

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 | \$2,977,836 Goal for December | \$553,317 Amount after 2 Sundays | \$157,644

Attendance on December 16

Total Worship | 1280 8:30 a.m. | 149 9:45 a.m. | 454 11:00 a.m. | 536 Online | 141 Sunday School | 360

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

Betsy Butler Minister of Missions betsy@athensfirstumc.org

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

Katie Elder Director of Route 56 *katie@athensfirstumc.org*

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

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

Laney Jones Assistant Director of Student Ministries *laney@athensfirstumc.org*

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

11:00 a.m.

Gathering

Flowers

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

THE PRELUDE

"In the Bleak Mid-Winter" | arr. Heather Sorenson Thomas Jones. cello: Grea Kirby, piano

THE CALL TO WORSHIP

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

THE PRAYER

Martha Aenchbacher

Creator of all that is good, open our hearts this day to recognize your divine Presence in everyone and in everything you have made. May our wonder and awe at your goodness draw us closer to one another, and may our work and lives never cease to lead those we serve to your love which is beyond our imagination. We ask this through Immanuel, God with Us, Christ our Lord. Amen

Praise & Thanksgiving

*THE PROCESSIONAL HYMN

имн 240 "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" | мендельзонн

*THE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

The Robinson family

We have lit three candles—for hope, for peace, and for joy. Today we light the fourth candle—the candle of love. With this flame we signify the love of God that surrounds and fills us at all times, but that we recognize in a special way in the Christmas story. There is no greater power than love. It is stronger than rulers and empires, stronger than grief or despair, stronger even than death. We love, because God loves us. 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.

*THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

THE 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

Katie Elder

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

"The First Noel" | arr. Dan Forrest

Sung by the Sanctuary Choir; Rachael Fischer and Serena Scibelli, violin; Rebecca Floyd, viola; Ana Abrantes, cello; Luca Lombardi, bass

*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 SERMON

"Recovering Wonder" | 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

UMH 219 "What Child is This" | GREENSLEEVES Verses 1-2

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 love to the world, love to the world, love to the world, the Lord is come.

* THE POSTLUDE

"Verset (Temps de Noel)" | Lucien Guittard

The Steeple

The Season of Advent 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 and peace, and add the third candle for joy.

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

Isaiah 7:14

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

Luke 2:4-5



Sympathy

Heartfelt Christian sympathy is extended to Ellen Bryson in the loss of her father, Sidney Bryson, on December 11.

New Members

On December 16, we welcomed Virginia Suggs, Drew Thomas, Pat Davis, and Carol Bishop to the Athens First United Methodist Church family.

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.

Traditionally, our Christmas Eve Services are very well attended and the sanctuary is often filled. We provide overflow seating in Hancock Hall for the 4:00 and 7:00 p.m. services. Additionally, our church parking lots will fill up quickly. When church lots are filled, please use the Washington Street pay parking deck.

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.

 $Register \mid athens first umc. org/wednesdaynight meals \\ Cindy McKoy \mid cindy@athens first umc. org \mid 706-543-1442 \\$

Holiday Service Times

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

Connect Group | Young Adult

Join the Young Adult Connect Group for a six-week book study on *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis beginning Thursday, January 3. In this study, we will explore the common ground upon which all of those of Christian faith

stand together. The group will meet on Thursday evenings from 7:00-8:30 p.m. in room 222. The book cost is \$12. For more information, contact Katie Elder.

Register | athensfirstumc.org/registration Katie Elder | katie@athensfirstumc.org | 706-543-1442

Young Professionals Sunday School

The Young Professionals Sunday School class will be studying *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis, starting with *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* in January. Come encounter God in a new way through these classic stories. Everyone is welcome to join us for this study. This Sunday school class meets at 9:45 a.m. on Sundays in the Hull Conference Room. For more information, contact Adriane Hanson.

Adriane Hanson | amhanson9@gmail.com

Epiphany | January 6

Join us Sunday, January 6, for Epiphany Sunday at all three services. This day celebrates the revelation of God in his Son as human in Jesus Christ and is most often known as the Twelfth Day of Christmas when the Wise Men brought their gifts to the manger. The name Epiphany comes from the Greek word "Epiphania," and means "to show, make known, or reveal." We will celebrate with the sacrament of Holy Communion.

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

Souper Suppers Collections

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). Please bring all donations to the basket near the Reception desk.

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

Sarah Beth Barger | sarahbeth@athensfirstumc.org

Renewal of our Baptismal Covenant

Join us Sunday, January 13, at all three services for the Renewal of our Baptismal Covenant Service. 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.

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 long-time member, father of three boys, and full-time summer camp director, will lead this experience. Register | athensfirstumc.org/registration

Register | athensfirstumc.org/registratio Cole Kelly I colekelly2@gmail.com

GriefShare

GriefShare will meet again during the winter and spring of 2019! This thirteen-week faith-based curriculum features nationally recognized experts on grief and recovery topics.

GriefShare groups are for people grieving the death of a family member or friend. We will meet each Wednesday from 9:30-11:30 a.m. in Room 100 and be led by Martha Aenchbacher. Our group will begin January 16 and conclude April 10. Please register online so that we will have materials prepared for you. There is a \$20 fee to pay for your workbook. You may pay that fee online when you register, or bring a check with you to the group meeting. Learn more | athensfirstumc.org/griefshare
Martha Aenchbacher | martha@athensfirstumc.org
706-543-1442



Come and serve!

Souper Suppers is just around the corner! Beginning January 10, we will open up our doors and our hearts to love and serve our neighbors by inviting them into our church for a warm meal and fellowship. We host Souper Suppers every Thursday from January 10 through the end of April in Hancock Hall. Individuals, Sunday school classes, UMW Circles, families, or any small group are welcome to serve in several different ways:

- Prepare a meal to feed our neighbors.
- Work with children in the gym or at our Kaleidoscope music program at 3:30 p.m.
- Greet community members, help in the Souper Suppers Store, or serve in our dining room at 4:30 p.m.
- Join the fun and serve with our cleanup crew at 5:30 p.m.

If you are interested in serving or preparing a meal, please contact Betsy or Sarah Beth to get involved!

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

athensfirstumc.org/soupersuppers



This Week

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23 | Luke 1:46-55

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

11:00 a.m. Worship Service SANCTUARY Preschool Nursery FIRST FLOOR

MONDAY, DECEMBER 24 | ISAIAH 9:2-7

Christmas Eve-office closed

4:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service SANCTUARY
7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service SANCTUARY
11:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service SANCTUARY

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 25 | HEBREWS 1:1-12

Christmas Day—office closed

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 26 | PSALM 148

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 27 | I SAMUEL 2:18-20, 26

1:30 p.m. Pickleball GYM

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

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 28 | LUKE 2:41-52

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

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29 | Colossians 3:12-4

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

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