



ALDERSGATE ADVOCATE

September 2025

Pastor's Column

Dear Siblings in Christ,

As we move into the month of September and make our way closer to the official beginning of Fall, I've been thinking a lot recently about all of the stories that are being gathered and told this time of year: stories of summer vacations or time away that kids will tell their friends about when they go back to school; the stories that co-workers will share about their families as they tell about the memories they made; catch-up stories that will update a close friend on the latest chapter of something they've been following together step-by-step. I was really taken in by a story I heard in an interview this morning on NPR as I was taking my kids to school. Author Arundhati Roy was being interviewed about her recent memoir (*Mother Mary Comes to Me*) and was talking about the mixture of feelings she carries about her own mother (Mary Roy), who was a famous and very influential advocate for women's rights in India throughout her life and yet also quite severe and emotionally distant in her home life. Arundhati spoke about her great admiration, respect, and gratitude for her mother's work and reflected aloud on what a gift it has been to her, even while she aches for the loss of some of the more personal gifts that she always wanted from her mother. She said at one point that she wrote this memoir because she wanted to try and get ahold of the shape that that experience and mixture of feelings left her in—in many ways, she said, that is the shape (for good or ill) that she has had to learn how to carry forward in her life. At the end, she said a word of thanks "to the God of striped and speckled things" for the gift of her mother and her experiences and for the wisdom and insight her reflection times has given her.

I'm struck by the way she put that: that relationship and that experience left her in a shape of some kind that she has had to learn to live her life in. Isn't that true of us all? The stories we learn about ourselves have shaped the teller and the telling. They fashion our hearts in sometimes contorted, sometimes contradictory ways and we somehow have to hold ourselves before God and one another in those shapes and live forward from there. I think it may be for this reason, above all others, that the Psalms are near and dear to me. In Psalms, we hear all kinds of voices in all kinds of stations of life—voices that are fearful, angry, broken, scarred, joyful, vengeful, sad, victorious, and voices that, very often, join their story with those emotions so that we can hear their truth in full and join in with them wherever we may be. Psalms, in that way, reminds us that there is an access-point to God wherever we may be, and somehow, at that access point, its words become not only our words to God, but God's word to us. What a grace it is, Psalms reminds us, that God finds us and moves ahead with us whatever shape life has left us in. That God is also the "God of striped and speckled things." Friends, I intend to usher us into the Fall on that theme and with the Psalms as our guide, especially here in the month of September. I will

be starting a new sermon series this coming Sunday entitled “I Will Call Upon the Lord” and it is my hope and prayer that it might offer us all an opportunity to look closely at the shape we’re in as we start to plan our way forward. It is an honor to be your pastor. I look forward to hearing your stories and getting to know you better as we move ahead on our journey together.

May God Bless Your Hearts!

Pastor John

Sermon Series in September: "I Will Call Upon the Lord"

How do we meet God where we are (rather than from where we wish we were)? If there is one thing that the book of Psalms is full of, it’s different voices finding themselves and finding their way to God from wherever they are whether they be strained, anxious, fearful, or joyful. Finding ourselves before God is how we find our footing, notice where we are and what we’ve been carrying, and ultimately bring the fullness of ourselves into step with where God would take us. In this new series, let us listen in a new way to the voices of the Psalmists as they reveal where God is already standing with us right where we are.

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 **Today, Rally Day:**

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 PreK - 2nd grade, 3rd - 5th grade, 6th - 8th grade, and 9th - 12th grade. On Rally Day, Church School Registration for children and youth starts at 9:15 am in the welcome area downstairs. We will also present Bibles to 3rd grade children during the 10:45 am worship service.

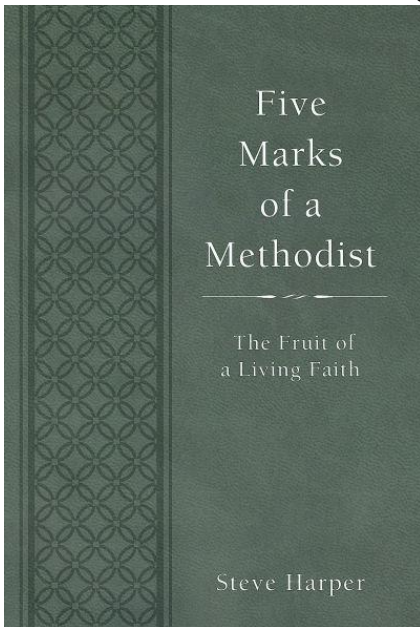
Adult Education will meet in the Concord Room today at 9:45 am to hear about the plans for the Sunday Adult Ed class this fall. Everyone is invited! The class will begin on September 14 in the Concord Room and via Zoom at 9:45 am. The Thursday Morning Bible study will begin this Thursday, September 11, at 10:00 am in the Concord Room and via Zoom. Early Bird will commence via Zoom on Tuesday, September 16 at 10:00 am.

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!

Beginning Sunday, September 14, 2025



Has it been decades since your confirmation classes? Fuzzy on what exactly makes you a Methodist? Looking for some conversation with delightful people about the things that really matter? Our new study can help! Join us to watch a short video and discuss Sunday mornings at 9:45 in the Concord Room.

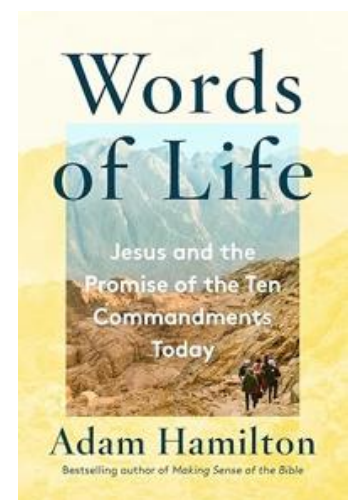
Discover five marks that confirm our identity as genuine and fruitful followers of Christ:

1. A Methodist Loves God
2. A Methodist Rejoices in God
3. A Methodist Gives Thanks
4. A Methodist Prays Constantly
5. A Methodist Loves Others

You can pick up a copy of the book or participant guide any where books are sold online.

Thursday Morning Bible Study Begins This Week!

The Thursday morning Bible study returns this Thursday, Sept 11 at 10 am in the Concord Room or on Zoom to catch up with one another after the summer break. Next week, September 18, led by Pastor John, the class will continue their study of *Words of Life* by Adam Hamilton, picking up at Chapter VII: Faithfulness in an Age of Porn. In this book of Scripture and inspiration, Adam brings modern eyes to the most important set of ethics in history, the Ten Commandments. He considers the commandments in their historical context, considering the meaning of each commandment in Hebrew, unpacking how Jesus reinterpreted them, and showing how every thou-shalt-not was intended to point to a life-giving “thou shalt.” He also explores how the latest research in science and psychology illuminates these commandments, rightly understood, as a way of ordering one's life beautifully in the present day. You can find the book at any online retailer.



Rally Day is Sunday, September 7!

Rally Day is Sunday, September 7! 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. We will have a special reception at 9:45 a.m. with refreshments in the library for all parents to have the opportunity to meet Pastor John and talk about our church school program for the fall. You are also invited to gather in the Concord Room after the first service 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 Library downstairs. We will also present Bibles to all 3rd 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! Please bring a side dish, salad, or dessert to share.

New Directory Coming!

Plans are underway to create a new church directory this fall, complete with family photos and contact info of the congregation! The former process of a directory vendor taking our photos is no longer available. So, instead, our own professional photographer, Val Shupe, will be taking the family photos. Each family will receive a high quality, 8x10 photo, plus a digital copy of the photo, for \$25, with \$5 going towards a mission selected by the Outreach committee. You can also discuss a photo package with Val, e.g., two 5x7s and eight wallets with the 8x10 for \$40. You can also submit your own family photo yourself, subject to the photo quality standards required by our vendor who is producing the directory.

There are sign-up sheets in the lobby to make your appointment! We are also looking for volunteers to staff the check-in table during the photo days. If you would like to help, or have questions about the process, please see Rick Newcomb (rnewcomb@comcast.net, 978-828-1455).

Help Us Create Our New Directory!

We are looking for help to create our directory! Volunteers are needed to help families check-in for their photo session, staff the sign-up area the next few Sundays, make calls to members of our church family who have not signed up, and with directory layout decisions. If you would like to help, or have questions, please contact Rick Newcomb (rnewcomb@comcast.net, 978-828-1455).

Chelmsford Children's Choir Invitation

Robin Knox would like to invite children who are 3rd grade to 7th grade to join the Chelmsford Children's Choir. If interested, please email her at robinknox@comcast.net.

Pastor Bob Jon's DS Installation Snnday Afternoon!

Our former pastor, Pastor Bob Jon, is being installed as the Green Mountain District Superintendent today, 3:00 – 5:00 pm at the Hedding UMC, Barre, VT. The installation will be live-streamed at the Hedding UMC web site:
<https://www.youtube.com/@heddingchurch/streams>

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.

Upcoming NE Conference Anti-Racism Webinars

The organization *A Long Talk about an Uncomfortable Truth* is offering, in conjunction with the New England Conference, three cohorts and associated sets of Anti-Racism Activation Experience webinars to "equip United Methodist congregations to move from resolution to action." There are two 2-hour webinars for each cohort. Two cohorts are scheduled for September. The Conference is hoping that, by attending these webinars, we can be better supporters and advocates of those who experience racism. More information and the link to register are at <https://www.neumc.org/newsdetail/answer-the-call-anti-racism-activation-experiences-with-a-long-talk-19133763>. More information about the organization is at <https://alongtalk.com>.

Visit the AUMC Booth at the Chelmsford Fall Festival on September 27

Come visit the Aldersgate booth during this year's Chelmsford's Fall Festival! The festival is Saturday, September 27, 11:00 am – 4:00 pm and will be staffed by our youth. We will be selling a slightly less ginormous sized version of Betsey's famous chocolate chip ice cream sandwiches than what is sold

at the July 4th booth. We will offer both the original chocolate chip cookie with vanilla ice cream sandwiches, and molasses cookies with pumpkin ice cream. Both varieties will also be available this year in vegan and gluten free! Cornhole will be available for the kids, and everyone wins a prize! Come celebrate the season, enjoy some fellowship, and support the church!



Coming Up at Aldersgate September 2025

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

Red Cross Blood Drive: October 4th, 9:00 am – 2:00 pm

Early Bird Bible Application

Early Bird Bible Application resumes on Tuesday 16 September.

Early Bird is a gathering of people who learn, share and grow together on their faith journey. Whether you are a seeker or have been on the Christian journey for months or years, you are invited to join in the conversation. This is a space where you can share your faith story, express your doubts and be open to the transforming power of God's Word. There is room in the discussion for you!

We will begin this new study series with the theme "The Christian Life." The foundational Scripture for the study is Micah 6:8 *'He has shown you, O human, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.'* (NIV)

On 16 September we will begin with a close look at the hymn, 'Lord I Want to Be a Christian.' What can we extract from this hymn and request about the Christian life?

Early Bird meets on Tuesday mornings at ten o'clock via Zoom. Charles McCrea is the group leader

Single Ladies Dining Out



Single Ladies Dining Out will have **lunch** together on September 27th at 1pm at Olive Garden, 422 Middlesex Rd, Tyngsboro, MA 01879. **Please** RSVP by Thursday September 25th 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 return to meeting in September.

Please contact Chantale 978-250-9573 to be added to list so she has an accurate headcount for the reservation.



Book Club in the Concord Room and on Zoom

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

VBS HIGHLIGHTS!!

What a wonderful week we had at our God's Big Backyard VBS! We welcomed children, youth and adults from our church family and the community. We learned about serving our family, friends, neighbors and community, and we learned that by serving others we are also serving Jesus!

A special thank you to all the adult and youth helpers for creating a wonderful opportunity for the children to learn Bible stories, make creative crafts, play fun games, eat delicious snacks, sing songs, watch funny puppet skits, and help with a different community service project each day.



CHURCH SCHOOL ON RALLY DAY – SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 7th



9:15 a.m. - Church School Registration
9:30 a.m. - Church School for Children & Youth
9:45 a.m. - Parent Reception in Rm 7/8
10:45 a.m. - Worship & Bible Presentation to 3rd Graders



Our church school teachers are very excited to meet their students for this year! We will also have a special reception at 9:45 a.m. with refreshments in room 7/8 for all parents to have the opportunity to meet Pastor John and talk about our church school program for the fall.

Potluck for All: 12:00 Noon

Please bring a side dish to share. We will supply the hot dogs, hamburgers, veggie burgers and beverages.

If you have any questions, please email Lee Williams at aumc-education@verizon.net

Backpack Drive

During VBS, we collected backpacks and school supplies for The Wish Project's "Backpack Attack" drive. The entire congregation generously supported this drive throughout the month of August. We delivered 41 newly-filled backpacks to The Wish Project! They will be distributed to children in homeless shelters or low-income families via the many social service agencies in the Merrimack Valley. Thank you all!



Youth Mission Trip Sharing Time!

Saturday, September 13th

5:30 – 7:00 p.m.

The youth and adults who attended our Youth Mission Trip this summer will host a free pasta dinner and share a special presentation with you about our experiences serving at Camp Wanakee.

We have many stories and photos to share with you. Come join us - all are welcome!



Junior Youth Pizza Party!

Friday, September 19, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

All youth in grades 5 - 7 are welcome to join us!

We will eat pizza, play games and talk about the activities for the year.

Friends are always welcome!

Senior Youth Fun!

Sunday, September 14, noon - 2:00 p.m.

All youth in grades 8 - 12 are invited to join us
as we begin a new year of youth group!

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



AUMC Habitat Work Day

Please also note that we have a work day scheduled for 10-25 in Westford. We have 13 volunteers already and have room for 1 more. I will create a waiting list if anyone drops out.

18th Annual Dream Builders Gala - Habitat

Get Early Bird Tickets Today!

Early Bird Pricing ends on Monday, 9/9.

Please join Habitat for Humanity of Greater Lowell for our 18th Annual Dream Builders Gala at the beautiful Nashawtuc Country Club in Concord, MA on Friday, October 3rd from 6 to 10 PM. Attire is black tie optional.

This special evening will include a catered sit-down dinner, music, and the chance to come together in support of our mission to build safe, affordable homes for families in need. [Tickets are on sale now!](#)

We're excited to share the progress we've made, including a home closing in Bedford this August, two homes under construction in Westford, and three new homes now underway in Concord.

As we grow from building one home per year to three, this event is a celebration of what we've accomplished — **and what's ahead**. The night will feature a silent auction, live auction, raffles, a delicious meal and drinks, and all proceeds will support our work to create more opportunities for local families to build brighter futures.

Please consider sponsoring this event. By donating, your funds will be leveraged to help us raise even more towards our mission. [Sponsorship levels and benefits can be found here.](#)

Garden Update

This is the peak harvest time for our church garden! Tomatoes, squash and peppers are ripe and ready for picking. During VBS, the children enjoyed harvesting tomatoes and digging for potatoes – some to sample and some to donate. This past week, we delivered 92 slicer tomatoes, 12 pints of cherry tomatoes, 5 summer squash, 12 cucumbers and a pepper to the Chelmsford Food Pantry. There will be more to share during Coffee Hour over the next few weeks!





SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 7TH

We will rally together to start our fall program!

WORSHIP SERVICES:

8:30 & 10:45 A.M.

9:15 a.m. – Church School Registration

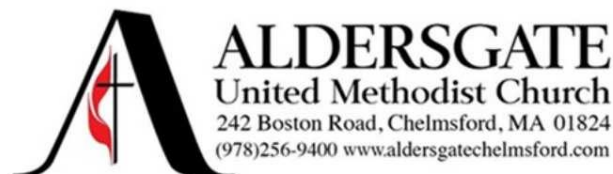
9:30 a.m. – Church School for Children & Youth

9:45 a.m. – Parent Reception in Rm 7/8

10:45 a.m. – Worship & Bible Presentation to 3rd Graders

POTLUCK FOR ALL: 12:00 NOON

Please bring a side dish to share. We will supply the hot dogs, hamburgers, veggie burgers and beverages.



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 – September

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 Regan

Sept 7 – Cate Lehan

Sept 9 – Tom Wall

Sept 10 - Dottie Newcomb

Sept 11 - Clewis Howe

Sept 12 – Owen B.

Sept 13 – Kim Ward

Sept 17 – Lisa Marson

Sept 22 – Isaac P.

Sept 25t – Nathan W.

Sept 30 – Aurora M.



September Anniversaries

Sept 2 – Val and Mike Shupe

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.

**You can schedule your appointment for the next Blood Drive
for October 4th 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

Faire planning meeting: September 11 at 7:30 in the Library. Bring your ideas and simples as we plan for the 2025 Faire December 5-6, 2025. All are welcome.

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).

Outreach News-

For the months of September and October, we will be collecting the following items to be packed into “Ditty Bags” to be distributed to seafarers through The Seafarers Mission located in Boston. There will be a container in the church lobby after Labor Day to collect items.

Items for Ditty Bag:

Hats - knit or store bought

Socks - white or black

Combs

Nail clippers

Bandanas

Hard candy

Lip balm

Toothbrush

Gum

Note pads

Pens

Disposable razor

Sewing kit (directions with container)

We are hoping to fill 24 bags for delivery the beginning of November.

Thank you for your support of this effort.

Outreach Committee

From Deb Benson:

Please support Rose's 1st Annual Fundraising Gala on September 20th to benefit St. Paul's Soup Kitchen, in memory of Rose Bronc who started the Soup Kitchen.



You Are Invited To

Rose's 1st Annual Fundraising Gala

All proceeds support the
St. Paul's Soup Kitchen.

SATURDAY | 20 | SEPTEMBER
6:00 PM | 2025

\$50 per ticket

Scan to purchase your tickets:



MERRIMACK VALLEY GOLF CLUB
210 HOWE STREET
METHUEN, MA

More Info :
<https://stpaulssoupkitchen.org>

Join Us For Junie's Place - 3rd Annual Gala

You're invited to the 3rd annual fundraising gala in support of Junie's Place, Inc, a local nonprofit with a mission to provide no-cost grief support to families journeying through the grief of pregnancy/infant/child loss and to champion grief awareness. This is the event of the season, with this year's theme being Iconic Couples and Crews! Come dressed as your favorite famous icons, ready to dance the night away, have your oracle read, enjoy tasty bites from Summer Street Grocers and try your luck at some fantastic raffle prizes (we hear Bruins tickets might be in the mix!).

We're also seeking sponsors for the event! Chelmsford Police Athletic League is this year's presenting sponsor, but we have many other opportunities available too. For any questions about sponsorships or the event, please reach out to Laura Brown at Brown@SapphireWomensHealthcare.com

JOIN US FOR

Junie's Place 3rd
Annual Gala:

ICONIC COUPLES AND
CREWS FOR AN
INCREDIBLE CAUSE

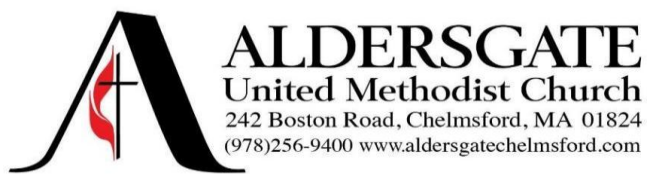
Join us for a night of joy, connection, and purpose —
supporting Junie's Place in providing no-cost grief
support to families experiencing child or pregnancy
loss and championing grief awareness.

SATURDAY 4th 7pm-11pm
OCTOBER TICKETS: \$60

Chelmsford Center for the Arts

www.JuniesPlace.org TICKETS: \$60





To: