



CHRISTMAS

at Athens First UMC

LESSONS AND CAROLS

Sunday, December 7, 2025

9:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

The Worship of God

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

Large print hymnals are available in the Narthex. Please ask a member of our Welcome Team for assistance.

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THE FLOWERS IN THE CHURCH ARE GIVEN TO THE GLORY OF GOD

In loving memory of Colonel Jack A. Turner by Muriel, Jackie, Mary, Chandelle, and Sandi.

In loving memory of Evan Haggard by Beth and Patrick Haggard and family.

GATHERING

The Prelude

“Fanfare-Toccata on Mendelssohn” | J. William Greene

Raina Wood, Organist; Ryan Ferguson, Director of Music and Worship;

Erin Towe, Music Assistant; Brandon Craswell and Tyler Jones, trumpets; Peter Riggs, horn;

Thomas Minor, trombone; David Stone, euphonium; Hsiao-Tsu Huang, timpani

The Welcome and Opening Prayer | Rev. Dr. Natalee Dukes Hamby

The Choral Call to Worship

9:30 a.m. | “Come, Come Emmanuel” | Lynn Shaw Bailey and Becki Slagle Mayo
Sung by the Cherub, Sonshine, and Joy Choirs

Leaders: Audrey Vazquez, Ann Orr, Gail Walton, Ashleigh Woodruff, Amy McCollum, Hallie McCollum, Jessie Wood, Steven Dasher, Patti Pitts, Rosemary Belger

Youth Helpers: Collins House, Dawson Presley, Vera Mae Wood

Come, come Messiah come, come Emmanuel. We are your children, you are our Savior, long we have waited, long we have prayed. Help us to follow, help us to listen, come Emmanuel, today!

11:00 a.m. | “Will You Be Ready?” | Mark Patterson

Sung by the Lyric and Celebrate Choirs

Leaders: Erin Towe, Josh Luke, Cathy Felton, Megan Presley, Sylvia Arant, Stuart McCurry

Youth Helpers: Becca Brodrick, Avery Rook

People who walk in darkness have seen a great light. The light will shine upon them; may it shine brightly tonight. Will you be ready for the light, ready for the light to shine upon you? Will you be watching? Will you be listening? Will you hear the angels sing? Will you be waiting? Will you be searching for a Savior and a King? People keep watching, true light is coming, look for a bright star in the East. Look for the Christ child, born in a manger, there you will find the Prince of Peace.

PRAISE & THANKSGIVING

**The Processional Hymn*

UMH 211 “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” | VENI EMMANUEL

Verses 1-4

**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.

**O come, thou Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh;
to us the path of knowledge show and cause us in her ways to go.**

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

**O come, O come, great Lord of might, who to thy tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times did give the law in cloud and majesty and awe.**

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

**O come, thou Root of Jesse's tree, an ensign of thy people be;
before thee rulers silent fall; all peoples on thy mercy call.**

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

**The Lighting of the Advent Candles*

9:30 a.m. | Victoria and Worth VanLinden

11:00 a.m. | The Orr and Mercier Families

Loving God, in this time of preparation and planning, we thank you for the hope and peace you unfailingly offer us. Show us the creative power of hope. Teach us the peace that comes from justice. Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you, that we may walk in the light of Christ. Amen.

Sing: A candle is burning, a candle of peace, a candle to signal that conflict must cease. For Jesus is coming to show us the way; a message of peace humbly laid in the hay.

**The Passing of the Peace*

The Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer | Rev. Jeremy Lawson

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 211 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" | VENI EMMANUEL

Verses 5-7

**O come, thou Key of David, come and open wide our heavenly home.
The captives from their prison free, and conquer death's deep misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

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

**O come, Desire of nations bind all peoples in one heart and mind.
From dust thou brought us forth to life; deliver us from earthly strife.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

THE LESSONS AND CAROLS

HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING

The story of Christ's birth traced through Charles Wesley's beloved carol

LIGHT AND LIFE TO ALL HE BRINGS

THE PROPHECY OF THE COMING LIGHT

The Lesson | Isaiah 9:2-7 | Rev. Jeremy Lawson

The Anthem

"We'll Welcome Him" | Ruth Elaine Schram

Sung by the Wesleyan Youth Choir; Janis Maxwell, Director of Children's and Youth Music;
Beth Rector, piano

In the silence and the darkness we have wandered, wandered, waiting for our Savior's birth; and our minds and hearts are longing for the Savior, Savior, waiting, waiting. When our Lord descends to earth, we'll welcome Him. Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand. Ponder nothing earthly minded, for with blessing in His hand Christ our God to earth, descendeth, our full homage to demand.

The Hymn

UMH 626 "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence" | PICARDY

Verses 1 and 3

Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand; ponder nothing earthly minded, for with blessing in his hand, Christ our God to earth descendeth, our full homage to demand.

Rank on rank the host of heaven spreads its vanguard on the way, as the Light of light descendeth from the realms of endless day, that the powers of hell may vanish as the darkness clears away.

PEACE ON EARTH, AND MERCY MILD: GOD AND SINNERS, RECONCILED.

THE PROMISE OF PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

The Lesson | Isaiah 11:1-9 | Rev. Dr. Nancy Johnson

The Carol

UMH 218 "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" | CAROL
Verse 1

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 all, from heaven's all gracious King." The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.

VEILED IN FLESH THE GODHEAD SEE

THE MIRACLE OF THE INCARNATION

The Lesson | Luke 1:26-38 | Rev. Montana Hamby

The Anthem

"The Angel Gabriel" | Paul W. Lohman
Sung by the Chamber Ensemble

The angel Gabriel from heaven came, with wings as drifted snow, with eyes as flame: "All hail to thee, O lowly maiden Mary, most highly favored lady." Gloria. "For known a blessed mother thou shalt be, all generations laud and honor thee; thy son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold. Then gentle Mary meekly owed her head; "To me be as it pleaseth God," she said. "My soul shall laud and magnify his holy name." Of her Emmanuel, the Christ, was born in Bethlehem all on a Christmas morn, and Christian folk throughout the world will ever say: "Most highly favored lady." Gloria.

GLORY TO THE NEWBORN KING

MARY'S SONG OF NEW CREATION

The Lesson | Luke 1:46-55 | Rev. Dr. Nancy Johnson

The Anthem

"Bogoroditsé Devo" from *All-Night Vigil* | Sergei Rachmaninoff

Sung by the Sanctuary Choir

Translation from Russian: *Rejoice, O Virgin, birth-giver of God! Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, for thou hast borne the Saviour of our souls.*

MILD HE LAYS HIS GLORY BY

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

The Lesson | Luke 2:1-7 | Rev. Montana Hamby

The Hymn

UMH 184 "Of the Father's Love Begotten" | DIVINUM MYSTERIUM

Verses 1 and 2

Of the Father's love begotten, ere the worlds began to be, he is Alpha and Omega, he the source, the ending he of the things that are, that have been and that future years shall see, evermore and evermore.

O ye heights of heaven, adore him; angel hosts, his praises sing; powers, dominions, bow before him, and extol out God and King; let no tongue on earth be silent, every voice in concert ring, evermore and evermore.

HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING

THE ANGELS ANNOUNCE PEACE

The Lesson | Luke 2:8-14 | Rev. Dr. Nancy Johnson

The Offering and Offertory Anthem

"I. Gloria in excelsis deo" from *Gloria* | John Rutter

Sung by the Sanctuary Choir

Translation from Latin: *Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace to men of good will. We praise thee. We bless thee. We worship thee. We glorify thee. Thanks we give to thee because of thy great glory, Lord God, King of heaven.*

JOYFUL ALL YE NATIONS RISE

The Lesson | Luke 2:15-20 | Rev. Montana Hamby

The Anthem

"If This Child Were Born Today" | Berta and Sonja Poorman

Sung by the Combined Choirs

If this child were born today in a manger on the hay, would we see a King? Would we hear angels sing? If a star were shining bright, would we notice in the night? Would we be the ones to behold God's Son? Would we fall on bended knee worshiping this Babe? Would we praise with thankful hearts God's gift of salvation? The first Noel the angel did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay; in fields where they lay, keeping their sheep, on a cold winter's night that was so deep. The gift of salvation? 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. Born is the King of Israel. Noel. Come tenderly on bended knee, you will see the King.

BORN TO RAISE US FROM THE EARTH; BORN TO GIVE US SECOND BIRTH.

The Lesson | Colossians 1:15-19 | Rev. Jeremy Lawson

**The Closing Carol*

UMH 240 "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" | MENDELSSOHN

**Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn 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 hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"**

**Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord;
late in time behold him come, offspring of the Virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail th'incarnate Deity,
pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn 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.
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"**

**The Blessing*

**The Postlude*

"Variation on a Noel: Sing We Now of Christmas" | Marcel Dupré

9:30 a.m. | Cherub (3s), Sonshine (4s), and Joy (K) Choirs can be picked up after worship from their Sunday School classrooms.

11:00 a.m. | Lyric and Celebrate Choirs (Grades 1-5) can be picked up after worship from the Music Suite. Wesleyan Youth Choir can be picked up from the Music Suite.



College and Young Adults | UNITED Night Tonight at 7:00 p.m.

College students and young adults are invited to join us for our final UNITED Night of the year on **Sunday, December 7, at 7:00 p.m. in the Chapel**. This special evening will be a Candlelight + Carols service that is an intentional, peaceful space to breathe, worship, and reflect before the semester ends. We'll worship together with music led by our Director of Music and Worship, Ryan Ferguson, and choral scholar Marianna Baccus. In between hymns we'll share reflections for the Christmas season, and close by candlelight as we send our college students and young adults into winter break with blessing and joy.

Rev. Dr. Natalee Dukes Hamby, Associate Minister
natalee@athensfirstumc.org



Last WND of 2025 | December 10

Join us for our last dinner of the year for a festive evening of food (Beef Tips with Rice), fun, and fabulously ugly fashion! We're having our annual Ugly Christmas Sweater Party, and you're invited to bring your best (or worst!) holiday threads. Whether it's glittery, goofy, or gloriously gaudy, wear your wildest sweater and come ready to celebrate the season with laughter, good eats, and great company; **Clawdus from the Athens Rock Lobsters Hockey Team will be here from 5:45 to 6:30 p.m.** Plenty of cheer awaits because nothing says Christmas like a reindeer in sunglasses and a plate of warm food! Don't miss it!

Alisha Bain, Administrative Assistant | alisha@athensfirstumc.org



The Sweet Life Luncheon | December 11

The Sweet Life is a gathering of our Athens First UMC members and friends who are age 50 and up. Our monthly luncheon events will include musical programs and information to help us live joyful, healthy and full lives. Building on the Senior Fun tradition, we will explore together all that makes life sweet. **Please RSVP by noon on Wednesday, December 10.** Register online by clicking the link below, or by going to athensfirstumc.org or by calling the church office.

Rev. Dr. Nancy Johnson, Associate Minister
nancy@athensfirstumc.org

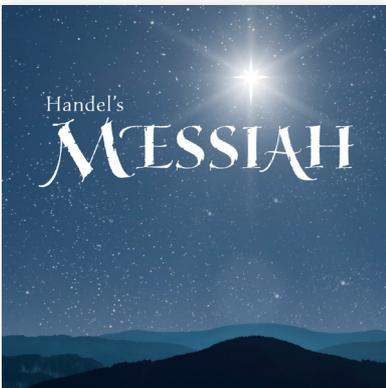


Children's Music Ministry Christmas Caroling | December 13

Children's Choirs will be spreading Christmas cheer next week! The Lyric and Celebrate Choirs will visit **Wesley Woods on Saturday, December 13, from 1:30 to 2:00 p.m.**, singing carols and visiting with residents!

If you have loved ones at Wesley Woods, please let them know we are coming!

Janis Maxwell, Director of Children's and Youth Music
janis@athensfirstumc.org



Handel's Messiah | December 14 at 7:00 p.m.

Come celebrate the season with the AFUMC Sanctuary Choir, soloists, and orchestra as our beautifully adorned Sanctuary is filled with the glorious refrains of "For Unto Us a Child is Born" and the resounding "Hallelujah Chorus" in Handel's Baroque masterpiece, "Messiah". Invite your family and friends and join us in this inspiring and powerful presentation of the greatest story ever told.

Soloists include three AFUMC Choral Scholar alumni: Esther Tonea, soprano, John Drake, bass-baritone, and Marlee Van Mullekom, mezzo-soprano; with Dashiell Waterbury, tenor.

Ryan Ferguson, Director of Music and Worship
ryan@athensfirstumc.org



Athens Rock Lobsters | January 9

Join Athens First UMC for a fun night out as we cheer on the Rock Lobsters at Akins Ford Arena! Our Wesleyan Youth Choir will perform the National Anthem, and we can't wait to fill the stands with our Athens First family. Youth Choir members and youth participating in "Destination Known" will register through their separate link. Our congregation can use the discounted ticket link provided on our website. While there is no reserved AFUMC section, those who want to sit near the choir and other church families should select Section 118 while purchasing their ticket. Friday night games sell out quickly, so grab your tickets soon! And don't miss Clawdius at our final Wednesday Night Dinner on December 10. Claws Up, Athens First!

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE TIMES

Join us on **Wednesday, December 24**, as we celebrate Christmas Eve together!

3:00 p.m. Children's Christmas Pageant*

5:00 p.m. Readings and Carols - Wesleyan Youth Choir and Brass*

7:00 p.m. Readings and Carols - Sanctuary Choir and Brass*

11:00 p.m. Christmas Holy Communion - Sanctuary Choir and Strings

*Nursery care available at the 3:00, 5:00, and 7:00 p.m. services.

CHURCH PHOTO DIRECTORY | January 8-13

Sign up for your family portrait today at athensfirstumc.org/photodirectory. Every family who is photographed will receive a complimentary 8x10 professional portrait and one printed directory. All appointments are on a first-come, first-serve basis, so make your appointment today by calling 1-877-896-9667 ext 360.



DECEMBER 10: Beef Tips over rice served with butter peas and bread.
Register by noon on Tuesday | Scan the Steeple QR Code to register online or Call the Church Office.

UGLY SWEATER PARTY | LAST WIND OF 2025!

FINANCIAL REPORT | As of November 30, 2025 (finance@athensfirstumc.org):

2025 YTD Giving Goal: \$3,104,828 | **YTD Actual Giving:** \$2,887,763 | **YTD Actual Expenses:** \$3,235,084

WAYS TO GIVE



OFFERING PLATE:

Fill out the envelope located in your pew.



ONLINE:

Scan to be taken to Realm, our online giving platform.



TEXT-TO-GIVE:

Text "AFUMCTTG" to 73256.

FOLLOW UP WITH A MINISTER

Rev. Jeremy Lawson | Senior Minister
jeremy@athensfirstumc.org | 404-304-3574

Rev. Dr. Natalee Dukes Hamby | Associate Minister
natalee@athensfirstumc.org | 404-414-1701

Rev. Montana Hamby | Associate Minister
montana@athensfirstumc.org | 770-633-3140

Rev. Dr. Nancy Johnson | Associate Minister
nancy@athensfirstumc.org | 762-233-4761

REQUEST PRAYER | Have a prayer request? Scan the QR code located in your bulletin and select "**Needing Prayer**" to fill out a form to submit your prayer request. If you desire for the request to be shared with our Prayer Ministry team, please indicate that in your submission. Prayer requests can also be made directly via email prayer@athensfirstumc.org.

CCS #12591 • CCLI #1097880

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