



ALDERSGATE ADVOCATE

July/August 2026

Pastor's Column

Beloved in Christ,

Oh boy, it's summertime! School is out, gardens are growing, and many are taking this opportunity to get some rejuvenating time away. For many, it's time to take up a new book, and there are two basic genres for this time of the year, I find. On the one hand, there's "summer reading"—this is what the college kids and high school students are asked to do. It's preparatory; it's somewhat serious; it's work—in fact, it's designed to build up a knowledge-base that will equip them and bring them up to the level that next year's course load hopes they'll be able to lead on. And then there's "beach reading"—decidedly less serious, these books are chosen with the idea that you could get sand in the book. Your mind may drift while you read it and that's okay—there's no test! In fact, a beach read is more of a challenge to the author than the reader: it's your job (O author) to entertain and draw me into this story or else I may just set this book down one day and forget about it entirely. Somewhere between those two extremes, though, lies the sweet spot we often go looking for but don't always find: something that's consequential *and* interesting; something that advances the ball in my understanding of the world *and* engages my attention and my heart.

This summer, I'm inviting you into an exploration that, I hope and intend, marries the two. I've recently begun a new sermon series I'm calling "The Church's First Big Decision." It's about an event that took place in the year 50 A.D.—The Council of Jerusalem—and the background and legacies of that decision. Imagine this series as a kind of historical docudrama: there are all kinds of background tensions and interesting twists, all sorts of unexpected twists and turns. Big names and big personalities get together and sometimes they're not getting along very well, but then there's also this beautiful and surprising moment when they do, and when they do, it matters. Like a good historical docudrama, it may stand to change the way you see certain parts of the Bible, and it may bring to the front of your attention things that have mostly been in the backdrop. But I want to say, as well, that what we'll be exploring has some very important consequences to it as well. This first big decision, in fact, set the model and tone for how we're always supposed to make decisions in church. It's the central hinge-point in the book of Acts and has done quite a lot of work in our history to help us understand who we are as the church, and it's a decision that is positively pregnant with meaning and implications for us today. Imagine that series with substance (as well as some sand) in it! Whether you're near or far away (or everywhere in between) over these next couple of months, I want to invite you to stay plugged in with us and may what we discover together be a blessing in your life!

With grace and well-wishes for the summer!
Pastor John

Coming Up at Aldersgate July – September 2026

Youth Mission Trip to Mission Central: July 12 – 18
Aldersgate B&B Wed July 22nd and Thurs. August 20th
Hymn Sing Sunday July 26th 9:30
Red Cross Blood Drive: August 8, 9:00 am – 2:00 pm
Vacation Bible School: August 10 – 14, 9:00 am – noon
Discussion and Listening Sessions on Relocating Flags, August 16
Blessing of the School Children – August 30th
GriefShare program, Wednesdays 9/9 – 12/16, 7:00 – 8:30 pm
Rally Day, September 13

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

B & B in FH

Wednesday July 22nd and Thursday August 20th 10:30 AM– 12:00 PM

Coming this month. An opportunity to participate in Aldersgate B&B. What is Aldersgate B&B? It is a summertime gathering for Breakfast and a Bible lesson (B&B). One Wednesday 22 July and Thursday 20 August there will be a continental breakfast and Bible lesson in the Fellowship Hall. The gathering will be 10:30-12:00. There will be two different lessons. The gatherings are open to all. You are, however, asked to sign up. A sign-up sheet will be in the lobby. This is a great opportunity to Gather, Gab, and Grow. Come be a participant in Aldersgate B&B. Pastor John and Charles McCrea will be your host

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 bit more than \$2000 was raised to help fund the youth mission trip to Mission Central in Mechanicsburg, PA, July 12 – 18. Special thanks to Betsey Driscoll, David Driscoll, Lee Williams, Peter Smyton, and the youth for making the booth a success!

Hymn Sing Sunday July 26th at 9:30



It is time for a Hymn Sing! We are joyfully anticipating coming together on Sunday, July 26, to sing some of our favorite hymns and share some of our most meaningful Scripture passages.

We will have cards for you to fill out this coming Sunday. Please fill those out by next Sunday, July 19, so that we can be ready for the Hymn Sing.

Looking forward to it!

Discussion and Listening Sessions on Relocating Flags, August 16

Thanks to everyone who has shared their opinion on whether to relocate the American and Methodist flags to the Fellowship Hall. The church leadership has learned that there are strong feelings on both sides of this topic. We believe, in the spirit of Christian fellowship, that it would be useful to have a session to discuss and listen to each other's views and the reasoning behind them to better understand each other's perspectives. The session will include a pot-luck meal and will be held on Sunday, August 16, at 5:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall. We hope and pray that those of you with opinions will attend and be willing to actively participate in discussions at your table during the dinner, followed by a sharing of those discussions with the whole group. We pray that this discernment process, conducted with respect and love, will move the church body to a better understanding of our collective views and towards a level of closure.

New Video Monitors to Enhance Our Worship Experience

Based on suggestions from the congregation, the Trustees have acquired and installed video monitors on the front wall in the sanctuary. The monitors were purchased using available Endowment funds. The worship planning and live stream/recording teams will be using the monitors during the service to display videos and slides, including potential announcements prior to the service, the Call to Worship, the sermon title, and responsive prayers and litanies. (We will not be displaying the entire service, just items that may help enhance our worship experience.) Please be patient with us as we use the summer to learn how to use the monitors. And we are looking for your feedback on the ways in which you find the monitors helpful or distracting; please share your thoughts with Pastor John, Bob Peterson, Val Shupe, or Peter Smyton.

Summertime Stewardship

It's hard to believe that we are 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 2026 pledged offerings when you join us on Sunday services this summer at 9:30 am. 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 peterson.robertk@gmail.com.

See "Electronic Giving 101" on the welcome rack, to show you how to set up your Bank to send your pledge

Women's Daytimers Breakfast Club

Breakfast club will not meet in July or August. Join us again in September

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

Single Ladies Dining Out



Single Ladies Dining Out will have **lunch** together on July 25th at 5pm at Rufina's on Concord Road, Chelmsford, MA 01824. **Please** RSVP by Thursday July 23rd 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 dinner out and lots of fun conversation, we would love to have you join us. Please talk to Betsy for more information.

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 cleaning windows, vacuum pews, remove wax off the sanctuary rug, paint the office ceiling, clean out the kitchen refrigerators, and repair hymnals.

Summer Social Justice:

Read MLK's Favorite Author with Us!

Join us to read *Jesus and the Disinherited* by Howard Thurman. This is the book Pastor Bob gifted our young people a few years ago. The UMC General Board of Church and Society frequently utilizes Thurman's writings including *Jesus and the Disinherited*, to inspire and shape its justice-rooted advocacy. Martin Luther King, Jr., carried the book in his briefcase wherever he traveled. Let's read it together and find out what the UMC and MLK found so compelling about it!

Our first gathering will be July 22 from 6:00-7:00 PM to discuss the first half of the book. (It's only three short chapters.) We will have a second gathering in August to finish our discussion of the book. Let either Kim (mikdraw@aol.com; 315-368-7324) or Suzanne (shevelone@gmail.com, 617-504-0922) know if you are planning to read with us but show up even if you don't RSVP!

Green Team News

We expect to share our bounty with the Chelmsford Food Pantry (CFP) every week of the summer. We donated five pounds of peas this week!

The Garden Club also has the congregation's share of produce. You can find the produce on tables in the Fellowship Hall every Sunday this summer. This week's offering are Leaf Lettuce, Swiss Chard, Kale and some Peas.



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: Angela Hughes, Jen van Buren, Kim Ward

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: Ray Brown, David Driscoll, Greg Piper, Ken Teal

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: Peter Smyton

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

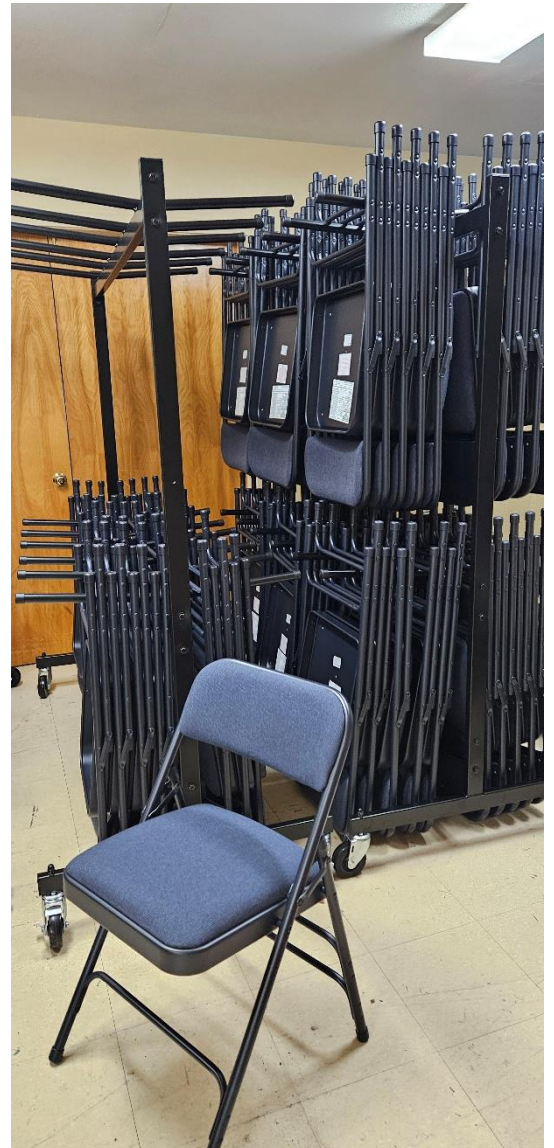
Junior Youth: Grades 5 – 7

Senior Youth: Grades 8 – 12

Update from the Endowment Committee

The balance of the Endowment Fund on December 31, 2025, was \$495,543.81. The Endowment Committee met earlier this year and based on the Endowment Distribution Policy; the committee recommended the use for expenditures of up to \$40,000 for 2026 mission and long-term property projects. The Finance Committee accepted this recommendation and shared it with the Church Council. The Church Council accepted proposals from the committee chairs for the use of the recommended distribution funds. So far this year the funds have been used for outreach missions, to fund a potential seminary intern from Boston University this Fall, installation of gutter guards, new padded chairs and racks for fellowship hall and the choir loft, and two large video monitors for the sanctuary. We saved some of the old metal chairs to use in the classrooms downstairs and, thanks to Greg Piper, donated the remaining 100+ to a church in the Dominican Republic. The Trustees are scoping some additional projects to use the remaining Endowment funds.

Additional gifts may be made to the Endowment Fund at any time. Any gifts to the fund will make a greater long-term investment to the financial health and well-being of the missions and property of Aldersgate. We are truly blessed by the generosity of our church family!



Service in the Fellowship Hall on Hot Sundays This Summer

If the sanctuary is uncomfortably hot on a Sunday morning this summer, we'll plan to hold the service in the **air-conditioned** Fellowship Hall. Our rule-of-thumb will be that we will hold the service in the Hall if the temperature that morning is predicted to be over 80°. Watch for an all-church email and/or One Call-Tell All notification of the venue change if time permits. In lieu of the livestream on those Sundays, a recording of the service will be uploaded later that morning.

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.

You can schedule your appointment for the next Blood Drive 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](https://www.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.

Green Team Update - Let's reduce what we throw away.

One of the many things shared at our AUMC Green Team meetings is how important it is to minimize what we waste. We spoke of a useful example from Westford which is named A to Z - How to Recycle Most Everything found

at <https://www.westfordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2924/How-to-Recycle-Most-Everything-PDF>

Before you place anything in the trash, at home or at church, check out this resource to see if there is a better idea. There often is. Just go to the index and click on what you are interested in. A few items are specific to Westford but the rest are good for all.

Happy Reducing/Reusing/Repurposing.
The Green Team

Come Join these Dance Classes starting in the Fellowship Hall at Aldersgate United Methodist Church – 242 Boston Rd., Chelmsford, MA 01824

For questions contact **Heather Dinsmore, dancingmom23@gmail.com**
Or check with Betsy in the office.

Cardio Boost and Beginner Line Dance

Looking for more movement in your life? We are pleased to announce two new classes for the next few months being offered in our hall designed to help you get motivated and feel fit! A local dance instructor, Heather Dinsmore, will be offering Cardio Boost and Beginner Line Dance classes for our local community.

Cardio Boost exercise class combines cardio moves to enhance endurance and burn calories, strength training to define muscles and strengthen your core, and stretching to increase flexibility. This class begins with a warm-up and stretch, then 5 cardio boost workouts, and ends with a hand weight routine and cool down. You will get a total body workout while increasing your stamina and having fun! Participants will bring their own weights to class (2-5 lbs. is recommended).

Put on your boots and join us for Line Dancing! This lively, beginner-friendly program welcomes all skill levels. Participants will be led through classic and modern line dances with step-by-step guidance. No partner or experience is required - just come ready to have fun, get moving, and enjoy time with your community.

Each class will be \$5.00 each, payable at the beginning of class via cash, check or Venmo. No pre-registration required and must be aged 18 or older to participate. Participants must wear closed-toe shoes and comfortable clothing for each class.

Schedule:

Fridays (7 weeks) - July 31, August 7, (no class August 14), 21, 28, (no class September 4),
September 11, 18, 25, 1:00-1:45 pm – Cardio Boost and 2:00-3:00 pm – Beginner Line Dance

Braille Edition of United Methodist Hymnal

Aldersgate UMC is very pleased to announce that we now have a Braille edition of the *United Methodist Hymnal*. We purchased this seven-volume edition using memorial funds to make our worship service more accessible to all. We are excited about offering a Braille version of the lyrics to the hymns we sing during worship! Thank you to Elaine Brown, Chantale Shepard, Sophia Rodriguez and Joanne Coughlin for working to index the pages with written page and hymn numbers. This will allow non-Braille readers to select the appropriate pages needed each Sunday and keep the binders organized. Thank you!

Youth Mission Trip at Mission Central!

Sunday, July 12 - Saturday, July 18



Our youth is heading out on our summer mission trip to Mechanicsburg PA where we will serve at the Mission Central warehouse! We will support their disaster relief work with jobs like packing flood buckets, assembling hygiene kits, and sorting donations. We will also visit HersheyPark on the way down and Philadelphia on the way back.

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

CONFIRMATION CLASS NEWS



Confirmation Class - Sunday, July 19, 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

The next class for confirmation students and mentors will be after Worship in the Concord Room. The next classes will meet on August 23, August 30, and September 6 after Worship, also 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. in the Concord Room.

Green Team Meeting - Sunday, July 26, 8:30 - 9:00 a.m.

Aldersgate's new Green Team will meet in the Concord Room before Worship. Help our church care for God's creation and serve our community with justice and compassion. Join us as we plan a Fall project and share ideas on how we can make our church even greener!



VBS Planning Meeting - Sunday, August 2, 10:45 a.m.

There will be a final planning meeting in the Concord Room for all who would like to help with this year's VBS program. **There are many opportunities for adult and youth volunteer helpers.** Please see Lee Williams if you have any questions.



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL!

August 10 – 14, 9:00 a.m. – noon Children Ages 4 – 12

Deadline to sign up is Monday, July 27

Sign up today for our exciting Vacation Bible School experience! This year's VBS, "Operation Overboard: Dare to Go Deep With God," is an invitation and a challenge to dive into the waters of God's Word and discover what true faith is all about.

Our special guest is an experienced scuba diver who will help us learn what it's really like to dive deep into the ocean!

Kids of all ages will experience God's Word, explore and create through fun crafts and activities, music, snacks, and games. We will also visit our church garden and harvest vegetables to sample and to donate to the Chelmsford Food Pantry.

The cost to participate is \$20 per child, family max \$60.

Sign up with the [Online Registration Form](#) by July 27.

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

Blessing of the Backpacks

Sunday, August 30

Before students return to school, Pastor John will offer a Blessing of the Backpacks during worship on Sunday, August 30. Children and youth are encouraged to bring their backpacks for this special time during the service.

Aldersgate Ice Cream Sandwich Booth

As usual, the Aldersgate UMC booth was the place to hang out on July 3 at the Chelmsford Country Fair! Thank you to Peter Smyton, David Driscoll, and our youth for running the booth. Thank you to Betsey Driscoll for making her famous giant ice cream sandwiches. And thank you all for coming out to support the Youth Group Mission Trip!





Vacation Bible School

August 10 - 14, 2026
9:00am - noon

**Ages
4 - 12**

REGISTER



**Music, Games, Crafts,
Bible Stories, and more!**



ALDERSGATE
United Methodist Church
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(978)256-9400 www.aldersgatechelmsford.com