



# ALDERSGATE ADVOCATE

September 2023

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## **Pastoral Letter for September 2023—“Invitation to Sermon Series on Loneliness”**

On May 3, 2023, US Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy warned that loneliness is the new epidemic sweeping our country today. He said, “In recent years, about one-in-two adults in America reported experiencing loneliness.” While many of us think that the pandemic is the primary cause of loneliness and isolation in many people today, research shows that people had already been wrestling with loneliness before the pandemic. According to study by Barna Group, the proportion of adults who described themselves as “lonely” has almost tripled for the past twenty-five years. While there may be many causes of loneliness, such as illness and death, Murthy identifies individualism as a driving force behind a growing number of people who feel rejected, isolated, and lonely.

How about you? Are you feeling lonely today? Such a question is not necessarily concerned with having children or significant other in your home. People can still feel lonely and isolated even when they are surrounded by people. The question is more concerned with the quality of your relationship with others through which you feel belonging. You feel seen. You feel that you matter to them. As our society is often driven by individualism, people often do not feel safe to share their pain, anxiety, or loneliness with others. We are taught to be independent and not to rely on others. In many cultures, men, especially, are taught not to show their emotions with others because it makes them look “weak” or “not man enough.” So, we hide behind our doors, thinking that no one cares about us and no one will love us.

The Bible tells us that God is relational. God created everything in the beginning because God desired a connection with God’s creatures. God also created Adam and Eve especially in God’s image, therefore giving us the privilege to be called God’s children through our faith. (Galatians 3:26) God exists in relationship, as we confess God as the Trinitarian God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. When Philip asked Jesus to show him the Father, he answered, “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?” (John 14:10) Jesus also promised to send the Holy Spirit as our Advocate to stay with us forever. Since God exists in a relationship, God also calls us to be relational with God and our neighbors. We worship God, share fellowship with one another, and serve those in need.

Recently, I came back from the vacation with my family. We left for a place in Vermont on Thursday and came back on Saturday. In our neighborhood, people put out the trash bin on Thursday. So, we put out the trash and recycle bins on Thursday, thinking that we would leave them until Saturday. As we came home, we found that those bins were already put away where they were usually kept. Sungha and I were surprised, wondering who came and did this for us. The next day, my neighbor came to tell me that she thought that my family had gone away for a vacation and was concerned that someone would think that the house was empty and try to break in. We thanked her for her kindness and promised to do the same for her in the future. As we shared some personal stories, I felt full in my heart that someone cares about my family.

While God has created us to be relational and seek social connection, this pandemic, coupled with American individualism, has made it more difficult for people to feel fulfilled in their relationship with others. As a matter of fact, the pandemic even revealed our societal hatred and rejection toward those who are often considered strangers or others. As Dr. Murthy warns that the lack of meaningful connection could increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, dementia, or even premature death, I believe that the topic of loneliness and isolation is an urgent matter for all of us to wrestle and confront together. Therefore, I invite you to join me as I start a five-week sermon series on loneliness from September 10. This sermon series will address loneliness associated with the pandemic, illness, social media, death, and misfit.

We currently have a sermon team of nine volunteers who help me with research, share their stories of loneliness, and even speak at some point. I pray that this sermon series would be meaningful to many people in our church, and at the same time, I hope that it could bring us together as a faith community where people feel that they belong and they matter to God and to one another.

Grace and peace,  
Pastor Bob

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## **Rally Day is Sunday, September 10!**

Rally Day is Sunday, September 10! We will return to two services at 8:30 and 10:45 am, with church school for children and youth at 9:30 am, as we rally back to church as summer winds down. You are invited to gather in the Concord Room that day at 9:30 am to hear about the plans for the Sunday Adult Ed class this fall, or to enjoy Coffee Hour in the Fellowship Hall.

Church School Registration for children and youth starts at 9:15 am in the welcome area downstairs. We will also present Bibles to all Kindergarten children and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade children during the 10:45 am worship service.

After second service, join us for the traditional Rally Day potluck luncheon, with burgers and hot dogs along with fellowship and four square! Please bring a side dish, salad, or dessert to share.

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## **Fall plans for Aldersgate!**

We are excited to be returning to our routine this fall! Everyone is welcome for worship, education, fellowship, and the shared camaraderie and joy that we experience when we gather as a community of faith together in person.

Beginning on **Rally Day, Sunday, September 10:**

**Worship services** will be offered at 8:30 and 10:45 am. The 10:45 service will be live-streamed and recorded for posting on the church web site shortly thereafter

**Coffee Hour** will be offered in the Fellowship Hall between the services.

**Church School classes** will be offered in-person, downstairs between the services, from 9:30 to 10:30 am. Classes will be held for **Pre-K – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade, 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade and 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade.**

On Rally Day, we will present Bibles to our Kindergarteners and 3<sup>rd</sup> Graders during the 10:45 service.

**Adult Education** will meet in the Concord Room on September 10 at 9:30 am to hear about the plans for the Sunday Adult Ed class this fall. The class will begin on September 24 in the Concord Room and via Zoom at 9:30 am. Early Bird will commence on September 19<sup>th</sup> at 10am on Zoom. The Thursday Morning Bible study will begin on September 14 in the Concord Room and via Zoom at 10:00 am. Please watch for details.

**Committees and Small Groups** will meet either in person or via Zoom, based upon the decision of each group. Please let Betsy in the office know of your group's plans so she can keep the calendar up to date and schedule rooms if needed.

**Staff & Office Hours** – Betsy will continue to be in the office Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 10:00 a.m. to noon. She will be working other hours from home and checking voicemail and email. The other staff will also be in and out of the office, as well as working remotely, connecting by Zoom, email and phone, and are also available by appointment.

If you have gotten out of the habit of attending in person, we hope you will plan to return and experience the joy of being in worship and fellowship together. Thank you for your faithfulness in prayer and in your participation as we begin this new year together!

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## **Info Sessions in September on the United Methodist Church's Stance on LGBTQI+ and Impact on AUMC**

The Church Council has recently been discussing how to ensure we are an inclusive, welcoming church to all here at Aldersgate. A Statement of Inclusivity, consistent with the beliefs of our denomination and its Book of Discipline, created by the Council and posted on the church web site in the Who We Are page, is included below.

Some people have been confused about or are unfamiliar with the United Methodist Church's (UMC's) stance on the LGBTQI+ community, how our New England Conference is addressing this stance, and what that means for Aldersgate. We invite the congregation to learn about the current situation and options the UMC and Conference may consider through information sessions in September, led by Pastors Bob and Maylis, as our clergy, and Bonnie Marden, our delegate to the UMC General Conference, where these topics are discussed. The sessions will consist of an overview of the denomination's stance and the impact on local churches, followed by a Q&A. Each of these four sessions will be similar. There will be two in-person sessions on **Thursday, 9/14 at 7:00 pm** and **Sunday, 9/17 at 9:30 am** (between the services) **in the Fellowship Hall**, and two sessions via **Zoom on Wednesday, 9/20 at 8:00 pm** and **Monday, 9/25 at 7:00 pm**.

The Council plans to offer other opportunities after these sessions for further dialog and sharing of stories and perspectives as we seek to discern how we as a church family can be inclusive to all regardless of age, race, nationality, ethnic background, gender, sexuality, ability, and physical appearance.

Paul wrote in Corinthians 1 12:12, "all the members of the body, though many, are one body . . ." The Council recognizes that there are many different opinions in our church family based on our individual understanding of the scriptures and Jesus' teachings. We hope to use this time to share

our views and learn from each other in constructive and respectful ways, so that we can together grow in our faith. Whether you join us for these sessions or not, thank you for holding all of us in prayer and faithful trust in God's leading us into the future.

## **All Are Welcome at Aldersgate**

As a United Methodist congregation, we affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. We affirm that we are an open, welcoming, fully accepting congregation supportive of all, regardless of age, race, nationality, ethnic background, gender, sexuality, ability, and physical appearance. In agreement with our New England Conference Open Spirit Task Force, we are committed to safeguarding the sacred worth and dignity of all persons in our churches and communities, including those who identify as LGBTQI+ persons.

We are a church that supports every individual's full participation in the life, ministry, sacraments, membership, and leadership of the church at any level. We celebrate the blessings of gender and cultural diversity in our pastors and leadership team.

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### **Single Ladies Dining Out**

Singles Ladies Dining Out will have dinner together on **Sept 16th** at 5:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall – Pasta Dinner sponsored by the youth. Come and hear about their trip to Youth 2023. Please RSVP by Thursday Sept 14th to Betsy Campbell 978-256-9400 or by email to [aldersgatehelmsford@verizon.net](mailto:aldersgatehelmsford@verizon.net) so that she can reserve a table large enough.



If you are a single lady and would enjoy a dinner out and lots of fun conversation, we would love to have you join us.

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### **Book Club in the Concord Room and on Zoom**

On September 26th is True Biz by Sara Novic, (Betsey's pick)

Let Deb know if you want to join by Zoom.

On October 31 is The Measure by Nikki Erlick, (Judy's pick)

Hope you all can join us! Blessings, Deb

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### **Upper Room Daily Discipline**

For those of you who use The Upper Room Daily Discipline, the September/October issue is now on the Welcome rack.

## Birthdays and Anniversaries – September

It has been a whole year of Celebrations for our Church Family.

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.

### September Birthdays

Sept 1 - Rich R.

Sept 7 – Cate L.

Sept 10 - Dottie N.

Sept 11 - Clewis H.

Sept 12 – Owen B.

Sept 17 – Lisa M.

Sept 22 – Isaac P.

Sept 30 – Aurora M.



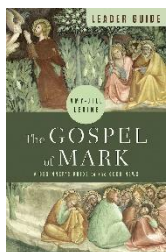
### September Anniversaries

Sept 2 – Val and Mike Shupe

**If we have missed your big day, please send them by email, to Betsy in the office at [aldersgetechelmsford@verizon.net](mailto: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.**

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## New Fall Adult Study on Sunday Morning!



Join us Sunday mornings in the Concord Room between the services to discuss Amy Jill Levine's **The Gospel Of Mark: A Beginner's Guide to The Good News**. Grab a copy at your favorite bookseller or just pop in on Sunday morning to discuss a video segment on the chapter. Class runs September 24 to October 29 and we will save you a seat!

The Thursday Morning Bible study will begin on September 14 in the Concord Room and via Zoom at 10:00 am. Watch for more details.

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## Early Bird Bible Study

Early Bird will commence on September 19<sup>th</sup> at 10am on Zoom.

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## Protestant Prayer Bead Workshop

Join Kim Ward, Melinda Goodick and friends again this autumn to discover a new way to enhance your prayer life! We will spend a bit of time making a set of prayer beads and then discuss a variety of prayer practices. No experience necessary- just you and a desire to spend time with other believers.

Books on making and using prayer beads are available in the lobby and the downstairs library, or check out this website. <https://www.kristenevincent.com/prayer-beads/>

**Keep your eyes peeled for beads and a cross pendant you'd like to use!** Yard sales, Grandma's old jewelry, or shops like Beadles in Nashua or Michaels are all good options to find what sparks a bit of JOY in your soul. Kim has some materials to offer. Contact her to see what she has available or if you want to contribute or help in some way. [mikdraw@aol.com](mailto:mikdraw@aol.com) or 978-256-2014

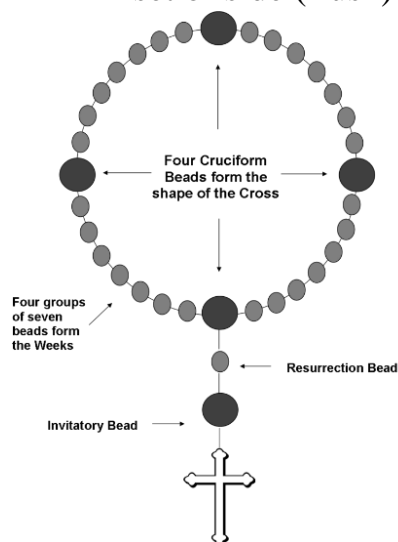
Here's a list of specific materials if you want to collect your own supplies:

### *Materials Needed*

- 5 large (10mm – 12mm) beads
- 29 medium (8mm – 10mm) beads
- 36 seed (size #6 or #8) beads
- 1 cross or other pendant
- 2 crimp tubes (size 2 x 2)- **Kim will supply this**
- 20 – 24 inches of wire (49-strand, .019 or .018")- **Kim will supply this**

***Tools Required- Melinda and Kim will have these available to use if you don't have your own.***

- 1 pair of chain nose pliers
- 1 set of side (flush) wire cutters



You can also buy a kit on line to assemble with us.

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/prayerworksstudio/?etsrc=sdt>

If you don't want to make your own, you can buy a pre made set online and join us to talk about how to use them. <https://fullcirclebeads.com/> or check out the wide variety on Etsy.com.

We look forward to spending some time with you and hope you will join us for a time of creating, fellowship, discussion and prayer!

## Prayer Partners Ministry

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. (James 5:16 NIV)

Want to make a difference in the lives of others without ever leaving your home? Join the Prayer Partners Ministry. We are a group of people devoted to lifting up the prayer concerns of others to God, who is always available to listen. The prayer requests are sent by email. The only requirement, other than offering a prayer, is to keep the requests confidential. It is a privilege and honor to lift up prayers to God on behalf of others. If you are interested in joining the Prayer Partners Ministry please contact Dottie Newcomb at [dotnewcomb@comcast.net](mailto:dotnewcomb@comcast.net). All questions and comments are welcome.

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## CHRISTMAS FAIRE...

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### Holiday Faire and Festival Preparations

With gifted and talented Angels and Elves already busy preparing beautiful Christmas decor, we invite you to save the date for Aldersgate's Holiday Faire and Festival on **December 1 from 1pm to 8pm and December 2 from 10am to 2pm!**

Help us celebrate all our talents by joining the Elves team and sharing whatever your gifts may be! Thank you for thinking of the Faire as you clean out jewelry boxes, begin to think about baking projects, and share containers for our live greenery and centerpieces. Ceramic and other creative containers and quality new items for the Silent Auction are welcome now. We would like to offer some Talent Items to the Silent Auction (home baked meal, skilled labor, or entertainment, etc.) so please let us know what you can offer by November 1. Thanks be to God for all the gifts of talent, time and creativity that contributes to the fellowship and festivities of this Aldersgate highlight!



Faire Tables include **Glad Tiding Greens** (wreaths and centerpieces), **Kringle's Kitchen, Country Store and Bakery, Silent Auction, Creative Crafts, Knitting Boutique, Children's Shoppe and Jingling Jewelry**. We look forward to an assortment of creative gifts and crafts, excellent food and caroling with Aldersgate's angelic musicians!

Please let us know if you have pine boughs or greens that could be used for our swags and centerpieces – we need some new sources of greens. Thanks!

Contact Bonnie Marden, Deana Peterson or Melinda Goodick or the church office at 978-256-9400 for more information.

Grateful for the talents and generosity of AUMC, we anticipate the joy of the season!

## Holiday Cards 4 Military

October 2 - 7PM Workshop in Fellowship Hall to make cards to be sent all over the world to our soldiers. We will provide everything needed and guidelines for writing a personal message inside the card.

Susan Lewis and Dawn Jones







## VBS HIGHLIGHTS!!

What a wonderful week we had at our Under Construction VBS event! We welcomed children, youth and adults from our church family and the community.

A special thank you to Pastor Bob and all the adult and youth helpers for creating a wonderful opportunity for the children to learn about Habitat for Humanity and how we are called to share, care, learn, worship and celebrate!

Thank you to Kevin Fusco from Habitat for Humanity for joining us on Friday for a special presentation. We also collected items for the Lowell Wish Project.





## CHURCH SCHOOL ON RALLY DAY – SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10<sup>th</sup>

**Church School Registration: 9:15 a.m.**

**Church School: 9:30 a.m.**

**Parent Reception: 9:45 a.m.**

**10:45 a.m. Worship Service: Bible Presentation to Kindergarten Children & 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Children**

Our church school teachers are very excited to meet their students for this year! We will also have a special fellowship time at 9:45 a.m. with refreshments in room 7/8.

If you have any questions, please email Cheryl Ortolf at [aumc-education@verizon.net](mailto:aumc-education@verizon.net)

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### **Youth 2023 Sharing Time! Saturday, September 16<sup>th</sup> 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.**

The youth and adults who attended Youth 2023 will host a free pasta dinner and share a special presentation with you about our experiences at Youth 2023.

We have many stories to share with you along with photos and videos.

Come join us - all are welcome!

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### **Junior Youth Pizza Party!**

**Friday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.**

**All youth in grade 6 - 8 are welcome to join us!**

We will eat pizza, play games and talk about the activities for the year – friends are always welcome!

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### **Senior Youth Fun!**

**Sunday, September 24<sup>th</sup> – noon - 2:00 p.m.**

All youth in grades 9—12 are invited to join us as we begin a new year of youth group!

We will eat pizza, talk about ideas for this year and play 9 square or scouter hockey!



## God's Garden

This is a fun time of year in the vegetable garden! During VBS, the youth helped harvest the cherry tomatoes, which was featured in a lovely salad at the St Paul's dinner that evening. They also dug up the potatoes, a job that left everyone with dirty knees!

Our yields are down a bit this year, due to the cool, wet weather and some hungry critters, but many plants are finally producing fruit. Here's a tally of the produce we've donated to the pantry and St Paul's so far this season:

Carrots - 7.5 lb  
Cucumbers - 10  
Garlic scapes - 2 bunches  
Mixed greens - 2 bunches  
Kale - 6 bunches  
Lettuce - 20 bunches  
Peas - 14 pints  
Potatoes - 10 lb  
Radishes - 2 bunches  
Rhubarb - 4 bunches  
Swiss chard - 3 bunches  
Tomatoes, slicer - 18  
Tomatoes, cherry - 4 pints  
Thanks to all the gardeners and youth helpers for bringing in the harvest!

