



ASHLAND UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Joining Together on a Christian Journey of Love and Service

May 2026

2600 Ashland Rd
Columbia, SC 29210
ashlandumc.org

The Rev. Jonathan Harris, Pastor

pastor@ashlandumc.org

Phone Ext. 15

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

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

Telephone: (803) 798-5350

Ashland family,

As I shared in last month's newsletter and at Ashland's most recent Church Council meeting on March 31, I have begun working with leaders to discern and craft a mission statement to guide our ministry and decision-making together in the days and years to come. The purpose of defining our mission—our shared understanding of what we believe God has ultimately called us to accomplish together for the sake of God's kingdom—is so that we can then align all that we do in an intentional and strategic way toward fulfilling that mission. Clarifying our collective understanding of what God has ultimately called us to accomplish (as well as what God has not called us to accomplish!) can then provide clarity for decisions like...

How do we organize our structures for mission and ministry?

Since we can't do everything, how do we decide which mission opportunities to pursue, and which ones not to pursue?

What should the preacher preach about, and how should he/she preach?

By what criteria will we evaluate whether a church event was successful or not?

The following is the starting point for a mission statement that I shared with Church Council after some initial feedback from Kim Crutchfield (Church Council chairperson), Marilyn Gramling (Lay Leader), and Craig Hatch (Staff-Parish chairperson): **"Ashland UMC makes and grows disciples who care for one another and serve the St. Andrews community."**

Members of Church Council have begun getting feedback on this starting point from the committees they lead, as well as the Sunday school classes they attend. The most common feedback I have received so far is:

- We need to specify that we are making disciples of Jesus Christ.
- How to best define the community we are called to serve that is broad enough to include all the ways Ashland is already serving, while being narrow enough to provide clarity?

Whether or not you are part of a Sunday school class or church committee, your input is important to me! If you have not already shared feedback in a meeting or class, I encourage you to send me responses to the following prompts at pastor@ashlandumc.org by May 19:

(continued on page 2)

Maria Anderson
office@ashlandumc.org
ext. 10

Ken Corbett
finance@ashlandumc.org
ext. 13

Robert Neese
music@ashlandumc.org
ext. 11

Brittany Staples
youthministries@ashlandumc.org

Kyle Staples
technology@ashlandumc.org

Epworth Children's Home

On May 10th, we will receive the Annual Epworth Mother's Day Offering to help provide loving care, safety, and services for the children, youth and families served by Epworth through all of its programs. This offering is our opportunity to support this vital ministry. For more information about Epworth, visit them on line at www.epworthsc.org. Checks may be made to Ashland UMC and noted for Epworth Children's Home or you may make a donation on the Ashland website.

**Covered Dish Dinner
followed by
Pantasia Steel Band Ensemble
Friday, May 1st, 6:00 PM
(Pull out your Hawaiian attire!)**

Ashland Seniors At Play (ASAP) SAVE THE DATE

"Summer Camp"

Friday, June 12th, 11:30 AM

Hot dogs, hamburgers, and much more.

Special entertainment.

Sign-up begins May 17th, in SS Classes,

Sunday bulletins

and by calling church office

(803) 798-5350, x 10



VBS

June 15-19 – 9:00 AM-Noon

Registration forms are outside

Ashland Hall and the Narthex

(Pastor Jonathan's article continued from page 1)

- In the proposed mission statement, which particular words most reflect your understanding of Ashland's values and aspirations?
- What (if any) values or aspirations do you have for Ashland that are not clearly reflected in the proposed mission statement?
- What criteria are most important to you in deciding which mission opportunities to pursue or not pursue (e.g., geography, size of impact, type of impact, etc.)?

At our next Church Council meeting on May 26, I will share the feedback I received and work with the Council to adopt a mission statement that reflects the heart of our collective understanding of what God is calling us to ultimately accomplish together for the sake of God's kingdom.

I celebrate the ways God continues to be at work through Ashland! Thank you for the unique gifts and graces you contribute within this particular expression of the Body of Christ!

In Christ,

Pastor Jonathan

Ashland Children/Youth Activities

We have been having fun during children's music time each Sunday. The kids have been learning about keeping a steady beat, the difference between piano and forte, working together, the names of instruments, and the importance of good posture when singing. They have enjoyed learning several songs including "The Fruits of the Spirit", "He is the King", "Marching in the Light of God", and "Praise Ye the Lord." The kids have been working hard on preparing a song to sing during service.

Marissa

Ashland Readers

The next meeting of Ashland Readers will be Sunday, May 17, 2026, at 3:00 in Room 111. Below are the upcoming books:

May 17, 2026: Broken Country, by Clare Leslie Hall

June 28, 2026: Isola, by Allegra Goodman

July, 2026: No meeting

Snack Pack Update

We near the end of Ashland's TENTH year of providing snack packs to children at Seven Oaks Elementary School. The need for snack packs is greater than ever. We now deliver 70 snack packs per week!

Ashland supports this mission by donations of funds and food items and by volunteering to pack and deliver snack packs. Shepherd's Center selected Snack Packs as its community service project for the spring term; we greatly appreciate their support.

We will add extra food items in the year-end snack packs. Plus, we are already planning to provide snack packs for the 2026-27 school year. If you would like to help fund the snack pack program, mark your donation for Missions - Snack Packs.

Thank you, Ashland!

Val Songer, Snack Pack Coordinator

Giving (more than) a Tenth to Missions!

Ashland was founded on a belief that at least a tenth of the church's expenditures should go towards missions. Through the end of March 2026, Ashland had spent \$18,885 of its total expenditures of \$121,604 on missions! That's **16 percent** of Ashland's total expenses, which have gone toward missions like Sharing God's Love, Epworth, Snack Packs, local utility assistance, and shared United Methodist missions like Africa University, college scholarships, and UMCOR. Way to go, and keep up the good work!

English as a Second Language (ESL) Family Literacy Night

Our ESL families had a great time at our "Earth Day Celebration" Family Literacy Night on April 13. We began the night by eating "Crockpot Lasagne", garlic bread and salad. After dinner, we read the book, Thank You, Earth together. It was filled with beautiful photographs of our amazing earth! Then, we did a craft project where we painted an earth and glued on hands and a heart to give it a "hug". Next, we made some "Flower Bombs" from recycled paper pulp and wildflower seeds. These can be planted as a way to beautify our earth! We ended the night learning about things we can recycle instead of throw away, and had a recycling relay race. Fun was had by all! ~Heidi Santos

Thank You

Dear Church Family,

I want to express my deepest gratitude for the prayers, cards, and phone calls you shared with me during my recently hospitalization.

Your kindness lifted my spirits more than you know, and I felt surrounded by love every step of the way.

I am grateful for each of you and for the strength your support has given me as I continue to heal.

With heartfelt appreciation, Mary Lightsey

To my friends at Ashland,

As I close this chapter of my life, I want to express my sincere gratitude to each of you. After 20 wonderful years, I feel both joyful for the memories we've made and sad to say goodbye.

Throughout my time at Ashland, I have been fortunate to have the support of church members and staff. Your friendship, encouragement, and shared laughter have made every day a joy to come to work. Each one of you has contributed to my journey in meaningful ways, and I cherish the moments we've spent together.

As I begin this new phase, I treasure countless memories. I look forward to new adventures, but will always fondly remember my time here and the incredible people involved.

Thank you for the laughter, the support, and the countless acts of kindness. I hope to stay in touch and hear about all the wonderful accomplishments that lie ahead for each of you and Ashland.

Blessings, Karen Zobel

Dear Ashland Family,

Many thanks for my 20 years celebration here at Ashland UMC! Coming here each day fulfills God's ministry for me! The bag of goodies and other remembrances are special. Looking forward to continuing my ministry with all of you.

Blessings, Maria

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