

December 16, 2018 8:30, 9:45, & 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.

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 2018 | \$3,231,864 Amount Given YTD | \$2,921,307 Goal for December | \$553,317 Amount after 1 Sunday | \$101,338

Attendance on December 9

Total Worship | 1462 8:30 a.m. | 109 9:45 a.m. | 503 11:00 a.m. | 604 Online | 246 Sunday School | 272

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

CCLI License No. 1097803

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Ministers

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

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

Josh Miles Minister of Student Life *josh@athensfirstumc.org*

Susan Taylor Minister of Discipleship susan@athensfirstumc.org

Directors

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Jennifer Golden Assist. Director of Children's Ministry *jennifer@athensfirstumc.org*

Linsey Jarrett Director of Weekday Preschool *linsey@athensfirstumc.org*

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

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

Stephen Mitchell Director of Music stephen@athensfirstumc.org

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

Bob Winstead Executive Director of Administration *bob@athensfirstumc.org*

Rusty Wood Director of Recreation Ministries rusty@athensfirstumc.org

The Worship of God

8:30 a.m.

Flowers

The poinsettias on the altar are given to the glory of God and in loving memory and honor of our loved ones.

GATHERING SONG

"Come Light Our Hearts" | Sandra McCracken For you, O Lord, our souls in stillness wait. For you, O Lord, our souls in stillness wait. Truly our joy is in you. Truly our joy is in you.

OPENING PRAYER Susan Taylor

*HYMN OF PRAISE

UMH 238 "Angels We Have Heard on High" | GLORIA

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH | The Apostles' Creed

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 Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at 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 Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

Robert Miles

We have lit the first two candles, one for hope and one for peace. Today we light the third candle, the candle of joy. This should be the easy one, because joy is all around us—in the children, the lights, the music, the gathering together. But how often do we let our preparations—or our memories—push joy to the side? Joy is like an underground spring that wells up within us, but joy is also a choice, an attitude. So today we open ourselves to joy, trusting that God has already planted it in us. All we need to do is give it care and offer it to share. Let us pray.

I

Loving God, we open ourselves to you, trusting that this is how you made us: you created us for joy-filled hearts and lives. 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. 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 joy, a candle to welcome brave Mary's new boy. Our hearts fill with wonder, and eyes light and glow, as joy brightens winter like sunshine on snow.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER Betsy Butler

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 CHILDREN'S MESSAGE Robin Stewart

OFFERING AND OFFERTORY ANTHEM "Mary Had a Baby" | Traditional

*DOXOLOGY

"Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow" | VENI EMMANUEL

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here; disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 1:18-22 | p. 1 New Testament

SERMON

"The Intersection of Heaven and Earth" | Chuck Hodges

Anthem Lyrics Mary had a baby, my Lord. She laid him in a manger, my Lord. What did she name Him, my Lord? She named him King Jesus, my Lord.

HYMN OF PREPARATION

имн 219 "What Child Is This" | greensleeves Verse 1

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

In this season of expectant waiting, we are invited to Christ's table here and now to experience God's grace. The table is open to all who seek to be in community with God and with one another. Let us pray.

God of salvation, we fall short of your perfect love. Be born once again in us today. Remove the barriers we build in our hearts and minds so that we are free to love you completely. Show us how to love our neighbor as ourselves through your Son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Out of the wilderness a voice calls out: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Prepare ye the way of love. Prepare ye the way of forgiveness." The Christ child was born in the midst of darkness to be the light. Christ is the light that shines in and through us. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. **Amen.**

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.

God of many blessings, you promised the coming of an anointed one, who would lead his people to peace and goodness. We give you thanks for your Son Jesus Christ, who is the Word made flesh. He is the one the prophets foretold, the one to whom John pointed in the wilderness, who was born in a lowly manger. Through his living and dying, he has shown us the way to your love. On the night...

And so, in remembrance of your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer our lives, in praise and thanksgiving for your many blessings, 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 this meal we share. Make us a Christmas people, secure in what has come, and hopeful for what is yet to be. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry until Christ shall dwell in the hearts and minds of all the world. **Amen.**

Receiving of the Elements

At Athens First United Methodist Church, 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. Gluten-free elements are available at the center station in the front of the sanctuary.

Music During Holy Communion "Christmas Must Be Tonight" | Robbie Robertson

Prayer of Thanksgiving

*BLESSING

*CLOSING HYMN

UMH 211 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" | VENI EMMANUEL O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

*POSTLUDE

"Trumpet Tune on WACHET AUF" | Hopson

swaddling clothes, the Prince of Peace. The wheels start turning, torches start burning, and the old wise men journey from the east. How a little baby boy brings the people so much joy-son of a carpenter. Mary carried the light. This must be Christmas, must be tonight. A shepherd on the hillside, watch over my flock I bide. On a cold winter night, a band of angels sing. In a dream I heard a voice say, "Fear not, come rejoice. It's the end of the beginning. praise the newborn King!" I saw it with my own eyes, written up in the skies. Why a simple herdsman such as I? And then it came to pass, he was born at last right below the star that shines on high.

Song Lyrics Come down to the

manger, see the little stranger wrapped in

The Worship of God

9:45 & 11:00 a.m.

Flowers

The poinsettias on the altar are given to the glory of God and in loving memory and honor of our loved ones.

Gathering

THE PRELUDE "I Wonder as I Wander" | arr. Peggy Bettcher Rung by the Carillon Ringers

THE CALL TO WORSHIP "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" | 15th cent. French Sung by the Sanctuary Choir

THE PRAYER

Martha Aenchbacher

O God, in this time of worship, may we be open to your promises, your love, and your transformation. May we vision and dream. May we be surprised. May we receive the life you give us. May we encounter Emmanuel—God with us. And may we never be the same. Amen.

Praise & Thanksgiving

*THE PROCESSIONAL HYMN имн 238 "Angels We Have Heard on High" | gloria

***THE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES**

9:45 a.m. The Garrett family 11:00 a.m. Nan and Drew Thomas

We have lit the first two candles, one for hope and one for peace. Today we light the third candle, the candle of joy. This should be the easy one, because joy is all around us—in the children, the lights, the music, the gathering together. But how often do we let our preparations—or our memories—push joy to the side? Joy is like an underground spring that wells up within us, but joy is also a choice, an attitude. So today we open ourselves to joy, trusting that God has already planted it in us. All we need to do is give it care and offer it to share. Let us pray.

Loving God, we open ourselves to you, trusting that this is how you made us: you created us for joy-filled hearts and lives. 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. 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 joy, a candle to welcome brave Mary's new boy. Our hearts fill with wonder, and eyes light and glow, as joy brightens winter like sunshine on snow.

***THE PASSING OF THE PEACE**

THE WELCOMING OF NEW MEMBERS | 11:00 a.m.

*THE HYMN | 11:00 a.m. имн 218 "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" | саког

It came upon a midnight clear, that glorious song of old, from angels bending near to 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.

THE RECOGNITION OF BABIES BORN IN 2018 | 11:00 a.m.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER 9:45 a.m. | Betsy Butler 11:00 a.m. | Josh Miles

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 CHILDREN'S MESSAGE | 11:00 a.m.

Robin Stewart

At the 11:00 a.m. service, children in kindergarten through grade 2 will go to Children's Church on the third floor where they may be picked up at the end of the service.

THE OFFERING AND THE OFFERTORY ANTHEM "Star Carol" | John Rutter

Sung by the Sanctuary Choir

Anthem Lyrics Sing this night, for a boy is born in Bethlehem: Christ our Lord in a lowly manger lies. Bring your gifts, come and worship at his cradle, hurry to Bethlehem and see the son of Mary! See his star shining bright In the sky this Christmas night! Follow me joyfully; hurry to Bethlehem and see the son of Mary! Angels bright, come from heaven's highest glory; bear the news with its message of good cheer: "Sing, rejoice, for a King is come to save us. Hurry to Bethlehem to see the son of Mary!" See, he lies in his mother's tender keeping; Jesus Christ in her loving arms asleep. Shepherds poor come to worship and adore him, offer their humble gifts before the son of Mary. Let us all pay our homage at the manger; sing his praise on this joyful Christmas Night. Christ is come, bringing promise of salvation. Hurry to Bethlehem and see the son of Mary!

***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 PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that as the Scriptures are read and Word proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

THE SCRIPTURE READING Matthew 1:18-22 | p. 1 New Testament

THE SERMON

"The Intersection of Heaven and Earth" | Chuck Hodges

Response to the Word

***THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

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 HYMN имн 218 "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" | сакоl

Sending Forth

*THE BLESSING AND CHORAL RESPONSE

"Be a Christmas Presence" | Pepper Choplin

Now we go into to the world to be the Christmas presence. Sharing gifts of hope and love the Lord has placed within us, the Lord has placed within us. We're bringing joy to the world, joy to the world, joy to the world, the Lord is come.

* THE POSTLUDE

"Trumpet Tune on WACHET AUF" | Hopson

The Steeple

The Season of Advent The Advent Wreath | Joy

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 and peace, and add the third candle for joy. In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you... Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High..."

Luke 1:26-28, 30-32



Sympathy

Heartfelt Christian sympathy is extended to John Loftis and his family in the loss of his father, Ed Loftis, on December 9.

Messiah

The Sanctuary Choir will present Part 1 of G.F. Handel's *Messiah* tonight at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. You are invited to hear the Christmas story again through one of the most loved and performed works. The evening will begin with the Pergolesi *Magnificat* sung by the Chamber Ensemble. The choir will be joined by a chamber orchestra.

Christmas Giving | Thank You

Thank you to everyone who so generously contributed their time, effort, and financial support as we enter the Christmas season. Because of our congregation, the three families from IHNA were able to spend a restful week together with their families for Thanksgiving at the Holiday Inn Express. Because of your generosity, 50 children through the Salvation Army, 18 families through Project Safe, and 10 community children will have a very merry Christmas from the overflowing generosity and gift giving support. More than \$500 in gift cards will go to support the IHNA families for Christmas; and because of you, more than \$3,000 of financial support will go to support our neighbors in need this Christmas! What a blessing it is to be a part of this church family!

Betsy Butler | betsy@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442 Sarah Beth Barger | sarahbeth@athensfirstumc.org

Wednesday Night Meals

There will be no Wednesday Night Meal this week. Please take time to enjoy family and friends. Wednesday Night Meals will start back January 9.

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

Holiday Service Times

On Sundays, December 23 and December 30, we will offer one service at 11:00 a.m. Sunday school classes will not meet.

Christmas Eve | Service Times

We will offer three Christmas Eve services this year. Our 4:00 p.m. service will be led by the Children's Music Ministry. Our 7:00 p.m. service will be led by Route 56 Music and the Wesleyan Youth Choir. Our 11:00 p.m. service will include Communion and music from the Sanctuary Choir. All three services will include candlelight.

Souper Suppers | Save the Date

Save our Date! Souper Suppers is just around corner. Beginning January 10, we will invite our community guests to dinner at the church each Thursday. At this time, we are collecting donations of toilet paper 4-packs, bottles of dish soap, peanut butter crackers, and new or used books (from children's books to young adult). If you are interested in getting involved or serving, mark your calendars and contact Betsy Butler or Sarah Beth Barger. Betsy Butler | *betsy@athensfirstumc.org* | 706-543-1442 Sarah Beth Barger | *sarahbeth@athensfirstumc.org*

Weekday Preschool Registration

Preschool registration opens online January 7. 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 25
- Church member deadline: January 28
- Community deadline: January 30

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

The Immanuel Project

We are excited to offer The Immanuel Project for the fourth time. This thought-provoking and interactive journey for dads and sons (in grade 8) will help start important conversations that can be otherwise difficult to begin, and everyone will benefit from a deeper knowledge of the Bible. Meetings will take place Sundays from 9:45 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. in room 301, January 27-March 3. Cole Kelly, a longtime member, father of three boys, and full-time summer camp director, will lead this experience. Register | *athensfirstumc.org/registration* Cole Kelly I colekelly2@amail.com



The need is constant. The gratification is instant. Give blood.™

redcrossblood.org | 1-800-RED CROSS



Give the gift of life this Christmas!

Tuesday, December 18 12:00-6:00 p.m. Hancock Hall

Join us Tuesday, December 18, to give the gift of blood! The holidays are a time when blood is most needed, and we are happy to host a blood drive to help those in need! Many in our church family have been beneficiaries of blood transfusions and platelets and we are excited to continue to serve our community in this way. The Red Cross blood drive will be in Hancock Hall from 12:00 to 6:00 p.m. Contact Sarah Beth Barger to schedule an appointment to give blood; however, walk-ins are always welcome!

Sarah Beth Barger sarahbeth@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Join us for Christmas Eve

SERVICE TIMES:

4:00 P.M. Candlelight service led by the Children's Music Ministry

7:00 P.M.

Candlelight service with music from the Wesleyan Youth Choir and Route 56 Music

11:00 P.M.

Candlelight service with Communion and music from the Sanctuary Choir

This Week

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16 | LUKE 3:7-18

- 8:30 a.m. Worship Service SANCTUARY
- Preschool Nursery FIRST FLOOR
- 9:00 a.m. Fun Gym GYM
- 9:45 a.m. Worship Service SANCTUARY Adult Sunday School SECOND FLOOR AND SAYE BUILDING Youth Sunday School YOUTH AREA Route 56: Grade 5 & 6 Sunday School ROOM 120 Elementary Sunday School: Holy Ground CHAPEL Kindergarten Sunday School: City on a Hill ROOM 311 & 313
- Preschool Nursery & Sunday School FIRST FLOOR
- 10:00 a.m. Sack Lunch Ministry HULL STREET ENTRANCE
- 10:30 a.m. New Baby Recognition Reception
- 11:00 a.m. Worship Service SANCTUARY Preschool Nursery FIRST FLOOR
- 3:00 p.m. Cub Scout Pack 1 Meeting HANCOCK HALL
- 3:45 p.m. WYC and Route 56 Christmas Eve Rehearsal ROOM 145
- 4:30 p.m. Connect & Grow Group JOHN WESLEY PARLOR
- 5:00 p.m. Youth Ice Skating Night ROOM 119
- 7:00 p.m. Messiah: Sanctuary Choir Christmas Program SANCTUARY

MONDAY, DECEMBER 17 | LUKE 1:39-45

- 10:00 a.m. Connect & Grow | Women's Group ROOM 200
- 4:00 p.m. Children's Basketball GYM
- 6:30 p.m. Evening Community Bible Study Junior Girl Scouts Meeting SAYE BUILDING

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 18 | MICAH 5:2-5A

- 12:00 a.m. Red Cross Blood Drive HANCOCK HALL
- 1:30 p.m. Pickleball GYM
- 4:00 p.m. Children's Basketball GYM
- 5:30 p.m. Connect & Grow Group JOHN WESLEY PARLOR
- 7:00 p.m. Boy Scouts Troop 1 SCOUT HUT

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 19 | PSALM 80:1-7

- 9:30 a.m. Wednesday Morning Bible Study ROOM 222
- 4:00 p.m. Kids Music and Arts Dress Rehearsal SANCTUARY
- **4:45 p.m.** Early Book Group ROOM 224
- 5:00 p.m. Kids Music and Arts Family Meal HANCOCK HALL
- 5:30 p.m. 66 Love Letters

Connect Group | Young Married ROOM 114

- 6:30 p.m. Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal ROOM 148
- 7:00 p.m. Children's Basketball GYM

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20 | HEBREWS 10:5-10

- 1:30 p.m. Pickleball GYM
- 4:00 p.m. Children's Basketball GYM

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 21 | ZEPHANIAH 3:14-20 Children's Basketball GYM

4:00 p.m. Children's Basketball GYM

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 22 | LUKE 1:45-55

Worship Bulletin (614-280)

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Athens First United Methodist Church

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