CHRISTMAS AT Biltmore
ATHENS FIRST UMC 2026

CHRISTMAS AT BILTMORE

December 4 - 5, 2026 | Asheville, NC

Ryan Ferguson, Director of Music & Worship

Rev. Lisa Lawrenz, Associate Minister

PRE-TRIP MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

GROUP & LEADERS

With 92 people traveling to Biltmore, we divided the group into two parties: *The Choir Group* and *The Touring Group*

Each group has a slightly altered travel itinerary for Friday.

While the choir and choir group perform in the house, the touring group will enjoy Antler Hill Village and the Winery. *Due to our group size, both groups cannot attend the choir's performance in the house.*

Ryan Ferguson will be the leader for the Choir Group, and Rev. Lisa Lawrenz will be the leader for the Touring Group.

We will assign additional leaders within both groups to oversee smaller groupings of 8-10 people. Our goal is to make sure everyone can easily access a leader if they need help or have a question.

COMMUNICATIONS

Over the next 4 weeks leading up to the trip, you'll get a weekly Biltmore email with reminders and group leader information.

On the trip, we will use a mass-text system for quick communications to the whole group. You will receive a test text next week!

Before the trip, you will also receive the contact information of your small group leader, as well as Ryan and Lisa's contact information.

TRAVEL & TRANSPORTATION

Departure: Friday, December 4 at 8:00 a.m.

Return: Saturday, December 5 at 12:30 p.m.

Two motorcoaches from Thrasher Brothers Trailways

These buses have restrooms and TVs.

They will park along Hancock Ave for loading.

If you are being dropped-off, you can pull under the Portico entrance and unload.

If you are driving yourself, you can park in the middle church lot across Hancock Ave. The church lots are gated and there are security cameras for overnight parking.

HOTEL ACCOMODATIONS

We are staying at the AC Hotel by Marriott in Biltmore Village

They have an onsite restaurant, bar, breakfast, pool/whirlpool, and outdoor fire pits

Rooming assignments are based on registration and are in info packets.

GROVE PARK INN | RESTAURANT & GINGERBREAD DISPLAY

Buffet Lunch at **Blue Ridge Farm to Table Restaurant.** Reservations: 12:15 PM – Choir Group & 1:15 PM – Touring Group.

Following each lunch reservation, groups will walk through the National Gingerbread House Competition displays.

BILTMORE CONCERT – CHOIR GROUP

Following lunch, the choir group will board the bus for the Biltmore House concert.

Choir will warm-up and robe on the bus. That means, choir members, your robes and folders will need to travel with you on the bus.

Bus will drop us off at the house. We will take a choir picture, go in and sing and come back out.

We will then go to the hotel and check in.

ANTLER HILL VILLAGE – TOURING GROUP

Included in your admission to Biltmore Estate, is Antler Hill Village.

Home to specialty shops and the Biltmore Winery, where you can take part in complimentary tastings and purchase wine.

Antler Hill is also home to Santa Claus during this season!

Following the Candlelight Tour, everyone will have the opportunity to see this area at night (Illuminations) before returning to the hotel.

BILTMORE CANDLELIGHT TOUR

5:45 PM entry time

It takes about 1.5 hours to go through the whole house

Dress for winter weather and expect walking/stairs. There are benches and elevators, if needed.

FRIDAY TRIP ITINERARY – CHOIR GROUP

December 4

7:30 a.m. Check-in; load Thrashers Bros motorcoach at AFUMC

8:00 a.m. Depart AFUMC for Asheville

12:15 p.m. Buffet Lunch at Blue Ridge, Grove Park Inn

& National Gingerbread Competition Display

2:00 p.m. Depart Grove Park Inn for Biltmore House

On bus: Warm-up & robe

3:00 p.m. Sanctuary Choir Concert - Biltmore House

4:00 p.m. Check into AC Hotel

4:00 p.m. Catered Dinner, AC Hotel Banquet Room

5:00 p.m. Depart for Biltmore Estate

5:45 p.m. Candlelight Tour of Biltmore House

7:30 p.m. Free time, Illuminations at Antler Village

9:00 p.m. Return to hotel

FRIDAY TRIP ITINERARY – TOURING GROUP

December 4

7:30 a.m. Check-in; load Thrashers Bros motorcoach at AFUMC

8:00 a.m. Depart AFUMC for Asheville

11:30 a.m. Check-in at AC Hotel Biltmore Village

12:30 p.m. Depart hotel for Grove Park Inn

1:15 p.m. Buffet Lunch - Blue Ridge Restaurant, Grove Park Inn

& National Gingerbread House Display

2:45 p.m. Depart Grove Park Inn for Antler Hill Village

4:00 p.m. Catered Dinner, AC Hotel Banquet Room.

5:00 p.m. Depart for Biltmore Estate

5:45 p.m. Candlelight Tour of Biltmore House

7:30 p.m. Free time at Illuminations at Antler Village

9:00 p.m. Return to hotel

SATURDAY ITINERARY – BOTH GROUPS

December 5

6:30-9:00 a.m. Breakfast at the hotel

9:00 a.m. Meet in lobby; Check out & load motorcoach

9:30 a.m. Depart AC Hotel for AFUMC

12:30 p.m. Arrival at AFUMC

ACCESIBILITY & GROUP SAFETY

Our trip will cover a lot of ground (175,000 sq. foot home!), and I want us to enjoy our time safely.

By splitting us into smaller groups with leaders, it allows more of us to keep eyes on one another. Looking out for one another is the best way to make sure no one gets lost or left behind!

There are a few opportunities where you have free time. Be sure to check the time to make sure you don't miss a pick-up time.

Lisa and I will have all of your medical information and emergency contacts with us should a need arise.

WHAT TO BRING

Comfortable walking shoes; warm layers and a weather-appropriate coat. The weather currently is a low of 32 and high of 50 degrees.

Personal medications and any mobility aids

Phone, charger, and portable battery

Small day bag; optional umbrella or rain layer

Luggage guidance: One suitcase and a carry-on

Your Biltmore sweatshirt! **We will wear our Biltmore sweatshirts on Saturday.**

Choir group: Choir robes, folders, and water bottle