

— FILLED TO —
Overflowing
— STEWARDSHIP 2026 —

Dear Athens First UMC Family,

By now, many of you have received our stewardship letter introducing this year's theme, ***Filled to Overflowing***. Unfortunately, there was one fairly important thing missing: the pledge card!

Thankfully, our printer graciously acknowledged the mistake and offered to send another letter at no cost to the church. And while we could have simply mailed the missing card, I'm grateful for another opportunity to share why your pledge matters so much this year.

Have you noticed what God is doing at Athens First UMC these days?

Have you noticed how we've been running out of bulletins because worship has been filled to capacity? Have you noticed the growing number of children, students, and college students filling our hallways, classrooms, and pews? Have you noticed all of the new faces in our Sunday School classes, small groups, senior adult ministries, and serving in missions?

It's not an overstatement to say that God is truly filling our church to overflowing!

But if there's one thing I've learned over the years, it's that growing ministries require faithful investment. Our Finance Committee has worked incredibly hard to align our expenses with our giving, reducing our annual budget from approximately \$3.5 million to just over \$3 million. Even after finishing last year with a surplus, we believed reducing the budget was the prudent and faithful thing to do.

That's why one of our goals for this year's campaign is 100% participation from our congregation.

We know not every gift to Athens First UMC will be pledged in advance. But every pledge gives our church leadership a clearer picture of what we can faithfully count on as we plan for the coming year. The more of us who participate, the more confidently we can plan for the future.

I recently told our Church Council that I believe Athens First UMC is at an important moment in the life of our church. Five years from now, we could look back at 2026 as a wonderful season of growth that we wish we could've sustained. Or we could look back and say, "That was just the beginning."

Jesus described seed falling on good soil and producing thirty, sixty, even a hundred times what was planted. What if the growth we're seeing today is only the beginning of what God has in store?

I couldn't be more excited about the future of Athens First UMC. Not simply because our church is growing, but because every sign of growth represents another opportunity to share the love of God and make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

So when your pledge card arrives this time—and I promise, there really is one enclosed!—I hope you'll prayerfully invest in what God is already doing and preparing for what God has in store next.

Grace and Peace,

