

December 7, 2025

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

**The Altar Flowers today are given in thanks for our Aldersgate family
this Christmas season. From Holly and Peter Fipphen**

AUMC 2026 Recommended Budget Presented at Church Conference

The Finance Committee met to reconcile the proposed 2026 AUMC budget which will be presented at the Church Conference this Sunday evening, November 30, at 7:00 pm. The budget includes a 3% pay increase for all staff. The recommended \$410,213 budget is, for the sixth year in a row, a deficit budget, with estimated expenses exceeding expected income by more than \$37,600. 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 4.3%. 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 almost 1%.

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

Church Conference Held Last Sunday

Aldersgate’s annual Church Conference was held last Sunday, 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.

Sign Up for Small Gatherings with Pastor John!

One way Pastor John wants to get to know us is through informal gatherings, hosted by members of the congregation. 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. There are two remaining opportunities, next Sunday, December 14 at 1:30 pm at the church, and Wednesday, December 17 at 7:00 pm at Roger and Maureen Whitehead’s home.

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.

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).

Christmas Poinsettias

Once again we will decorate our sanctuary on Christmas Eve with five beautiful poinsettias. We will purchase larger plants that will be present for the Christmas Eve service.

We are again inviting people to make a donation toward the cost of the poinsettias in celebration of someone or in memory of a loved one (suggested donation of \$10). There is a form on the welcome desk that you can fill out and either put in the offering plate or mail to the office. You can also call the church office and leave a message and Betsy will return your call to follow up with you. Betsy will also include the form in the Worship email.

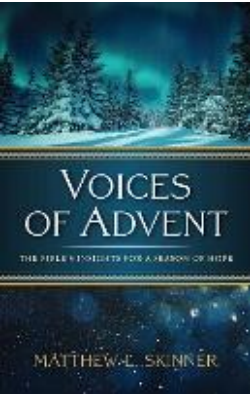
We will include the names in a printed attachment to the Christmas Eve service and will show the names on the video during part of the recorded service, if possible. We want to honor each family’s preference...so please indicate your preference on the form as well. **deadline for Poinsettias will be on December 21st**

**You can schedule your appointment for the next Blood Drive
for December 27th 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](https://www.redcrossblood.org) and search under December 27th to schedule an appointment. For more information call or email Cate Lehan or Robin Dye or the church office.

**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. The Sunday 9:45 AM class begins today in the Concord Room and on Zoom. The Thursday 10 AM class will begin Dec. 11 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.



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. 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

Early Bird Bible Study

Early Bird continues the Advent series "Another Look at the Messages of Christmas." This week's Scripture passage is Matthew 2:7-12, especially verse eleven. We will explore the topic 'Gifts from the Magi.....What Shall I Give Him?' Do you have a present for the Christ Child? Think on this and join the discussion on Tuesday morning at nine o'clock via Zoom. All are invited.

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 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.



JUNIOR YOUTH UPCOMING EVENTS

*This fellowship group is for youth in grades 5th – 7th grade.
Friends are always welcome!*

Junior Youth Christmas Party

Friday, December 12, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Come join us as we celebrate the coming of Christmas! We will have lots of fun playing games, decorating cookies and making a craft. We will need a parent helper to assist. Please let Lee Williams know if you can help.



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.

HAPPY HOLIDAY WISHES



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
- * Love all
- * Spend Less on things people do not need
- * 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.