

The background features a stylized illustration of three fish in grey and purple tones, arranged in a triangular pattern. The fish are enclosed within a purple geometric frame that resembles a stylized 'L' or a corner. A solid purple circle is positioned in the top-left corner, and another is in the bottom-right corner. A horizontal purple line with a central dot is located below the church name.

ATHENS FIRST
UNITED
METHODIST
CHURCH

Third Sunday in Lent

March 8, 2026
9:30 & 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.

✠

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

In loving memory of Dr. E. Pierce Arant and Meli Arant by Sylvia Arant and family.

GATHERING

The Prelude

“Ruhig bewegt” from *Sonata II for Organ* | Paul Hindemith

Raina Wood, Organist

The Welcome and Opening Prayer | Rev. Jeremy Lawson

The Call to Worship | from Psalm 107

Minister: O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!

All: Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

Minister: Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to humankind!

All: For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things. Let us worship God with thanks and praise.

PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING

**The Processional Hymn*

UMH 292 "What Wondrous Love Is This" | WONDROUS LOVE

**The Prayer of Confession*

Let us confess our sin before God and one another.

We confess to you, all-knowing God, what we are. We are not the people we like others to think we are. We are afraid to admit, even to ourselves, what lies in the depths of our souls. But we cannot hide our true selves from you. You know us as we are, and yet you love us. We stand in your presence filled with regret for our many sins and failings. Come into the brokenness of our lives with your healing love. Help us to be willing to bow before you in true repentance, and to bow to one another in real forgiveness. By the fire of your Holy Spirit, melt our hardened hearts and consume the pride and prejudice which separate us. Fill us, O Lord, with your perfect love, which casts out our fear, and bind us together in that unity which you share with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

All pray in silence.

If we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. May the almighty and merciful Lord grant us remission of all our sins, true repentance, amendment of life, and the grace and consolation of the Holy Spirit. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven! Glory to God. Amen.

**The Kyrie* | Antonin Dvorak

Translation: *Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.*

**Kyrie, Kyrie eleison. Kyrie, Kyrie eleison. Christe, Christe eleison. Christe, Christe eleison.
Kyrie, Kyrie eleison. Kyrie, Kyrie eleison, eleison.**

**The Passing of the Peace*

The Pastoral Prayer 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 382 "Have Thine Own Way, Lord" | ADELAIDE

At 11:00 a.m., children Kindergarten to grade 4 are dismissed through the front, lectern side doors to attend Children's Church. They can be picked up at the conclusion of worship in Room 320.

The Offering and Offertory Anthem

"The Lord's Prayer" | Albert Hay Malotte

Sung by the Sanctuary Choir; Ryan Ferguson, Director of Music and Worship

**The Doxology* | OLD 100TH

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

PROCLAMATION

The Scripture Reading | Psalm 95:1-5

The Word of God for the People of God. **Thanks be to God.**

The Message | Rev. Dr. Nancy Johnson

"Creation Sings"

RESPONSE

**The Hymn of Response*

UMH 77 “How Great Thou Art” | HOW GREAT THOU ART

**The Blessing*

**The Congregational Response*

“Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross” | NEAR THE CROSS

All singing: **Near the cross, O Lamb of God, bring its scenes before me; help me walk from day to day with its shadow o’er me. In the cross, in the cross, be my glory ever, till my raptured soul shall find rest beyond the river.**

**The Postlude*

“Lebhaft” from *Sonata II for Organ* | Hindemith



Special Offering | March 15

The UMCOR Sunday special offering supports the administrative costs of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). This ensures that 100% of every donation made to UMCOR goes directly to humanitarian response and recovery efforts in the communities that need it most. By contributing to UMCOR's operations, you help the church mobilize resources swiftly and effectively, bringing hope and making an immediate difference in communities impacted by disaster and hardship worldwide. You may give online or send a check to the church office with "UMCOR" in the memo.



Easter Flower Dedications

Remember or honor a loved one by donating Easter flowers this year. Donations of \$10 per name will be accepted through **March 22** and will be listed in the Easter Sunday bulletin on April 5. You may place your order by scanning the QR code in your bulletin. Orders may also be made by filling out the needed information at the reception desk in the church office and including a check for payment. In addition to the beautiful arrangements of sanctuary flowers, a large outdoor flower cross will be assembled by the Flower Guild. On Easter Sunday, all are invited to place flowers on the cross, creating together a symbol of new life and Resurrection - and a great backdrop for pictures!

Kelly Roberson, Executive Assistant to the Senior Minister
kelly@athensfirstumc.org



Holy Week Services | March 29 - April 5

As Christians, Holy Week is a sacred journey we take each year as we retell the stories of Jesus' final days. You're invited to our Holy Week services as we walk with Jesus to the cross and hear the Good News of Easter anew: "He Is Risen!"

Palm Sunday | Sunday, March 29 | 9:30 and 11:00 a.m.

Maunder Thursday | Thursday, April 2 | 6:30 p.m.

Good Friday | Friday, April 3 | 12:00 p.m.

Easter | Sunday, April 5

Sunrise at the Steeple | 7:00 a.m.

Easter Sanctuary Worship | 9:30 and 11:00 a.m.



Men's Breakfast | March 14

Men of the church, you are invited to our Men's Breakfast on **Saturday, March 14, from 8:30-9:30 a.m. in Hancock Hall.** We're excited to welcome Jack Murray, who serves as the Area Director of Fellowship of Christian Athletes, as our guest speaker. Kevin Tolbert will provide the devotion. Men of all ages are encouraged to attend and bring friends and neighbors! The cost is \$15 per person.

Please register on Realm or by calling the church office, (706) 543-1442, by Wednesday, March 11.

Rev. Lisa Lawrenz, Director of Small Groups
lisa@athensfirstumc.org



Women's Conference | March 21

Join us for our Women's Conference on **Saturday, March 31, from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. in Hancock Hall** with guest speaker Laura Whitaker. Laura is the CEO of ESP, Inc., Co-Founder of Java Joy, and Author of The Joy Exchange. ESP is an Athens-based nonprofit that serves individuals with disabilities and their families through inclusive programs that foster belonging, purpose, and community. Join us for a meaningful morning of worship, reflection, and connection as we explore how God calls us to live with purpose and compassion in our everyday lives. The cost to attend is \$20 per participant. **Register today by scanning the QR Code in The Steeple.**

Rev. Lisa Lawrenz, Director of Small Groups
lisa@athensfirstumc.org



Middle School Mission Trip | July 13-16

We're inviting all middle school students for an opportunity to join us on our 2026 Summer Middle School Mission Trip to the Brunswick/St. Simon's Island area. Travel down to the coast with the Students at Athens First for some fun in the sun and an opportunity to serve our neighbors through mission. **Save the dates - July 13-16!** Come stay with us at the Honey Creek Episcopal Retreat Center as we partner with local organizations to practice what it means to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ! All current 6th through 8th grade students are invited to register! Register by June 15 for your 2026 Mission Trip T-Shirt!

Rev. Montana Hamby, Associate Minister
montana@athensfirstumc.org

MEMBER NEWS

Sympathy

Heartfelt Christian sympathy is extended to family and friends in the loss of Lorenzo Moss on February 21.

New Arrival

Congratulations to Sara Catherine and Elijah Martin on the birth of their daughter Cynthia Lane "Laney" Martin on February 18. Laney is the granddaughter of Carla and Tim Pennell.

Wedding Bells

Congratulations to Anna Story and William Lamb on their marriage on February 28 in our Sanctuary.



MARCH 11: Chicken pot pie served with a side salad and a roll.

Register by noon on Tuesday | Scan the Steeple QR Code to register online or Call the Church Office.

FINANCIAL REPORT As of March 2, 2026 (finance@athensfirstumc.org):

2026 Budget: \$3,055,000 | YTD Actual Giving: \$568,626 | YTD Actual Expenses: \$525,121

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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