



ALDERSGATE ADVOCATE

February 2026

Pastor's Column

Dear Beloved in Christ,

It's February! And that means Valentines Day; it means statistical reports; it means Shrove Tuesday-become-Sunday pancakes and Superbowl subs and Undie Sunday and a whole host of other things as well, I'm sure, but one of the most important things it means (this year especially) is the work that begins on February 18—Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday kicks off the season of Lent (as you probably know), but Lent's importance and Lent's "work" is under-celebrated, I think, compared to some of the other things happening this month. It doesn't come with burst-in-your-mouth chocolates with mysteries inside. It doesn't come with bright colors, fancy script, or alluring symbols. And I've never personally seen a clothing ad for the prescribed sack-cloth apparel of the season. Quite the opposite, in fact: in Lent we tend to put the chocolates aside, strive toward more simplicity and austerity, fast and explore with God what it is we really need, bury our alleluias, and sing song that are more somber and reflective. And could it be this sort of season is the very thing we need the most right now?

The simplicity, the austerity give us room, after all. They clear out the slate of distractions. In Lent, we set our pace with Jesus in the desert as he prepared for his ministry. In Lent, we too are asked to prepare. In Mark's very short account of this, he adds that "the angels waited on him" (Mark 1:13), which seems to mean that he wasn't just led out there to be tempted, he wasn't just led out there to fast and be away from the city; he was out there to receive something as well. This Lent, I want to invite us to hone in together on what there might be for us to receive in this season that sends us out into a land of scarcity. Once we allow our slate to clear and our minds to de-clutter, is there something there for us? Are there angels waiting to attend? We're going to be leaning into the practice of prayer this year especially and considering the possibility that there could be ways of praying that don't just involve asking or ranting or giving thanks (as important as all of those are), but of hearing and receiving as well. So eat your burst-in-the-mouth chocolates while you can, stack those pancakes high, but as we enter into February, let's begin to prepare ourselves as well for what really is the main event of this month.

The Very Deepest of Blessings

Pastor John

Special Charge Conference

On February 4th at 7:00 pm, there will be a Special Charge Conference to review Victor Strama's Candidacy for Ministry during the Council Meeting in the Concord Room.



Thank You from the Staff

Dear church family, we the staff are so very thankful to you for your love and support and for your very thoughtful and generous Christmas gifts to us this past season. It is truly a joy to serve you here at Aldersgate. We are deeply blessed because of you.

Signed

*Pastor John, Pastor Maylis, Lee, Betsy,
Don, Mirna, and Deana*

Advent Conspiracy Donates \$8,000 to Yambasu Agriculture Initiative

On February 1, Aldersgate presented a check for \$8,000 to Rev. We Hyun Chang, NEUMC Director of Connectional Ministries, as part of our Advent Conspiracy program. Each year, we conspire to worship fully, spend less, give more and love all. This program encourages us to set aside funds for a life-changing gift that truly matters. Our Advent mission project this year has been the Yambasu Agriculture Initiative. Thank you for your generosity in helping provide communities with food security and sustainable incomes through agricultural training and resources.

NE Conference Guidance Regarding Local Church Engagements with ICE

As a result of recent events, the Methodist denomination, along with many other religious denominations, has issued guidance on how local churches should interact with ICE officers. The Church Council wants to ensure the congregation is aware of this guidance. The New England Conference has a web page with resources at <https://www.neumc.org/immigrant> that includes material from a webinar describing the rights and recommended responses to ICE engagements, along with checklists and other useful information that is periodically updated. You will see signage in the church building designating private areas that would require a warrant signed by a judge – not signed by an immigration agent – for ICE officers to enter. Staff and ushers will receive training on how to respond to ICE interactions, with an emphasis on knowing our rights, dealing peacefully with ICE officials, and de-escalating any confrontations. We encourage the congregation to use these resources to understand how to engage with ICE, both within the church building and out in the community. At a minimum, you have the following constitutional rights:

- Do not open a door if an immigration agent is knocking at the door unless they have a valid warrant to enter signed by a judge
- Do not answer any questions from an agent - you have the right to remain silent
- Do not sign anything

If you want to understand the difference between a judicial warrant signed by a judge and an administrative warrant signed by ICE, or have any other questions or concerns, or please contact Pastor John, SPRC chair Dan Ward, or Council co-chairs Peter Smyton and Roger Whitehead.

Coming Up at Aldersgate January – April 2026

Lenten Worship

Ash Wednesday service at W. Chelmsford UMC: February 18, 7:30 pm

Lenten Soup Suppers (6:00 pm) & Laity-led Lenten services (7:00 pm)

February 25, March 4, March 11, March 18, March 25

Palm Sunday March 29, 8:30 am and 10:45 am

Passover Seder Meal: April 2, 6:00 pm

Maundy Thursday service: April 2, 7:30 pm

Easter Egg Hunt: April 4, 10:00 – 11:30 am

Easter Breakfast: April 5, 7:30 am – 10:30 am

Easter services: April 5, 8:30 am and 10:45 am

Outreach

Undie Sundie – Feb 8th

Red Cross Blood Drive: February 21, 9:00 am – 2:00 pm

Red Cross Blood Drive: April 18, 9:00 am – 2:00 pm

Super Bowl Sub Sale: Pickup Feb 8th – Order by Feb 1st

Troop 81 Pancake Breakfast/Scout Sunday: March 8, 8:00 – 11:00 am

Local Pastor Preaching Lab: **Saturday March 7**, 9:00 am – 2:00 pm

OUTREACH...

**You can schedule your appointment for the next Blood Drives
for Feb 21st and April 18th 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 December 27th to schedule an appointment. For more information call or email Cate Lehan or Robin Dye or the church office.

Single Ladies Dining Out

Single Ladies Dining Out will have **lunch** together on Saturday, February 28th at 1pm at  Emerald Rose 785 Boston Rd, Billerica, MA 01821. Please RSVP by Thursday February 26th to Betsy Campbell at 978-256-9400 or aldersgatechelmsford@verizon.net so that she can reserve a table large enough. If you are a single lady and would enjoy a lunch 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

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!



Book Club in the Concord Room and on Zoom

February 24, Yada Yada Prayer Group by Neta Jackson, Deb's pick

March 31, More or Less Maddy by Lisa Genova, Faith's pick

April 28, Everything is Tuberculosis by John Green, Kim's pick

May 26, Betty by Tiffany McDaniel, Robin's pick

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

Flower Chart

The 2026 Flower Chart is up. Please sign up for your special dates. Feb 15, March 1, and 22nd and April 19th and 26th are available. Please let Betsy know if you would like her to order flowers for you. They are such a beautiful addition to our Altar.

If you have vases from previous Sundays, please bring them in to be returned to our Florist.

Confirmation Mentors Needed

We are looking for mentors for the youth in our upcoming confirmation class. A mentor doesn't need to be a trained theologian or someone who has all the answers. Rather, a mentor is an adult who is mature in the faith and can walk alongside a young person on the confirmation journey. If you are interested in serving as a mentor, please contact Pastor John or Lee Williams.

Garden Club Meeting

Sunday, February 8, noon – 12:30pm, Concord Room

Join the garden club as we make plans for this year's church garden. All are welcome! We'll decide what to grow this season and which seeds to order. If you have any extra seeds to share or swap, bring them along. Please contact Lee Williams if you have any questions.



CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS

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, please e-mail Lee by February 10 at aumc-education@verizon.net.

PANCAKE SUNDAY!

Sunday, February 15, 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 Group 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!



Junior Youth – Show Me Love!

Friday, February 6, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. (parent helper needed)

We will talk about Christian Love, play games, and make Valentine crafts. Please bring a snack to share.

St. Paul's Feeding Ministry

Wednesday, February 18, 3:30 – 6:00 p.m.

The junior youth group will help prepare and serve a meal at Elliot Church.

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!

Super Bowl Sub Prep

Saturday, February 7, 10:00 – 11:00a.m. 7th – 12th graders.

7th graders will join us as we prep the subs that we will sell on Super Bowl Sunday.



Super Bowl Sub Sale

Sunday, February 8, 8:30 – 9:30 a.m. (finish orders) & after both services. 7th – 12th graders.

We will need help with finishing the sub orders and will also sell them after both services.

Winter Break Fun!

Monday, February 16

Join us for late-night bowling at Bowlero! Watch for details to come.



Big Mouth! Taming the Tongue

Sunday, February 22, noon – 1:30 p.m.

We'll make mac & cheese for lunch and talk about the impact of the words we speak.

Youth Mission Trip to Mission Central

July 12 – 18. 7th – 12th grades.

Watch for more details coming – save the dates!



Many Thanks from Cheryl and Jim

Thank you to Pastor John and our church family for all the support, prayers, cards and help after the sudden death of my Dad and Jim's brain surgery. Jim is slowly recovering each day. We hope to be back to church soon. We are so very blessed!

Cheryl & Jim

February 8

Super Bowl Sub Sale

**ITALIAN, TURKEY, FALAFEL
& VEGETARIAN SUBS**

**EACH SUB COMES WITH
CHIPS & SODA**

GLUTEN FREE
ROLLS
AVAILABLE



**The Senior Youth Group will take orders
January 18 - February 1**

ORDER
BY FEB 1

**Place your order in the basket
in the hallway or
e-mail aumc-education@verizon.net**

Pick-up February 8 (after each service)

**DONATIONS WILL GO TOWARDS OUR
YOUTH MISSION TRIP THIS SUMMER**



1st Annual Spring Fling Fundraiser

DUELING PIANOS

FEATURING

March 21, 2026 • 6:00PM - 10:00PM



SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Piano Man - \$2500

(4) complimentary tickets, social media spotlight, your logo/name displayed during the event, live shout out during the event and you first song request is prioritized

The Lounge - \$1000

(2) complimentary tickets, social media spotlight, your logo/name displayed during the event and a live shout out during the event.

Whiskey Business - \$500

(1) complimentary ticket, social media spotlight and your logo/name displayed during the event

In Tune - \$250

Social media spotlight and your logo/name displayed during the event

Scout Sunday and Troop 81 Pancake Breakfast on March 8

We will celebrate Scout Sunday on March 8, and recognize the committed youth and adults involved in scouting organizations that day. Scouts and adult leaders are encouraged to wear their scout uniform. On Scout Sunday, Troop 81 will hold a pancake breakfast fundraiser in the Fellowship Hall 8:00 am – 11:00 am. They will be serving pancakes, sausages, butter/syrup, fruit, coffee, tea, and juice for a suggested donation of \$10 per person, \$8 for senior citizens/kids under 5. Those of us who just want to participate in our usual “Coffee Hour” that day are welcome to attend and enjoy coffee, tea, and juice for a voluntary nominal free-will donation. They hope you all enjoyed this event last year and look forward to having you join them again. Fundraising events like this help fund their scouting activities like attending summer camp and maintaining their equipment (trailer, camping kitchens, and Klondike derby sleds, just to name a few). Look for the flyers around the church for more info!

Note: You can buy tickets using the QR code, they don't need a physical ticket because we will have a list with the names. If you prefer to purchase the tickets before the event please see Betsy in the office or at the Breakfast.



Troop 81
**PANCAKE
BREAKFAST**
HOT BREAKFAST INCLUDING PANCAKES, FRUIT,
TEA, AND COFFEE. SUPPORT THE SCOUTS!

WE HAVE GF!

MARCH 8TH
2026
8AM- 11AM

ADULTS \$10
SENIORS AND
KIDS UNDER 5
\$8

BUY TICKETS
HERE

ALDERSGATE METHODIST
CHURCH
242 BOSTON ROAD, CHELMSFORD, MA

QR CODE

Birthdays and Anniversaries – February

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 22 – Sybil Whitley

February 25 – Vern Champeaux

Feb 28- Henry M



February Anniversaries

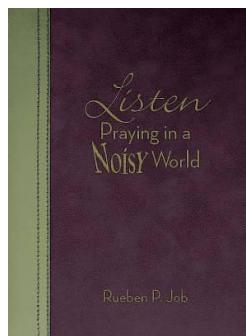
Feb 2 – Gail Kaufmann, James Casiello

Feb 7 - Garth & Elaine Brown 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.

Lenten Study: an Invitation to the Whole Church Body

Listen: Praying in a Noisy World



“We live in a world of noise. Everywhere we go, we hear sounds that compete for our minds and hearts. Listening to God requires a deliberate choice to shut out the chaos around us and focus our thoughts.

Listen: Praying in a Noisy World, by Rueben P. Job, is a 40-day experience created to offer help to those new to prayer, those with a daily prayer routine, and those whose lives seem too busy to pray. With a focus on listening prayer and prayer as a two-way conversation, the experience will assist individuals and groups in building and deepening a personal prayer practice and spiritual discernment.

As we learn to listen, we find a new depth and fulfillment in our relationship with God and a new experience of God as guide and companion in our lives. The daily prayer pattern includes an invitation, silence, Bible reading, a story, guided time for reflecting and listening, and practical help for developing six specific prayer practices.” from Cokesbury

Written for personal and group use, you can purchase your copy of *Listen* at any online retailer. You may find used books available as this study was written in 2014! Both the Sunday morning 9:45 class and Thursday 10:00 am class will be using this study and it may also inspire some of our Wednesday night service reflections. Classes start after Ash Wednesday, February 18. Grab a copy and jump into a whole new prayer experience this Lent!