

December 14, 2025

Our Vision—A beacon of God's love radiating faith, hope, and joy... Everywhere!

The Altar Flowers today are given by Melinda and Don Goodick dedicated to the memory of Don Sr., Lois and Nancy Goodick.

December Upcoming Events

Remaining Sundays of Advent: December 14 and 21

Christmas Pageant, December 21, 10:45 am

Christmas Eve Services, December 24, 4 pm, 7 pm, 10 pm

Red Cross Blood Drive: Aldersgate UMC, December 27, 9 am – 2 pm

One Service, December 28, 9:30 am; No Church School

Epiphany Sunday on January 4, 8:30 am and 10:45 am



2026 AUMC Budget Approved at Church Conference

The Church Conference approved the 2026 AUMC budget on November 30, 2025, as presented by the Finance Committee. The budget includes a 3% pay increase for all staff. The recommended \$410,414 budget is, for the sixth year in a row, a deficit budget, with estimated expenses exceeding expected income by more than \$37,800. That is a deficit of 9.2%.

We recommend applying the *remaining* funds that we received due to some very generous unexpected donations during the pandemic to decrease the 2026 deficit to 4.4%. NOTE: This year, in 2025, we started the year with an even bigger deficit of 11.7% and benefited from the generosity of the congregation, as well as unallocated funds, to substantially decrease this year's deficit to approximately 2%.

Please pray for continued wise stewardship in managing our financial resources to further Aldersgate's ministry!

Faire Items Still Available!

A big THANK YOU to all the Faire Elves and shoppers for participating in last weekend's Faire! It was a fantastic time of fellowship as we welcomed the community to Aldersgate! There was a great spirit throughout in preparing for and holding the Faire. Thanks to the generosity of the congregation and community, we have made about \$9,400! There are still excellent items, including wreaths, swags, arrangements, knitted items, crafts, jewelry, and regifting items, that are available for purchase in the Fellowship Hall. We invite you to shop before or after the service.

2026 Flower Chart is now on the wall in the hallway
Please reserve your dates to donate flowers for 2026. The cost is \$40.

Hats, Gloves, Mittens, Socks, and Toiletries for St. Paul's

Outreach will be collecting items for St. Paul's by the **14th of December**. Please bring in hats, gloves, socks, and mittens as well as toiletries. There is a box in the welcome area.

Santa Fund

The Santa tree is up and presents need to be in by **December 14th**. Thank you all for making Christmas special for all the kids.

Last Call to Attend Small House Gatherings with Pastor John!

There are two remaining opportunities this week to attend a small informal gathering to get to know Pastor John better. Those who have attended previous sessions, hosted by members of the congregation, have enjoyed getting to know Pastor John and each other a bit more. Look for sign-up sheets in the Welcome Area with the date, time, host family, and location of these gatherings. The number of entries for each gathering is the maximum that can be accommodated, so please use one line per individual when signing up, e.g., couples should use two lines. The remaining opportunities are today, December 14 at 1:30 pm at the church, hosted by Garth and Elaine Brown, and Wednesday, December 17 at 7:00 pm at Roger and Maureen Whitehead's home.

60th Anniversary Concert Available

Due to copyright licensing restrictions, we are unable to make the recording of the 60th anniversary concert held on November 2 widely available, e.g., on our church web site or YouTube channel. However, there is one copy of the video on a thumb drive and one copy of the audio on a CD that can be borrowed from the church office by contacting Betsy (Aldersgatechelmsford@verizon.net or 978-256-9400).

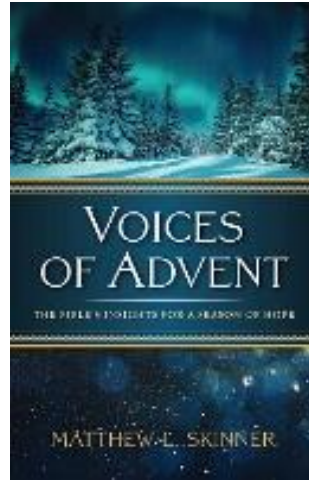
Directory Photos Are Here!

For those families who had Val Shupe take their photo for our upcoming directory, the photos are ready! The digital version of your photo has been emailed to you, so please let us know if you did not receive it. The hardcopy of the package you ordered is available by stopping by the church when the office is open, Mon, Wed, and Fri, 10:00 am – noon. As part of your payment for your photo package, \$400 was given to Junie's Place, Inc, a local nonprofit that provides support to families journeying through the grief of pregnancy/infant/child loss and to champion grief awareness. If you have questions, please contact Rick Newcomb (rnewcomb@comcast.net, 978-828-1455).

2025 Advent Study

Voices of Advent by Matthew Skinner

Advent has begun! Hurry to pick up a copy of *Voices of Advent*, by **Matthew L. Skinner**. Skinner examines biblical texts to show how they influence our lives and Christmas traditions. Through voices from Jesus, John the Baptist, faithful believers, angels, and visionaries, *Voices of Advent* guides readers to find hope in their messages and experience Advent as both the beginning of the Christian year and an introduction to the story of Jesus. This study includes short video segments to watch together and discuss. Join the conversation Sundays at 9:45 AM or Thursdays at 10 AM in the Concord Room and on Zoom. If you can't make it to a group meeting, you can watch the videos on your own any time on Amplify Media. Call Betsy in the office for access code.
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Early Bird Bible Study

Early Bird concludes the Advent series with a look back to Isaiah 7:14 and a look ahead to 2026. We will explore the thought “God With Us.” Plan to be a part of this faith discussion. Early Bird meets Tuesday morning at nine o’clock via Zoom

Church Conference Held Last Month

Aldersgate’s annual Church Conference was held on November 30, in conjunction with our brothers and sisters from West Chelmsford UMC and the UMC of Westford. Our District Superintendent, Rev. Megan Stowe, presided. At the conference, we approved the 2026 church budget – see the article elsewhere here for more info – that included the compensation for the pastors and other church staff. We also approved the slate of committee nominations for the coming year. We spent time brainstorming how the three churches could better use our combined resources and how to more effectively reach out in our communities to help others. If you have ideas in these areas, please contact Pastor John or Peter Smyton, Church Council chairperson.

Songs of Hope and Light - Christmas Concert and Carols for All Ages

Sunday, Dec. 21 at 2:00pm

Tewksbury United Methodist Church, 2335 Main Street, Tewksbury, MA

Featuring traditional and contemporary musical selections for the season. We will enjoy organ music, voice and bell choirs, and caroling. Join us, bring a friend, be blessed by a powerful musical message. Bring a food donation for local food pantries serving our communities. Sing with us as we prepare for the Light of Christ to be born again in our world! This is a combined project by Tewksbury UMC, Wilmington UMC, Woburn UMC, and Aldersgate UMC in North Reading.

Christmas Poinsettias



Once again, we will decorate our sanctuary at Christmas with several beautiful poinsettias. We will purchase several larger plants that will not be distributed but will remain in the sanctuary, beginning on Christmas Eve. If you would like to make a donation of \$10.00 each, please fill out this form so that these dedications can be listed in the Announcements.

We plan to list the dedications on the screen during worship and on the dedication page in the Bulletin. Please check Yes___ or No___ if you give us permission for the listing.

The deadline is December 21st, 2025.

I/we wish to make the following donation:

Number of dedications_____

Please indicate how you would like the dedication(s) listed: It would be helpful if you would print the information. Thank you.

Given by: _____

Please return this form with your gift of \$10.00 for each donation to the church office or put it in the offering plate. Checks should be made payable to Aldersgate United Methodist Church, marked “Poinsettias

Church School Christmas Pageant

Sunday, December 21, 10:45 a.m.



The church school will be presenting this year’s Christmas Pageant during the 10:45 a.m. worship service for the congregation, neighbors, and friends! Lee Williams will be visiting the church school classes on December 7 and 14 to sign up children and youth for different parts. The pageant practice for all participants will be on Saturday, December 20, at 10:00am in the sanctuary.


NO CHURCH SCHOOL ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28
MERRY CHRISTMAS!

SENIOR YOUTH UPCOMING EVENTS

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

Senior Youth Christmas Party!

Sunday, December 14, noon – 1:30 p.m.

 Come join us as we celebrate the coming of Christmas! We will play games and make Christmas tree shaped pizzas.

CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS



With one week left, our Aldersgate family wishes to extend to you the opportunity to participate in the giving of a Congregation Gift for the Staff: Pastor John, Betsy, Rev Maylis, Lee, Deana and Mirna.



The Congregation Gift is a wonderful opportunity to share of ourselves and acknowledge our love for their gift to us throughout the year.

If you would like to contribute you may do so by dropping your donation off at the church, mailing it to the church and marking it with a “Staff Gift” note, or giving it to an usher or any member of the SPRC (Dan Ward, Clewis Howe, Lee Pender, Steve Johnson, Jay Turchinetz, Scott Henderson).
In Christian Love and Spirit,
The Staff Parish Relations Committee



What Would Jesus want for His Birthday?

Just as the Wise Ones traveled great distances to bring precious gifts to the child Jesus, so too, we want to give gifts this Holy season that would make the heart of Jesus glad.

Again, this year, we are following the principles of *The Advent Conspiracy*:

- * Worship Fully
- * Spend Less on things people do not need
- * Love all
- * Give more of ourselves, our time, our lives



We are encouraging each other to save the money we would have spent on gifts that those we love really don’t need, and instead give a life-giving gift that truly matters. This year our church council and outreach committee have selected as our Advent Mission the UMC Global Ministries *Agriculture and Food Ministry* program: the Yambasu Agriculture Initiative.

You are welcome to take one of the special ornaments on our Mission tree in the front lobby area beginning November 30.

On Epiphany, also known as “Kings’ Sunday” - January 4, we will bring our monetary gifts from the savings we have made and will offer them to support our Advent Mission: the Yambasu Agriculture Initiative.



UMC Global Ministries Agriculture and Food Ministry Program

Yambasu Agriculture Initiative

Will you join us during Advent in offering the gift of food security this Christmas Season? Global efforts to eliminate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition are meeting more roadblocks because of the elimination of many U.S. foreign aid programs. In Africa, UMC Global Ministries is expanding the **Yambasu Agriculture Initiative** to help communities improve their food security through agricultural training and capacity building.

Named for the late Bishop John K. Yambasu of Sierra Leone, the Yambasu Agriculture Initiative works with United Methodist annual conferences and episcopal areas in Africa to lead agricultural projects that build self-sustaining communities.

Project Examples

- expanded growth of crops such as maize, cassava and rice
- cultivating seed projects to expand future crop output
- honey and secondary product sales
- poultry, rabbit and piggery projects, among others

You can find out more about this organization at:

umcmmission.org/story/food-security-from-the-ground-up-yambasu-agriculture-initiative and

umcmmission.org/work/humanitarian-relief/agriculture-and-food-security

Bring your gift on January 4, as we celebrate King's Sunday and offer our gifts of love for the world Christ loves and came to save.