



WINDOW

DECEMBER 2025

The Monthly Newsletter of
First Presbyterian Church, Athens, OH



December 2025

Sunday, December 7th 2nd Sunday of Advent Music Sunday

9:00 a.m. Advent Breakfast
10:30 a.m. - Extra Music and
Bell Choir during Worship

Sunday, December 14th 3rd Sunday of Advent

10:30 a.m. - Worship
1:00 p.m. - Lindley Inn
Hymn Sing

Sunday, December 21st 4th Sunday of Advent

10:30 a.m. - Christmas Joy
offering during Worship

4:00 p.m. Blue Christmas
Service

Wednesday, December 24th

Christmas Eve

5:00 p.m. Christmas Eve
Family Service
7:00 p.m. Organ music
7:30 p.m. Christmas
Candlelight Service of
Lessons & Carols

Sunday, December 28th 1st Sunday of Christmas

10:30 a.m. Worship

December 25th & 26th
Church Office Closed



From the Pastor....

A few years ago, amid all the holiday chatter, there was a moment that caught my attention on a TV show. The studio was filled with Christmas trees. The backdrop was colored in green and red. Three women in festive outfits shared their thoughts about the holiday. "It's my favorite time of the year," she said, "for everybody is so happy and joyful."

Apparently, she didn't know anybody who was feeling stressed, lonely, or sad.

"I love the food," said another. "It's so much fun to go out to eat. So many choices, and cookies, too!" Apparently, she didn't know anybody who's going hungry, or can't afford the groceries, or eats alone."

And then the third said, "I love Christmas carols. I make my annual trip to the church and listen to the music." Apparently, she doesn't know that some people go to church more than once a year, or that others volunteer to make music regularly in the choir loft. Then she added, "I do have to admit, when the preacher starts talking, I zone out. All those big words they toss around in church – incarnation, redemption – all those words are over my head."

Of course they are over our heads. Whatever is going on in heaven is above us. It's beyond us. It's up here somewhere, just out of reach. The angel Gabriel appears in a burst of light. Evening gloom is punctured by something greater than starlight. It's so dazzling that the first thing the angel says is, "Don't be afraid!"

He gives his message to a group of anonymous sheep herders, but he doesn't explain. What's a Messiah? Who or what is he

saving us from? The only evidence of his "good news of great joy" is that the Lord will be found in the humblest of surroundings as a peasant just like them. It is a lot to take in. I agree with that lady who goes to church once a year: it's over our heads.

The multitude of angels sing a song. *"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"* It's a short song, at least in the number of words. A Christmas song doesn't need a lot of words. Glory, peace, and favor. Whatever else we want to say about Christmas, this is the message. This is the song. And it is sung, not only to those who feel happy and joyful, but to those who are stressed, lonely, and sad. The song comes as a gift, not only to those who overeat and overconsume, but to those who don't know where the next meal is coming from.

And it's especially given to those who zone out when the preacher talks. None of those shepherds could spell the words incarnation, redemption, or reconciliation. Yet they knew the song was for them. The good news is for all the people. The God we glorify is at peace with us, and that's the evidence of God's good will.

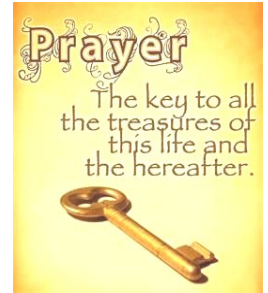
So, we sing. The angels sing to the world. We return the song. The glory goes up to God, for the peace of God comes down. That is the Good News of Christmas. Heaven and earth are singing together. Christ the Lord has come.

~Pastor Rob

*We are a Christian community of faith
that shares the love of God with all people everywhere."*

Prayer Requests and Visitation

Prayer request slips are available in the narthex. If you would like others in the church to pray for a person or for a concern near to your heart, place the slips in the Prayer Request box in the narthex. If you or someone you know would enjoy a visit from Pastor Rob and a Deacon, or appreciate receiving communion at home, contact the office 740-593-3351 or office@athensfpc.org



December 2025 Worship First Reading (Liturgist) - *Italics* - Sermon Text

DECEMBER 7 **Change our hearts and lives (Music Sunday)**

First Reading Isaiah 11:1-10

Psalm Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

Second Reading Romans 15:4-13

****Gospel Matthew 3:1-12***

DECEMBER 14 **Honest doubt**

First Reading Isaiah 35:1-10

Psalm Psalm 146:5-10

Second Reading James 5:7-10

****Gospel Matthew 11:2-11***

DECEMBER 21 **A spotlight on Joseph**

First Reading Isaiah 7:10-16

Psalm Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Second Reading Romans 1:1-7

****Gospel Matthew 1:18-25***

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE – 4:00 P.M.

DECEMBER 24 **Darkness can be Holy**

FAMILY SERVICE – 5:00 P.M.

CANDLELIGHT SERVICE – 7:00 P.M.

First Reading Isaiah 9:2-7

Psalm Psalm 96:1-13

Second Reading Titus 2:11-14

****Gospel Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)***

DECEMBER 28 **Home by another way**

First Reading Isaiah 63:7-9

Psalm Psalm 148

Second Reading Hebrews 2:10-18

****Gospel Matthew 2:13-23***



2025 Advent Devotionals are available in the Narthex

A BIG thank you to everyone that shared a story for the Advent Devotional, and to Barb Martin for compiling and producing the booklet again this year. The booklets are available in the Narthex and online.

Advent Breakfast Sunday, December 7th - 9:00 a.m.

The Church Community Committee will host the annual Advent Breakfast at 9:00 a.m. on December 7th and asks for volunteers to help with preparations/clean up or to prepare a dish to share if you are able. Please email Sandy Nesbitt (sandynes@yahoo.com) or phone her at 740-590-6515 to make your commitment.

Come enjoy the food and fellowship before the worship service.

Christian Education and Other Upcoming Events at FPC

Weekly

Sundays during Worship - Children's Sunday School - Grade school and pre-school children are invited to attend Sunday School during Worship. If you have questions or would like to help with a class, please contact Barb Martin at barbaramartin729@msn.com or phone the church office at 740-593-3351.

Women's Book Study - via Zoom - Join Women's Book Study beginning in January on Fridays at noon via Zoom. For more information or to join, please contact the church office at 740-593-3351 or Joan Nease at christianed@athensfpc.org.

Monday, December 1st - The Monday after Thanksgiving is traditionally a school holiday. The Christian Education Committee invites you to enjoy the day off by coming to bake and decorate cookies in the church kitchen with our youth from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Cookie dough and decorations will be provided. The cookies will then be served for dessert at the Advent Dinner.

Tuesday, December 2nd at 5:30 p.m. - Advent dinner and crafts - Join FPC friends for an evening of food and Advent crafts. Vegan and gluten-free options will be available as we enjoy baked ziti, salad, bread, desserts and a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus plus various Advent crafts to make.

Sunday, December 21st 4:00 p.m. - Blue Christmas Service

Wednesday, December 24th 5:00 p.m. - Family Christmas Eve Service
 7:00 p.m. - Christmas Organ Music
 7:30 p.m. - Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols

Court Street Clothesline Donations for Winter Needs - The Christian Education Committee is inviting everyone to donate new winter gloves, mittens, hats, and scarves for the FPC winter clothesline. A collection box will be placed by the Christmas tree in Fellowship Hall. Warm clothes will be hung from a clothesline along the railing on the Court Street side of the church for people in need during cold weather.

WINDOWS ON: GHANA SCHOOL PROJECT

Please keep Lois Harkins and Samuel Amany in your prayers as they make their way to Ghana to present the many items that they were able to procure to support Ghana schools.

Their project was able to provide both academic and athletic support to five schools, thanks to your generous support.

Among the academic items are: two desktop computers, one printer, tools to engrave computers and printer, cartons of computer paper, ink cartridges, 200 backpacks, 300

kindergarten exercise books, 800 primary-junior high exercise books, alphabet charts, numbers charts, graphing boards, wooden math sets, teachers' wooden math set, coloring books, crayons, pencils, class books, erasers, markers, high-lighters, pens, etc.

In support of the athletics in the schools they were able to supply 48 running vests with matching shorts for volleyball and track for five schools, 96 soccer jerseys with matching shorts for five schools, 12 soccer balls, 12 volleyballs, one volleyball net, two soccer

nets and other miscellaneous items.

Lois and Samuel expect to arrive in Accra, Ghana on December 7th. Many church activities are planned during their stay. There will be "blessing of the gifts" ceremonies at all five schools.

Special thanks to Athens First Presbyterian Church, Rev. Dr. Rob Martin, Debbie Perry, members and friends for your support and prayers. Thanks also to Alpha Delta State Ohio Educational Foundations for their support. Together we can make a difference.



Christmas Services

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4:00 p.m. - Blue Christmas Service

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Windows ON: The Board of Deacons THIS MONTH'S NEWS

Each Sunday a "Deacon of the Month" is listed in the bulletin, and everyone is encouraged to contact that person with any needs a Deacon might be able to help with.

Deacon members strive to be aware of congregational members who have challenges or concerns,

and try to check on those people. Deacons also are aware that there may be congregational members, with or without particular needs, who would appreciate a phone call, a visit, or prayers.

All Deacons welcome any opportunity to provide contact, care, and assistance to church

members and friends.

December Deacon of the Month is Harold Robison. He may be reached by phone at (740) 592-1450.

Windows ON: Sanctuary Repair and painting THIS MONTH'S NEWS



Thanks to Advanced Painting for repairing and re-painting our church entrances, Narthex, and sanctuary following extensive water damage to our plaster and paint.



Note of Thanks

Thank you to Pastor Rob Martin, Debbie Perry, and the ladies that helped in the kitchen-Mary Costello, Carolyn Allen, and Helen King, for helping with Dan and Marilyn Neason's celebration. Everything came together for a perfect event to celebrate Dan and Marilyn!

Sincerely,

Amy Neason, Nita Olson, and Eric and Susan Neason

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

2 – Lyntha Eiler
6 – Trevor Key
10 – Perry Lloyd
13 – Adalyn Broadbent
Florence McGeoch
15 – Theresa Kerr
16 – Kevin Eskey
17 – Nina Bierlein
Carolyn Allen
21 – Lois Harkins
Zachary Strickmaker

22 – Linda Philips
24 – Heidi Marty
Wendy Toadvine
29 – Kimberly McKinley
Nicholas Stephenson
31 - Debbie Coon
Jim Gleason

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

15 - Ron and Calista Strickmaker
18 - Paul and Joyce Mullins
20 - Larry and Mindy King
23 - Neal and Sandy Nesbitt
26 - Corey and Elizabeth Howell
28 - Travis and Mink Neely



FPC Church Elders**2025** Adrienne Nagy, Andrew Stuart, and David Tees**2026** Sharon Huge, Linda Parsons, Jane Woodrow, and Hugh Woods**2027** Harvey Ballard, John King, Susan Loughridge, and Sandy Nesbitt**FPC Board of Deacons****2025** Alan Boyd, Mary Costello, Kim Jordan, Becky Pankratz and Ellen Sostarich**2026** Helen King, Joyce Mullins, Harold Robison, Riley Smoot, and Ayse Suer**2027** Carolyn Allen, Margaret Bourke, Bobbi Conliffe, Lois Harkins, and Carol Perry**Habitat for Humanity**

Habitat for Humanity held a rummage sale on November 15th which was well attended and raised \$1870 to support house building projects for low income people in the area. Thanks to all who donated items to the sale or made purchases. All proceeds go to the next house build. We couldn't do it without you!

**2026 Pledge Card - Still time to pledge!****2026 Stewardship Campaign**

The theme of the FPC 2026 Stewardship Campaign is "Embrace Kindness and Compassion"

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

— Colossians 3:12

Name: _____

Address: _____

PLEASE CHECK AND COMPLETE AS APPROPRIATE: Below is my pledge amount for the 2026 Budget.

Amount			
Payment Interval (choose 1)	Week	Month	Year

☐ I will not formally pledge but will give as I am able throughout the year.

☐ Please provide giving envelopes.

PLEASE CONTACT ME ABOUT: ☐ Making a gift to a FPC Athens Endowment Fund.

☐ How to accomplish a lasting gift to the church.



Blue Christmas Service December 21st, 4:00 p.m.

Christmas does not bring with it the joy and happiness that is advertised on shopping websites or on TV. People separated from loved ones, experienced loss or health setback, unable to afford the Christmas our culture promotes, or suffering emotional pain may feel God's comfort in this more contemplative service.



Do you now people who are grieving, or ill, or unemployed, or have painful memories of past Christmases? Do you know anyone who is finding it hard to hope? Consider recommending the Blue Christmas service to them.

Christmas Services

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Christmas Joy Offering Supporting Past, Present, and Future Leaders



CHRISTMAS JOY
SPECIAL OFFERINGS
LEADERSHIP: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Each year during the Advent and Christmas Season, eyes are turned toward Bethlehem to celebrate the wondrous gift of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

God has blessed the Church with incredible leadership in every time and place, but those leaders often need to be supported by their communities as well. The Christmas Joy Offering addresses the support needed by some church leaders, including supporting leadership development for communities of color, and providing support for Presbyterian church workers in their time of need.

By giving to the Christmas Joy Offering, you honor God's gift of Jesus Christ by providing assistance to current and retired church workers in their time of need and developing future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.

Supporting past, present, and future leaders. The Christmas Joy Offering has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s. The Offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. The Assistance Program provides critical financial support to church workers and their families. Presbyterian-related schools and colleges provide education and leadership development while nurturing racial and ethnic heritage. This has been a Presbyterian commitment for nearly 140 years.

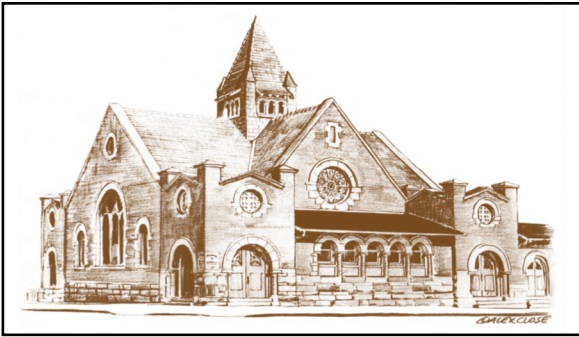
Sanctuary Christmas Poinsettias

If you sponsored a poinsettia for the Advent season sanctuary decorations please remember to retrieve your flower after the Christmas Eve service. No action is needed if you indicated that you wanted the Deacons to distribute them to our church family.



First Presbyterian Church
9 North College Street
Athens, OH 45701

December 2025



Phone: 740-593-3351
Fax: 740-593-3352
Email: office@athensfpc.org
Web: athensfpc.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AthensFPC/>
<https://www.Youtube.com/athensfpc>

Pastor: Rev. Dr. Robert E. Martin

Church: Corner of Court and Washington Streets
Office: 9 North College Street

Office Hours: Monday - Friday - 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Clerk of Session: Andrew Stuart

Choir Director: David M. Tadlock

Organist: Janice Robison

Bell Choir Director: Peter Haley

CE Co-Directors: Richard and Joan Nease

Administrative Assistant: Debbie Perry

Church Custodian: Tom Medley

Phone: (740) 593-3351 **FAX:** (740) 593-3352
E-Mail: office@athensfpc.org **Web:** www.athensfpc.org

Worship Service: In person service and can be seen live on YouTube. It is also recorded and under Worship Archives.

Bible Study: Tuesdays at 12:00 Noon in the church library and via Zoom

January 2025 Newsletter Deadline
Tuesday, December 23rd

First Presbyterian Church, Athens, Ohio - FPC has occupied its site in the center of Athens, Ohio since 1809. Among the founding fathers was Ohio University's first president, a Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Jacob Lindley. Dr. Lindley served this congregation as Moderator and Pastor until 1824. Over the years, thirteen pastors of the church have been either university presidents or members of the faculty. Dr. William Holmes McGuffey, author of the McGuffey's Readers, was called to serve as President of Ohio University and served as pastor of the church in 1839.

Presbytery of Scioto Valley - The Presbytery of Scioto Valley encompasses twenty-six counties in south central Ohio. From Ironton in the south to Ibera in the north: Hanover in the east and London in the west, FPC's presbytery consists of 95 congregations many of them historic where Presbyterians today are carrying on a long tradition of witness and service in their communities. All over FPC's presbytery, Presbyterians reach out to welcome the stranger, sharing the Gospel and God's love as Christ bids us to do.

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) - The PC (U.S.A.), with denominational offices in Louisville, Kentucky, has approximately 2.3 million members, more than 10,000 congregations and 14,000 ordained and active ministers. Presbyterians trace their history to the 16th century and the Protestant Reformation. Its heritage, and much of its doctrine began with John Calvin (1509-1564), whose writings crystallized much of the Reformed thinking that preceded him.