



South Mecklenburg

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A Service of Worship
Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost
August 23, 2026
10:10 a.m., Sanctuary & Livestream

**Please rise in body or in spirit.*

We Gather

Prelude *Jesus Loves Me* arr. Jason Payne

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

Moment for Mission Tony Castle

Introit *Surely the Presence* Lanny Wolfe

***Call to Worship** (from Psalm 104) Caroline Trimmer

One: O Lord my God, you are very great!

All: You are clothed with splendor and majesty!

One: You wrap yourself in light as with a garment.

All: You stretch out the heavens like a tent.

One: You make the clouds your chariot.

All: You ride on the wings of the wind.

One: I will sing to the Lord all my life!

All: I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

One: May my meditation be pleasing to God.

All: I rejoice in the Lord.

One: Praise the Lord, O my soul!

All: Praise the Lord!

***Hymn 1** *Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty*

NICAEA

4 Ho - ly,

1 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! Lord God Al - might - y!
 2 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! all the saints a - dore thee,
 3 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! though the dark - ness hide thee,
 4 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! Lord God Al - might - y!

ho - ly,

Ear - ly in the morn - ing our song shall rise to thee.
 cast - ing down their gold - en crowns a - round the glass - y sea;
 though the eye of sin - ful - ness thy glo - ry may not see,
 All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth and sky and sea.

ho - ly,

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! mer - ci - ful and might - y!
 cher - u - bim and ser - a - phim fall - ing down be - fore thee,
 on - ly thou art ho - ly; there is none be - side thee,
 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! mer - ci - ful and might - y!

God in three per - sons, bless - ed Trin - i - ty.

God in three per - sons, bless - ed Trin - i - ty!
 who wert, and art, and ev - er - more shalt be.
 per - fect in power, in love and pu - ri - ty.
 God in three per - sons, bless - ed Trin - i - ty!

Prayer of Confession (*unison*)

Rev. Lindsey Odom

Gracious and loving God, you call us into new life through Jesus Christ, yet we often resist the transformation you desire for us. We hold on to old habits, old hurts, and old ways of thinking that keep us from fully trusting your Spirit's work within us. We confess that we sometimes seek comfort instead of growth, certainty instead of faith, and control instead of surrender. We fail to notice the new life you are creating

around us and within us. We forget that you have claimed us as your beloved children and continue to shape us each day. Forgive us, renew us, and make us new. Breathe your Spirit into our lives, that we may grow in faith, reflect your love, and become the people you are calling us to be, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, we pray, Amen.

Assurance of God's Grace

Rev. Odom

One: Friends, Jesus reminds Nicodemus that the Spirit of God moves like the wind, bringing new life, renewal, and transformation in ways we cannot always see or understand. Through Christ, God has claimed us, forgiven us, and continues to make us new. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven, renewed, and born again into the new life God offers us.

All: Alleluia! Amen.

*Response of Praise

Hymn 582, stanza 1

*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. Watch [the story of Nicodemus](#). Then read John 3:1–8 and compare the video with the Bible story. What did the video help you notice or understand?
2. Add signs of new life to your house. Draw flowers, plants, vines, or flower boxes around your house. Plants remind us of new life and the new life Jesus offers us. This week, finish putting your house together and bring it to church on **Sunday, August 30**. We will create a whole neighborhood of faith to display together! As you add signs of new life, remember that God is building us into a people of welcome, grace, and love.
3. Explore becoming a new creation. Have a caterpillar-to-butterfly race: wiggle across the floor on your stomach like a caterpillar, then stand up, spread your wings, and flutter back like a butterfly. You could also make a butterfly craft or simply act out a caterpillar changing into a butterfly. Talk about how a caterpillar becomes something new. In Christ, Paul says that we are a **new creation** too!
4. Wonder Together:
 - a. What do you think confused Nicodemus about being “born again”?
 - b. What does it mean to be a new creation in Christ?
 - c. Where do you see God making something new?



Blessing of the Backpacks

The children will return to join their families following the sermon.

Prayer for Illumination

Rev. Odom

Old Testament Reading Ezekiel 36:24-28

Rev. Odom

I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Epistle Reading 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

Rev. Odom

For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

Anthem

Clouds of Witnesses Surround Us

Robert Hobby

Chancel Choir; Festival Brass

*Clouds of witnesses surround us, saints whose heritage we claim.
Christ's own love has bought and bound us one with all who bear his name.
Here, within this congregation, trusting Your strong Word alone,
Help us build on this foundation: Christ, the living cornerstone.
Holy Spirit's fire falling where Your faithful people pray:
Fall on us, expectant, calling, gathered in Your name today.
Come, through word of mystic power; come, through water, bread and wine.
Gifts of grace upon us shower; Christ's pure light among us shine.
Send us where Your people languish, lost in depths of sin, despair.
Send us where they lie in anguish, wounded, wasted, bowed with care.
Lord, Your Gospel's word of freedom let our lives, our lips reveal
Till the long awaited kingdom comes this broken world to heal.
Help us, as the saints before us, bear with faithfulness Your name,
Till we join the mighty chorus singing hymns of glad acclaim:
Praise the Lamb, once slain, victorious over death forevermore.
Father, Spirit, ever glorious, Triune God whom we adore.*

Gospel Reading John 3:1-8 (NIV)

Dr. Hull

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi,

we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.” Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again. ” “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!” Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

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

Sermon “What About Those Born-Again Christians?” **Dr. Hull**

***Hymn 658**

God Is So Good

GOD IS SO GOOD

God Is So Good

658

1 God is so good; God is so good;
 2 God cares for me; God cares for me;
 3 God loves me so; God loves me so;
 4 God is so good; God is so good;

God is so good; God's so good to me.
 God cares for me; God's so good to me.
 God loves me so; God's so good to me.
 God is so good; God's so good to me.

The exact origins of this chorus celebrating God's providential care are not clear, but it seems to have arisen during the 1970s. Because the text changes so little, the slowly rising four-note pattern of the tune provides the primary source of energy within its five-note range.

TEXT and MUSIC: Anon.

GOD IS SO GOOD
4.4.4.5

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

Confession of 1967

Rev. Melissa White

The Holy Spirit brings us God's forgiveness, moves us to respond in faith, repentance, and obedience, and initiates the new life in Christ. The new life takes shape in a community where we know that God loves and accepts us in spite of what we are. We therefore accept ourselves and love others, knowing that no one has any ground on which to stand,

except God's grace. The new life finds its direction in the life of Jesus, his deeds and words, his struggles against temptation, his compassion, his anger, and his willingness to suffer death. The teaching of apostles and prophets guides us in living this life, and the Christian community equips us for our ministries.

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.**

Offering Invitation

Rev. White

Offertory

Amazing Grace

arr. Anthony Evert

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**

Hymn 606

***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**

Graham Trimmer

Covenant God, you have claimed us as your people and entrusted us with gifts to be used for your glory. Receive what we return to you this day, and make it fruitful for the work of your kingdom. Bless these gifts for the work of your Church, the proclamation of the gospel, and the service of our neighbors. Amen.

We Go Out to Serve

***Hymn 295**

Go to the World!

SINE NOMINE



1 Go to the world! Go in - to all the earth.
 2 Go to the world! Go in - to ev - ery place.
 3 Go to the world! Go strug - gle, bless, and pray;
 4 Go to the world! Go as the ones I send,

Go preach the cross where Christ re - news life's worth,
 Go live the word of God's re - deem - ing grace.
 the nights of tears give way to joy - ous day.
 for I am with you till the age shall end,

bap - tiz - ing as the sign of our re - birth.
 Go seek God's pres - ence in each time and space.
 As ser - vant church, you fol - low Christ's own way.
 when all the hosts of glo - ry cry "A - men!"

Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

***Charge and Benediction**

Dr. Hull

***Benediction Response**

God Be with You Till We Meet Again

William Tomer

Postlude

Festival Piece on "Nicaea"

Jerry Westenkuehler

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

Festival Brass: Kyle Gavagan, trumpet I; Dottie Buchan, trumpet II;

Justin Austenfeld, trombone I; Nathaniel Cheek, trombone II

Caroline Trimmer, Graham Trimmer, liturgists

A/V Team: Dylan Booker, Chris Wilcox

Ushers: Dan DeChant, Gena DeChant, Dean Elledge, Mary Elledge, Richard Fransee, Tom Klecker

Welcome Team: Jennifer Hurlburt, Leanne Royster, Greg Sligar, Amy Zagora

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 Thursday mornings, contact Adrienne Jaquith, Office and Database Manager, adrienne@smpchome.org.

Interested in joining South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church? To learn more about membership and the process of joining, contact Rev. Melissa White, Parish Associate, melissa@smpchome.org or 704-887-7488.

Congregational Notes (as of August 20, 2026)

Remember in Prayer

- Students, parents, teachers, and administrators, as the school year begins.
- The people of Bayonnais and all of Haiti, that God would bring protection from violence, healing for the injured, provision for those in need, and strength and hope in the midst of hardship.
- That God would guide us to serve others with compassion, justice, and mercy within our church, our community, and our world.

SMPC STAFF

Dr. Sandy Hull, Transitional Pastor

sandy@smpchome.org

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Mary Katheryne Zagora, Financial Administrator

mkzagora@smpchome.org

To join the prayer chain or send a prayer request:

prayer@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

Facebook: @southmecklenburgpresbyterian; Instagram: @southmeckpres

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
AUG. 23

Educational Equity Fair Narthex

Representatives from our educational equity mission partners and members of the Missions/Outreach Committee are in the narthex with information on how you can serve students this school year! Contact: Kathy Graham, kathyspeech91@gmail.com.

today
AUG. 23
11:45 a.m. -
1:15 p.m.

SMPC Youth Fall Kickoff Pool Party Home of the Sheelers, Middle and High Schoolers

Join us as we kick off the new SMPC Youth year with a pool party and lunch at the home of the Sheelers. Register and find more details on Realm or smpchome.org/events. Contact: Lindsey Odom, lindsey@smpchome.org.

tuesday
AUG. 25
10:30 a.m. -
12:30 p.m.

SMPC Tuesday Mahjong Narthex

Players of all skill levels are invited to join this group, which meets weekly on Tuesdays. Contact: Mary Katheryne Zagora, mkzagora@smpchome.org, to be added to the email list.

thursday
AUG. 27
1:15 p.m. -
3:15 p.m.

SMPC Thursday Mahjong Narthex

Players of all skill levels are invited to join this group, which meets weekly on Thursdays. Contact: Mary Katheryne Zagora, mkzagora@smpchome.org, to be added to the email list.

saturday
AUG. 29
4:00 p.m. -
6:00 p.m.

Hops and Vine Around Town Vintner Wine Bar, Arboretum

Come for fellowship and fun! Contact: Frank Graham, Frank.Graham@us.forvismazars.com.

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

BYG (Big Youth Group), Sunday Mecklenburg Hall, Middle and High Schoolers

BYG is held on the first Sunday of each month during the school year and is an opportunity for youth to grow in faith and love through Bible study, small group time, good food and fun games. Register on Realm or smpchome.org/events. Contact: Lindsey Odom, lindsey@smpchome.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS

BAM! (Bible and Music) Kickoff, Sunday, September 13, 5:00-6:30 p.m., Palmer Building, Ages K-5th Grade - During BAM!, children sing, creatively engage with Bible stories, explore instruments, and build friendships in age-based groups. Dinner is served. Register on Realm or smpchome.org/events. Contact: Rebecca Guzman, rebecca@smpchome.org.

Mental Health Workshop for Parents and Teens, Sunday, September 13, 5:00-6:30 p.m., Sanctuary - Parents will gather with Dr. Lisa DeVore for guidance, resources, and encouragement as they support the mental health of children and teens. We welcome all parents to attend - even those with younger children! Middle and high school youth will participate in separate, age-appropriate sessions led by Robert Limkeman, MA, LMFT and Abigail Bates, LCSW, MSW. Register on Realm or smpchome.org/events. Contact: Lindsey Odom, lindsey@smpchome.org.

SMPC Golf Tournament, Wednesday, September 16, 1:30 p.m. - All levels, men, women & youth. Shotgun start at 1:30 p.m. Range balls will be provided starting at 12:30 p.m. Cost is \$55. Proceeds go to Missions and Outreach. Register by September 9 on Realm or smpchome.org/events. Contact: Brett Thompson, bathomp1971@yahoo.com, or Ron Morgan, colronmorg@gmail.com.



International Dining Group, Thursday, September 17, 6:30 p.m., Azucar Cuban Restaurant, 14825 Ballantyne Village Way - Join this group that loves to eat out! Register on Realm or via QR code. Contact: Carol Roan, candwroan@gmail.com, or Brenda Villa, bvilla20@carolina.rr.com.

CREATED FOR COMMUNITY: JANE AND SKYE

The last in our summer series where we've highlighted community at SMPC!



Sometimes the most meaningful relationships begin at the most unexpected times. Last summer, longtime SMPC member Jane Brookshire served in the Preschool Science Rotation Station at Vacation Bible School. Normally, she'd be paired with her granddaughter, who had helped in previous years. But when her granddaughter was out of town, Jane was paired instead with youth volunteer Skye.

"Rebecca and the VBS leaders are so good at pairing us up," said Jane. "When you lead a focus group at VBS, you're usually together all week. I was delighted to meet Skye and spend the week with her and her friend, Tuuli."

Between activities, the two would chitchat. They quickly got to know one another's families and interests, and by the end of the week, they were friends. Rev. Lindsey Odom took notice of the sweet pair, and when it was time to help find Confirmation mentors for the Class of 2026, she thought Jane would be the perfect mentor for Skye. Jane had mentored both of her grandchildren through Confirmation and was honored to be asked to mentor someone outside her own family.

Throughout the year, Jane and Skye intentionally spent time with one another. They sat together in worship, participated in the CROP Hunger Walk, exchanged small Christmas gifts, and served together in the back-to-school All Church Serves. Through those shared small experiences, they built a relationship rooted in faith, encouragement and genuine friendship.

"We often sat together at church and had many fun conversations," Skye said. "Jane has provided a safe space to ask questions. She always models Christian behavior and offers encouragement, which has really helped me grow in my faith."

For Jane, the experience was just as meaningful. Being Skye's mentor gave her a fresh perspective on the Confirmation journey, especially as she watched Skye thoughtfully prepare and share her Statement of Faith.

"Skye did such an excellent job on her Statement of Faith - as did all the confirmands - and it really allowed me to see Confirmation with new eyes," Jane said. "I'm so often with people my own age or those with similar interests, but you're missing so much if you don't take time to learn what's going on with our young people. We are so blessed to have such a vibrant youth ministry at SMPC!"

Now entering ninth grade, Skye enjoys tennis, band and spending time with friends. Looking back on her year with Jane, she says her mentor's kindness and support helped her better understand both her faith and her place within the larger church community.

Their story is a beautiful reminder that community at SMPC isn't limited by age or stage of life. Sometimes all it takes is saying "yes" to serving and being open to the relationships God places in our path.

If you would like more information about the Confirmation process or about mentoring a confirmand, please contact Rev. Lindsey Odom, Associate Pastor of Youth and Mission/Outreach, lindsey@smpchome.org. And while Vacation Bible School is over for the summer, you can always be added to the volunteer list for next summer! Youth and adults should reach out to Director of Spiritual Formation Rebecca Guzman, rebecca@smpchome.org, to be added to the volunteer list.

Encourage, Empower, and Support the Education of Our Local Kids

Join us in the Narthex immediately following worship for our Educational Equity Fair! Enjoy an educational treat and refreshment, meet our passionate partners, and find a simple way to serve a local student that fits your schedule.



Why It Matters: Partnering for Student Success



Every student deserves the opportunity to thrive, yet too many face barriers to success. Schools play a vital role, but ensuring every student has the support they need to succeed requires an entire community. By investing in students from kindergarten through graduation, we can help open doors to lifelong success.

Building Strong Foundations (K-5)

Only 1 in 3 local fourth graders meet rigorous national standards in reading and math, limiting future academic success and opportunities.

Creating Access to Success: Strategic, one-on-one support makes a measurable difference. Each year, **96% of Heart Math students meet their academic growth goals**, and **90% of Augustine Literacy Project (ALP) students gain more than 1.5 grade levels in reading**. ALP and Heart Math are the strategic tutoring partners approved by CMS to tutor during the school day.

Launching Future Opportunities (Grades 6-12)

While **84% of local students graduate on time**, only **62%** transition directly to college or trade programs, leaving many without a clear pathway to their next opportunity.

Expanding Opportunity Through Mentorship: Consistent mentoring helps students build confidence, develop goals, and successfully navigate life after high school. Through UrbanPromise Charlotte, nearly **100% of participating seniors graduate** and take the next step into college, career, or workforce training.

Be the Difference

You don't need to be an educator to help change a student's future; you simply need to show up. Whether you're playing math games with a first grader, helping a student become a stronger reader, or guiding a teenager through college or career decisions, your time helps expand access, build confidence, and create opportunities that can last a lifetime.

Ready to Connect Instantly?

Scan this code to fill out our quick online interest form and let the Missions and Outreach Committee know how you'd like to help!



HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

SMPC coordinates volunteer opportunities at Smithfield Elementary, Sterling Elementary, and Urban Promise. Follow these two simple steps to get started:

1

Register with CMS (Required Annually)

All elementary-level volunteers must register or renew annually with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. Select both Sterling Elementary and Smithfield Elementary in your profile. Register at: cmsvolunteers.com

2

Choose Your Path

Option 1: Strategic Tutoring (Highly Recommended)

No experience needed! Get full training and pre-planned lessons with our trusted partners:

- **Heart Math Tutoring:** Tutor math in-person at Smithfield or Sterling Elementary Schools
- **Augustine Literacy Project (ALP):** Tutor reading in-person at Sterling or REMOTELY from anywhere.



Option 2: Classroom Support (Smithfield Only)

Partner directly with one teacher to assist in their classroom on a schedule you coordinate together.

Option 3: High School Mentorship (Urban Promise)

Become a "Promise Coach" to walk alongside a local high school student as a consistent cheerleader, helping them navigate graduation and college/career prep.



Option 4: "As Needed" Volunteers

Can't commit to a weekly schedule? Join our contact list for one-time or seasonal volunteer needs throughout the school year. Register with CMS, so you are prepared to jump in!

Questions? Contact Kathy Graham, kathyspeech91@gmail.com

