

Morning

- Worship with communion
- Theme: New community in Christ, empowered by the Spirit
- Departure around 11:00 a.m.

Retreat Leader: Rev. Dr. Laura Cunningham

Laura is a 25-year Presbyterian pastor and Spiritual Care Volunteer in Alexandria. She has served churches across National Capital Presbytery and currently ministries as a "free-range" pastor. She finds joy in gardening, woodworking, watercoloring, mountain climbing, cooking, and cultivating relationships with her young adult children and clergy spouse. A lifelong Presbyterian, she continues to rediscover the Spirit's movement and the gift of prayer.

WE MONTREAT!

Montreat is a special place! Check out some of the photos below of the wonderful memories our SMPC youth, women, staff, members and friends have shared at Montreat. Our prayer is that you leave feeling refreshed and connected!

