

The background features a stylized design with grey fish outlines and red geometric shapes. The fish are arranged in a circular pattern, with some overlapping. The red shapes include a large 'L' shape in the top-left, a horizontal line with a central dot, and a large 'L' shape in the bottom-right. A red circle is also present in the top-left corner.

ATHENS FIRST  
UNITED  
METHODIST  
CHURCH

*Fourth Sunday of Advent*

DECEMBER 24, 2017

11:00 a.m.

# Welcome

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We are glad you are here! Thank you for joining us for worship this Sunday. Members of this congregation have been gathering here to worship since 1804. 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."

## *Attendance*

Please let us know of your attendance this morning by completing the pew pad.

## *Newcomer Orientation*

We invite you to learn about the life of our church, ways you can get involved, and how to become a member by attending Newcomer Orientation. Newcomer Orientation is held the second Sunday of each month at 9:45 a.m. in the Hospitality Room.

## *Sunday School*

We offer Sunday school for children age 2 through adult each Sunday from 9:45-10:45 a.m.

## *Children*

At Athens First United Methodist Church, we invite families to worship together. Children's Church is held for children in kindergarten through grade 2 most Sundays during the 11:00 a.m. service.

## *Financial Report*

Budget for 2017 | \$3,038,381

Amount Given YTD | \$3,120,897

Goal for December | \$536,096

Amount after 2 Sundays | \$136,177

## *Attendance on December 17*

Total Worship | 1260

8:30 a.m. | 169

9:45 a.m. | 440

11:00 a.m. | 530

Online | 121

Sunday School | 329

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## *Contact Us*

Office hours: Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Facebook: @Athens First United Methodist Church  
[athensfirstumc.org](http://athensfirstumc.org) | 706-543-1442

# The Worship of God

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11:00 a.m.

## *Gathering*

### *Flowers*

The flowers on the altar are given to the glory of God and in loving memory of Drucye B. and Frank E. Casey and Julia E. and Gene C. Miller by their families.

### THE PRELUDE

“He is Born” | Andre Lash

### THE CALL TO WORSHIP

“Prepare the Way of the Lord” | Joseph Herl

*Sung by the Sanctuary Choir*

## *Praise & Thanksgiving*

### \*THE HYMNS

234 “O Come All Ye Faithful” | ADESTE FIDELES

Verses 1-4

### \*THE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

The Taylor Family

Let us pray.

**Loving God, we open ourselves to you this Christmas season. As these candles are lit, light our lives with your imagination. Show us the creative power of hope. Teach us the peace that comes from justice. Fill us with the kind of joy that cannot be contained, but must be shared. Magnify your love within us. Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you, that we may walk in the light of Christ. Amen.**

*Congregation sings:*

**A candle is burning a candle of love,  
a candle to point us to heaven above.  
A baby for Christmas a wonderful birth,  
for Jesus is bringing God’s love to our earth.**

### \*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Martha Aenchbacher

**We believe in God, the creator and giver of life, who brought all creation to birth, who mothers us and fathers us, protecting, nurturing, and cherishing us. We believe in Jesus Christ: God born among us as a fragile baby, embodying both love and the need for love, and calling**

**us to rest in God as trustingly as a tiny child. We believe in the Holy Spirit, breathed into us at our birth, always drawing us on to be born again, encouraging, exhorting, comforting, nourishing our growth and inspiring our living. We believe in the reconciliation of the world to God, through Christ. Searched for at birth and lifted up at death, Christ entered our fearful darkness so that we might enter his glorious light and share the life of his resurrection. And we believe that each new child is a glimpse of the face of God, a sign of the life to come, and a call to live in peace and celebrate living together. Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's people on earth. Amen.**

**\*THE GLORIA PATRI**

UMH 71 "Glory Be to the Father"

**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**

**THE WELCOMING OF NEW MEMBERS**

**THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM**

Charlotte Emili Walton, daughter of Kierstin and David Walton

**Charli, Charli, 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. Charli, Charli, God claims you, God helps you, protects you, and loves you too.**

**THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**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 HYMN**

UMH 217 "Away in a Manger" | AWAY IN A MANGER

**THE CHILDREN'S MESSAGE**

Robin Stewart

*Please Note*

The children may come forward for The Children's Message during verse 3 of "Away in a Manger."

*Antem Lyrics*

The words to this anthem can be found on page 221 of your hymnal.

**THE OFFERING AND THE OFFERTORY ANTHEM**

“In the Bleak Mid-Winter” | Harold Darke

*Sung by the Sanctuary Choir; Esther Tanea and Isaiah Feken, soloists*

**\*THE DOXOLOGY**

“Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow” | VENI EMMANUEL

**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. Rejoice, Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

## *Proclamation of the Word*

**THE SCRIPTURE READING**

PSALM 4 6:10

“He says, ‘Be still, and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth.’”

The word of God for the people of God.

**Thanks be to God.**

**THE SERMON**

“Expect the Unexpected” | Betsy Butler

## *Response to the Word*

**\*THE HYMN**

UMH 219 “What Child Is This?” | GREENSLEEVES

## *Sending Forth*

**\*THE BLESSING AND CHORAL RESPONSE**

“See Amid the Winter’s Snow” | John Goss

*Sung by the Sanctuary Choir; Kaitlyn Gilmore, soloist*

**\*THE POSTLUDE**

“The First Noel” | Traditional

# The Steeple



## *The Advent Wreath | Love*

The advent wreath is a tradition that symbolizes the passage of the four weeks of Advent. The wreath is a circle of various evergreens, signifying continuous life, the eternity of God, the immortality of the soul, and the everlasting life found in Christ. The four colored candles represent hope, peace, joy, and love, and the center candle represents the birth of Christ. Today we light the candles for hope, peace, and joy, and add the fourth candle for love.

*For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*

Isaiah 9:6-7

# reNEWal

**December 31** | 11:00 a.m. only

## **Wesley Covenant Renewal Service** *An opportunity to renew our covenant with God*

The first Covenant Service in the Methodist movement likely dates to August 11, 1755. Wesley stated, "It was an occasion for a variety of spiritual experiences. I do not know that ever we had a greater blessing." The heart of the service, focused in the Covenant Prayer, requires persons to commit themselves to God. We will follow Wesley's Covenant Renewal Service and conclude with Holy Communion.

## **January 7** **Epiphany Sunday**

Epiphany is the Christian feast day that celebrates the revelation of God in his Son as human in Jesus Christ and is most often known as the Twelfth Day of Christmas. For the Church, Epiphany represents a responsibility to reveal Jesus as the Divine Son and Savior sent by God the Father to atone for the sins of humanity. It is a time of healing and fellowship, where the Church comes together in the covenant of unity to love one another as Christ commanded.

## **January 14** **Renewal of our Baptismal Covenant** *The day we remember our baptism*

United Methodism teaches that baptism initiates people into the faith community and into a covenant relationship with God and God's people. You will have the opportunity to come to the font at the front of the sanctuary, touch the water, and remember your baptism.

# This Week

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## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24 | LUKE 2:1-20

*Christmas Eve*

- 10:00 a.m. **Sack Lunch Ministry** HULL STREET ENTRANCE
- 11:00 a.m. **Worship Service** SANCTUARY
- Preschool Nursery** FIRST FLOOR
- 4:00 p.m. **Christmas Eve Service** SANCTUARY
- 7:00 p.m. **Christmas Eve Service** SANCTUARY
- 11:00 p.m. **Christmas Eve Service** SANCTUARY

## MONDAY, DECEMBER 25 | ISAIAH 61:10-62:3

*Christmas Day*

*Office closed—no programming*

## TUESDAY, DECEMBER 26 | PSALM 148

*Office closed—no programming*

## WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27 | GALATIANS 4:4-7

- 9:00 a.m. **Children's Basketball Christmas Camp 2** GYM
- 9:30 a.m. **Wednesday Morning Bible Study** ROOM 222

## THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28 | LUKE 2:22-40

- 9:00 a.m. **Children's Basketball Christmas Camp 2** GYM
- 5:00 p.m. **Children's Basketball** GYM

## FRIDAY, DECEMBER 29 | ISAIAH 52:7-10

- 9:00 a.m. **Children's Basketball Christmas Camp 2** GYM
- 4:00 p.m. **Children's Basketball** GYM

## SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30 | PSALM 98

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

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