



A Service of Worship
Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 21, 2025
10:10 a.m., Sanctuary & Livestream

**Please rise in body or in spirit.*

We Gather

Prelude *Sussex Carol Gallop* Simon Peberdy

Welcome and Concerns of the Church Rev. Lindsey Odom
The Lord be with you. **And also with you!**

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 – LOVE
Dan, Christy, Graham and Caroline Trimmer

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: **Beloved Sustainer, in a world where care is mocked by the powerful, we stand as those who know your love—a love for your chosen people, which includes all of us, every part of us. Enable us to be protectors of compassion, bold in tenderness, fierce in love, and guardians of mercy in a world in need. Amen.**

***Hymn 93** *Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates* TRURO

1 Lift up your heads, ye might - y gates; be - hold the
 2 Fling wide the por - tals of your heart; make it a
 3 Re - deem - er, come! I o - pen wide my heart to

King of glo - ry waits; the King of kings is
 tem - ple, set a - part from earth - ly use for
 thee; here, Lord, a - bide. Let me thy in - ner

draw - ing near; the Sav - ior of the world is here.
 heaven's em - ploy, a - dorned with prayer and love and joy.
 pres - ence feel; thy grace and love in me re - veal.

Prayer of Confession (unison)

Rev. Odom

Merciful God, we confess that we have succumbed to society's seduction to prepare for the coming of Santa more than for the coming of Jesus. We have been going through Advent with overstuffed calendars and undernourished souls. We have let this holy season become just a busy season, pressure-packed with shopping, social obligations, and stress. Forgive us we pray, through the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus, and by your Holy Spirit, enable us to refocus our minds and hearts and to reorient our priorities. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Assurance of God's Grace

Rev. Odom

*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

1. **Story Connection:** Matthew gives us the clearest picture we have of Joseph—a faithful man who listens to God and chooses love, even when it is hard. [Father and Son: A Nativity Story](#) imagines what Joseph may have felt as he accepted a quiet, supporting role in God’s plan. His love did not seek attention or power, but showed up through trust, care, and obedience. [Source:](#) Virginia C. Thomas and Ann Thomas Knox at StoryPath.
2. **Music Connection:** : [Listen](#) to “Only Joseph” by Garrison Doles. As you listen, notice how Joseph’s small, faithful choices play a big part in the Christmas story. Talk about what we can learn from the way Joseph loves quietly and faithfully.
3. **Activity:** Joseph is told to name the child *Jesus*, which means “God saves.” Talk about the names in your family. Who chose them? What do they mean? Then wonder together what Jesus’ name tells us about who he is and why he came
4. **Wonder Together:**
 - a. I wonder what it was like for Joseph to trust God when the future was unclear.
 - b. I wonder how love can show up in quiet ways.
 - c. I wonder what Joseph teaches us about faithfulness.
 - d. I wonder how we can practice this kind of love 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. 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. Odom

First Reading

Romans 1:1-7

Rev. Odom

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including yourselves who are called to belong

to Jesus Christ, To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Anthem

I Too Shall Walk to Bethlehem
Chancel Choir; Ann Carney, piano

John Rutter

*I too shall walk to Bethlehem along each lonely road;
I did not have the strength until I heard the story told.
There is a place where all may rest and set down any load:
in a stable where once a child was born, where once a child was born.
I too shall walk to Bethlehem on through the darkest night;
I did not have the courage until I saw the holy light
Of brightest star to guide my way on to the holy site of a stable
where once a child was born, where once a child was born.
I too shall walk to Bethlehem and never shall I fall;
I did not have the heart until I heard the angels call,
And quicken then each eager step, with tidings for us all, to a stable
where once a child was born, where once a child was born.
I too shall walk to Bethlehem, for now I know the way
lies with a child who lies within asleep where oxen lay.
The road to heaven shall begin that blessed Christmas day from a stable
where once a child was born, where once a child was born.*

Second Reading

Mathew 1:18-25

Dr. Sandy Hull

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

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

Sermon

"Invisible Man"

Dr. Hull

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

The Confession of 1967

Rev. Melissa White

In Jesus Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself. Jesus is God with us, the eternal Son of the Father, who became human and lived among us. He is present in the church by the power of the Holy Spirit to continue and complete his mission. Those joined with him by faith

are set right with God and are commissioned to serve as his reconciling community. Christ is head of this community, the church, which began with the apostles and continues through all generations. The same Jesus will come again as judge. His judgment discloses the ultimate seriousness of life and gives promise of God's final victory over sin and death.

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer Rev. White
... (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 arr. Molly Ijames
Appalachian Carol
Ann Carney, recorder

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** Graham Trimmer
Generous God, you have given us the greatest gift of all—the gift of your Son. With grateful adoration, we give these gifts to you, for your service to your glory. Amen.

We Go Out to Serve

***Hymn 110** BRING A TORCH
Love Has Come

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 B^b 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 B^b 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 B^b 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. 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

Danse Festivale on "Adeste Fideles"

Marko Hakanpää

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
Ann Carnery, piano, recorder
Graham Trimmer, liturgist

Acolytes: Caroline Trimmer, Graham Trimmer

A/V Team: Dylan Booker, Chris Wilcox

Ushers: Mitchell Davis, Mary Elledge, Andrew Gaul, Curtis Guy, Curt Ireland, Tom Klecker

Welcome Team: Jennifer Hurlburt, Kasia Hurlburt

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 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 and Facebook: @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.
- A glider and changing table are available in Room 208 for mothers who wish to have privacy while nursing.
- 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 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 18, 2025)

Remember in Prayer

- 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

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Rev. Melissa White, Parish Associate

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Steve Stevenson, Facility Administrator

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Dr. Tammy Winchip, SMPC Preschool Director

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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 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. 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 note: We will not have gift boxes. Contact: Rebecca Guzman, rebecca@smpchome.org.

monday

DEC. 22

10:00 a.m.

11:00 a.m.

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

This is the last session of this study that has met to 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.

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.

The Alternative Gift Market is open online until Thursday, December 25! Shop via the QR code. Cards are located in the parlor. Contact: Heather Carpenter, heathercarpenter1@yahoo.com.



IMPORTANT WAYS TO SERVE IN THE NEW YEAR!

American Red Cross Blood Drive, Saturday, January 3, 8:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Mecklenburg Hall - The need for blood and blood supplies never takes a holiday! Please register, roll up your sleeve and donate. Sign up via QR code. Contact: Bill Ramsey, bill.john.ramsey@gmail.com.



Room in the Inn, Wednesday January 7, Sunday February 15, Sunday March 1, Sardis Presbyterian Church - Volunteers will help with dinner, overnight stays or breakfast and cleanup. Sign up on Realm. Contact: Rev. Lindsey Odom, lindsey@smpchome.org.

ALL-CHURCH RETREAT

All-Church Retreat: 'Created for Community,' Friday, March 6-Sunday, March 8, Montreat, NC - All ages are invited to join us as we examine how God exists in community and how God designed us to be in relationships with God and one another. More information and register on Realm. Contact: Rebecca Guzman, rebecca@smpchome.org, pchome.org,



SMPC PRESCHOOL REGISTRATION UPDATES!

Registration opens January 20 for church members. New preschool families must schedule a tour before registering. Tours will take place January 5-16. Please contact Tammy Winchip, tammy@smpchome.org, to schedule.

A SPECIAL SMPC TREAT!

SMPC member Emily Williams was kind enough to share two recipes loved by many SMPC members and friends! You can also find these on our website via QR code! Thank you, Emily!!

SPICED HOLIDAY TEA (As sipped on at the Women's Advent Tea!)

7 cups water
1 ½ cups sugar
5 tea bags
1 (6 oz) can frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed,
plus 1 can water
4 T. bottled lemon juice
4 cups water
5 cinnamon sticks
1 T. whole cloves



1. Bring the 7 cups water to boil in a large pot. Add the sugar and stir and cook until the sugar dissolves. Add the tea bags. Remove from heat and steep for 10 minutes; remove tea bags.

2. Add the orange juice concentrate and 1 can of water; add lemon juice and stir to combine.

3. In a separate pot, combine the 4 cups of water, the cinnamon sticks and the cloves. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 30 minutes; strain, and add to the tea mixture.

4. Serve hot.

Yield: 3 ¼ quarts



SMPC'S "FAMOUS" PUNCH

3 cups sugar
6 cups water
1 (12 oz) frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed
6 oz bottled lemon juice
1 (46 oz) can pineapple juice
4 bananas
2 (2 liter) bottles ginger ale
2 (10 cup) plastic containers with lids

Heat water to boiling and then add sugar, stir to dissolve. Add orange juice and lemon juice to sugar mixture. Break 2 bananas into chunks, add to a blender with ½ of pineapple juice, process until smooth and pureed. Add to sugar/juice mixture, repeat with remaining bananas and pineapple juice. Stir to combine. Divide equally between the 2 plastic containers, cover with lids and freeze until firm, preferably at least two days before serving. When ready to serve, take containers of base out of freezer about 2 hours before planning to serve. One base per punch bowl. As the base thaws enough to place in punch bowl break into large chunks. Just before serving, pour 1 (2 liter) bottle of ginger ale into each punch bowl with base. Each base makes about 25 servings. This recipe makes 50 servings.



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