



ALDERSGATE ADVOCATE

February 2024

Pastoral Letter for February 2024 – “Giving It Up”

Some years ago, I went to Taco Bell for lunch. As I entered the restaurant, I saw an interesting sign on the entrance door. “You don’t have to miss Taco Bell this Lent just because you can’t eat meat. We have the perfect solution for you. Fish Tacos!” Interestingly, it is said that Lent is a time when U.S. retailers go all out to capitalize, offering discounts and events. The season of Lent “produces the highest seafood sales in the U.S.” While even the markets operate on the assumption that Lent means giving up something temporarily, I wonder how many Christians engage in reflection on why we need to fast in the 21st century and how we can do it.

For many Christians today, fasting or giving up something may sound unnecessary theologically. When people came to Jesus and criticized his disciples for not fasting like John’s disciples and the Pharisees, he answered, “The wedding attendants cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they?” (Mark 2:19) Jesus has already been resurrected. The tomb is empty. Why do we need to fast when we can celebrate his presence with us? For others, fasting may look more concerned with external appearance rather than internal spirituality. Jesus also warned the hypocrites who fasted to be praised by others for their piety. (Matt 6:16-18) So, why practice fasting?

In his sermon “The Means of Grace,” John Wesley defines means of grace as “outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God” through which “God might convey to people, prevenient, justifying, or sanctifying grace.” As he encouraged the Methodists to attend upon all the ordinances of God such as worship, scripture reading, communion, family/private prayer, and fasting. Wesley considered fasting as a means of grace through which God could draw people to the presence of God. No one can guarantee that fasting will work magic to render some drastic change in them. Instead, when we fast with humility and openness, by the grace of God, we may encounter God, who reveals our fundamental yearning for God.

After he was baptized, Jesus was driven by the Holy Spirit to the wilderness where he fasted for forty days. Although he heard the voice of God calling him, “My beloved Son,” his identity was tested where he wrestled with hunger and thirst, the fundamental human needs for survival. Therefore, in *Five Means of Grace*, Elaine Heath explains that as Jesus was tested in his identity and authority, we are also invited to enter the “emptiness and loneliness of fasting,” therefore facing our own “vulnerability.” In the fourth century, therefore, some Christians went to the desert, not just to escape the persecution, but also to encounter God actively by fasting.

This year, I want to invite you to our Lenten Wednesdays with the theme of “Giving It Up” written by Rev. Matthew Kelley. The series does not ask people to give up something like chocolate, meat, coffee, or social media, to which they return once Lent is over. Instead, this Lenten series encourages us to reflect certain attitudes that harm our relationship with God and

our neighbors: control, expectations, superiority, enemies, and popularity. By the grace of God, we are empowered to give them up and find joy in being freed from the bondage to the power of this world. Starting from February 21, five laities will lead the service for five Wednesdays, sharing their stories and insights.

My hope is that through this series, we all can reflect on ourselves to discern what we need to let go of our relationship with God and our neighbors and seek to be drawn to the love of God.

Pastor Bob

Our Lenten Journey Begins on Wednesday, February 14th

The Ash Wednesday service is February 14th at 7:30, and is being hosted by West Chelmsford UMC as a hybrid event, with the in-person service in their sanctuary and viewable remotely via Zoom. Pastor Geisa will give the message and co-officiate with Pastor Bob of Aldersgate UMC. A Zoom link will be sent to your email prior to the service. There will be a recording on the WCUMC website if you would like to watch it later. If you are participating via Zoom and wish to use ashes during the service, ashes are available in the brown bin outside the front hall entrance to the church.

Wednesday evening in-person soup suppers and worship led by one of our church family members will return this year, beginning on Feb 21st. 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 **salad, bread, or dessert for one or more weeks**, please contact Betsey Driscoll, (betseylll@yahoo.com).

This year we will be sharing reflections on **giving it up with fasting, giving up control, prayer, expectations, and finally giving it up in death**. If you are interested in offering one of the reflections, please contact Pastor Bob.

We will also live-stream and record the service so people can watch it in real-time or later at home.



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 to all of you!

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

Don, Mirna, Sherri and Deana

Memorial and Collation for Audrey Wetterwald

We got word from Ed Wetterwald that Audrey passed away at Lowell General on Tuesday Morning January 16th. Her memorial will be held on **February 3rd at 11 am** in our Sanctuary, with her burial at Pine Ridge Cemetery at noon. After all return to the church, there will be a collation served in the Fellowship Hall. Please check in with Betsey Driscoll and let her know what you would like to bring for that.

Please pray for Ed and the rest of the family as they prepare to celebrate Audrey's life.

Memorial and Reception Meal for Chuck Piper

We got word from Jean Piper that Chuck passed away at Kennedy Meadows on Saturday morning January 20th. His memorial will be held on **March 16th at 11 am** in our Sanctuary, with a reception in the Fellowship Hall at noon. His burial will be sometime this summer in Maine. Please check in with Betsey Driscoll to find out what you can help with.

Please pray for Jean and the rest of the Piper family as they prepare to celebrate Chuck's life.

Here is the link for Chuck's Obituary: <https://www.rivetfuneralhome.com/obituary/charles-piper-sr?>

2024 Budget Approved

Thanks to everyone who attended the Charge Conference on December 31st where the 2024 church budget was approved. The budget includes estimated income of \$352,904 and budgeted expenses of \$389,803, for a deficit of \$36,899. Our major source of income is from congregational pledging. There are 74 pledges, including 7 new pledges, totaling \$309,704. This is an increase of \$27,240 from 2023 to 2024. Thank you for your generous giving to Aldersgate's ministries! The Finance committee is looking for ways to reduce the 2024 budget deficit. If you have suggestions, please contact the Finance chair, Wendy Baker (wbaker15@comcast.net).

Interested in Learning How to Record Worship?

We are looking to add to our friendly team of volunteers who live-stream and record our worship services. We take turns so everyone gets an opportunity to participate. We schedule the two-person crew weekly based on everyone's availability. Training is provided. If you are interested in learning more, please contact Peter Smyton (617-893-9669) or Jim Ortolfo (978-995-0614).

Single Ladies Dining Out

Single Ladies Dining Out will have dinner together on **February 24th** at 1:00 pm at Emerald Rose in Billerica. Please RSVP by Thursday Feb 22nd to Betsy Campbell 978-256-9400 or by email to aldersgatechelmsford@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. Please talk to Betsy for more information.



Book Club in the Concord Room and on Zoom

Here are the upcoming book picks for February, March and April. If you haven't yet picked, think of your pick and let me know

Tuesday, February 27th Remarkably Bright Creatures by Shelby Van Pelt (Liz's pick)

Tuesday, March 26, Mad Honey by Jodi Picoult (Robin's pick)

Tuesday, April 30th, The Woman with the Cure by Lynn Cullen (Ken's Pick)

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.

Birthdays and Anniversaries – February

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.

February Birthdays

Feb 4 - Elaine Brown

Feb 5 – Suzanne Hevelone

February 6 – Jenna W.

Feb 15 – Richard Kinnett

February 20 – Maylis de la Fe

February 25 – Vern Champeaux

Feb 28- Henry M

February Anniversaries

Feb 7 - Garth & Elaine Brown Anniversary



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.

VETERANS PARK PLANS ADDITION OF MONUMENTS LISTING VETERANS' NAMES

The Chelmsford Veterans' Memorial Park is planning the addition of two stone pillars which will hold 136 names to the Park. The criteria for listing a Chelmsford living or deceased veteran's name, the cost, and an application can be found at:

ChelmsfordVeteransPark.org, at the Chelmsford Veterans Services office at town hall, or attached here. This is a wonderful way to honor a veteran and memorialize their name for generations to come. Below is the application.



QUALIFICATIONS TO HAVE VETERAN'S NAME ENGRAVED ON MONUMENT WITHIN CHELMSFORD VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK

1. A Veteran of any US military service, abroad or stateside.
2. Honorably discharged or presently serving in the Armed Forces.
3. A Chelmsford resident during service, or a current or prior resident with a minimum of 5 (five) years residency.
4. Proof of service (a copy of form DD-214 or a copy of Honorable Discharge).
5. A check or money order for \$250 made out to Chelmsford Veterans Memorial Park.

Mail to: **Chelmsford Veterans Memorial Park**
P. O. Box 141
North Chelmsford, MA 01863

Application Deadline: JULY 12, 2024

PRINT THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION

Your Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Veteran Name: (First, Middle Initial, Last) _____

Military Branch: _____ Service Dates: _____

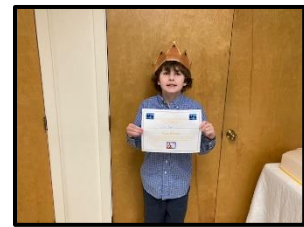
Chelmsford resident from _____ to _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

FINAL DECISIONS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE PARK COMMITTEE

CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS

Epiphany Sunday



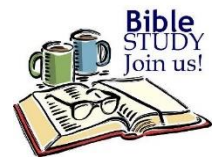
The Kings visited each of our classes on Epiphany. We also had cupcakes to eat and one child in each class was honorary King for the day!



Supper, Singing & Pop-up Bible Study

Tuesdays, February 6th & 13th from 5:00 – 6:00 p.m.

We will all join for supper from 5:00 – 5:30 p.m. in room 7&8 downstairs.



Children and youth will have a singing time from 5:30 – 6:00 p.m. in the music room. Dr. Suzanne Hevelone will offer a pop-up Bible study from 5:30 – 6:00 p.m. in the library.

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 by February 11th at aumc-education@verizon.net.

Pancake Sunday

Sunday, February 11th 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 this Sunday. All are welcome!

Junior Youth Upcoming Events

This fellowship group is for youth in grades 5th – 7th grade.

The junior youth and senior youth will have some activities together.

All 7th graders will be invited to help with the Senior youth fundraisers to earn points towards attending our mission trip this summer.

REMEMBER – FRIENDS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!

People Pleaser

5th – 7th grade

Friday, February 16 from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Are you a people pleaser? We will have some fun and serious activities and discussion on peer pressure. We will meet in the Concord Room.

St. Paul's Feeding Program

5th – 7th grade

Wednesday, February 21st from 3:30 – 6:00 p.m.

More information to follow –

Pizza & Trivia Fun!

Junior & Senior Youth

Sunday, February 25th from noon – 1:30 p.m.

Please bring \$5.00 towards the cost of pizza. We will have fun with trivia questions!

Senior Youth Upcoming Events

All youth in grades 8 – 12 are welcome to join us at any time.

We ALWAYS welcome friends and remember you are an important part of this group!

Sub Planning and Making Mistakes

Sunday, February 4th from noon – 1:30 p.m.

How do you feel when you make a mistake? Come learn about a new way to approach mistakes. We will make subs for lunch.

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

7th – 12th graders

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

Super Bowl Sub Sale

Sunday, February 11th 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.

Pizza & Trivia Fun!

Junior & Senior Youth

Sunday, February 25th from noon – 1:30 p.m.

Please bring \$5.00 towards the cost of pizza. We will have fun with trivia questions!

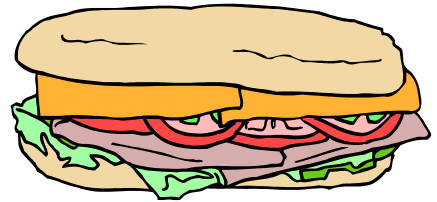
Super Bowl Sub Sale! February 11TH

TYPES OF SUBS:

Italian, Turkey, Falafel & Vegetarian

Gluten Free rolls are available

Each sub comes with chips & soda



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

January 21st & 28th, February 4th

Place your orders in the basket located in the hallway
or e-mail your order

to: aumc-education@verizon.net

**Pick-up: February 11th
(after each service)**

DONATIONS WILL GO TOWARDS OUR YOUTH MISSION TRIP

POTLUCK BIBLE TRIVIA NIGHT FUN!



SATURDAY, MARCH 2ND 5:30 – 7:30 P.M.

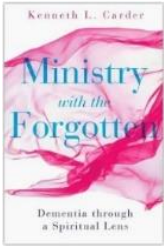
The youth will be hosting a potluck trivia night for all.

Bring your favorite dish to share.

How well do you know the Bible?

ADULT EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Adult Ed Sunday Class



Our study and discussion on the impact Alzheimer's disease and dementia has on our loved ones and our congregation continues today between the services. Pastor Bob has recommended *Ministry with the Forgotten* by Kenneth L. Carder as a resource. You can get it online or at your favorite bookshop. We invite you to read and join the discussion, led by Debbie Smyton, on Sunday mornings at 9:45 in the Concord Room or via Zoom. See more information in the January Advocate.

Did you know?

Alzheimer's Statistics

- More than 5 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's. By 2050, this number could rise as high as 16 million.
- More than 15 million Americans provide unpaid care for people with Alzheimer's or other dementias.
- In 2016, caregivers provided an estimated 18.2 billion hours of care valued at over \$230 billion
- In 2017, Alzheimer's and other dementias will cost the nation \$259 billion. By 2050, those costs could rise as high as \$1.1 trillion.
- Thirty five percent of caregivers for people with Alzheimer's or another dementia report that their health has gotten worse due to care responsibilities, compared to 19% of caregivers for older people without dementia.
- One in three seniors dies with Alzheimer's or another dementia.
- It's the 6th leading cause of death and it kills more people than breast and prostate cancers combined.
- Currently, there is no cure for Alzheimer's.
- Since 2000, deaths from heart disease have decreased by 14 percent while deaths from Alzheimer's disease have increased by 89 percent.

Alzheimer's Association; <https://www.alz.org/facts/overview.asp?type=alzchptfooter>

The Adult Ed team has decided to focus on the "Ministry With The Forgotten" for several more weeks this month and will find another time to discuss Jesus and the Disinherited by Howard Thurman. We encourage you to read it or another book on your own for Black History month.

OUTREACH...

Reminder to schedule your appointment for the Blood Drive – February 24 from 9-2

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](https://www.redcrossblood.org) and search under February 24th to schedule an appointment.

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

Blessings, Outreach.

Change for Change

Change for Change continues to contribute to others. In the fall, our youth selected the Alzheimer's Association as a candidate. \$400 has been collected by change and will be donated. Our Adult ED team has selected the Alternative House in Lowell as our next candidate. Change matters. God is Good.

From Kim – Chair of Adult Ed

“Adult Ed would like the next Change for Change designation to go to Alternative House in Lowell, a domestic violence shelter. We'd love the announcement to include a logo, their slogan "There is no excuse for abuse" and link to the website.” <https://www.alternative-house.org/>

Request from Jasper: from Ken Bair

Jasper has texted and asked for **coffee creamer (not refrigerated type), and protein bars (it is hard to get enough protein for their workouts), and fruit cups or dried fruit. Microwave popcorn especially the kettle corn kind and the single serving oatmeal cups, or oatmeal packets with a box of paper cups as well as coffee filters.** We have a pretty solid coffee maker and a coffee bean grinder and everything. Between all the crews we drink a ton of coffee we like trying a lot of different specialty types. Favorites so far are Dunkin Donuts, Caribou Coffee, New England Coffees French vanilla flavor. s. Definitely need more creamer than coffee for the next couple of months.

Kim and Dan will continue sending out packages to Jasper and the troops. If you have anything that you would like to send, please let them know or check with them to get a list of items. If you would like to help with sending Girl Scout cookies, check with Kim.
