

GATHERING AROUND THE WORD

As the Prelude begins, we invite you into a period of quiet reflection as we *gather* as a community and prepare our hearts to worship God.

PRELUDE *Gesu Bambino (The Infant Jesus)*
Pietro A. Yon (1886-1943)

WELCOME AND CONCERNS OF THE CHURCH Dr. Matthew S. Brown

One: The Lord be with you.
Many: **And also with you.**

INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS Nancy Metzler

INTROIT *He Shall Feed His Flock/Come Unto Him, Messiah*
Denise Dyce, soloist G. F. Handel

* CALL TO WORSHIP

Lighting of the Advent Candle - **LOVE**
Cullen, Kari, Harrison, and Xander Case

One: People of God, today we hear the story of an angel appearing in a dream.

Many: **Joseph was a righteous man who heard God's messenger.**

One: Because of his deep faith, he trusted in God's steadfast love.

Many: **When we know God's love, we can extend it to others.**

One: Today we light a candle to symbolize the steadfast love of God. We hope in the One who will come. We pray for God's peace to prevail. Our joy will come with God's servant. God's love never ends. (Light the candles of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.)

One: People of God, remember you are God's beloved children.

All: **We celebrate God's steadfast love!**

* HYMN *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus* No. 2

CALL TO CONFESSION Rev. Jessica Tidwell-Weinzierl

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (unison) Rev. Tidwell-Weinzierl

Transforming God, we can get so wrapped up in commercialized Christmas – the decorating, the gift buying, the parties – that we miss the real event of Christ's coming, even as it happens in our very midst. But in this Advent season, we are supposed to be waiting for the coming of Christ and anticipating the world being turned upside down! How we wish we could avoid the turbulence of change. Like Esther before us, we often would rather keep our heads down than risk the wrath of the powerful, even if our courage might save others. We would rather shut out the advice of the wise than be instruments of prophetic challenge. We would rather be left alone, in complacency, than face the demands of faithful living. Forgive us, Holy One. Help us embrace the courage of Esther and the faith of Elizabeth and Mary. Help us claim the promise of radical transformation that has come and is coming in the Christ-child of Bethlehem. Teach us to be faithful as we navigate a world You will turn upside down and make new with your grace and love. (silence)

*Please stand as you are able.

Leader: Trusting your mercy, we lift these prayers to you in the name of Jesus Christ, our redeemer. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON Rev. Tidwell-Weinzierl

* RESPONSE OF PRAISE From: **Angels We Have Heard on High**

**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.**

PROCLAIMING THE WORD

We *listen* for the word of God through song, Scripture, and preaching.

ANTHEM *Thou Shalt Know Him When He Comes* Hal H. Hopson

“... not by any din of drums,
nor the manner of His airs, nor by anything He wears;
not by His crown or His gown.
But His coming known shall be by the holy harmony
which His coming makes in thee.
Thou shalt know Him when He comes. Amen.”

Chancel Choir

CHILDREN'S WORSHIP Rev. Tidwell-Weinzierl

As the children four years old through third grade gather and recess to the Chapel for Children's Worship, the congregation is invited to join in singing:

**Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
And fit us for heaven to live with Thee there.**

Congregation: The peace of Christ be with you.
Children: And also with you.

**Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
And fit us for heaven to live with Thee there.**

The children will return to join their families at the Doxology.

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION Dr. Brown

READINGS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT
Esther 3:12a, 13 Pew Bible p. 446
Esther 4:4, 5-17 Pew Bible pp. 446-447

READING FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT
Luke 1:38 Pew Bible p. 57

One: This is the Word of the Lord.

Many: **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON *For Such a Time As This* Dr. Brown

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

We *respond* to the hearing of God's word through affirmation, offering, and prayers.

* HYMN *The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came* No. 16

* AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (unison)

The Apostles' Creed
Rev. Whitney Bayer

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 (unison) Rev. Bayer

. . . **“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 *What Is This Lovely Fragrance?*
17th C. French/Cathy Moklebust
Chancel Ringers
Sandi Buchanan, Leslie Harper, Gayle Ireland, Patti Kelly,
Tim Krantz, Barbara Lee, Mary Lynn Rawls, Lori Schellin, Gwen Volker

Online giving option: As an alternative to the traditional offering plate, you may support SMPC using your mobile device by texting SMPC to **73256** or give online at www.SMPChome.org/Giving

* DOXOLOGY From: **The First Nowell**

**Then let us all with one accord sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
That hath made heaven and earth of nought,
And with His blood our life hath bought.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born is the King of Israel.**

* PRAYER OF DEDICATION Julia Fuller

Creator God, today, we don't offer you what is left over after our Christmas spending. Out of our deep trust in Your grace, we offer our whole selves and the resources you have given us for the transformation of our world. May we offer to make a difference, not only in our community and the world, but in our church family and in our hearts, too. Amen.

BEARING AND FOLLOWING THE WORD

* HYMN *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming* No. 48

* CHARGE AND BENEDICTION Dr. Brown

* CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE From: **It Came Upon the Midnight Clear**
**For lo, the days are hastening on, by prophet bards foretold,
When with the ever-circling years comes round the age of gold;
When peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world give back the song which now the angels sing.**

The Worship Service Notes

Leading Worship this Morning

Dr. Matthew S. Brown, Pastor
Rev. Whitney Bayer, Associate Pastor of Congregational Care
Rebecca Guzman, Director of Spiritual Formation
Audrey McConnell, Director of Music
Rev. Jessica Tidwell-Weinzierl, Director of Youth Ministry
Denise Dyce, Soloist
Julia Fuller, Liturgist
The Case Family, lighting the Advent Candle

We welcome back Denise Dyce to SMPC this Advent morning! She is the daughter of our own Hilreth Dyce and got her start singing in children's choirs in church and school, and later studied voice while a student at Columbia University. Denise has since performed as a solo artist at weddings and other events, most notably in a solo classical recital at Carnegie Hall in 2009. She has also sung in several choral ensembles including the Memorial Presbyterian Church Choir of Roosevelt, New York, the Chancel Choir of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, New York, and the Oratorio Society of New York, which hosts three concerts each year at Carnegie Hall, including their annual Messiah concert which is a New York Christmas tradition since 1874. Denise is a licensed attorney who currently serves as the Director of Labor Relations for Syracuse University.

Large print bulletins and hearing enhancement equipment are available at the Connection Center. An usher will be happy to assist you.

Please sign the Friendship Register as it is passed. To update contact information in our database, contact smpcoffice@smpchome.org.

Interested in joining South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church?

The Session of South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church will welcome new members on January 6 at 11:45 a.m. in the Chapel. If you have interest in membership, please speak to one of the pastors or with Nancy Metzler, Director of Hospitality and Connection, following today's service.

Worship Teams

Elders and Deacons: Patty Stevenson
Ushers: Charles Casey, Head Usher; Andy Burke, Krista Casey, Bob Cushman, Curtis Guy, Peggy Merritt
A/V: Bill Bishop

Hospitality Teams

Greeters: Barbara Goodman
Coffee Grounds Hosts: Ellen & Robert Clark, Emily Williams

Note to Parents: We offer childcare for infants through kindergarten each Sunday during the 10:10 a.m. Worship Service. Additional information or questions contact:

Rebecca Guzman, Director of Spiritual Formation,
Rebecca@smpchome.org; 704-544-0404, ext. 117.

Congregational Notes (as of December 18, 2018)

Remember in Prayer

- Linda Nagle Hanson as her husband Russ Hanson entered the Church Triumphant December 14
- The Doug Rhodes family as Doug's mother entered the Church Triumphant December 15
- Our partners in ministry in Bayonnais, Haiti.

To join the prayer chain or send a prayer request: prayer@SMPChome.org.

Deacons

Moderator: Jeana Lee
Secretary: Tricia Gosnell

Class of 2019: Kay Dano, Dick Engle, Joyce Highsmith, Jeana Lee, Jim Loftus, Lori Schellin

Class of 2020: Brad Alford, Kathy Gahagen, Tricia Gosnell, Brenton Hartman, Curtis Ireland, Carol Palmgren

Elders

Clerk of Session: Frank Graham
Recording Clerk: Gary Rawls

Class of 2018: Frank Graham, Janet Morgan, Amy Zagora, Michael Zagora, Katie Cushman (youth)

Class of 2019: Maria Davis, Kim Dracon, Jerry Hawver, Gary Rawls

Class of 2020: Mary Elledge, Guy Gosnell, Greg Hobby, Melissa White

Staff

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South Mecklenburg PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A Service of Worship

The Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 23, 2018

10:10 a.m., Sanctuary

Our Mission . . . to seek God's will for our lives,
joyfully responding to the Good News of Jesus Christ
with Love and Grace.