



ALDERSGATE ADVOCATE

February 2023

MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR:

“Would You Please Forgive Me?”

A couple of years ago, I got a call from Bishop Jane. “Bob, my husband Jack is really sick.” She and Jack used to attend my former church in Connecticut. When Jane got her call to ministry, Jack fully supported her and followed her in her appointments in Connecticut, New York, and later as a bishop in Pennsylvania. Jack was active in our church, helping with the soup kitchen. He had such passion for racing cars and was a member of the Automobile Historical Society. One day, the men’s group went to a garage full of antique cars, as it was managed by the daughter of a church member. I remember him being so happy, like a child in the candy store, being amazed by all those cars.

I could not believe it when Bishop Jane told me that Jack was dying. His smiles, his passion for cars, his love for the church, and his affection for my two boys. And she told me, “There are some words that my pastor friend encouraged me to say. “I love you. I forgive you. Would you please forgive me?” As Jack was in hospice care, Bishop Jane held his hand and kept whispering to his ears, “I forgive you. Would you forgive me?” Knowing that they were such a wonderful couple, I wondered what things they had to forgive each other. She wanted to make sure that Jack and she would be at peace and be reconciled with each other, as it is God who has reconciled us through Christ.

In *Forgiveness*, Marjorie Thompson insists, “Forgiveness is the healing stream flowing out from the crucified Christ over a world that does not know how desperately it needs the healing.” While our society endorses our tendency not to forgive and retain anger as its reality, it is said that any unresolved conflict can affect us not just emotionally but also physically. Dr. Karen Swartz from the Johns Hopkins Hospital, for example, argues that “Chronic anger puts you into a fight-or-flight mode, which results in numerous changes in heart rate, blood pressure, and immune response” Furthermore, the unresolved anger can lead to depression, heart disease, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other conditions.

For Christians, we forgive one another not just because there are some medical benefits in forgiving and being forgiven, such as reducing stress and improving our health. Instead, God calls us to forgive one another because God is the One who has forgiven us through the radical love of Christ. By being crucified on the cross, Christ has reconciled us to God, therefore calling us righteousness again. Since it is not us but God who has forgiven us first, we are also called to forgive and be reconciled to each other. Therefore, Paul says in Ephesians 4:32, “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.”

During the week, we live in a world surrounded by the news that people retaliate against other people, and nations take revenge for nations. We often think that it is just normal to take what we have lost and strike others as we are struck by them. One day after school, Daniel got into the car and told me, “My friend hit me today, and it really hurts.” Joshua, being only three years old at that time, turned to him and said, “Who is it? Give me his name. I will go and beat him up for you.” Even

a little child believes that it is normal to pay back what we suffer and get even with them. However, as we gather in Jesus' name, we pray together, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

I invite us to explore the theme of forgiveness during Lent this year in 2023. I encourage you to volunteer to preach for the Lenten Wednesday services. I suggest we read some books to deepen our understanding of forgiveness. *Forgiveness* by Marjorie Thompson, *Forgiveness: Finding Peace through Letting Go* by Adam Hamilton, *No Future without Forgiveness* by Desmond Tutu, and *Free of Charge* by Miroslav Volf. Lent is a season in which we humbly walk with Christ joining his journey toward Jerusalem, to witness how the love of God overcomes our brokenness and reconciles us to God through the love of Christ. In such a meaningful season, I pray that we also experience healing, joy, and grace as we forgive others and are forgiven by them.

Pastor Bob

Our Lenten Journey Begins on February 22

The Ash Wednesday service is on February 22 at 7:30 here in our sanctuary, in conjunction with our friends at West Chelmsford UMC. The service will be live-streamed, and a recording will be posted afterward on our website.



Wednesday evening in-person soup suppers and worship led by one of our church family members will return this year, beginning on March 1. The suppers will be held at 6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall, followed by the 30-minute service in the sanctuary at 7:00 pm. If you want to help provide soup for one or more weeks, please contact Betsey Driscoll (betseylll@yahoo.com). The worship theme this year is "Forgiveness." If you are interested in offering one of the worship reflections, please contact Pastor Bob or the church office. Pastor Bob has Bible stories and other resources available to help you prepare. The service will be live-streamed and recorded.

Save the Date

Reserve June 10, 2023, for Rev Maylis' Ordination Ceremony

Reserve the afternoon of June 10, 2023. Rev Maylis will be ordained a Deacon in the United Methodist Church at a ceremony conducted by Bishop Peggy Johnson during Annual Conference at the DoubleTree Hotel in Manchester NH. We need to be represented at that ceremony in support of Rev Maylis. We can set up carpools for those wishing to attend that session that is usually at 2 PM on Saturday afternoon. As we get closer to the date, we will have more information.

At a subsequent worship service at Aldersgate, we will be presenting Rev Maylis with a Jordan River stole in honor and recognition of this important milestone in Rev Maylis' journey with Christ. If you want to make a small donation for the purchase of that stole, make your checks payable to Aldersgate UMC but mark it with "Stole" in the notes section of your check. We don't need that much, only a couple hundred dollars, so if there are more donations than needed to cover the cost of the stole, the remaining money will go towards our youth attending Youth 2023 this summer in Daytona Beach, Florida. This event is sponsored by the United Methodist Discipleship Ministries.

For now, reserve June 10, 2023.



Thank You from the Staff

Thank you for your gifts of love and appreciation this Christmas season. We are so blessed to serve as your staff here at Aldersgate. Your kind words and overwhelming generosity have touched our hearts. With deep gratitude for all of you!

Pastor Bob, Cheryl O, Maylis, Cheryl C., Betsy,

Don, Mirna, Sherri and Deana

Have You Picked Up Your 2023 Offering Envelopes?

The 2023 offering envelopes have arrived! Please pick yours up in the welcome area, or contact Betsy in the office (978-256-9400 or aldersgatehelmsford@verizon.net) and she can leave your box in a bin outside the church entrance for you to collect at your convenience.

If you need envelopes and there is not one for you, please let Betsy know. There are blank boxes, and you can write the number and your name on the clipboard list so that Kelly can record your donations correctly.

2023 Flower Chart

The Flower Chart for 2023 is up on the wall in the hallway. Please sign up for flowers throughout the year. Please fill in your dates on the chart or let Betsy know. There has been a raise in price from \$25 to \$40. February 12th, 19th, and 26th and March 5th and 12th are still open along with some dates in future months. If you can fill in any of these dates, that would be great.

Covid Protocols

The conditions in our community due to the various viruses are changing rapidly! The Discernment Team continues to monitor the CDC and our denomination, as well as best practices in our community, weekly, to understand the protocols we need to apply to allow us to worship safely. Due to the high number of flu and COVID cases in the area, **it is strongly recommended that you wear a mask while in the building.** Please continue to watch for announcements as we adapt our guidance to help keep the church family safe and healthy.

Remember, if you are feeling ill for whatever reason, or if you have been around anyone waiting for COVID test results, to please refrain from attending church, and attend virtually by enjoying the recorded services while you recover at home. If you test positive for COVID-19, have been in the church building in the past two weeks, and believe you may have been contagious while there, please notify the church office and someone will assist you with contact tracing.

Birthdays and Anniversaries – February

We celebrate a Happy Birthday and a Happy Anniversary for the following. When you see them, you can celebrate with them or send them a card on their special day.

February Birthdays

Feb 4 - Elaine Brown

February 6 - Jenna W.

February 20 - Maylis de la Fe

February 23 - Vern Champeaux

Feb 28- Henry M



January 31st – Deb Benson - Sorry we missed your special day.

February Wedding Anniversaries

February 5 – Elaine and Garth Brown

If we have missed your big day, please send them by email, to Betsy in the office at aldersgetechelmsford@verizon.net or call 978-256-9400 so she can add your names and dates to the lists for the Advocates for the coming months. We can then recognize the milestones in your life and celebrate with you.

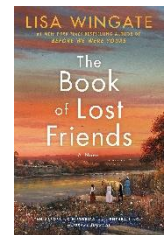
Book Club in the Concord Room and on Zoom

Book club is meeting on Feb 28th, 2023!!! We will discuss “The Book of Lost Friends” by Lisa Wingate. (Judy's pick). Let Deb know if you want to join by Zoom.

On March 28, we will discuss “The Book of Two Ways” by Jodi Picoult. (Liz’s pick)

On April 25 we will discuss “The Fallen Angels Book Club” by Franklin James. (Betsy's pick).

Hope you all can join us! Blessings, Deb



Single Ladies Dining Out

Singles Ladies Dining Out will have lunch on February 25th at 1 pm at Bahama Breeze, 413 Middlesex Rd, Tyngsborough, MA 01879.

If you are a single lady and would enjoy a lunch out and lots of fun conversation, we would love to have you join us. Please RSVP by Thursday February 23rd to Betsy Campbell 978-256-9400 or by email to aldersgatechelmsford@verizon.net.

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 for more details or if you are interested in being added to the email list.

We welcome new members!



ADULT EDUCATION...

Church Wide Lenten Study begins Ash Wednesday, February 22

Explore the Psalms and their link to the New Testament and the life of Jesus in this wonderful guide. Over six weeks, discover with us: Jesus in Our Hard Places, Jesus as Our Shepherd, our Hope, Our Strength and Our Savior.

"The Book of Psalms hums with the heartbeat of our humanity with divinely inspired words that find purchase in the tenderest places in our hearts when our human words or wisdom fails us." -Barb Roose, author of *Finding Jesus in the Psalms*

There is always a seat available when it's best for you:

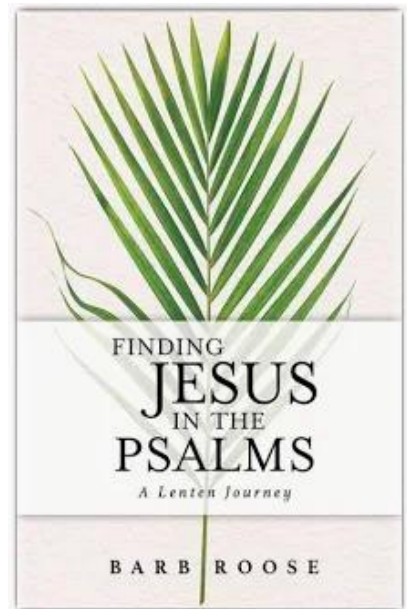
Sunday morning 9:45 in the Concord Room and on Zoom led by Adult Education members

Tuesday morning 10:00 on Zoom led by Charles McCrea

Thursday morning 10:00 in the Concord Room and on Zoom led by Pastor Bob Jon

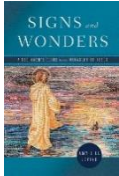
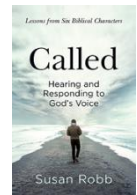
You can read and watch the study videos on your own at any time using the church's Amplify account. If you don't already have the access code, contact Betsy Campbell in the church office. <https://tinyurl.com/3zkfzy5r>

Or take part in the free Facebook Live study group hosted by the author, Barb Roose on Wednesday nights at 8:00 pm Feb. 22 to April 5. This group is open to anyone in the country on Facebook, and is not run by Aldersgate Members. For more information and to register use this link: <https://barbroose.com/onlinestudy/> You can obtain the book online. There are a few copies available in the library for those who can't order the book.



Adult Studies

The Sunday morning Adult class continues with “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. There is always a seat for you with us in the Concord Room between the services.



The Thursday Morning class continues “Signs and Wonders: A Beginner's Guide to the Miracles of Jesus” by Prof. Amy-Jill Levine. We'd love for you to join us Thursdays at 10:00 am in the Concord Room and on Zoom.

Be Kind

**Vivian has a message on her hat for all. “Be Kind”
A lesson we all can learn from her. Well done Vivian.**



OUTREACH...

Reminder to schedule your appointment for the Blood Drive - February 25
Please sign up if you can help this important cause. There continues to be a national shortage!

Please call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or visit RedCrossBlood.org and search under February 25th to schedule an appointment.

For more information, call or email Cate Lehan or Robin Dye or the church office.

Blessings, Outreach.

Thank you from Project Kompass:

To our friends at Aldersgate,

On behalf of all of us at Project Kompass, I'd like to express my sincere thanks for your donation of \$500. Year-end is the perfect time to reflect on our progress and prepare for a very active year ahead. With your support and encouragement, we have provided housing to more than 40 young adults, babies and soon-to-be new moms. We've expanded programming to include more in-depth life skills training and broadened our network of community partnerships. Our overriding goal is to help transform the lives of our residents from homelessness to permanent independence recognizing that no two individuals, and no two situations are the same. Our programming therefore is highly individualized and flexible to meet the unique needs of each member of the PK family.

Our staff, board and amazing group of volunteers are committed to applying innovative approaches to address housing insecurity and the associated trauma experienced by our area young adults. None of this would be possible without your support for which we are forever grateful.

Thank you again and we look forward to providing you with updates.

Warm regards, Ronnie Hoey, Executive Director.

Thank you from the Thom Anne Sullivan Center, Lowell MA

We received a card of Thanks for our donation of food at Thanksgiving that helped many of their children. Some of their notes said:

Thank you for your generous donations – Katie

Thank you for sharing your holiday spirits with our children – Bonna

Your kindness means so much! Thank you – Amanda

With gratitude for your generosity – Lisa Conner, RN

With so much appreciation – Pam

Thank you for your generosity, with gratitude, Sara

CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS
College Student Gathering!

On January 8th, our senior youth and college students gathered for pizza and conversation. What a blessing it is to have such caring and talented young adults as part of our church family!



Epiphany Sunday



The Wise Men visited each of our classes on Epiphany. We also had cupcakes to eat and one child in each class was honorary King for the day!



Worship Arts

Join us on Tuesday afternoons from 4:00 - 5:00 p.m. in the church school area downstairs. This program is for children ages 4 through 6th grade. Cheryl will be leading the art time and Maylis de la Fe will be leading the music time.

Junior Youth Upcoming Events

Game Night

Friday, February 3rd from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

5th – 8th grade

Bring your favorite game to play, and a snack to share.

St. Paul's Feeding Program

5th – 8th grade

Wednesday, February 15th from 3:30 – 6:00 p.m.

More information to follow –

Pay it Forward

Friday, February 24th from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

5th – 8th grade

Learn how you can make a difference during Lent!

Senior Youth Upcoming Events

Games and Sub Planning

Sunday, February 5th from noon – 1:30 p.m.

We will plan the sub sale and play games. Bring money for pizza.

Super Bowl Sub Prep Saturday, February 11th from 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Come help us prep the subs that we will sell on Sunday.

Super Bowl Sub Sale

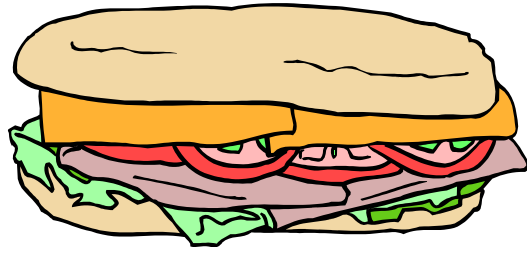
Sunday, February 12th from 8:30 – 9:30 a.m. (finish orders) – sell after both services

We will need help with finishing the sub orders and will also sell them after both services.

Pay it Forward

Sunday, February 26th from noon – 1:30 p.m.

Learn how you can make a difference during Lent! Bring money for pizza.



Super Bowl Sub Sale!

TYPES OF SUBS:

Italian, Turkey, Falafel & Vegetarian

Gluten Free rolls are available too

Each sub comes with chips & soda

**The Senior Youth group will be taking orders on the following
Sundays:**

January 22nd & 29th, February 5th

Place your orders in the basket located in the hallway

or e-mail your order

to: aumc-education@verizon.net

Pick-up: February 12th

(after each service)

***DONATIONS WILL GO TOWARDS YOUTH ATTENDING
YOUTH 2023***



Church School Valentines

The children's church school classes are making valentines and will mail them to those who would appreciate a card. If you know of someone who would like to receive a card, e-mail Cheryl at aumc-education@verizon.net.

Pancake Sunday

Sunday, February 19th from 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.



Everyone is welcome to join us for a pancake breakfast in the Fellowship Hall as we prepare for the season of Lent. There will be pancakes, games and discussion about the season of Lent. There will be no church school classes downstairs for children and youth on this Sunday. All are welcome!

Thank you from Joanne Snook (received in her handwriting)

Thank you, my treasured Aldersgate family for all the prayers and cards of encouragement in this latest period in my faith journey. You are such a blessing to me and I treasure your presence in my life.

Sometimes we don't know where our faith journey will take us but we know and trust the One who leads us. God is so good! He has blessed my life with my Aldersgate church family!

My prayer is we can be together soon and my prayer for all of us is that our waiting for the Prince of Peace is filled with prayer, hope and peace and love for all.

Joanne Snook

