



ALDERSGATE ADVOCATE

December 2022

MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR:

Pastor's Letter for December 2022

There is a story about a small boy bitterly disappointed at not being cast as Joseph in the school Nativity play. He was given the minor role of the innkeeper instead, and throughout the weeks of rehearsal, he brooded on how he could avenge himself on his successful rival. On the day of the performance, Joseph and Mary knocked on the inn's door. The innkeeper opened it a fraction and eyed them coldly. "Can you give us board and lodging for the night?" pleaded Joseph, who then stood back, awaiting the expected rebuff. But the innkeeper had not pondered all those weeks for nothing. He flung the door wide, beamed excitedly and said, "Come in, come in. You shall have the best room in the hotel!"

Well, we all know that is not exactly what happened in the evening as Mary and Joseph knocked on the door. Caesar ordered everyone in the Roman world to register for the census. Mary and Joseph had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem, which is about 96 miles. She was in her third trimester. As they arrived in Bethlehem finally, there was no guest room available for them. In *Because of Bethlehem*, Max Lucado gives several possible reasons why there was no room. There were a lot of people that gathered in the small town for the census. The innkeeper probably thought that it was a great opportunity to make the best of the opportunity by filling every room and even the floor with mattresses. Or, maybe it was late in the evening when everyone was sleeping.

But what if the innkeeper saw the young couple with great compassion and said, "Gosh... you look like you could go into labor tonight. Why don't you stay in my room? I will go and prepare some warm water for you." While the kid who played the innkeeper had another motivation, what if the innkeeper flung the door wide and embraced Mary and Joseph? We might have a different story in the Gospel of Luke today. Although it is difficult to determine the innkeeper's mind, I wonder if many of us could relate to him. "Our place just happens to be full to capacity. There is no way that I can offer my space to them." Or it could be, "If something happens to them, I cannot be responsible for any of the incidents." We come up with many reasons to say that this couple cannot come in.

Somehow, I see the parallel with our culture today when it comes to the Christmas season. We have so many agendas when Christmas comes to the point that we simply do not have time to stop and ponder the birth of Christ in the world. We buy Christmas gifts for all our family members. We write Christmas cards for our families and friends. We book the flight tickets to travel and see our families. We go to the Christmas party that our boss is hosting. We decorate the house with a Christmas tree and ornaments. While we come up with a long list of "I have to ..." we often find ourselves pushing Mary, Joseph, and the baby to the margin of our priority and tell them, "Sorry, I have no room for you."

But the miracle is that Christ still comes to us, meeting us where we are today. He was still born in the manger surrounded by shepherds, foreign magi, and animals. Just like the innkeeper, we might miss the sacred moment of the birth of Christ, who comes with the message of peace and joy. However, Christ faithfully comes and knocks on the door of our hearts again. "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me" (Revelation 3:20). I pray that we all have a blessed season of Christmas with our families and friends this year. And I also pray that we always have the center of our heart open for Christ as he comes as our savior today.

Pastor Bob

Join Us This Special Advent Season

We hope you can join us, either in-person or remotely, for our special services this Advent season. In-person worship is at 8:30 and 10:45 am each Sunday. The 10:45 service is live-streamed (preceded by church announcements) and a link to the recording is available on the church website (aldersgatehelmsford.com) shortly after the service; live-streams and recordings will include the Silent Night and the 7:00 pm Christmas Eve services. Masks continue to be optional while in the church building and the back several pews are reserved for those who wish to be socially distant.

Christmas Pageant, Sunday, December 18 at 10:45 am

The church school will be presenting this year's Christmas Pageant during the Sunday worship service for the congregation, neighbors, and friends!

Silent Night Service, Thursday, December 15 at 7:00 pm

Join us for this special service in the middle of the busy Christmas season. The service features beautiful scripture, reflections, and music that speaks words of peace and comfort during what can be a time of sadness. You will also have an opportunity to light a candle of hope as we await the coming of Christ, the Light of the World. A brief fellowship reception will follow in the Fellowship Hall.

Christmas Eve

4:00 pm - Family Service

This is an abbreviated worship for wiggly ones!
It will include the retelling of the Christmas story and a time for children.

7:00 pm - Intergenerational Christmas

This service will retell the story of the first Christmas in scripture and carols.
It will conclude with the candle-lit singing of "Silent Night."

10:00 pm - Communion and Candlelight Christmas Eve

This service includes scripture, carols, a Christmas meditation,
Holy Communion in the pews and the candle-lit singing of "Silent Night."

Charge Conference at Noon on December 11

We will be holding a Charge Conference after the second service, around noon, on December 11 to vote whether to approve the proposed 2023 budget. The balancing of the budget needed to be done after the Church Conference on 11/13, once the pledges were received and were compared with the proposed 2023 expenses. The proposed budget includes a 3% pay increase to the church staff. All church members are invited to attend this short meeting – 15 to 30 minutes – to review and vote on the proposed budget.

New Church Web Site

We have moved to a new web site: <https://www.aldersgatehelmsford.com>. It contains links to livestreams and recordings of our Sunday worship services, a calendar of all the church events, and useful information about our ministries and history. The new site will be under construction for a bit, so please be patient as it is built up. Please check it out, watch it grow, and add it to your browser bookmarks!

ADVENT GREETINGS



Our Aldersgate family wishes to extend

to you the opportunity to participate in the giving of a Congregation Gift for the Staff:
Pastor Bob, Betsy, Cheryl O., Cheryl C., Rev Maylis, Sherri, Deana and Mirna.



Aldersgate is truly blessed with a dedicated and talented staff. The Congregation Gift is a wonderful opportunity to share of ourselves and acknowledge our love for their gift to us throughout the year.

If you would like to contribute you may do so by dropping your donation off at the church, mailing it to the church and marking it with a “Staff Gift” note, or giving it to an usher or any member of the SPRC (Roger Whitehead, Marcia Dana, Jay Yang, Dan Ward, Angela Hughes, Jane Vooys, Michelle Mescall, or Ray Brown).

In Christian Love and Spirit,
The Staff Parish Relations Committee

Christmas Faire News

Thank you for supporting our Faire this year. Wreaths and swags have begun decorating homes!

We are looking forward to being together in person this year during the Faire on **Friday, December 2, 1:00 – 8:00 pm** and **Saturday, December 3, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm**. It will include any remaining wreaths and swags as well as baked goods, craft items, centerpieces, knitting items, collectibles. And the kitchen and dining area returns this year! Join us for some traditional fun and fellowship!

Visit the Fellowship Hall on Sunday December 4th. The remaining Faire items will be available for purchase. Thank you for a wonderful event and beautiful gifts shared and consumed this year.

The Faire Elves are grateful for the blessings we create together.

Christmas Poinsettias

Once again we will decorate our sanctuary at Christmas Eve with five beautiful large poinsettias.

We are again inviting people to make a donation toward the cost of the poinsettias in celebration of someone or in memory of a loved one (suggested donation of \$10). There is a form on the welcome desk that you can fill out and either put in the offering plate or mail to the office. You can also call the church office and leave a message for Betsy. She will also include the form in the Worship email.

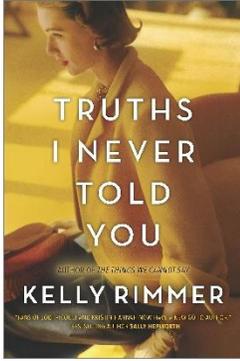
We will include the names in a printed attachment to the Christmas Eve service and will show the names on the video during part of the recorded service, if possible. We want to honor each family's preference...so please indicate your preference on the form as well.

If you are interested in providing a home for one of the large poinsettias after Christmas Eve, please let the office know. We will make them available on a first-come basis.

Deadline for Poinsettias will be on December 18th



Book Club in the Concord Room and on Zoom



December Book club will meet in person and on Zoom on Tuesday night Jan. 3 – Ken's pick - Truths I Never Told You by Kelly Rimmer
We also will have a recurring Zoom link for those who would like to join us from home. We have new technology that allows for good sound and video in the Zoom call. We would love to have you join us.

Future picks:

Jan 31 - Deb's pick – “The Nature of Fragile Things” by Susan Meissner

Feb 28 - Judy's pick – “The Book of Lost Friends” by Lisa Wingate

March 28 – Liz’s pick – “The Book of Two Ways” by Jodi Picoult

April 25th – Betsy’s pick – “The Fallen Angels Book Club” by R. Franklin James

Single Ladies Dining Out

Singles Ladies Dining Out will have dinner on December 17th at 1 pm at 110 Grill in Chelmsford.

If you are a single lady and would enjoy an evening out, we would love to have you join us. Please RSVP by Thursday Dec. 15th to Betsy at aldersgatechelmsford@verizon.net. Or 978-256-9400

Nobo 11/19



Women’s Daytimers Breakfast Club

We meet once a month, Friday mornings at 10 am at a local restaurant for breakfast and socializing. Please contact Chantale Shepard at 978-250-9573 for more details or if you are interested in being added to the email list. We welcome new members!

ADULT EDUCATION...

Advent Study

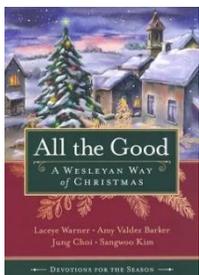
Our Advent study this season is *All the Good: A Wesleyan Way of Christmas* by Lacey Warner, Amy Valdez Barker, Jung Choi, and Sangwoo Kim.

You are welcome to join us when it is best for you:

Thursdays 10:00 AM in the Concord room and on Zoom.

Sundays at 9:45 AM in the Concord room and on Zoom.

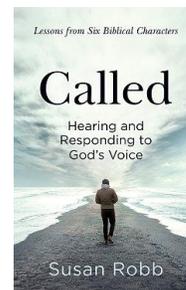
Books may be purchased online or you can find a copy in the library.



Beginning in January

The Sunday morning Adult class' next study is *Called: Hearing and Responding to God's Voice* by Susan Robb.

Grab a book at your local book seller or put it on your Christmas wish list.



Read the Bible in the New Year!

Would you like to read the entire Bible? Join our private Facebook group! This is a great way to read the Bible consistently, with group encouragement and flexible participation to suit your schedule. Each week a post will provide the passages to read and one question to contemplate. You can share your reflections in the comment section or not, at your discretion. Occasional in person or Zoom gatherings may be held to talk about our progress and what we are learning. We are using *The Bible Year* by Magrey Devega as our guide, but this group will have rolling participation structure. We are currently in the middle of Job and headed to the Psalms. We will read through Revelation and continue on to Genesis. We will read until everyone who wishes to has completed reading every book. Questions? See Kim Ward. Click here to join the group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1681533592241078>



The Violet Hopkins Library is OPEN!



More than 863 items are available to you in the library located in the basement. Simply write your name on the card located in the back of the item of your choice, then leave the card in the green floral box on the shelf. If there isn't a card already in the back of the book, there are extras available in the green floral box. Add the title of the item to the top of the card and your name and enjoy! Recommendations are enthusiastically provided by the members of the Adult Education Committee. See Suzanne Hevelone, Charles McCrea, Kathy Mireault, Cheryl Ortoff, Bob Peterson, Debbie Smyton, Kim Ward, or Pastor Bob.



OUTREACH...

A Big Thank You from Outreach

Thank you all for your donations to the Thanksgiving Baskets. We delivered 47 baskets this year to families in need. We could not have done that without you!

Santa Giving Tree

The Chelmsford Santa Giving Tree is be up in the entrance way. Tags are hung on the tree for your selections. Christmas gifts are due by Sunday **December 11**.

Thank you for helping create a better holiday for local families who need some assistance. God is Good, all the time.

Hats, Gloves, Mittens, Socks, and Toiletries for St. Paul's

Outreach will be collecting items for St. Paul's by the **18th of December**. Please bring in hats, gloves, mittens, socks, and mittens as well as toiletries.

From St. Paul's Soup Kitchen

Dear Aldersgate UMC

We are so glad to have you as a vital part of our organization! We are so grateful for the devotion you share for our organization through your service and your generous donation of \$2,000.00 that continues to keep St. Paul's Soup Kitchen going.

As you know, needy families and individuals in our community go without proper food, shelter, and essential medical care every day due to a variety of factors including low wages, job loss, injuries, illness, age, domestic violence and divorce.

With the generous support of people like you, we will be able to help many of these families and individuals by meeting an essential daily need by providing meals from St. Paul's Soup Kitchen.

For more information on how your donation is helping to make a difference in the lives of so many in our community, we invite you to visit our website at stpaulssoupkitchen.org or follow our Facebook page at facebook.com/stpaulssoupkitchen/.

Thank you again, and we look forward to your continued support.

Sincerely,

Paula Forest

PS: I simply cannot thank you all enough!! You are all amazing. Thank you!

Landscaping Project

Earlier this month, a team of gardeners met at our church to beautify the area around the sanctuary entrance. First, we raked back the mulch and pulled weeds. Next, we spread a layer of compost and added lime, gypsum, and fertilizer to improve the soil. Finally, we planted pairs of Bluepoint juniper, Goldmop false cypress, Pleasant White azalea and Limelight Prime hydrangea, and replaced the mulch. It was a long day, but we hope the new plants will thrive and make our church entrance more beautiful and inviting for years to come.

Thank you so much to Chris Sargent, Deana Peterson, Jim Ortolfo, Wendy Xu, Jay Turchinetz, Bev Turchinetz, Soo Kim Lee, and Pastor Bob for all your help and hard work! We'd also like to thank Joseph's Landscaping for a delivery of excellent compost at a deep discount. And we are so grateful for a generous donation from a church member towards this project, helping to make it all possible.

Lee Williams



WHAT WOULD JESUS WANT FOR HIS BIRTHDAY?

Just as the Wise Ones traveled great distances to bring precious gifts to the child Jesus, so too, we want to give gifts this Holy season that would make the heart of Jesus glad. Again, this year, we are following the principles of *The Advent Conspiracy*:

- * Worship Fully
- * Spend Less on things people do not need
- * Love all
- * Give more of ourselves, our time, our lives

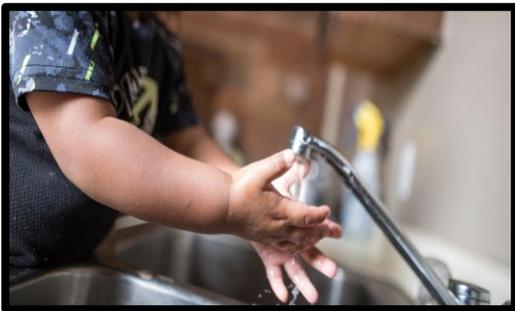
We are encouraging each other to save the money we would have spent on gifts that those we love really don't need, and instead give a life-giving gift that truly matters.

During Advent, our church family has supported many Advent mission projects over the years. This year our council and outreach committee selected DIGDEEP for our Advent Mission Project.

DIGDEEP is a human rights nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring that every American has clean, running water forever. DIGDEEP works with communities through education and advocacy programs as well as water access projects.

Many Americans may take clean water for granted, while millions of our neighbors struggle to get enough clean water to survive. More than 2.2 million Americans still don't have running water or basic plumbing, like a flush toilet. 44 million more don't have clean water that's safe to drink.

DIGDEEP knows that every dollar we invest in their work is hard earned and thoughtfully given, so they commit 100% of every donation to programs that close the Water Gap in the U.S.



For more information about DIGDEEP go to: www.digdeep.org

Please join us in our special giving on “Kings’ Day” – January 8, 2023

On Epiphany, also known as “Kings’ Sunday” - January 8, we will bring our monetary gifts from the savings we have made and will offer them to support our Advent Mission: “DIGDEEP”. Checks may be made payable to AUMC with “DIGDEEP” in the memo.

CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS

Thank you to all the church school families for their donations towards our Thanksgiving baskets. Thank you to the 6th – 12th grade youth that helped put our Thanksgiving boxes together!



Church School Christmas Pageant Sunday, December 18th

The church school will be presenting this year's Christmas Pageant during the 10:45 a.m. worship service for the congregation, neighbors, and friends! Cheryl Ortolf will be visiting the church school classes the next couple of Sundays to sign children and youth up for different parts.

**NO CHURCH SCHOOL ON
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25TH and SUNDAY, JANUARY 1ST
MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

Epiphany Sunday



The Wise Men will visit our church school classes on Sunday, January 8th and will share the story of their journey to find the new king. We will also distribute cupcakes – will you pick the cupcake with a coin in it and be an honorary King for the Day!

YOUTH GROUP NEWS

Junior Youth Events

*This fellowship group is for youth in 5th – 8th grade.
Our mission is to provide your youth with a safe, healthy and loving
environment to help them grow and experience Christianity.
Friends are always welcome!*

Junior Youth Christmas Party!

Friday, December 16th

6:30 – 8:00 p.m. in the Youth Room downstairs

We will have lots of fun playing games, decorating cookies and making a craft. We will also have a Yankee Swap – bring a \$5.00 gift wrapped that is appropriate for either a boy or girl.

Senior Youth Events

*This fellowship group is for youth in grades 9-12. During some events, the 7th & 8th graders will join us.
We are a fun group of youth who celebrate Christ's
presence among us by engaging in community and group activities,
church participation and mission projects.*

Elf Life Lessons

Sunday, December 11th from noon – 1:30 p.m.

We will watch Elf and see what life lessons we discover, please bring money for pizza.

Christmas Party

Sunday, December 18th from noon – 1:30 p.m.

Come join us as we celebrate the coming of Christmas! We will bake cookies, play games and have a yankee swap!

Thank you – Holiday Card Challenge

Thank you everyone who helped make cards for the Holiday Card Challenge for the soldiers overseas. I delivered 215 cards. The cards will be so appreciated.

Susan Lewis

Wonder Women

Is Sponsoring a

HOLIDAY COOKIE WALK



Aldersgate United Methodist Church
Sunday, **December 18th** between
services and after the second service
in Fellowship Hall



Donations will be contributed to the
Advent Mission Program

Make 2 Dozen of your favorite cookies to share`
Drop them off on
Saturday **December 17th** from 3-5pm

Call Susan Lewis to sign up

