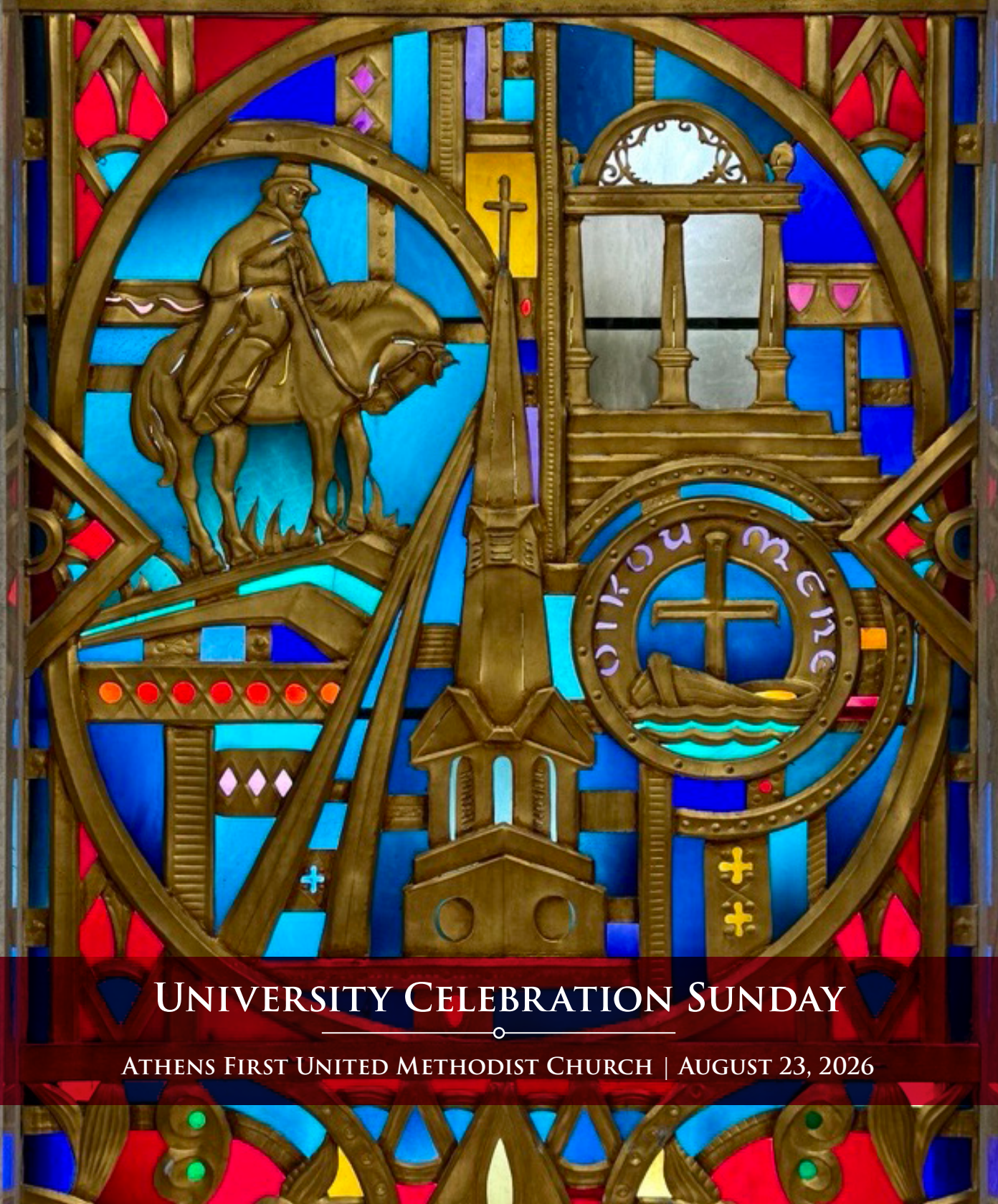




UNIVERSITY CELEBRATION SUNDAY

ATHENS FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH | AUGUST 23, 2026

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 Caroline and Ted Ridlehuber by their daughters and grandchildren.

Welcome to University Celebration Sunday!

Today we give thanks for the vibrant community we share with the University of Georgia and offer a special blessing over our college students, professors, staff, and administrators. As we begin a new academic year, we recognize the important role education plays in our lives and express our commitment to nurturing the faith and growth of our church and university communities.

GATHERING

The Prelude

"Prelude in G Major" | Felix Mendelssohn

Raina Wood, Organist

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

The Choral Introit

“O Come, Let Us Sing to the Lord” | Charles Callahan

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

O come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving and show ourselves glad in him with psalms. Let us make a joyful noise with songs of praise! Psalm 95:1-2

PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING

**The Processional Hymn*

UMH 61 “Come, Thou Almighty King” | ITALIAN HYMN

**The 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.

**The Gloria Patri* | MEINEKE

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

**The Passing of the Peace*

The Welcoming of New Members | 9:30 a.m.

The Celebration of our University Community | 11:00 a.m.

President Jere W. Morehead, The University of Georgia

The Blessing of our College Students | Owen Parker and Corbin McKay

Gracious and loving God, as we step into a new academic year, we bring before you in prayer all who are beginning this season.

For students, new and returning, who carry dreams, burdens, questions, and potential,

Grant them wisdom, strength, curiosity, and peace.

For faculty and staff: professors, mentors, advisors, administrators, and all who serve,

Empower them to teach with passion, lead with grace, and guide with integrity.

For parents, guardians, and families sending loved ones to college, some for the first time,

Comfort them with your presence and surround them with your peace.

For friends, roommates, and classmates,

May they be companions on the journey, offering encouragement, joy, and understanding.

For students far from home and for those who feel isolated or unseen,

Wrap them in welcome, belonging, and love.

For all who face mental health concerns or feel overwhelmed by pressures of our world,

Be their refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

For classroom, library, dorm, and office,

Let them be places of learning, growth, and grace.

For our church,

May it be a sanctuary of refuge, a place of belonging and love, and a nurturing community of faith.

Holy Spirit, guide this year. Remind us daily that we are not alone: that you go before us, beside us, and behind us.

Renew our hearts and minds. May we love you with all that we are and love our neighbors well.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Teacher, Savior, and Friend,

Amen.

The 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 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 347 "Spirit Song" | SPIRIT SONG

During the singing of the hymn 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

"Speak, O Lord" | John Ferguson

Sung by the Sanctuary Choir

Speak, O Lord, as we come to You to receive the food of Your Holy Word. Take Your Truth; plant it deep in us; shape and fashion us in Your likeness, that the light of Christ might be seen today in our acts of love and our deeds of faith. Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us all Your purposes for Your glory. Teach us, Lord, full obedience, Holy reverence, true humility; test our thoughts in the radiance of Your purity. Cause our faith to rise; cause our eyes to see Your majestic love and authority. Words of power that can never fail - let their truth prevail over unbelief. Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds; help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us - truths unchanged from the dawn of time that will echo down through eternity. And by grace we'll stand on Your promises, and by faith we'll walk as You walk with us. Speak, O Lord, 'til Your church is built and the earth is filled with your glory.

Text by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend

**The Doxology* | LASST UNS ERFREUEN

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise God, all creatures here below: Alleluia!
Alleluia! Praise God, the source of all our gifts! Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

PROCLAMATION

The Scripture Reading | Mark 12:28-34

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

The Message | Rev. Jeremy Lawson

“With All Your Mind”

RESPONSE

**The Hymn of Response*

UMH 384 “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” | BEECHER

The Introduction of 2026–2027 Leadership Residency Interns

CHASE WALKER | Lead Intern

DALY CARPENTER | Freshman Intern

KATIE GARDNER | Student and Family Ministry

KIERA WALTON | Marketing and Communications

LANE MCAFEE | Hospitality and College Ministry

MARY KATHERINE LOOMIS | Discipleship Ministry

OLIVIA NESPECA | Kids Ministry

**The Blessing and Congregational Response*

“The Battle Hymn of the Republic” | BATTLE HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC

Glory, glory, hallelujah! Glory, glory, hallelujah! Glory, glory, hallelujah! His truth is marching on.

**The Postlude*

“I. Allegro” from *Concerto in G Major* | Johann Ernst, arr. Johann Sebastian Bach



Our vision for College Ministry is for every student to know they are created by God, connected in community, and called to live their faith in the world. At Athens First UMC, college and graduate students are an important part of our church community, with opportunities to form lasting friendships, grow as disciples of Jesus Christ, and discover how God is at work in their lives. Whether you are new to Athens, looking for a church home, or ready to become more connected, we invite you to come and be part of what God is doing here!

SUNDAYS

Sunday School | 10:00 a.m.

Begin your Sunday with coffee, Scripture, and opportunities to grow in faith alongside other college and graduate students. Our current series is "Questions Worth Asking." This is the perfect time to jump in.

Worship | 9:30 & 11:00 a.m.

Gather with our Athens First UMC community for worship in the Sanctuary each Sunday.

College Lunch | Following 11:00 a.m. Worship

College Lunch is the main gathering point for our College Ministry. Each week, we share a great meal, continue the conversation from the morning's sermon, and, most importantly, spend time building friendships and deepening our community together. College Lunch is sponsored by Sunday School classes, small groups, and other donors.

WEDNESDAYS

Wednesday Night Dinner | 5:30 p.m.

Come enjoy dinner with our wider church family before Small Group. College students and full-time graduate students always eat free! Register each week online or with the QR code in the bulletin.

College and Young Adult Small Groups | 6:30 p.m.

Our Wednesday Small Groups start back this week! Join us for a welcoming space to dig into Scripture, ask questions, and discover how our faith speaks into the lives we're actually living.

THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER

College Ministry is about more than our weekly gatherings! Throughout the semester, we offer social events, service opportunities, special gatherings, outings, and other ways to connect with one another and with the wider life of Athens First UMC.

There is no single way to be involved. Join us on Sundays, come on Wednesdays, meet us at an event... or jump into all three. No matter what, we hope you always know that you belong here!

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

Small Groups & Bible Studies

Disciplines | *The Upper Room: Disciplines* Devotional Bible Study
Begins September 14 | Mondays at 1:15 p.m. | Room 213 (Hull Conference Room)

Women's Bible Study | *Life Lessons from Psalms* by Max Lucado
Begins September 15 | Tuesdays at 12:30 p.m. | John Wesley Parlor

Women's Bible Study | *The Way of Wisdom: A Study on Proverbs*
Begins September 15 | Tuesdays at 4:00 p.m. | Offsite

Prayer Shawl Ministry
Ongoing | Tuesdays at 10:00 a.m. | Panera on Atlanta Highway

Prayer Shawl Ministry
Begins August 26 | Wednesdays at 4:30 p.m. | Room 200 (Hancock Parlor)

Parenting with Purpose | *James: What You Do Matters* by Margaret Feinberg
Begins August 26 | Wednesdays at 6:15 p.m. | John Wesley Parlor

Men's Bible Study | *Gospel of John* by Amy Jill Levine
Begins August 26 | Wednesdays at 6:15 p.m. | Room 240

New Parents Small Group
Begins August 26 | Wednesdays at 6:15 p.m. | Room 226

Wednesday Night Bible Study | *Jesus is Lord* by Tom Berlin
Begins August 26 | Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. | Room 213 (Hull Conference Room)

A Disciple's Path | *Christianity's Family Tree* by Adam Hamilton
Begins August 26 | Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. | Room 222

College and Young Adult Small Group
Begins August 26 | Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. | Room 318

Friday Morning Mom's Group | *Finding I Am* by Lysa TerKeurst
Begins September 11 | Every other Friday at 8:00 a.m. | Offsite

The Heartthrobs
September 2 and December 2 | Meets Quarterly | At Hilltop Grille

Financial Peace University
Begins September 20 | More details to come

Grief Support Group
Coming this Fall | Contact Rev. Lisa Lawrenz if you are interested.

*Learn more about these studies and register online by visiting
athensfirstumc.org/smallgroupsministry.*

Rev. Lisa Lawrenz, Associate Minister | lisa@athensfirstumc.org



Concert Series Kickoff Raina Wood, Organ | August 30

Join us **Sunday, August 30 at 3:00 p.m.** as we kick off the 2026-2027 Sanctuary Concert Series! Come and enjoy the music of Athens First UMC Organist, Raina Wood, in an afternoon recital, "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken," featuring works by Albrecht, Bach, Paine, and Widor. Reception to follow in Hancock Hall. Free admission; no tickets required.

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



Men's Opportunities

The Heartthrobs will hold their quarterly luncheon on **Wednesday, September 2, at 11:45 a.m.** at Hilltop Grille. The Heartthrobs is a support group for men who have experienced heart-related health issues such as heart surgery, pacemakers, heart disease, and other cardiovascular conditions. The cost is \$15 per person. Please register by Monday, August 31.

The Athens First Men's Ministry will be hosting a **Men's Breakfast** on **Saturday, September 19, from 8:30 - 9:30 a.m.** in Hancock Hall. Men of all ages are encouraged to attend and bring friends and neighbors! The cost is \$15 per person. Please register by Wednesday, September 16.

Rev. Lisa Lawrenz, Associate Minister | lisa@athensfirstumc.org



Sweet Life Luncheon | August 27

The Sweet Life is a gathering of our Athens First UMC members and friends who are age 50 and up. This month's luncheon, set for August 27, will include a program and lunch catered by The Master's Table. Lunch begins at 12:00 noon in Hancock Hall. The program starts at 12:30 p.m. We'll welcome Benjamin Whetstone and Scott Allen from UGA's IT team within the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences for a high-level presentation on Artificial Intelligence. Their department has been involved in AI development, and Ben and Scott have also helped educate more than 2,000 employees about AI and its impact. We're looking forward to an informative and engaging conversation about this rapidly changing technology. Please RSVP by noon on Wednesday, August 26.

Rev. Lisa Lawrenz, Associate Minister | lisa@athensfirstumc.org



Wednesday Night Dinner

Wednesday Night Dinners are back **beginning August 26!** We invite you to join us for fellowship and a delicious meal prepared by our very own Mitch Bain. Every week, we will also offer a salad bar option. Dinner is served from 5:00 – 6:30 p.m. in Hancock Hall. Adult meals are \$10, and the salad bar is \$7. Our child-friendly option is \$5. **All orders must be placed by Tuesday at noon.** Our church staff is happy to assist you if you have any trouble ordering online. More information, the menu for the next month, and the link to register can be found by scanning the QR code.

Alisha Bain, Administrative Assistant | alisha@athensfirstumc.org



Christmas at Biltmore | Registration Open

This December, the Sanctuary Choir is hosting a trip to the Biltmore Estate in Ashville, NC, and everyone is invited! Events will include admission to Biltmore Estate, Sanctuary Choir Concert in the Winter Garden of Biltmore House and evening Candlelight Tour, National Gingerbread House display at Grove Park Inn, with meals, overnight stay, and motorcoach travel. Those who are not members of the choir will enjoy the sights and sounds of the historic Biltmore Estate along with us. Dates: **Friday, December 4 - Saturday, December 5.** The cost is \$525 per person (double-occupancy). Registration will close on October 1 (\$125 deposit due at registration). Visit athensfirstumc.org/christmasatbiltmore to learn more, or scan the QR code to register.

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



Basketball Registration

Are you ready to shoot some hoops?! Children ages 4 through 5th grade are invited to join us this winter for our Children's Basketball League. All teams are co-ed and divided by age. This year, our Basketball Season will kick off the week of November 16th (Monday) with our Basketball Skills Clinics. Official team practices will begin in December, and games will be held on Saturdays beginning in January. Each team will have one practice and one game per week. Scan the QR code above to find a full schedule of the season showing dates for clinics, coaches' meetings, and a full practice and game schedule. The cost for the season is \$125.

Brynn McGlamery, Director of Recreation | brynn@athensfirstumc.org

SERMON NOTES:

Wednesday NIGHT DINNER

AUGUST 26: Fried Chicken, mac-n-cheese, green beans, 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 August 18, 2026 (finance@athensfirstumc.org):

2026 Budget: \$3,055,000 | YTD Total Revenue: \$2,074,396 | YTD Total Expenses: \$1,995,060

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. Lisa Lawrenz | Associate Minister
lisa@athensfirstumc.org | 706-338-6952

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

ATHENS FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
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