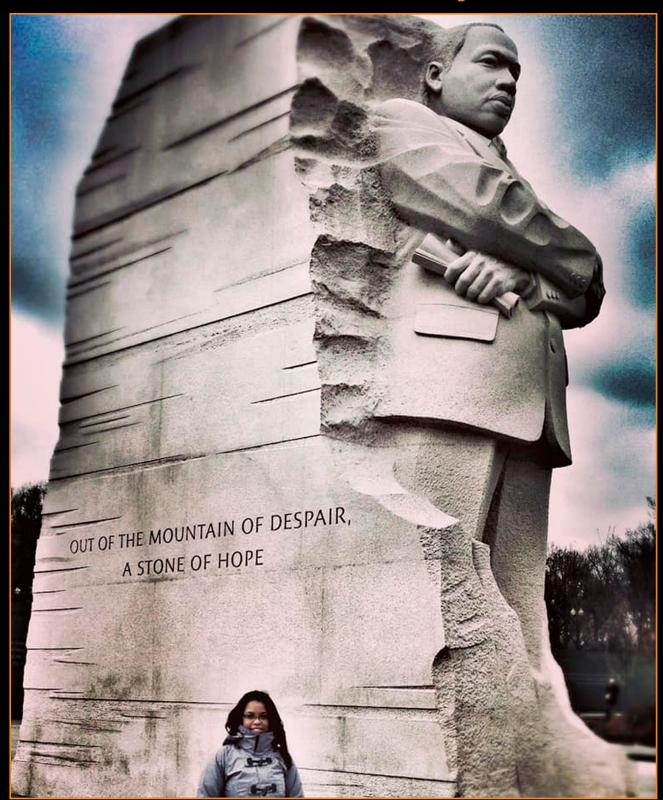
February & March 2021



## Welcome to Atlanta First United Methodist Church!

Welcome to Atlanta First! This community of faith believes in radically welcoming all people! So whether you are young or old; light, medium, or dark skinned; living with a disability or non-disabled; have it all together or have nothing together; are poor in resources or have plenty of resources; heterosexual or identify as a LGBTQ+ person – whoever you are and however you come, we believe that you were created beautifully in the image of God!

You are welcome and loved at Atlanta First!

#### Dear Atlanta First Family,

We are coming up on a year of physical distancing, mask-wearing, hyper-vigilance, and unprecedented living due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. A year ago, none of us could have imagined how much our lives would change. We all thought that we would stay home for a few weeks and get back to life as usual. Unfortunately, for so many, life will never be the same. We prayed with our church and community as people fell ill; adapted as "Zoom" became a way of life; economic circumstances changed; the reality of racial injustice and medical inequality set in; and more people than we ever could have imagined died all over the globe. And yet, God has been faithful through it all!

As each day passes, I miss you more than words can say. I love technology, yet technology can not compensate for the hugs, in-person visits, and the pre-Covid ease of social interaction. Your Leadership Team, Worship Team, and Pastor have worked non-stop to try to compensate and keep things as "normal" as possible, but as time progresses, everyone is growing weary of the distance.

I remain proud of how our church immediately pivoted to continue our strong tradition of worship, service, growth, and engagement. The creativity of our congregation has blown me away! No, we have not been able to keep up with everything and everyone. Nevertheless, we have done our best and persisted through impossible circumstances.

For those of you who have jumped in to help, encouraged us, granted grace, and made communication easier through taking the initiative to "step up" to the challenge, I could not be more grateful!

It's incredible what God has been able to do amid the pandemic. Our wors hiping community continues to grow and expand across the globe. More people are connected to God through Atlanta First because of the expansion of our digital platforms. We've added grow small group options and expanded our Sunday school community because people have been willing to try something new and have welcomed those who could not have connected otherwise. Our serve team has led us in digital and in-person mission options to continue to care for those who rely on us to eat, stay warm, remain housed, receive mail, and have a connection to Christ and our community. Our engage team created an app, just this month adding video devotions, to help us communicate and stay informed in new ways! There is so much more I can tell you - look at what God has done!

One of the things I'm most proud of is that our church leaders have continued to make progress on our property development initiative. People everywhere said that COVID-19 would kill this ministry opportunity; instead, COVID drove it forward! This week, I'm so excited to announce that our Leadership Team and Development Task Force UNANIMOUSLY approved the Joint Venture Development agreement to bring to you so that we can begin the project in earnest! Please don't miss the opportunity to learn more and be a part of moving Atlanta First into a new season on ministry. I'm including the "high points" of the agreement in this Messenger (see page 4). However, look for your emailed invitation to our **Church Conference (I.e., town hall meeting) on Monday, February 15<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm!** You can connect via Zoom, with the link available at www.atlantafirstumc.org/townhall. The vision has come to fruition! We are ready to execute this agreement and bring affordable and attainable housing to Peachtree Street in Atlanta!

Don't miss worship in February and March. Black History Month and the Lenten Season lead us into life-changing worship series. Learn more about worship and all of the other ways to #beChurch in this edition of the Messenger!

I'm not sure what you've heard, but don't miss what God is doing through Atlanta First! It's absolutely mind-blowing to see God bring fruitfulness out of such a hard season.

I love you more than you know! I miss you more than you know! I'm here for you if you need me!

Grace and peace,

Tastoe Jasmue

The Reverend Jasmine R. Smothers, Lead Pastor

We exist to worship God, serve people, grow together, and engage with the people of our city.

# Upcoming Events at Atlanta First

Sundays @ 9:45 am (does not meet  $5^{\text{th}}$  Sundays)

Online Sunday School (see page 9)

Sundays @ 11:00 am

Online Worship (see pages 6 - 7)

Tuesdays @ 6:30 pm

Virtual Intentional Time of Prayer (see page 9)

Tuesdays @ 7 pm (does not meet March  $9^{th}$  &  $30^{th}$ )

Disciple Fast Track Small Group (see page 9)

Thursdays @ 11 am (does not meet on Februaty 18th)

Disciple IV Small Group

Saturdays @ 12 pm

Youth Life Group (see page 10)

Sunday, February 7th @ 2:00 pm

1st Sundays at First Music Recital (see page 5)

Christopher Bryant: Black History Month Suite for Organ

Monday, February 15<sup>th</sup> @ 6 pm

Town Hall Meeting - www.atlantafirstumc.org/townhall

Tuesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> @ 2:00 pm

Friends at the Front Door (see page 8)

Sunday, March 7th @ 2:00 pm

1st Sundays at First Music Recital

Recital for Women's History Month

Sunday, March 14th

UMCOR Sunday (see page 8)

# Lent and Holy Week Worship Schedule

Sundays @ 9:45 am (not 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays)
Online Sunday School (see page 9)

Sundays @ 11:00 am

Online Worship (see pages 6 - 7)

Tuesdays @ 6:30 pm

Virtual Intentional Time

of Prayer (see page 9)

Wednesday, February 17<sup>th</sup> @ 6:30 pm Ash Wednesday Worship

Sunday, March 28<sup>th</sup> @ 11 am Palm Sunday Worship

Thursday, April 1<sup>th</sup> @ 6:30 pm Maundy Thursday Worship

Friday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> @ 12 & 6:30 pm Good Friday Worship

Sunday, April 4<sup>th</sup> @ 11 am
Easter Sunday Celebration Worship

# Free COVID-19 Testing

Visit <a href="https://atlstrong.org/testing/">https://atlstrong.org/testing/</a> for up-to-date COVID-19 testing locations and schedules. Mobile testing locations change weekly. Let's do our part to help end this pandemic by social distancing and wearing masks!

This is an excerpt from the Development Summary that we'll talk about and vote on during our Church Conference Town Hall on Monday, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 6:00pm. Visit www.atlantafirstumc.org/townhall for the link and phone numbers to connect to the ZOOM meeting for the Conference.

	development overview
1	Phase I - The Podium  Church Offices and Community Flexible Space Atlanta First Day School Commercial Retail Space Parking Garage with Dedicated Church Parking
2	<ul> <li>Phases II and III - Housing Towers</li> <li>Mixed Income Towers</li> <li>Towers I and II will consist of approximately 300 housing units</li> <li>80% Affordable Housing</li> </ul>
3	<ul> <li>MAC: Timeline To Be Decided</li> <li>Renovated Annex Building to house Midtown Assistance Center (MAC)</li> <li>MAC, while a long-time partner, is an independent agency and its governing board will determine its future location</li> <li>All current references to the location of MAC are the hopes of the Development Task Force</li> </ul>
4	<ul> <li>Expectations, Relationships and Responsibilities</li> <li>Best and highest mission-focused use of the offered property plots; discernment process</li> <li>Affordable, attainable, mixed income housing and green space; new Day School; new and expanded Midtown Assistance Center; flexible community and worship space</li> <li>Work with a mission-minded, non-profit developer with a proven track record of multi-use, transformational, community-focused, urban-based development projects Evergreen Real Estate Group</li> <li>Church retains jurisdiction on what happens on the property into perpetuity</li> <li>Existing Education Building and parking lots will be replaced with Podium, Housing and MAC</li> <li>No church dollars are required to fund the development</li> <li>Exception of pre-development funds that we have spent to execute the project; Those dollars will come back to the church through the project</li> <li>Ground lease of the land plots that will be used; No land is being sold</li> <li>Multiple streams of income secured for Atlanta First for years to come</li> <li>Historic Sanctuary Building remains intact, in its current location, with funding for renovations  Limited access to Sanctuary during the building process</li> </ul>



# "GOD HEALS THE BROKENHEARTED AND BANDAGES THEIR WOUNDS. GOD COUNTS THE STARS BY NUMBER, GIVING EACH ONE A NAME." — PSALM 147:3-4, CEB

"Black History Month is with us because, for a variety of reasons, Black history has been ignored, revised or distorted too often in our history books. We find it difficult to explore honestly the reasons a study of Black history makes so many of us uncomfortable," the Rev. Gilbert Caldwell, a civil rights pioneer who died September 4, 2020, wrote in a UM News Service commentary a few years ago.

"We know it is essential to be historically correct about the issues in England that energized the efforts that established the United States," he said. "We understand Israel exists in the main because of the history of the oppression of the Jewish people. However, there is difficulty for some people in admitting the existence of American slavery made necessary the abolition movement, and the reality of racial segregation provoked and evoked the U.S. civil rights movement."

If we do not remember accurately the negatives of the past, Caldwell said, we may repeat them. "Failure to remember the negatives deprives us of the opportunity to celebrate the magnificent progress we have made as a nation since slavery and legal racial segregation," he explained.

February is Black History Month, a time to celebrate the vital roles of African Americans in the development of the United States. Recognizing those roles from a historical perspective is an important step in noting the contributions of individuals and the collective changes by the African American community.

Adapted from "Black History Month," Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference website.

#### **OFFERTORY PRAYER:**

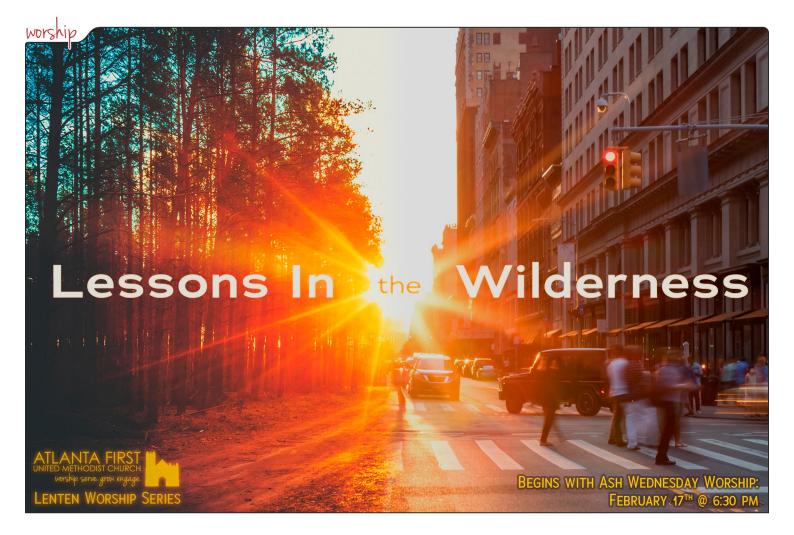
Loving God, you love us and call each of us by name. May we honor the rich legacy of our African-American family in faith. In your name, we pray. Amen.





Are you over the pandemic, stress, and worry about the future? Dreaming of a safe post-COVID change of scenery? Anxious about when mask-wearing, physical distancing, and constant health worries will end? Do you yearn for a chance to visit with family and friends? This restlessness is not new. On Sundays, February 7 and 14, we will explore how God helps us through restlessness and keeps us focused on the future with hope! Let's worship together as we refuel for the days ahead.

# Live Online Worship: Sundays, February 7<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> @ 11 am



Do you ever feel like you're wandering in the wilderness, not sure of where to go or what to do? You are not alone. In fact, the Lenten season — a season that prepares us to celebrate Easter — is based in the 40 years that the people in the Old Testament wondered in the wilderness and the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness. Wilderness times can challenge us, teach us, prepare us, and deliver us!

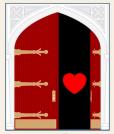
Our Lessons in the Wilderness series kicks off on Ash Wednesday, February 17 with worship at 6:30 pm. Each Ash Wednesday, we worship together to mark the beginning of the Lenten Season, one of the holiest season's of the year for the people called Christian. Ash Wednesday has two purposes: to remind us that we belong to God as we confront our mortality and to help us confess our sin before God within our community of faith. Ash Wednesday is the beginning of the Lenten season during which we prepare to celebrate Easter. But, before we get to Easter, we must prepare ourselves — heart, mind, and soul. Focusing on what the "wilderness" can teach us will help us to focus on God, how to survive the wilderness, and how to be ready to emerge into abundant life!

Ash Wednesday Live Online Worship:

February 17th @ 6:30 pm

Lenten Season Live Online Worship:

Sundays @ 11 am







While we are currently unable to gather in the sanctuary, there are still ways to be the hands and feet of Christ in the city. Donations for our *Keep Atlanta Warm* drive are desperately needed for our next Friends at the Front Door outreach on Tuesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, at 2pm. You can mail your donations to the address listed in our *Keep Atlanta Warm* ad, or support through a monetary donation. A gift of \$15 helps provide toiletries and a gift of \$8 helps to provide a meal. Please see the *Serve Through Giving* ad for details on how to give.

For more information and ideas on how you can support the Atlanta First serve ministries during the current crisis, please contact Mary Jackson, our serve Team Lead, at serve@atlantafirstumc.org.

KEEP ATLANTA WARM

#keepATLwarm

PLEASE DONATE:
HATS \*\* SCARVES
GLOVES \*\* EARMUFFS
SOCKS \*\* BLANKETS
HAND WARMERS
BACK PACKS
EMERGENCY SLEEPING BAGS

Please Mail Donations to: Atlanta First UMC - Packages 2020 Howell Mill Road NW Suite D-339 Atlanta, GA 30318-1732

give

# serve Through Giving

We are a church that makes a difference and gives ourselves away. We do not have to do this. We get to do this! We get to do this because of people like you who generously invest financially to this incredible mission. We want to thank you for your generous support of the ministries of Atlanta First!

Your giving directly changes lives of those in this city whom God has entrusted to our care. Thank you for prayerfully considering how you can make a huge difference!

Please scan the QR code below, or visit our website at AtlantaFirstUMC.org/give.

You can give with CashApp, at \$AtlantaFirstUMC, or scan the CashApp code below.

You can also Text-to-Give with your smart phone by texting "1" to 833-675-0154.

CashApp Code:



Online Giving QR:



GIVE UNICOR
United Methodist Committee On Relief

# MARCH 14<sup>TH</sup> IS UMCOR SUNDAY

When disaster strikes around the globe—Haiti's 2010 earthquake or Typhoon Haiyan in 2013—so many watching the drama unfold on our living room televisions feel entirely helpless. How could any one person make a difference in the wake of such widespread devastation? As responders around the globe scramble to help survivors, the United Methodist Committee on Relief, UMCOR, is prepared to act.

Since 1940, when UMCOR's forerunner was established to meet the needs of those suffering overseas at the onset of World War II, we've continued to respond to those in desperate need—today in more than eighty countries around the world. The response of UMCOR isn't something "they" do, it's something we do.

When you give, you equip Christ's body to serve in his name. That's because your generous giving to UMCOR is what allows us to act as the arms and legs of Christ's church, moving toward the most vulnerable in their darkest days.

UMCOR Sunday is March 14<sup>th</sup>. Please consider sharing a gift to support this vital ministry. You can give through any of Atlanta First's giving channels, marking your gift for "UMCOR."



2020 was a difficult year for all of us. A year of disappointments, loss and uncertainty. The pandemic has highlighted inequalities in our community and has made hunger and homelessness a bigger threat. It was also a year of great creativity and generosity. All of our partners stepped up to the plate, adapting to these unique times to ensure our neighbors are well-cared for. With your help, we provided over \$1,000,000 in assistance in 2020! Your faithful prayers, creative involvement, and financial gifts made it possible. **Thank you!** 

Click Here to Donate to MAC (PayPal)

#### Notecards for MAC

Notecards are one of the best tools we have to stay connected to our clients. We send dozens of cards every week to clients, and we are looking for volunteers to help us write notes. This could be a great service project for an individual or a small group! Please email ciara@midtownassistancecenter.org for more information

grow

# Virtual Time of Prayer Tuesday Nights @ 6:30 pm

You are invited to join us, weekly on Tuesdays at 6:30 pm, for a time of virtual intentional prayer together. You can call in or login on your smartphone, tablet, or computer once a week to pray together. A congregation that prays together is a strong, fortified, and faithful congregation that can endure anything! The prayer time will be hosted in ZOOM (see below). If you have any prayer concerns or praises, you may send them to prayer@atlantafirstumc.org.

Virtual Time of Prayer ZOOM Information:

Meeting ID: 820 2929 0243 Passcode: 0360

Click here to join the meeting.

Or join through the ZOOM app with the credentials above.

Or join by phone, with the credentials above, by calling either phone number below:

646-876-9923 or 312-626-6799

grow

# Winter 2021 Sunday School: Adult Bible Studies - Hope

During this time of social-distancing, we have a single, combined online Sunday School class that meets through ZOOM. Participants can use video conferencing or call in through their phone. Pastor Jasmine leads the class, and we encourage everyone to participate!

Study for Winter 2021 - Adult Bibles Studies: Hope



This series calls us to consider the Incarnation and what it means that God sent Jesus into the world in human form, as one of us. Thus, the lessons invite us to think about the relationship God wants to have with us and how God's sending Jesus makes that relationship possible. The study is hosted online in ZOOM, Sunday mornings at 9:45 am.

The Adult Bible Studies: Hope book is available for purchase online: Click Here to Order from Cokesbury.

\*NOTE: The ZOOM meeting hosting the class has a password. There is a new ZOOM login link, so please contact our grow ministry at grow@atlantafirstumc.org to receive an updated invitation with the link to the meeting, phone number, and the password.

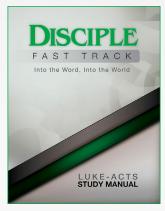
Classes do not meet on 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays of the month.

grov

# Disciple Fast Track Winter 2021: Luke & Acts

Disciple Fast Track is ideal for busy people who want to fit an in-depth Bible study into their schedule. This 12-week study will immerse you in the books of Luke and Acts. Pastor Jasmine will lead this class. Classes will meet Tuesday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30 pm in ZOOM.

Please send an e-mail to grow@atlantafirstumc.org to sign up and receive the ZOOM link.



Click Here to order the study e-book from Amazon.







The engage Team invites you to get involved in the fight against COVID-19 in Atlanta: by making reusable face masks and collecting hand sanitizer! We are seeking volunteers who want to donate their sewing skills, time, or monetary contributions to this effort. We are in need of more masks to hand out at our Friends at the Front Door ministry, as the number of COVID-19 cases continue to rise.

To sign up to learn more, please fill out this form:

https://forms.gle/4dknc7v1ge8EnbkYA

Or you may email Erin Martin, our engage Team Lead: engage@atlantafirstumc.org.

engage

Atlanta First

Mobile App for

Android & Apple!



\*New for February!\* - Check out our daily devotional videos, recorded by members of Atlanta First!

Atlanta First has a mobile app! Now it is easier than ever to have information about how you can worship, serve, grow, and engage right at your fingertips. In addition to up-to-the-minute information, the app will also include recorded videos (such as worship videos, Thursday Thoughts, and concert series). The biggest reason to download the app? We'll be launching "app exclusives," such as mini-movies, sermon addons, and devotionals, that can only be accessed via the app. The app is now available for download for both Apple and Android devices! Click the link below to download:

https://a3a.me/atlantafirstunitedmethodist

# **Prayer List**

We would like to pray with you and for you. Please share your prayer needs with us at prayer@atlantafirstumc.org.

### Sympathy -

With the sure and certain hope of the resurrection, we extend our deep sympathy to Alisa and Arwin Smallwood and Family. Alisa's mother, Gerelene Mayfield, died on Sunday, December  $6^{th}$ , 2020.

With the sure and certain hope of the Resurrection, we give thanks for the life of Mr. Ross Lane, who died on Saturday, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021. We extend our deep Christian sympathy to Bonnie and the Lane Family. Our gratitude for Ross' deep commitment to God, the Atlanta First United Methodist Church, the St. Andrew Sunday School Class, his community through SafeHouse and more, extends deep and wide, and we will miss him.

With the sure and certain hope of the Resurrection, we extend our deep Christian sympathy to Robert Jones and family. Robert's grandmother, Larita Grant, died on Tuesday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021, in Savannah, Georgia.

——————————————————————————————————————				
Pastor Jasmine & Family	Mattie Brock	Barbara Fruit	Rev. Dr. Jacqui Rose-Tucker	
Atlanta First	Beverly Bush	Claudia Harris	Les Scarborough	
Atlanta First Staff	Virginia Cathcart	Dr. Helen Jin Kim	Gerald Stacy	
Atlanta First Staff	Hubert Davis	Bonnie Lane		
Atlanta First Shut-Ins	Marlee Franklin	Rev. Ed and Ann Nelson	Dorothy Ann Turnipseed	
The Adams-Williams Family	Dot Fraser	Lisa Peterson	Rev. Hulda Wilson	

### Extended Church Family and Friends

All who are affected by Carl B. Fairchild the COVID19 Pandemic Friend of Jeanne Spencer

Healing for our Nation

Edward Bean

Grandson of Dallas Terrell

Mary Jim Black

Mother of Miriam Smith

Pamela Datcher

Sister of Dr. Jacqui Rose-Tucker

Joyce Essein Friend of Dr. Jacqui Rose-Tucker Barry Fraser Son of Dot Fraser

Tonia Freeman Rosa Freeman's Sister

Bishop Sue Haupert-Johnson Resident Bishop

Ruth Jackson Mother of Sandra Jackson

Dr. Michael T. McQueen
District Superintendent

Tommye & Keith Miller Friends of Jeanne Spencer

Anthony Smallwood Brother-In-Law of Alisa Smallwood

> The Stotler Family Missionaries

Meredith Tarantino Friend of Jeanne Spencer

Lynn Weller Relative of Natalie Smith

Drs. Anne and Ed Wimberly Cousins of Mary Jackson

# Active Duty Military & First Responders

MSgt. Logan Cathcart Grandson of Virginia Cathcart MSgt. Scott Cathcart Son of Virginia Cathcart

All active-duty military who are currently deployed, and their families.

#### Happy Birthday in February! Happy Birthday in March! 8 Ruth Richardson 24 Iman Waiswa 3 Dana Lyles 14 Steve Skinner Mattie Brock 26 Hubert Davis 5 Carol Colly 21 Rosa Freeman **Dorothy Chandler** 28 Marlee Franklin 6 Emma Sanchez 22 Dallas Terrell Anthony Hardy Alicia Cathcart 27 Jacquelyn Banks 21 Wally Colly Kevin Bell 31 Raina Smallwood Please make certain we have your birth date! Justin Smallwood Call or email the Church Office, or include it on 11 Aimee Caswell your connect & engage card during worship.

# Media & Online Worship



#### Live-Stream - AtlantaFirstUMC.org/live

If you are unable to join us in person for worship, please join us online through the link above! All of our worship services are live-streamed through our YouTube channel and Facebook page. Be sure to subscribe to our YouTube channel to see all of our latest videos and to be alerted when our streams start! Our YouTube channel is found at: YouTube.com/AtlantaFirstUMC

#### Video Archive - AtlantaFirstUMC.org/videos



Visit here to see the archive of all of our worship and sermon videos, as well as videos of concerts and other special events.

#### Sermon Archive - AtlantaFirstUMC.org/sermons

Did you miss a Sunday during the "Life Matters" worship series or do you want to hear Pastor Jasmine's sermons from "The Gospel According to Mr. Rogers" again? Here you will find previously recorded sermons in videos, .mp3 audio downloads, and podcast audio streams.











## Podcasts - AtlantaFirstUMC.org/podcasts

Audio podcasts of our Pastors' sermons and other recordings are available here. There you will also find links to subscribe to our podcasts on Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify, and through an RRS feed. Also, check out: Bishop Sue's Podcast - https://pod.link/1485744526

# Giving - AtlantaFirstUMC.org/give

We are a church that makes a difference and gives ourselves away. We do not have to do this. We get to do this! We get to do this because of people like you who generously invest financially to this incredible mission. We want to thank you for your generous support of the ministries of Atlanta First! Your gifts help make worship, serve, grow, engage, at Atlanta First a reality!





Your giving directly changes lives of those in this city whom God has entrusted to our care. Thank you for prayerfully considering how you can make a huge difference! Please scan the QR code to the left or visit our website at AtlantaFirstUMC.org/give.

You can also give through CashApp, at \$AtlantaFirstUMC, or by scanning the CashApp code. You can also Text-to-Give by texting "1" to 833-675-0154.



Amazon Smile will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible purchases to Atlanta First. To choose Atlanta First as your donation recipient, go to: smile.amazon.com/ch/58-0600848

You can also directly support Atlanta First Missions by purchasing needed supplies from our Amazon Smile donation list: smile.amazon.com/hz/charitylist/ls/2VLKWYPS8Z5HS

# Contact

If you would like to subscribe to our e-mail list to receive weekly "Thursday Thoughts" message and other important church announcements, please send a note to: subscribe@atlantafirstumc.org.

Rev. Jasmine R. Smothers - Lead Pastor

Rev. Dr. Nancy Long, LPC, LMFT - Pastoral Counselor

Dixie Scruggs - Ministry Intern

Christopher Bryant - Director of Worship and Music

Jennifer Graham - Executive Assistant to the Pastor

Jeanne Spencer - Events and Operations Coordinator

Steven Colly - Communications & Media

pastor@atlantafirstumc.org counseling@atlantafirstumc.org dixie@atlantafirstumc.org christopher@atlantafirstumc.org jennifer@atlantafirstumc.org jeanne@atlantafirstumc.org steven@atlantafirstumc.org

Have any questions or comments about how to worskip, serve, grow or ergage here at Atlanta First? Contact us at:
worship@atlantafirstumc.org • serve@atlantafirstumc.org • grow@atlantafirstumc.org • engage@atlantafirstumc.org

Atlanta First UMC Office: 404-524-6614

24/7 Pastoral Care Line: 404-446-3777

Have any prayer concerns? Let us pray with you and for you: prayer@atlantafirstumc.org



