

The background features a stylized design with three fish in grey outlines. Two fish are in the upper left, and one is in the lower right. They are connected by thick red lines that form a large, abstract shape resembling a stylized 'A' or a cross. There are also small red circles: one in the top left and one in the bottom right.

ATHENS FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Covenant Renewal Service

DECEMBER 31, 2017
11:00 a.m.

Welcome

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 | \$3,193,167
Goal for December | \$536,096
Amount after 3 Sundays | \$208,447

Attendance on December 24

An updated attendance report will be available on Sunday, January 7.

Table of Contents

- 1 Order of Worship
- 6 The Steeple
- 9 Calendar

Ministers and Directors

Chuck Hodges Senior Minister
chuck@athensfirstumc.org | 706-206-5529

Bob Winstead Executive Pastor
bob@athensfirstumc.org

Martha Aenchbacher Minister of Congregational Care
martha@athensfirstumc.org | 678-230-9708

Betsy Butler Minister of Missions
betsy@athensfirstumc.org

Susan Taylor Minister of Discipleship
susan@athensfirstumc.org

Josh Miles Minister of Student Life
josh@athensfirstumc.org

Stephen Mitchell Director of Music
stephen@athensfirstumc.org

Janis Maxwell Director of Youth Music & Organist
janis@athensfirstumc.org

Sarah Lawing Director of Children’s Music Ministry & 8:30 a.m. Worship Leader
sarah@athensfirstumc.org

Robin Stewart Director of Children’s Ministry
robin@athensfirstumc.org

Katie Elder Assistant Director of Children’s Ministry
katie@athensfirstumc.org

Leslie Rogers Director of Route 56
leslie@athensfirstumc.org

Linsey Jarrett Director of Weekday Preschool
linsey@athensfirstumc.org

Contact Us

Office hours: Monday–Friday, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
Facebook: @Athens First United Methodist Church
athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

The Worship of God

11:00 a.m. *Gathering*

Flowers

The flowers on the altar are given to the glory of God and in loving memory of Jim T. Blasingame by Alma L. Blasingame, Rhonda, Ellen, and Andrew McClure, and Becky and Jim II Blasingame.

THE PRELUDE

“Hark! The Glad Sound” | Michael Burkhardt

THE OPENING PRAYER

Betsy Butler

O God, Searcher of all our hearts, you have formed us as a people and claimed us for your own. As we come to acknowledge your sovereignty and grace and to enter anew into covenant with you, reveal any reluctance or falsehood within us. Let your Spirit impress your truth on our inmost being, and receive us in mercy, for the sake of our Mediator, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Praise & Thanksgiving

*THE HYMN

UMH 240 “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” | MENDELSSOHN

*THE LITANY OF THANKSGIVING

Let us give thanks for all of God’s mercies.

O God, our Covenant Friend, you have been gracious to us through all the years of our lives. We thank you for your loving care, which has filled our days and brought us to this time and place.

We praise your holy name, O God.

You have given us life and reason, and set us in a world filled with your glory. You have comforted us with family and friends, and ministered to us through the hands of our sisters and brothers.

We praise your holy name, O God.

You have filled our hearts with a hunger after you, and have given us your peace. You have redeemed us, and called us to a high calling in Christ Jesus. You have given us a place in the fellowship of your Spirit and the witness of your Church.

We praise your holy name, O God.

You have been our light in darkness and a rock of strength in adversity and temptation. You have been the very spirit of joy in our joys and the all-sufficient reward in all our labors.

We praise your holy name, O God.

You remembered us when we forgot you. You followed us even when we tried to flee from you. You met us with forgiveness when we returned to you. For all your patience and overflowing grace.

We praise your holy name, O God.

***THE PASSING OF THE PEACE**

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Liam Bradley Marucci, son of Catherine Corey and Richard Marucci

Liam, Liam, 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. Liam, Liam, 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 OFFERING AND THE OFFERTORY ANTHEM

"I'll Walk with God" | Brodzsky

Sung by Isaiah Feken

***THE DOXOLOGY**

UMH 94 "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow" | LASST UNS ERFREUEN

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise God, all creatures here below: Alleluia, alleluia! Praise God the source of all our gifts; praise Jesus Christ whose power uplifts. Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Proclamation of the Word

SCRIPTURE READING

GALATIANS 4:4-7 | p. 178 NEW TESTAMENT

The word of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

SERMON

"Kidnapped by the Law" | Susan Taylor

Wesley's Covenant Service

From time to time we renew our covenant with God, especially when we reaffirm the Baptismal Covenant and gather at the Lord's table. Today, however, we meet, as the generations before us have met, to renew the covenant that binds us to God. Let us make this covenant of God our own.

Commit yourselves to Christ as his servants. Give yourselves to him, that you may belong to him. Christ has many services to be done. Some are more easy and honorable, others are more difficult and disgraceful. Some are suitable to our inclinations and interests, others are contrary to both. In some we may please Christ and please ourselves. But then there are other works where we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves. It is necessary, therefore, that we consider what it means to be a servant of Christ. Let us, therefore, go to Christ, and pray:

Let me be your servant, under your command. I will no longer be my own. I will give up myself to your will in all things.

Be satisfied that Christ shall give you your place and work.

Lord, make me what you will. I put myself fully into your hands: put me to doing, put me to suffering, let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you, let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and with a willing heart give it all to your pleasure and disposal.

Christ will be the Savior of none but his servants. He is the source of all salvation to those who obey. Christ will have no servants except by consent; Christ will not accept anything except full consent to all that he requires. Christ will be all in all, or he will be nothing. Confirm this by a holy covenant.

***THE HYMN**

UMH 413 "A Charge to Keep I Have" | BOYLSTON

Response to the Word

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

In times of new beginnings...

Christ invites us to his table.

In times of painful endings...

Christ invites us to his table.

When the light of the new heaven dawns...

Christ invites us to his table.

When the new earth is hidden from our sight...

Christ invites us to his table.

Here and now, dear friends...

Christ invites us to his table.

Come to the table of grace...

All are welcome here.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth. In the time of creation, you created us but a little lower than the angels, formed us in your image, and brought forth the earth in all of its abundance. You walked with our ancestors, and when we fell short, your loved remained steadfast. During times of sinfulness and disobedience, you delivered us into a time of grace and forgiveness. In times of rebellion and confusion, you spoke to us in the voices of the prophets. When we lost hope for our world and for ourselves, you revealed your promise of a new heaven and a new earth. And so, with your people on earth, and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of power and might a - dored, heaven and earth
shine that night with the glo - ry of your light. Loud ho-san-nas now we sing!
In the high-est may they ring! Blest is your An-oint-ed One, Christ, E - man - nu -
el, your Son. Sing Ho-san-na at his birth! Glo - ry on high, and peace on earth!

Holy are you and blessed is your holy name. In the fullness of time, you sent your Son, Jesus Christ, to reveal your powerful love in the world. In this time of new beginnings, Christ proclaims to us life in the face of death and hope in the midst of despair. In this time and place, Christ invites us into your new heaven and new earth, that we might be disciples of his powerful love and his endless grace. In this time of remembering the past and looking to the future, we remember Jesus' time of endings and beginnings.

On the night before his death, Jesus took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, and gave it to his disciples, saying: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." When the supper

was over, Jesus took the cup, offered thanks and gave it to his disciples, saying: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my life in the new covenant, poured out for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts of love and grace, and with the hope of new beginnings and new life in Christ Jesus, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving in union with Christ's love for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine, that this may be a time for releasing past regrets, a time for leaning on past wisdom, and a time for moving forward with hope. May these gifts of memory and faith be for us new life in Christ, as we are nourished by your love. May we be for the world the body of Christ, a people of new beginnings and new hope, a people redeemed and renewed by Christ's love and grace. By your Spirit moving within and among us, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world; make us new creations in your holy image, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at your heavenly banquet. Through Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty God, now and forevermore.

Amen.

The Receiving of the Elements of Communion

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. All elements are gluten-free.

Sending Forth

***THE HYMN**

UMH 117 "O God Our Help in Ages Past" | ST. ANNE

***THE BLESSING AND CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE**

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

**O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.**

*** THE POSTLUDE**

"As With Gladness Men of Old" | Robert Hobby

reNEWal

December 31 | Wesley Covenant Renewal Service

An opportunity to renew our covenant with God

Today, we renew our covenant with God by following Wesley's Covenant Renewal Service. We will conclude with Holy Communion. The heart of the service, focused in the Covenant Prayer, requires persons to commit themselves to God.

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. The name Epiphany comes from the Greek word "Epiphania," and means "to show, make known, or reveal." 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. Adam Hamilton, Sr. Pastor at Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City, states "I appreciate the daily opportunity to remember that in my baptism God claimed me as his child, promised to forgive me, to fill me with his Spirit, blessed me with the church, and ordained me to a life of service in the world. My baptism is both a sign of God's gift of salvation and a sign of my desire and commitment to follow Christ." You will have the opportunity to come to the font at the front of the sanctuary, touch the water, and remember your baptism.

Sympathy

Heartfelt Christian sympathy is extended to Priscilla Carroll and her family in the loss of her mother, Pauline Gossett, on December 13.

Thank You from Missions

Thank you to all of those who aided in Christmas giving for Salvation Army Angel Tree, Project Safe families, Interfaith Hospitality Network gift cards; and supported children in our community; those who gave the gift of blood at the Red Cross Blood Drive; those who gave their time to serve our neighbors in need at the Mobile Food Pantry and at our Community Christmas Party. Because of the generosity of our church family we were able to represent the hands and feet of Jesus during this special season of Christmas.

Wednesday Night Meals

There will be no Wednesday Night Meal on January 3. Wednesday Night Meals will resume January 10.
Register | athensfirstumc.org/registration
Cindy McKoy | cindy@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Youth Choir Winter Workshop

The Wesleyan Youth Choir Winter Workshop will be held Saturday, January 6, from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. We will work on spring music, our annual Variety Show, and music for our choir tour. Guest Clinician Russell Nelson from Birmingham, Alabama, will be here to work with our men! Janis Maxwell | janis@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Weekday Preschool Registration

Preschool registration opens for the upcoming school year online on January 8. Our preschool program serves families of children age nine months through Pre-K from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Please note the following registration deadlines:

- Currently enrolled deadline: January 22
- Church member deadline: January 24
- Community deadline: January 26

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

Disciple Fast Track | Old Testament

Disciple Fast Track Old Testament will devote 12 weeks to focus on the Old Testament. Disciple Fast Track is for busy people seeking a comprehensive Bible study in a timely manner. All are invited to join. This study will begin with a meet-and-greet on January 9 and will continue, January 16 through April 10, Tuesday evenings, from 6:30-8:00 p.m. in room 224. The cost is \$13. Childcare is available with registration. Register online.

Register | athensfirstumc.org/registration

Susan Taylor | susan@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Cindy McKoy | cindy@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Financial Peace University

Join Tom Foster for Financial Peace University, which presents biblical, practical steps to get you from where you are to where you've dreamed you could be. In only nine lessons, you will learn how to get rid of debt, take control of your money, spend and save wisely, give generously, and much more! On average, families save \$2,300 and pay off \$5,700 in debt in the first 90 days! Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University will be offered on Tuesday evenings, beginning January 9 and continuing through March 6, 6:00-7:30 p.m. in room 222. The materials for this course cost \$100; couples share one kit. Childcare is available with registration. Register online.

Register | athensfirstumc.org/registration

Susan Taylor | susan@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Cindy McKoy | cindy@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Pastors' Bible Study

Join Chuck Hodges and Bob Winstead in an eight-week study as we read and discuss their favorite scripture verses. This study will meet on Tuesdays, January 9-February 27, from 10:00-11:00 a.m., in Hancock Hall. All are invited to join. Register online. For more information, contact Susan or Cindy.

Register | athensfirstumc.org/registration

Susan Taylor | susan@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Cindy McKoy | cindy@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Secrets from the Ancient Paths

Join Therese and Keith Wilson for a ten-week Bible study on Andy Cook's *Secrets from the Ancient Paths*. Recorded before

a live audience, these lessons incorporate Google Earth GPS technology to “fly in” to the very location of a Bible story. This study will meet on Wednesdays, January 10–March 14, from 1:00–3:00 p.m., in Hull Conference Room. All are invited to join. The cost is \$15. Register online.

Register | athensfirstumc.org/registration

Susan Taylor | susan@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Cindy McKoy | cindy@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Sack Lunch Ministry

Sack Lunch Ministry is an ongoing weekly ministry. We currently have several available dates. Please visit our website to register to prepare sack lunches for our community guests in need. If you have any questions please contact Betsy Butler or Mary Young.

Register | athensfirstumc.org/sacklunchministry

Betsy Butler | betsy@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Mary Young | young.macy@gmail.com

Souper Supper

Starting on January 11 we will be serving a community meal at the church each Thursday from January through April. We have many open dates for groups to cook and provide a meal for members of our community in need. This is a great way to serve with your circle, Sunday school class, small group, family and friends. If you are interested in serving in this way, please sign up online or contact Betsy Butler or Sarah Beth Barger.

Register | athensfirstumc.org/souper supper

Betsy Butler | betsy@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Sarah Beth Barger | sarahbeth@athensfirstumc.org

iRest Yoga Nidra Workshop

Based on the ancient teaching of meditation, iRest is an evidence-based transformative practice that leads to psychological, physical, and spiritual healing and well-being. iRest provides you with tools to help you relax deeply, release stress, increase resiliency, improve your interpersonal relationships and provide you with greater mastery and control in your life. This eight-week workshop will meet on Monday evenings, January 22–March 12, 5:45–6:45 p.m. in Hancock Hall. All are invited to join. Materials cost \$30. For more information, contact Susan.

Register | athensfirstumc.org/registration

Susan Taylor | susan@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Rise Against Hunger

Mark your calendars for Saturday, January 27, for Rise Against Hunger (formerly known as Stop Hunger Now)! This is a meal packaging event and a churchwide mission opportunity that impacts our neighbors across the globe without leaving Athens. We will package 50,000 meals in a single shift beginning at 10:00 a.m. Register online to let us know you will be coming; shifts are available Friday for set-up and Saturday for meal packaging and clean-up. Contact Betsy Butler or Sarah Beth Barger with any questions.

Betsy Butler | betsy@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Sarah Beth Barger | sarahbeth@athensfirstumc.org

Kari Kampakis | January 28

Parents of teens and tweens, join us on January 28 for two events with author and speaker Kari Kampakis! At 4:30 p.m. there will be a session for mothers and daughters (fifth grade and older) called “Dear Girls, You are Stronger Than You Think.” At 6:30 p.m. there will be a session for the parents of pre-teens and teenagers called “How to Love Your Teenager: Navigating Your Relationship into the Teen Years.” Please visit our webpage for more information and registration for each of these events.

Learn more | athensfirstumc.org/pwp

Robin Stewart | robin@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Prayer Beads Workshop

Plan now to join Kristen Vincent, author of *A Bead and a Prayer*, on Wednesday, February 7, at 6:30 p.m. or on Sunday, February 11, at 5:30 p.m. to learn about the history of protestant prayer beads and to make your own set of prayer beads to begin using throughout the season of Lent. Kristen has a Master of Theological Studies from Duke Divinity School and has completed the Academy for Spiritual Formation. Register online. For more information, contact Susan or Cindy.

Register | athensfirstumc.org/registration

Susan Taylor | susan@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Cindy McKoy | cindy@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

This Week

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31 | HEBREWS 1:1-12

New Year's Eve

10:00 a.m.

Sack Lunch Ministry HULL STREET ENTRANCE

11:00 a.m.

Worship Service SANCTUARY

Preschool Nursery FIRST FLOOR

MONDAY, JANUARY 1 | REVELATION 21:1-6a

New Year's Day

Office closed—no programming

TUESDAY, JANUARY 2 | PSALM 148

Office closed—no programming

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3 | ISAIAH 61:10-62:3

9:30 a.m.

Wednesday Morning Bible Study ROOM 222

6:30 p.m.

Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal SANCTUARY

7:00 p.m.

Children's Basketball GYM

8:00 p.m.

Chamber Ensemble Rehearsal ROOM 148

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4 | LUKE 2:22-40

5:00 p.m.

Children's Basketball GYM

FRIDAY, JANUARY 5 | GALATIANS 4:4-7

4:00 p.m.

Children's Basketball GYM

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6 | EPHESIANS 3:1-12

9:00 a.m.

Wesleyan Youth Choir Winter Workshop ROOM 148

Children's Basketball GYM

Worship Bulletin (614-280)

Published weekly

Periodicals Postage
Paid at Athens, GA

Athens First United Methodist Church

327 N. Lumpkin Street

Athens, GA 30601-2743

Telephone | 706-543-1442

Fax | 706-546-4797

Website | *athensfirstumc.org*

Vol. LX No. 53

Postmaster

Send address changes to:

AFUMC

P.O. Box 1109

Athens, GA 30603-1109