

Welcome

We're glad you're here! Thank you for joining us today. Members of this congregation have been gathering here to worship since 1804, when our church was formed to minister to the Native American and European settlers in Athens. Over the past two centuries our congregation has changed, but our mission remains the same: to make disciples of Jesus Christ. We are inspired by the words of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, who encouraged believers to "do all the good you can, in all the ways you can." At Athens First United Methodist, there are many ways to get involved, grow in your faith, and do good in our community.

If you are unable to attend worship in person, each Sunday our 11:00 a.m. service is broadcast on WRFC 960 AM, and our 9:45 and 11:00 a.m. services are live-streamed on our website at athensfirstumc.org/webcast.

Nursery

Our nursery is available for infants through four-year-olds on Sundays from 8:15 a.m.– 12:15 p.m. The nursery area is located on the first floor of the building, off the Washington Street entrance.

Children

Worship activity bags (age appropriate for all preschool and elementary children) are available every Sunday in the narthex and by the south entrance of the sanctuary. Children's Church is held for children in kindergarten through second grade and follows the Children's Message during 11:00 a.m. worship all Sundays except for Communion Sundays.

Sunday School

We offer Sunday School for all ages, kindergarten through adult, each Sunday from 9:45-10:45 a.m. For a list of adult Sunday School classes and locations, visit *athensfirstumc.org/adultsundayschool*.

Connect

We are blessed to have a large congregation. Because of this, we offer many programs and ministries. It can be overwhelming trying to decide where to get involved. If you would like a buddy to guide you along this process, please notify a Helper. Helpers serve as part of our Welcome Ministry team. Look for them in the narthex or near the altar. You can also contact a Helper through our website *athensfirstumc.org/helper*.

Another great way to learn about the life of our church is through attending a Newcomer Orientation held every second Sunday of the month at 9:45 and 11 a.m. We also encourage you to visit our website, *athensfirstumc.org*, for information about our ministries, to register for events, and to listen to sermons from our sermon archive. Visit *athensfirstumc.org/thesteeple* to sign up for our weekly newsletter, the eSteeple. You can also connect with us via social media. Find us @athens_firstumc on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest.

Our church office is open Monday through Friday, from 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. If you need assistance, please call 706-543-1442.

The Worship of God

*Please stand as you are able. The congregation speaks or sings the text in **bold type.**

Gathering

THE PRELUDE

The flowers on the

"Good Christian Friends Rejoice" | Laubengayer

altar are in loving

THE CALL TO WORSHIP

memory of James

Beth Dickinson

T. Blasingame

Let us go, in heart and mind, to see what has come to pass.

for his December

Let us go with the shepherds:

18 birthday by

Let us go to find the Savior!

his family: Alma

Let us go with the wise ones:

L. Blasingame,

Let us go to find God's promise, born for us!

Rhonda B.

Let us go with the poor and humble:

Клопаа в. McClure, Ellen Let us go to find our King, born in a lowly manger.

1.4.1

Let us go with all the world, with all the peoples of the nations.

and Andrew

Come, let us worship; come, let us adore him:

McClure, James T.

Christ the Lord!

Blasingame II, and
Becky Blasingame.

*THE HYMNS

"Go Tell It on the Mountain"

Refrain:

Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere; Go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.

While shepherds kept their watching, over silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens, there shone a holy light:

Refrain

Down in a lowly manger, our humble Christ was born And God send us salvation, that blessed Christmas morn:

Refrain

"Joy to the World"

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King; let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing.

He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove the glories of his righteousness, and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love.

"Hark, the Herald Angels Sing"

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King, peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!" Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies; with th' angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!" Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King!"

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.

Praise & Thanksgiving

* THE CHRISTMAS CREED

We believe in Jesus Christ and in the beauty of the gospel begun in Bethlehem.

We believe in the one whose spirit glorified a little town; and whose spirit still brings music to persons all over the world, in towns both large and small.

We believe in the one for whom the crowded inn could find no room, and we confess that our hearts still sometimes wants to exclude Christ from our lives today.

We believe in the one who the rulers of the earth ignored and the proud could never understand; whose life was among common people, whose welcome came from persons of hungry hearts.

We believe in the one who proclaimed the love of God to be invincible.

We believe in the one whose cradle was a mother's arms, whose modest home in Nazareth had love for its only wealth, who looked at persons and made them see what God's love saw in them, who by love brought sinners back to purity, and lifted human weakness up to meet the strength of God. We confess our ever-lasting need of God:
The need of forgiveness for our selfishness and greed, the need of new life for empty souls, the need of love for hearts grown cold.
We believe in God who gives us the best of himself.
We believe in Jesus, the son of the living God, born in Bethlehem that night, for us and for the world.
Amen.

* THE GLORIA PATRI

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

* THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

Son of

Amy &

Matt Lee

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

9:45 a.m. | Jackson Charles Lee

Jackson, Jackson, God claims you, God helps you, protects you, and loves you too. We this day do all agree a child of God you'll always be. Jackson, Jackson, God claims you, God helps you, protects you, and loves you too.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER Martha Aenchbacher

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory,

forever. Amen.

THE OFFERING

THE OFFERTORY ANTHEM

8:30 a.m. | "Little Drummer Boy"

9:45 a.m. & 11:00 a.m. | "Gloria Emmanuel"

* THE DOXOLOGY | THE FIRST NOEL

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise God, all creatures here below. Praise God above, ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Noel, Noel, Noel Noel. Born is the King of Israel.

THE SCRIPTURE READING

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

THE MESSAGE

"Keeping a Merry Christmas" | Martha Aenchbacher

Response to the Word

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION | 8:30 a.m.

Please turn to page nine in your hymnal. At Athens First United Methodist, all are invited to commune at Christ's table. If you need to be served in your pew, please call this to the attention of an usher. Note that all gluten-free communion elements are available at the center altar station.

Sending Forth

* THE HYMNS

"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.

Refrain:

Gloria, gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, gloria, gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo! Come to Bethlehem and see Christ whose birth the angels sing, come, adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King.

Refrain

See him in a manger laid, whom the choirs of angels praise, Mary, Joseph, lend your aid, while our hearts in love we raise.

Refrain

"It Came upon the Midnight Clear"

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, good will to men, from heaven's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come with peaceful wings unfurled, and still their heavenly music floats o'er all the weary world; above its sad and lowly plains, they bend on hovering wing, and ever o'er its Babel sounds the blessed angels sing.

"Away in a Manger"

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes; I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

* THE BLESSING

* THE RESPONSE

"Away in a Manger"

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.

* POSTLUDE

"Good King Wenceslas" | Otis

GREETERS

Susanne and Woody Chastain, Mary and Henry Folsom, Melanie Herhar, Martee and Foye Horne

DECEMBER USHERS

8:30 a.m. Jim Belger, Ann and Paul Brown, Larry Deal, Hugh Larkey, Mack Lowrey, Jim Lyons, Candler Meadors, Olan Moore, Bob Noble, Grace Rabek, Ken Reece, Keith Wilson, Michael and Sharon Broun

9:45 a.m. Chris Bostdorff, Tom Cooper, David and Jane Disney, Mark Ellison, Mark Firth, Tom Hedges, Dan Lasseter, Jim Lyons, Sharon Milton, Tom Milton, Al Rogers, Bill Trigleth, Michelle and Reeves McNeill **11:00 a.m.** Al Hawley, Charles Grimes, Henry Folsom, Tom Henson, Henry Garrard, Jim Lyons, Jake Riley, Frank Thornburg, Mike Scott, Tom Dean

OFFERING STEWARDS

Bob Booth, Charlie Grimes, Jim Lyons, Nat Carmack, Henry Garrard, Nathan King, Al Hawley, Sean Rogers, Charlie Upchurch III

FIRST LIGHT ACOLYTES

8:30 a.m. Riley and Madison Holland, Isabelle Channell, Nick Mauldin

9:45 a.m. Tanner Iley, Peyton Shedd, Curry and John Cross

11:00 a.m. Eliza Petersen, Madeline Jackson, Tommy Warner

OUR MINISTERS AND PROGRAM DIRECTORS

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The Steeple

Senior Fun Christmas Tree Undecorating | Today

All members of the Senior Fun Group are invited to help undecorate the Senior Fun Christmas tree in Hancock Hall immediately following 11:00 a.m. worship on Sunday, December 28. Light refreshments will be served.

Beth Dickinson | beth@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Serve Lunch to International Students January 3

Extend hospitality to new International Students on the UGA Campus by partnering with REACH International to serve lunch to students during UGA's International Student Life Orientation on Saturday, January 3, from 11:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m. We will be serving 50+ students and need smiling faces and helping hands to set up the meal and welcome them to Athens. Contact Lynn to volunteer. Lynn Bryant | Jynn@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Discipleship Drop-In | January 4

All current and past small group, adult Sunday school, and Bible study teachers and leaders are invited to a special drop-in time in the resource room (room 224) on Sunday, January 4 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Future leaders and anyone interested in previewing curriculum are invited as well.

Beth Dickinson | beth@athensfirstumc.org 706-543-1442

Small Group Opportunities for Parents Beginning January 7

This January there are going to be multiple meeting opportunities for parents to join a small group book study of Parenting by the Book, Biblical Wisdom for Raising Your Child or Teen Proofing: Fostering Responsible Decision Making in your Teenager in anticipation of Johns Rosemond's talk at Parenting with Purpose on February 8.

Parenting by the Book Sessions:

- Wednesday evenings January 7-28, 4:30-6:00 p.m. in our church, led by Jennifer Foster
- Wednesday evenings January 7-28, 6:30-8:00 p.m. in our church, led by Kim and Ben Griffith
- Friday mornings January 9-30, 9:30-11:00 a.m., hosted and led by Stacey Richardson at her home

Teen Proofing Sessions

- Wednesday mornings January 7-28, noon-1:30 p.m., hosted and led by Tracy Trigleth at her home
- Sunday evenings January 11-25, 4:30-6:30 p.m. in our church, led by Amy Parrish

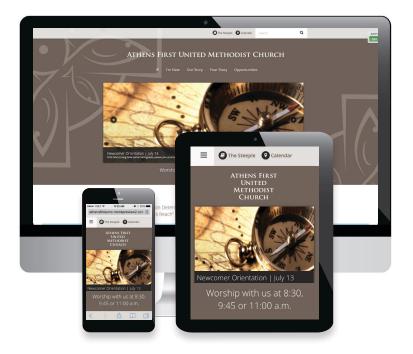
Please register online. Childcare is available with registration for studies hosted at Athens First United Methodist Church. The cost of the book is \$15.

Register online | athensfirstumc.org/registration Robin Stewart | robin@athensfirstumc.org



Covenant Bible Study Groups

Covenant Bible study consists of three modules of eight weeks each: Creating the Covenant (C1), Living the Covenant (C2), Trusting the Covenant (C3). Each module of this series builds upon itself as participants read, study, and discuss the Bible together and learn how to love God—and each other—better. Covenant Bible study shows the interconnectedness of scripture while demonstrating how the covenant relationship between God and people is woven through the entire Bible. Covenant represents a relationship —a living, breathing conversation.



Top 3 Website Improvements

- BETTER VIEWING ON MOBILE DEVICES
- FASY ACCESS TO THE STEEPLE
- IMPROVED OVERALL DESIGN

COMING JANUARY 12, 2015

One session of Creating the Covenant (C1) will be offered on Wednesdays beginning January 7 at 6:30 p.m. and is led by Bob Noble.

Numerous Living the Covenant (C2) sessions are offered. We recommend you have completed a Creating the Covenant (C1) session before taking C2.

- Tuesdays | January 13, 6:30-8:00 p.m. | Led by Beth and Keith Dickinson
- Wednesdays | January 14, 9:15-10:45 a.m. | Led by Alice Deal and Debbie Whittemore
- Wednesdays | January 7, 5:30-7:00 p.m. | Led by Karen Spence
- Wednesdays | January 7, 6:30-8:00 p.m. | Led by Pat Morrison and Tom Reichert
- Wednesdays | January 7, 6:30-8:00 p.m. | Led by Alan Cannon and Don Griner

Childcare is available by registration for all sessions except Wednesday morning. Individual books are \$20; the set of all three books costs \$50.

Register | athensfirstumc.org/registration
Beth Dickinson | beth@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442



Volunteers Needed at Snack and Chat January 9

On Friday, January 9, REACH International will host a "Welcome Back!" party in Hancock Hall at 6:30 p.m. Volunteers are needed to offer hospitality and to help serve the meal. Contact Lynn for more information. Thanks so much for your support...it makes a world of difference! Lynn Bryant, REACH Director | lynn@athensfirstumc.org 706-202-9017

New Website Launch | January 12

Have you ever tried to use our website on your phone? Unless you have eagle eyes and very nimble fingers, you might have trouble finding what you need. On January 12, a new mobile-friendly website will launch. To accompany the launch of this website, tutorials will be held at 5:00 p.m. on January 14, 21, and 28 at the iPad Welcome Station. During these tutorials, you will learn how to register for events, sign up for the eSteeple, and access information. No registration is necessary, just show up ready to learn.

Amelia Wilson | amelia@athensfirstumc.org 706-543-1442



Store Donations Needed for Souper Supper

We are getting ready to kick off our Souper Suppers ministry in just a few short weeks! We are stocking our Souper Supper Store. The Souper Supper Store provides necessary personal items to our guests at Souper Suppers. Items that we need include non-perishable food items: Spam and peanut butter crackers; personal hygiene items: deodorant and body wash; and home goods: paper towels and toilet paper. A full list of needed items is available online. Please bring any donations to the basket behind the reception desk. Kate Kelly | kate@weequahic.com or Mary DeLoach | marymdeloach@yahoo.com Learn more | athensfirstumc.org/soupersuppers



New Young Professional Adult Sunday School Class | January 2015

Young Adults, you're invited to be a part of a new adult Sunday School Class that will be meeting at 11:00 a.m. beginning on January 11 in room 224. This group is open to any adult in their late 20s-40ish. This new class will gather for study, encouragement, prayer, and social activities. Beth Dickinson | beth@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Men's Study The Truth Project Begins January 7

The Truth Project is a no homework, DVD-based small group curriculum taught by Dr. Del Tackett. This study is the starting point for looking at life from a Biblical perspective. Each lesson discusses the relevance and importance of living the Christian world view in daily life. The course is offered January 7-March 4 from 6:30-8:00 p.m. There is no cost, but please register if childcare is needed.

Register | athensfirstumc.org/registration Learn more | www.thetruthproject.org Bruce Powers | bpowers@armc.org or Keith Wilson | kcw2236@gmail.com

Wednesday Nights Meals Resume January 7

Wednesday night meals are resuming on Wednesday, January 7. Join us for a delicious meal provided by Fresh Air Bar-b-que. Meals are \$5 each, and advance sign ups are required. Sign up online or by calling the church office by Tuesday at noon. If you had a standing reservation in

fall 2014 you'll be contacted to renew your order. Contact Diana Zylow to make a standing/regular reservation. Volunteers are needed each week to help serve or clean up the meal. It is a huge help to the church and a lot of fun. Please sign up online.

Diana Zylow | diana@athensfirstumc.org Register | athensfirstumc.org/registration



Cub Scouts Collecting Flags

Cub Scouts Pack 1 will be conducting a flag retirement ceremony in early January. If you have a worn or tattered flag in need of retirement, please bring them to the reception desk at church. We will collect them and retire them during the ceremony.

Nat Carmack | nat@bosstaff.com

Living in the Light Celebration January 7

In celebration of Epiphany and to kick off the New Year, children ages 3 - grade 4 are invited to a special Living in the Light party. We will gather in the gym on January 7 from 4:30 - 6:00 p.m. to play games, make new friends, and more. Just like the wise men, children can bring their coin bank from the Advent Breakfast as an offering to the United Methodist Children's Home.

Sarah Lawing | sarah@athensfirstumc.org

Beth Moore Bible Study | Begins January 21

A Beth Moore Bible Study, Children of the Day, will be



WAYS TO SERVE AT SOUPER SUPPER

INDIVIDUALLY

You can serve as an individual by offering hospitality in many different capacities, donating items, and helping in the Souper Supper store.

COUPLES

Couples, please consider offering hospitality, helping to clean up, or helping at the store through service or donations.

FAMILIES

Families are welcome to join with another family to prepare the meal or help with hospitality or at the store!

GROUPS

Service with your Bible Studies, Small Groups, United Methodist Women Circles, or Adult Sunday School Classes. Groups can prepare the meal for Souper Supper—many hands make light work!

Learn more I athensfirstumc.org/soupersupper Contact | Betsy Butler | betsy@athensfirstumc.org offered beginning Wednesdays January 21-March 18 from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. or from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. This study focuses on 1 and 2 Thessalonians and how truths from those books apply to every situation in our lives today. Materials for this study cost \$20. Contact Janet Strickland directly to register.

Contact: Janet Strickland | jstrickland@bellsouth.net 678-910-0039

Communion Guild Training January 25

This training is for current members of the Communion Guild and those interested in joining. Chuck Hodges will explain the significance of Holy Communion, along with how to prepare and serve the elements at Athens First United Methodist Church. At the conclusion of the training, we invite you to sign up to prepare or serve Communion at any of the three worship services throughout the year. Please join us at the front of the sanctuary immediately following the 11:00 service on January 25. Katherine Hodges | katherine@athensfirstumc.org

Preschool Registration for Fall 2015 Begins in January

706-543-1442

Weekday Preschool will begin accepting registrations for Fall 2015 on Friday, January 10; priority registration closes Friday, January 23. Forms will be available online and in hard copy at the preschool desk at that time. Classes will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis giving priority to the groups listed below in that order. Please visit our website for more information. Priority deadlines are as follows:

- Currently Enrolled Families: registration due Friday, January 16
- Church Member Families: registration due Thursday, January 22
- General registration: due Friday, January 23
- Parents Notified of Acceptance/Class Placement by Friday, February 6

Website | athensfirstumc.org/weekdaypreschool

Linsey Jarrett | linsey@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Stop Hunger Now | January 31

Stop Hunger Now's meal packaging program is a fun, hands-on international mission project for all ages. This is an opportunity to an impact across the globe without leaving Athens.

This is an annual churchwide mission project with many ways to be involved. First, you can pray for the hungry and for the families' hearts that can be transformed by our service. If you can't attend on January 31, pray for everyone that will be present. Pray that the Holy Spirit be present and move the hearts of everyone in Hancock Hall and everyone across the world who receives a meal.

Another way to be involved is to give financially. One quarter pays for one meal! Look for more information will about collecting money in coming weeks, but for now start saving those quarters! If you would like to write a check place your donation in the offering plate and marked "SHN" in the memo line.

And finally, you can serve! If you can pour a bowl of cereal, you have all the skills you need to be a part of Stop Hunger Now. The fun starts Friday January 30, 2015 with the opportunity to help unload the truck and set-up beginning at 5:00 p.m. Then on January 31 you have the opportunity to help package more than 40,000 meals for Stop Hunger Now. This is a high energy event that is exciting and action packed. There are jobs for people of all ages. This churchwide event is also a great time to meet people who attended other worship services.

Betsy Butler | betsy@athensfirstumc.org
Learn more| athensfirstumc.org/stophungernow

Parenting with Purpose | February 8

The Children's Ministry of Athens First United Methodist Church is excited to announce our fourth Parenting With Purpose event. Nationally known author and speaker John Rosemond will join us on February 8 to discuss *Parenting with Love and Leadership*. We hope you'll mark your calendars to join us. This event is free and open to the public. Childcare will not be provided for this event. Registration will begin on January 4.

Robin Stewart | robin@athensfirstumc.org

This Week

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28 | ISAIAH 61:10-62:3

8:30 a.m. Worship Service SANCTUARY

Preschool Nursery & Sunday School FIRST FLOOR

9:45 a.m. Adult Sunday School SECOND FLOOR AND SAYE BULDING

Elementary Sunday School THIRD FLOOR
Grade 5 & 6 Sunday School: Fuel FIRST FLOOR
Youth Sunday School: First Word FIRST FLOOR

Worship Service SANCTUARY

The Psalm Trees Connect Group ROOM 103

10:00 a.m. Sack Lunch Ministry HULL STREET ENTRANCE

11:00 a.m. Worship Service SANCTUARY11:30 a.m. Children's Church CARAVANS

12:00 p.m. Senior Fun Christmas Tree Undecorating HANCOCK HALL

2:00 p.m. Volleyball GYM

MONDAY, DECEMBER 29 | PSALM 148

7:00 a.m. Fashion Fitness GYM

5:00 p.m. Children's Basketball GYM

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 30 | GALATIANS 4:4-7

5:30 a.m. Fashion Fitness GYM
5:00 p.m. Children's Basketball GYM
5:30 p.m. Fashion Fitness ROOM 119

7:00 p.m. Boy Scouts | Troop 1 SAYE HUT

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31 | Luke 2:22-40

Church office closes at noon.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 1 | ISAIAH 54:1-13

Happy New Year | Church Office Closed

FRIDAY, JANUARY 2 | 1 CHRONICLES 1:7-13

Church Office Closed

SATURDAY, JANUARY 3 | I SAMUEL 2:18-20, 26

9:00 a.m. Children's Basketball GYM

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