ASHLAND UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

"Ashland United Methodist Church develops disciples of Jesus Christ who care for one another and serve our communities."

December 2026

2600 Ashland Rd
Columbia, SC 29210
ashlandumc.org

The Rev. Jonathan Harris, Pastor
pastor@ashlandumc.org
Phone Ext. 15

Office Hours: M-Th: 8 am-3:30 pm

Telephone: (803) 798-5350

The Path: 8:45 AM Traditional: 11:00 AM Sunday School: 10:00 AM

In Advent, we not only remember when Jesus entered the world as a small child; we also look ahead to the second Advent, when Christ returns and his kingdom is fulfilled. A great way to look ahead to Christ's kingdom is to work towards that fulfillment together as we bring hope to the hopeless, shine light in the darkness, and enact love and healing–even here and now!

A few months ago, Doreen and Kinsey Jenkins approached me about doing a medical debt relief campaign. They remembered me mentioning a previous church I served that had partnered with the nonprofit Undue Medical Debt to forgive more than $4.8 million in medical bills for more than 5,300 South Carolina residents. Given that residents in Lexington and Richland counties have more than $31 million in medical debts, how could this work?

When people get sick and accumulate medical bills they do not have the means to pay, medical providers will often sell those debts for pennies on the dollar to debt collection companies. For example, if someone owes $10,000, a hospital might sell the debt to a collector for $200, which allows the hospital to get the debt off of their books. The debt collector then tries to get as much money as possible from the patient; anything over $200 is profit.

Like a debt collector, Undue Medical Debt purchases medical debts from hospitals for pennies on the dollar. The difference is that they then forgive those debts, rather than collecting them. Every dollar raised allows Undue Medical Debt to purchase and forgive about $100 in debts!

I encourage you to participate in this Advent campaign, which we've named "Hope is on the Way." The Searchers class has already committed $10,000, which will forgive $1 million in medical debts for our neighbors! Whether you give or simply spread the word to friends, neighbors, and others, reaching our goal of $25,000 would forgive about $2.5 million in debts!

I leave you with a quote from two people I actually know who had their debts forgiven through the previous campaign I participated in:

"I was pleasantly surprised when I found a letter from Undue Medical Debt in my mailbox. Like many, I ignored my debt because the cost was too much in the face of greater priorities. It was easier just to resign [myself] to the idea that it would never be paid."

"I received a medical bill in the mail on Saturday, and I didn't open it, because who wants to see what I owe right now in the midst of everything else. My friend opened it by accident thinking it was theirs; it was an undue bill saying that the church had covered my debt!!!! I HAD NO WORDS. Thank you to everyone who was involved, you touched my life…."

At the first Advent long ago, hope was on the way in the person of Jesus Christ. This Advent, let's remind our community once more that hope is on the way!

In Christ, Pastor Jonathan

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GIVING GARLAND

Angel Ornaments for gift cards in Narthex and Ashland Hall
November 29 – December 20
Gifts due by December 20

Christmas with Epworth Children's Home
WALMART & TARGET gift cards
Christmas with Family Promise
WALMART & TARGET gift cards

Return gift cards on Sunday mornings
or
deliver gift cards to the church office during the week.

Monetary Gifts
By check to Ashland UMC and marked
"Christmas with Epworth" or "Family Promise"
OR
E-giving at http://www.ashlandumc.org/egiving

Ashland Children Music & Education (ACME)
United Methodist Youth Fellowship (UMYF)
Schedule for November and December

November 20-22 – Immerse Retreat 2026 at Asbury Hills
November 29 – 4:30 PM, ACME & UMYF
December 6 – 4:30 PM, ACME & UMYF
December 13 – 4:30 PM, ACME & UMYF
December 20 – Children & Youth Christmas Celebration
ACME & UMYF on break until January 10

Advent Study starts November 29!

We all know something about Jesus, but who did the gospel writers hope we would understand him to be? Pastor Jonathan will lead a study he wrote, called "What Child Is This?" each Sunday during Advent from 4:30-5:30 p.m. Participants will learn what the gospel writer Matthew intended for us to know about Jesus and explore what that means for how we live as his disciples!

Advent Study – All Are Welcome

4 Sundays in December 10:00 in the Cornerstone Classroom
During the month of December, the Cornerstone class will be exploring " Who Needs Christmas?" by Andy Stanley. These lessons will consist of a video and class discussion. If you do not regularly attend a class or if you do have a class but want to participate in this Advent study, you are invited!
Please let Sally Lowery know if you plan to attend so a spot can be reserved for you.

Peanut Butter for Snack Packs

126 Jars of Peanut Butter!

Thanks to the generosity of Ashland UMC, every snack pack for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays will contain extra items, including a jar of peanut butter. Ashland faithfully provides snack packs to children in need at Seven Oaks Elementary School every weekend. It is important to add extra food items for holidays when the children will not receive meals at school. Ashland makes this possible.

Thank you! Val Songer, Snack Pack Coordinator

Sharing God's Love Donation Box

One of the missions Ashland UMC supports is Sharing God's Love. This ministry positively impacts many needy folks in our community. There is a large wooden box in the corner of the hallway near the Cornerstone class for you to share your donations of canned goods and clothing. You can also deliver your donations directly to Sharing God's Love at 147 Friarsgate Blvd in Irmo from 9-12 noon Monday-Saturday. Volunteers will even unload your car for you! You can go to the SGL website at sharinggodslove.net to see specific items that are accepted. Thank you for blessing others with your donations.

Advent Medical Debt Relief Campaign: Hope is on the Way

When Jesus entered the world in the form of a small child, hardly anyone could have dreamed of the impact he would have as he healed the sick, forgave the guilty, restored relationships, and shone light in the darkness. But hope was on the way!

This Advent, let's show our neighbors that hope is on the way once again! Residents in Lexington and Richland counties currently owe more than $31 million in unpaid medical bills. In partnership with the non-profit Undue Medical Debt, raising our goal of $25,000 would allow us to purchase and forgive roughly $2.5 million of those eligible unpaid medical bills!

You may place a check in the offering plate, or you may mail a check to the church office between now and January 3, 2027. Please write "Medical Debt" in the memo line.

Recognition for Jim Dennis

Jim Dennis and his crew with Midlands Maintenance have been our custodial crew at Ashland since Tom Wilkinson first brought them on in December of 2013! In October 2026, Jim notified us that he would be retiring and would no longer be able to continue his work at Ashland. As a testament of his dedication to his craft as well as his clients, Jim 'set the stage' by finding a suitable replacement willing to take on his client portfolio while honoring current pricing and retaining his current staff. We would like to thank Jim for his 23 years of service to maintain our campus and serve our congregation. Please consider writing a note out to Jim to thank him for his service to Ashland and wish him well in retirement. Cards may be left with Maria by Monday, November 30th. We are looking for a date in December to see if Jim can attend one of our services so that he can be recognized and presented with the well wishes and cards.

5th Sunday Brunch

November 29th, 10:00 AM, Ashland Hall
Bring your favorite brunch item to share and
non-perishable items for the Blessing Box.

Saturday, December 5, 10:00 AM

Join us in decorating the Ashland campus and Chrismon trees.

Christmas Eve Service

December 24, 5:00 PM

Ashland United Methodist Church
2600 Ashland Rd
Columbia, SC 29210

NON-PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT No. 18
IRMO SC 29063

Remember in Prayer

Bob Markland and family
Lynda Mixon and family

For Pastoral Care after hours:

Rev. Jonathan Harris
(864) 952-9043