



First Presbyterian Church of Athens

In response to God's grace, the mission of First Presbyterian Church is to create a community where people seek the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, rejoice in worship, and go forth sharing the love of Christ with Athens and the world!

December 24, 2017
8:45 and 11:00 a.m.
Fourth Sunday of Advent

GATHERING IN THE NAME OF GOD

Welcome to all who are worshipping with us. As we enter a holy space this morning, **please silence your cell phone**. The nursery is available downstairs during both services. Consult an usher if you need a personal hearing device, large-print bulletin or large-print hymnal.

The congregation is invited to speak or sing the liturgy in **bold** type.

Please sign and pass the Fellowship Pad.

Greeting

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Prelude

In dulci jubilo

James Vivian

Words of Welcome and Concerns of the Church

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

8:45 a.m. Xan Palmer, College Student,
Richard and Susan Stone, W.D. Hooper Class

11:00 a.m. Cash Havick, 5th Grade,
Ian Hardin and Bruce Middendorf, Wayne F. Middendorf Men's Bible Class

This Advent season we welcome members of our Sunday School classes and the handbell choir to light the Advent wreath.

Congregational Response

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.

*Those who are able may stand.

In its original form, Hymn 28, dating from at least the 14th century, was a “macaronic” carol, meaning it was in two languages, German and Latin. Though the present version is only in English, it is sung to the traditional German folk melody.

Worshippers may greet each other by saying, “The peace of Christ be with you,” and responding, “And also with you.”

After the Passing of the Peace at the 11:00 a.m. service, children, ages Pre-K-grade 2, are invited to Children’s Church held in the Children’s Ministry Suite.

The words of the Sussex carol first appeared in 1684 in a collection by an Irish bishop, Luke Wadding. Whether they were his own work or something gleaned from another source is not clear. The tune name recalls that the tune was collected in 1904 from Mrs. Verrall of Monk’s Gate, Sussex.

***Hymn 28** Good Christian Friends, Rejoice IN DULCI JUBILO

***Call to Confession**

***Prayer of Confession**

O God, we have lit the Advent candles of hope, love, joy, and peace. But we confess that at times we are apathetic and resigned rather than filled with hope. We focus on ourselves and our agendas more than others. Too often we lead cheerless lives. And our world is plagued by conflict. Forgive us. Help us turn around, that we may experience life as you mean it to be – hopeful, loving, joyous, and peaceful.

***Silent Prayer**

Lord, have mercy. **Amen.**

***Assurance of Pardon**

***Congregational Response**

Hymn 3, Stanza 1

**Comfort, comfort you my people,
tell of peace, thus says our God;
comfort those who sit in darkness
bowed beneath oppression’s load.
Speak you to Jerusalem
of the peace that waits for them;
tell them that their sins I cover,
and their warfare now is over.**

***Passing of the Peace**

Since God has forgiven us in Christ, let us forgive one another.

The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

And also with you.

Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you.

HEARING THE WORD OF GOD

Congregational Prayer for Illumination Hymn 68, Stanza 3

**O Jesus, while the star of grace impels us on to seek your face,
let not our slothful hearts refuse the guidance of your light to use.**

First Lesson Luke 9:20-25, page 946

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

11:00 a.m. Anthem Sussex carol arr. David Willcocks

On Christmas night all Christians sing, to hear the news the angels bring,
on Christmas night all Christians sing, to hear the news the angels bring –
news of great joy, news of great mirth, news of our merciful King’s birth.
Then why should we on earth be so sad, since our Redeemer made us glad,
then why should we on earth be so sad, since our Redeemer made us glad?
When from our sin he set us free, all for to gain our liberty?
When sin departs before his grace, then life and health come in its place,
when sin departs before his grace, then life and health come in its place;
angels above with joy may sing, all for to see the newborn King.
All out of darkness we have light, which made the angels sing this night,
all out of darkness we have light, which made the angels sing this night:
‘Glory to God and peace to men, now and for evermore. Amen.’

Second Lesson Luke 2:8-14, page 935
This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon Christmas at the Movies: "It's a Wonderful Life"
Dr. Carol Strickland

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

***Hymn 31** Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
MENDELSSOHN

***Affirmation of Faith** from A Declaration of Faith, PCUS 1977
God sent the promised Deliverer to his people.

**Jesus, the long expected Savior, came into the world as a child,
descended from David, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of
Mary, a virgin.**

**He lived as a Jew among Jews. He announced to his people the
coming of God's kingdom of justice and peace on earth.**

**We affirm that Jesus was born of woman as is every child,
yet born of God's power as was no other child.**

**In the person and work of Jesus, God himself and a human life
are united but not confused, distinguished but not separated.**

**The coming of Jesus was itself the coming of God's
promised rule.**

**Through his birth, life, death, and resurrection,
He brings about the relationship between God and humanity
that God always intended.**

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 debts,
as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the
power and the glory, forever. Amen.**

Presentation of Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory Noël de Saintonge Jean-François Dandrieu

***Doxology** Hymn 592
**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.**

***Prayer of Dedication**

Brought together in the mid-19th century, the text and tune of Hark! The Herald Angels Sing begin in quite different forms. The text had ten stanzas and began, "Hark, how all the welkin rings." The tune was created for a festival celebrating Gutenberg's introduction of moveable type.

The Affirmation of Faith is an excerpt from a contemporary statement of faith which the church adopted as "a reliable aid for Christian study, liturgy, and inspiration."

SENDING IN THE NAME OF GOD

* Hymn 38	It Came Upon the Midnight Clear	CAROL
* Benediction		
* Congregational Response		GLORIA, refrain
	Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.	
* Postlude	From Heaven Above	Garth Edmundson

Texts and music for hymns and
sung responses reprinted under
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A special word of welcome to our guests: thank you for joining us for worship this morning. Please fill out the fellowship pad so that we may be in touch. We are delighted you are here and look forward to seeing you again.

Nurseries for infants and toddlers, available from 8:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., are located next to the Children's Ministry Suite and are accessible down the stairs in the Atrium and through the glass door.

To pick up your child from Children's Church after the 11:00 a.m. service, please go through the Atrium to Fellowship Hall. A Children's Church teacher will meet you there.

NOTES ON THE SERVICE

WORSHIP LEADERS

Liturgist:

8:45 a.m. Bruce Lancaster

11:00 a.m. Bruce Lancaster

Acolytes:

11:00 a.m. Lane Holloway, Sammy Pope

Lay Readers:

8:45 a.m. Scott Collins

11:00 a.m. Stephen Covington

USHERS

8:45 a.m. John A. Simpson (head),
Charlie Logan, Henry Logan, David Magrino

11:00 a.m. Richard Lane (head),
Allen Crowell, Phylli Crowell, Fran Lane,
Helen London, Jim London

GREETERS

8:45 a.m. Michelle Clenden-Shaw,
Faye Marshall, Mary Peace

11:00 a.m. Brenda Glasscock, Bob Glasscock

FLOWERS

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

We thank the Flower Committee for decorating our church and sanctuary during Advent and Christmas.

TO AID IN WORSHIP

If you need to leave the sanctuary during the service, a live video feed is available in the Atrium.

Available in the narthex or from an usher:

- **Personal hearing receivers** usable anywhere in the sanctuary
- **Large-print** hymnals, Bibles, bulletins, and hymnsheets
- **Sermons** from the previous six weeks

CONGREGATIONAL CARE

Prayer requests can be submitted to the church office, 706-543-4338, by the Prayer Request link on our church website (firstpresathens.org) or on the prayer cards in the fellowship pads.

ADVENT SERMON SERIES

During Advent, our Sunday sermons have highlighted popular holiday films, seeing how these Christmas stories intertwine with "THE" Christmas story. Our last sermon in the series will be this evening: Christmas Eve, 6:00 & 8:00 p.m., "Miracle on 34th Street."

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BATTLING A BLUE CHRISTMAS?

“Getting through the Holidays When You’ve Lost a Loved One” booklets are available in the Atrium. Pastors are also always available to talk.

COMMITMENT SUNDAY UPDATE

The response to Commitment Sunday has been good. Thank you to everyone who has already pledged.

There are still a number of members from whom we hope to hear. It will help our church leaders plan the 2018 budget if we can receive pledges prior to year-end. You may turn in your pledge in the offering plate, in the church office, or you may pledge online. Thank you for prayerfully considering your pledge.

HOLIDAY BENEVOLENCE MARKET Through December 31

Shop for “symbolic gifts” from 29 local nonprofits to give to friends, relatives, and teachers this Christmas. Shopping lists are available in the Atrium, or you can shop online at holidaybenevolencemarket.org.

2018-19 WEEKDAY SCHOOL REGISTRATION

Begins January 11, 2018

Please call our director, Elaine Johnson, at 706-206-8180 to schedule a tour. Our Weekday School is celebrating 51 years of serving Athens children, ages infant through 5 years.

A very special invitation to join us this evening:

Candlelight Christmas Eve Services

4:00, 6:00 & 8:00 p.m.

Family service, 4:00 p.m., planned with small children in mind

Communion services, 6:00 & 8:00 p.m.

Dr. Bruce Lancaster preaching

Nursery at 6:00 p.m. Nursery will not be provided at 8:00 p.m.

Please plan to join us on this most holy of nights as we celebrate the birth of our Savior.

The Wayne F. Middendorf Memorial Concert Series

presents

The Voices of Truth

January 14, 4:00 p.m.

**First Presbyterian Church
Sanctuary**

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service

January 15, 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

As a celebration of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday and commitment to service, Athens-Clarke County is committed to making Monday, January 15, “A Day On, Not A Day Off.” The Kick-Off Celebration will be 8:30 - 9:30 a.m. at Clarke Central High School gymnasium, and volunteers will work from 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. at one of more than a dozen sites in our community.

To see the complete list of participating organizations and register, visit uga.givepulse.com/group/events/118913. You can also sign up with the individual agencies or the day of the event at Clarke Central High School.

For many years, FPC members have helped at the Project Safe Thrift Store, so please join fellow members there if you would like. However you sign up, please list your First Presbyterian Church affiliation. We know our members are active throughout Athens. Let others know it, too!

SUNDAY SCHOOL RESUMES JANUARY 7

Sunday School Classes are available for all ages and meet 9:45-10:40 a.m.

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN

Children's Ministry Suite • Infants - 5th Grade

Director of Children's Ministries: Natalie Bishop

Nursery Volunteer & Staff Coordinator: Jennifer Abbott

Infants • Nursery Baby Room

Room Lead: Rita Raines

Toddlers - Preschoolers • Nursery Playroom

Room Lead: Mary Smith

Our toddler and preschooler curriculum is Group Publishing's Play-n-Worship. It is filled with music, activities, and storyboards that encourage little ones to interact with Bible stories.

Children's Sunday Morning Music: Garland Ryder

Pre-Kindergarten - 5th Grade

Our elementary aged children will experience Godly Play during Sunday School. Godly Play helps children to explore their faith through story, to gain religious language, and to grow their spiritual experience through wonder and play.

Pre-Kindergarten - Kindergarten • Room 127

Godly Play Guides: Susan Ferguson, Karen Phillips, Heather Roberts, Dan Trier

1st Grade - 2nd Grade • Room 126

Godly Play Guides: Jennifer Abbott, Mary Elizabeth McConnell, Carmen Meadows

3rd Grade • Room 125

Godly Play Guides: Greta Covington, Madie Fischetti, Cathi Lancaster, Chuck Roberts

4th Grade - 5th Grade • Room 124

Godly Play Guides: Jody Corry, Denise Horton, Matt Jones

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR ADULTS

Christian Issues • Room 310

Study of the book, Judges Returning to God by Donald Baker.

Coordinator: Sandy Boyles

Inquirers • Moses Waddel Room

Thoughtful introspection and lively group discussion covering contemporary issues and daily Christian living.

- January 7 - DVD, The Old Testament, by Amy-Jill Levine.

- January 14 - David Alper, Congregation Children of Israel, on the class's upcoming visit to the synagogue.

Facilitators: Carl Bergmann, Carla Buss

Living on a Prayer • Room 303

Study of the book, Vanishing Grace by Philip Yancey. Socials outside of class.

Facilitators: Bryans, Holloways, McConnells

New Voices • Room 308

Study of the book, Short Stories by Jesus by Amy-Jill Levine.

Led by: Lewis Hudgins, Christine Register

W. D. Hooper • Room 309

Study of the Acts of the Apostles with other books of the New Testament to follow.

Led by: Richard Stone

Wayne F. Middendorf Men's Bible Class

Bride's Room, Tinsley Stern

Study of the Gospel of Matthew.

Teacher: John Kipp

Women's Bible Class • Room 301

Study of Micah, one of the minor prophets, followed by a study of Hebrews.

Teacher: Wanda Wilcox

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR YOUTH - The PIT

Director of Youth Ministries: Kim Ness

MIDDLE SCHOOL – re:form

Lounging on bean bags, our MS class will use the re:form curriculum - creative, funny animated videos and group activities - to engage in tough faith questions. Teachers: Jordan Osborne, Erik Ness

9th GRADE CONFIRMATION – CnC (Confirm not Conform)

This year we are using a confirmation program that celebrates questions and choices. Together, we will create a space where youth can explore the breadth of the Christian tradition, ask questions, express doubts, and discover what they truly believe. This is a year-long class with Confirmation on May 20. Teacher: Kim Ness, Robbie Bryan

HIGH SCHOOL – d365

The demands of high school can feel overwhelming, but finding just a few minutes each day to connect to God can help lighten the load. This year we'll take time to pause-listen-think-pray-go on a different verse from scripture using the app d365.org as our guide. On the fourth Sunday of the month, the high school class will also meet with Natalie Bishop to help plan and lead Children's Church.

Teacher: Megan Bawcum

THIS WEEK

Sunday, December 24 - 4th Sunday of Advent, Christmas Eve

8:45 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Services, Dr. Carol Strickland preaching, No Sunday School
4:00 p.m. Family Candlelight Service
6:00 p.m. Candlelight Communion Service, Nursery provided
8:00 p.m. Candlelight Communion Service, Nursery will not be provided

Monday, December 25 - Church Office Closed for Christmas Holiday

9:00 a.m. Weekday School Christmas Break
10:00 a.m. Christmas Day Meals on Wheels Delivery

Wednesday, December 27

3:00 p.m. Bridge, Room 302

Sunday, December 31

10:00 a.m. Service, Dr. Bruce Lancaster preaching, No Sunday School

LOOKING AHEAD

- January 1 -** Church Office Closed for New Year's Holiday
New Year's Day Meals on Wheels Delivery, 10:00 a.m.
- January 7 -** Communion Sunday/Food Sunday*
8:45 and 11:00 a.m. Worship Services, Dr. Bruce Lancaster preaching
9:45 a.m. Sunday School resumes for all ages
- January 10 -** Bookless Book Group, 11:30 a.m., Heirloom Cafe and Fresh Market
- January 12-15 -** Youth Ski Trip
- January 14 -** Voices of Truth Concert, 4:00 p.m.
Ecumenical Martin Luther King, Jr. Service, 5:00 p.m., First Baptist Church
- January 15 -** Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service
- January 17 -** Wed@First Programs and Dinner Begin
- January 23 -** PTP Trip to UGA Veterinary Teaching Hospital, 9:30 a.m.
- January 24 -** Bookless Book Group, 11:30 a.m., South Kitchen + Bar
- January 28 -** Congregational Meeting and Lunch, 12:00 p.m.
Athens Area Youth Skate Night, 6:00 p.m.

* January 7 we will be collecting pork & beans, breakfast cereal, and spaghetti sauce for the Athens Area Emergency Food Bank.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SESSION

Bruce Lancaster, Moderator Jerris Hayes, Clerk of Session
Carol Strickland, Associate Pastor

CLASS OF 2017

Allen Crowell
Don DeMaria
Susan Ferguson
Madie Fischetti
Jerris Hayes
Joy Holloway
Diane Hudgins
Mike Morris
Jerry Rogers
Ella Stewart

CLASS OF 2018

Joe Attaway
David Cole
Jason Doornbos
Sue Gray
Mark Harrison
Denise Horton
Christine Register
Arlene Shirley
Harry Shuford
Richard Stone

CLASS OF 2019

Robbie Bryan
Greta Terrell Covington
DeeAnn Cox
Mary Havick
Joe Hermanowicz
Richard Lane
Mary Peace
Lawton Stephens
Dan Trier

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH STAFF

Dr. Bruce Lancaster, Interim Senior Pastor
Dr. Carol Strickland, Associate Pastor
Dr. John Kipp, Parish Associate
The Reverend Bob Googe, Parish Associate
Dr. John Coble, Director of Music and Organist
Mrs. Kim Ness, Director of Youth Ministries
Mrs. Natalie Bishop, Director of Children's Ministries
Mrs. Elaine Johnson, Director of Weekday School
Mr. Roger Burbage, Church Administrator
Ms. Lucy Bell, Administrative Assistant
Ms. Nan Powell, Communications Specialist
Mrs. Jennifer Sunderlin, Receptionist/Administrative Assistant
Mrs. Laura McHugh, Accountant
Mrs. Tiffany Greene, Weekday School Administrative Assistant
Ms. Jennifer Abbott, Nursery Volunteer & Staff Coordinator
Mrs. Charlotte Chromiak, Children's Music Assistant
Mr. Chuck Hunt, Sunday Morning Manager
Mr. Willie "Buc" Collins, Sexton
Mrs. Madeline Van Dyck, Parish Nurse

STUDENT INTERNS

Ms. Jordan Osborne, Youth Ministry Intern
Ms. Yamini Pulusu, Website Technician

WADDEL FELLOWS

Mr. Wesley Bowden, Congregational Care
Mr. Christian Cordon, Mission & Outreach
Ms. Nettie Jester, Youth Ministry

PLEASE SEE FIRSTPRESATHENS.ORG

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH.