



ALDERSGATE ADVOCATE

July/August 2025

Pastor's Column

Dear Siblings in Christ,

As I said this past Sunday, it is such a joy to be moved in finally and to begin life with you here in Chelmsford! My family and I have a lot to learn and many people to get to know and, although it feels a bit like drinking through a firehose at the moment, getting to know and work with people is my favorite part of ministry. Truth be told, I've never actually drunken from a firehose before, but I imagine the water comes out too quickly to taste. I hope we get the time in the coming year to slow down the pace a bit and really get to know each other well. The flavor, after all, is what makes the water enjoyable!

As I begin to settle into my ministry this summer, there are a couple of short-term items that I want you to know about. The first is that, through July and early August, I'm going to be preaching a sermon series on Paul's letter to the Colossians. You can read more about that further on in the Advocate but here I would just like to say that whether you're close-by or vacationing, I would like to ask you to tune in and give this series some thought. Colossians is a getting-to-know-you letter and a mission-framing letter—a letter that, in many ways, gives us all an opportunity to be reintroduced to one another and even to ourselves. I intend, through this series, to begin sorting out some of the pieces of the dialogue that we are soon to begin here together that, I hope, will be a spur to me and to you to deepen our life in faith and see what God has in store for us in our time together. One of the things I've learned in ministry so far is that ministry is something like a long, unfolding conversation—one that we share and shape together—and there are so many ways that we all stand to grow and change just by sharing the road together for however long we're given. I want to get all I can from that and I hope you do as well.

The other thing that I want you to know about is that, on Sunday August 24, I am going to do a special celebration as part of our Sunday morning service to commission our kids into the new school year. As part of that, I'm going to do a "blessing of the backpacks" as part of that service and I would love to gather backpacks from the kids in your orbit (alongside backpacks that we plan to donate) to make that celebration real and meaningful. After the communion service on Sunday August 3, I invite you to begin to gather those backpacks around the altar in preparation for that celebration. I hope our kids will feel seen and held by us as they begin that transition into a new venture and I hope as well that they'll carry those backpacks into the new year with the reminder that God shares the load. I am excited about what this new chapter in all of our lives stands to bring! May the God of joy and Sabbath be with us all as we journey our various paths this summer and look forward to gathering in the Fall.

Deep Blessings and Grace!

Pastor John

Coming Up at Aldersgate July – September 2025

Youth Mission Trip to Camp Wanakee: July 14 – 18

Red Cross Blood Drive: August 9, 9:00 am – 2:00 pm

Vacation Bible School: August 11 – 15, 9:00 am – noon

GriefShare program, Wednesdays 9/3 – 12/10, 7:00 – 8:30 pm

Rally Day, September 7

8:30 am Worship

9:30 am Church School preschool – 12th grade

9:30 am Coffee Hour

9:45 am Parent Reception

10:45 am Worship & Bible presentation to 3rd Graders and Kindergarten Children

11:45 am Potluck lunch for all

Welcome Pastor John and Family!

We are very excited to welcome our new pastor, Pastor John Whitley, and his family to Aldersgate! We celebrated their first Sunday on July 6 with a presentation by Dan Ward, special music from the Shepherd Bells and Chancel Choir, and a potluck reception. Thanks to Charles McCrea for assisting Pastor John in the worship, Betsey Driscoll, Robin Dye, and Susan Lewis for organizing the reception, and the kitchen elves for cleaning up!



We ask that those attending services today and in the coming weeks wear name tags so Pastor John and the family can begin to get to know us. The name tags are in the welcome area near the greeter. We ask that you include both your first and last name on your name tag. Thank you!

Thank You for Making Our July 4 Booth a Success!

Thanks to everyone who stopped by the Aldersgate booth at the July 4th Country Fair! A total of almost \$2500 was raised to help fund the youth mission trip to Wanakee July 14 – 18. Special thanks to Betsey Driscoll, David Driscoll, Lee Williams, Peter Smyton, and the youth for making the booth a success!

Highlights of the New England UMC Annual Conference

The New England Annual Conference consists of the clergy and laity of the 516 Methodist churches in New England meeting for three days once a year to conduct Conference-wide business, led by our new bishop, Bishop Thomas Bickerton. Aldersgate was represented by Pastors Bob and Maylis, and five laity: Sofia Rodriguez and Peter Smyton as laity representatives, Sam Rodriguez as a youth equalization rep, Gabe Rodriguez as a non-voting youth rep, and Bonnie Marden as a Conference consultant. The theme this year was “Hope with Joy . . .” In addition to approving the 2026 budget of ~ \$6.5M, which is down about 5% from the ‘25 budget, and the closing of six churches due to decreasing attendance, a number of social justice actions were taken: (1) establishing the Conference Commission on Queer People’s Status and added Queer People as an additional area of diversity and inclusivity to provide education about and support to this group, (2) committing to support the 46 immigrant pastors who are anxiously hoping for their Green Card before the time expires on their current temporary visas, (3) extending anti-racism training across all clergy and interested laity, (4) condemning Christian Nationalism and Christian Zionism and (4) offering additional training for immigrant families in our communities to know their rights in dealing evolving ICE tactics, and work to eliminate the use of disposable water bottles at UMC events.

The statistics about the Methodist churches in New England were presented and show a 7% decrease in attendance region-wide compared to 2023, only 2% of churches have an average attendance above 100 per week, and only 41% have youth attending. However, per capita mission activity and giving has increased, 23 of the 516 churches showed growth in membership, attendance, income, and mission support, and paid 100% of mission shares. Aldersgate is one of those churches; the 23 churches were asked to share what works. As you’d expect, the common denominators include energetic, creative, hard-working, enthusiastic, welcoming, and committed clergy and laity that are intentional in their work and worship, visible in the community, and strong leadership. Not surprisingly, Pastor Bob’s previous church, Living Faith, is also one of the 23. Aldersgate is blessed to be very healthy church compared to many.

There were two significant highlights for Aldersgate. (1) A vote was held to accept the Constitutional amendments to the Methodist Book of Discipline recommended at last year’s General Conference that includes removal of language restricting clergy to openly be members of the LBGTQI+ community or clergy to officiate same-sex weddings. Two-thirds of all the votes cast across all Annual Conferences world-wide must approve these changes. As a result, the results of this Conference vote were not announced to not bias the votes of upcoming Annual Conferences. The results will be announced at the Council of Bishops meeting in November. (2) The appointments of the pastors, or elders, for the church year beginning July 1 were announced. We were sad to say farewell to Pastor Bob and his family last month, and excited to receive Pastor John Whitley and his family. And, Pastor Maylis is not going anywhere!

Single Ladies Dining Out



Single Ladies Dining Out will have **lunch** together on July 19th at 1pm at Longhorn Steak House, 5 Harold Drive, Nashua, NH 03060. **Please** RSVP by Thursday July 16th to Betsy Campbell at 978-256-9400 or 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. Please talk to Betsy for more information.

Women's Daytimers Breakfast Club

Breakfast club will not meet in July or August.

We will meet Friday June 20 at 10 am at Classic Kitchen in Westford

Please contact Chantale 978-866-1034 to be added to list so she has an accurate headcount for the reservation.

Book Club in the Concord Room and on Zoom



July 29th will be "Shanghai Girls" by Lisa See, Deb Benson's pick.

August 26th will be "We begin at the End", by Chris Whitaker. Ken Tea pick.

September 30th, "The Jackal's Mistress" by Chris Bojhalian. Liz's pick

October 28th. "Speak to Me of Home" by Jeanine Cummins. Betsey's pick

If you have a suggestion for an upcoming book let Deb Benson know. 978-604-0288

Clean Sweep

Please see the signup sheet in the welcome area and consider signing up for a job or two helping to spruce up the church this summer. The jobs can be done on your time! If you don't have a key, ask Betsy in the office to borrow one or when to come. Thank you! Samples of the tasks this year include clean windows, vacuum pews, remove wax off the sanctuary rug, paint the office since there was a water leak, and repair hymnals.

Summertime Stewardship

It's hard to believe that we are already halfway through the year! There has been so much activity and hard work, by so many servants at Aldersgate! As we journey through the summer months, please be sure to keep your church family in mind with your prayers and your pledges.

Please feel free to bring your 2025 pledged offerings when you join us on Sunday services this summer at 9:30a.m. You can also send them by mail or electronic bill pay. Thank you for your faithful stewardship! For questions about bill pay through your banking institution, contact Kelly Mongiovi, our Financial Secretary at kmongiovi@aol.com, or Finance Chair, Bob Peterson, at peterston.robtk@gmail.com.

See "Electronic Giving 101" below to show you how to set up your Bank to send your pledge automatically if you desire. Copies are also on the Welcome Desk.

Electronic Giving 101

If you are interested in electronic giving, consider using the ***“Bill Pay”*** option through your bank account ***to set up a one-time or recurring electronic payment from your bank to the church.*** Remember to clarify in the “Memo section” of the check if the payment is for your Pledge, Capital Campaign, Flowers, Memorial or other specified gift. There is no charge to use this feature (including no charge for postage). Checks received directly from the financial institutions are counted with the weekly offering.


Bill Pay Detailed Instructions

Log into your on-line bank account and click on “Bill Pay” or “Pay Bills” (banks use different titles for this).

- Click “Add a Company or Person”
- Type in the “Search our Network” section: Aldersgate UMC
- Click on “Other Company”
- Type in the following **church** information:
 - Aldersgate UMC
 - Account Number: **<Type your name here>** (for financial statement purposes)
 - Address Line 1: 242 Boston Road
 - City: Chelmsford
 - State: MA
 - Zip Code: 01824
 - Phone Number: 978-256-9400
 - Mobile Number: Leave this line blank
 - Email Address: aldersgatechelmsford@verizon.net
- Now choose the amount and frequency of your contributions:
 - Click on “Auto Pay”
 - Type in the amount you wish to give
 - Type in the First Delivery Date
 - Type in the Frequency (Most people choose Weekly or Monthly)
 - Select a Duration (you can choose “Until I stop automatic payments” or ending date)
 - Remember to include pertinent information in the Memo section: Pledge, Memorial or other specified gift, flowers, envelope number, etc.

Electronic giving cards (see photo) are available to place in the offering plate or simply hold the offering plate and lift it slightly to indicate your gifts are made electronically. The electronic giving cards are located on the reading rack or the under the Choir Loft with the ushers.

Consecration of Electronic Giving



I have given a financial offering to Aldersgate United Methodist Church through an electronic giving option. I wish to consecrate this gift by placing this card into the offering plate. We are thankful to God for all the ways we are able to share our blessings! Amen

If you have any questions, please contact a member of the Finance Committee, Treasurer, or Financial Secretary. Thank you for your generosity and faithfulness to the financial stewardship strength of Aldersgate United Methodist Church. Your gifts and generosity strengthen our mission and ministry to the community and the world!

Committees, Groups and Ministries

If you are interested in becoming involved with, or learning more about, a committee or group at Aldersgate, here's who to talk to.

Adult Education: Kim Ward

Organizes and supports the three Adult Ed Bible Study classes on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays

Book Club: Debbie Benson

Meets monthly to discuss books selected by club participants

Children Education Ministry:

Christine Kelley

Supports Church School and teachers with teacher resources and substitutes

Christmas Fair: Bonnie Marden

Organizes the fair, the first weekend of Dec.

Congregational Life: Cheryl Ortolf

Organizes fellowship events for families

Daytimers Breakfast: Chantale Shepard

Meet monthly for breakfast and fellowship

Endowment Gifts: Rick Newcomb

Manages major gift accounts & distributions

Finance: Bob Peterson

Oversees church financial matters

Garden Club: Lee Williams

Maintains the church vegetable garden

GriefShare: Marcia Dana, Chris Sargent

13-week confidential program open to the community to deal with loss of loved ones

Holy Strollers: Rick Newcomb

Come join a weekly walking/hiking group

Hospitality: Betsey Driscoll, Robin Dye

Organizes Coffee Hour, Collations

Info Technology: Greg Piper

Oversees church computers, networks, livestream of worship

Knitting Ministry: Betsy Campbell

Meets weekly for knitting and fellowship

Mighty Men: Peter Fipphen

Fellowship and mission work by the men

Music: Rev. Maylis de la Fe Rodriguez

Chancel Choir is open to those interested in singing at the second service

Shepherd Bells is open to experienced bell ringers

Bellisimos is for those interested in learning to play bells

Committee Nominations: Jim Ortolf

Matches people with ministries of interest

Outreach Programs: Robin Dye

Oversees the church's outreach missions

Prayer Ministry: Dottie Newcomb

On-line prayer circle

Records/History: Jill Angel, Peter Smyton

Preserves historical, business church records

Single Ladies Dining Out: Betsy Campbell

Meets monthly for meals and fellowship

Staff-Parish Relations: Dan Ward

Acts as a liaison between our staff and the congregation

Trustees: Don Goodick

Oversees and facilitates the maintenance of the church building and parsonage

Wonderful Women: Elaine Brown

Fellowship and mission work by the women

Worship Planning

Acolytes, lay readers,

greeters:

Betsy Campbell

Altar Guild:

Jane Vooy

Livestreaming:

Peter Smyton

Ushers:

Jim Ortolf

Youth Ministry: Lee Williams

Junior Youth: Grades 5 – 7

Senior Youth: Grades 8 – 12

Birthdays and Anniversaries – July/August

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.

July/August Birthdays

July 7 – Andrew P.

July 15 – Jeff Thurlow

July 15 – Cheryl Cruickshank

July 19 – Evelyn W.

July 29 – Marty van Buren

August 5 – Kim Ward

August 9 – Jim Casiello

August 18 – Pastor John Whitley

August 24 – Harriet Kinnett

August 28 – Melvin Kinnett



July/August Anniversaries

July 3 - Clewis and Dave Howe's anniversary

July 14 – Carmen and Arthur Umana Anniversary

August 7 - Cheryl & Keith's Anniversary

August 23 - Diane and Marty van Buren's wedding anniversary -



If we have missed your big days, 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.

Join us for Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat this Summer!

MIDDLE SCHOOL/SENIOR HIGH MUSIC THEATRE

Camp at Mechuwana, Winthrop ME July 27-August 2

Grades 6-12 Campers participate in acting, singing, dancing, & technical assistance. Led by professional performance artists and seasoned theatre musicians, cabin counselors, and Bible teachers, this week of fun and miracles concludes with two performances. Meet new friends and participate in a full range of activities and spiritual experiences. \$535 with 50+% scholarships available.

Contact Bonnie Marden (978-846-1260) or bonmarden@gmail.com for more information or visit <https://www.mechuwana.org/summer-camps>

**You can schedule your appointment for the next Blood Drive
for August 9th from 9am-2pm**

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 August 9th to schedule an appointment. For more information call or email Cate Lehan or Robin Dye or the church office.

Aldersgate Faire - Save the Dates: December 5-6, 2025

Preparations are already underway - please note these dates in your calendar!

Betty and Carmen finished the 2025 wreath bows and picks (Thank You!) and we look forward to training others for this special element of our Faire. Thank you also to knitters and crafters already busy creating special items!

We look forward to seeing you in December, welcome any Silent Auction and new jewelry donations, and give thanks for all the talents and community fellowship we create during our annual Christmas Faire. Creative containers for centerpieces are also welcome.

For more information or to find out how you can join the Elves Team, contact Bonnie M (978-846-1260), Melinda G (978-996-3138 or Deana Peterson (978-758-6232).

Summer Camp Programs



The New England Conference offers many summer camping opportunities for all ages. Please visit this website: www.neumc.orgcampsandretreatcenters to find out more information. There are scholarships available to all children and youth who attend a camp program, thanks to our Doris Miller Camp Scholarship Fund.

YOUTH MISSION TRIP!

We have 8 youth and young adults and 3 adults attending our youth mission trip at Camp Wanakee in Meredith, NH. We will make new benches for the fire pits at the campground and have fun together as we grow in faith and serve our community.



Thank you to our church family for all the ways
you have helped support us by attending our fundraisers!

ALDERSGATE U.M.C. VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



GOD'S BIG BACKYARD!

For children Ages 4 - 12

August 11 – 15, 9:00 a.m. – noon

Deadline to sign up is Monday, July 28.

Sign up today for God's Big Backyard VBS! Get ready for an outdoor adventure that starts in our own backyard and gets bigger each day as we take the love of Jesus into our homes, neighborhoods, and communities. Kids of all ages will experience God's Word, learn ways to serve others, plus explore and create through fun-filled crafts, snacks, and games.

Cost: \$20.00 per child, family max: \$60.00

Scholarships are available – please see Lee Williams

Registration forms are available downstairs or [online](#).

There are many opportunities for adult and youth volunteer helpers.

Please see Lee Williams if you have any questions or would like to help.

Ice Cream Sandwiches at the Fourth of July Booth!



The senior youth group sold Betsey Driscoll's homemade ice cream sandwiches at the Chelmsford Country Fair. Aurora and Gideon enjoy them while watching their grandfather play in the Chelmsford Community Band concert. Owen, Emmy, and their cousin Mills make a valiant attempt to tackle a sandwich.

Blessing of the Backpacks

Sunday, August 24

During Vacation Bible School, we will be collecting backpacks and school supplies to support The Wish Project's "[Backpack Attack](#)" drive. Newly filled backpacks are distributed to children in homeless shelters or low-income families via the many social service agencies in the Merrimack Valley.

Before students return to school, Pastor John will offer a Blessing of the Backpacks during worship on Sunday, August 24. We will dedicate our donated backpacks and supplies before delivering them to The Wish Project. Children and youth are encouraged to bring their own backpacks, too!

The congregation is invited to join our VBS participants in this drive, and now is a good time to watch for sales on school supplies or order from their [Amazon wishlist](#). We can donate either complete backpacks or individual items, and they will put the bags together. The following unused items are needed in each pack:

- 1 New backpack (17" or larger)
- 3 spiral notebooks
- 3 folders
- 1 pack of 10 #2 pencils
- 1 pencil sharpener
- 2 or more black pens
- 1 large pink style or 6 cap erasers
- 1 12" ruler (inches and centimeters)
- 1 pair of metal scissors
- 1 pack of 12 markers or colored pencils
- 2 or 3 glue sticks or 1 bottle of glue
- 1 pack of 24 crayons
- Optional: 1 scientific calculator for high school student

Memorial Bench Dedication

On June 15th, Pastor Bob dedicated a Memorial Bench installed by the Wetterwald Family in loving memory of Audrey Wetterwald.

The bench was donated by the Sisters of Pithius – an organization that Audrey was very involved in for many year.





PMC Update
July 9, 2025
Dear Aldersgate Family,

The Pan Mass Challenge is fast approaching. On August 2, I will ride from Wellesley to Bourne; a distance of 84 miles. I've been riding and raising funds for the Dana Farber Cancer Institute (no relation) since 2006.

It has been a tough year to get in my training miles. Between having Covid in April, a sinus infection in June, and well, there was that trip to Prague last month. Consequently, my mileage is much lower than it usually is at this point in the summer. I used to aim for 150-200 miles per week and now I'm happy if I manage 50-100 miles per week.

Fortunately it is not a race. On August 2, I'll get there when I get there.

I look forward to riding with my son, Evan, this year. I'm always grateful for a strong wheel to follow, and sharing this experience with Evan makes it extra special.

My goal this year is to raise \$20,000 for my 20th year. I am currently at just over \$9000.

Only \$11,000 more to go! I would be ever so grateful for any amount you are able to give.

You can donate online by going to <https://profile.pmc.org/md0202> or by sending a check made out to PMC, to my house at 6 Sterling Lane, Westford, MA 01886. If there is someone special you would like me to ride for, please let me know if this tribute is in memory, or in celebration of survivorship.

With humble gratitude and love,
Marcia

