



ALDERSGATE ADVOCATE

September 2026

Pastor's Column

Beloved in Christ,

A new beginning is a sacred opportunity. I've been thinking about our blessing of the backpacks this past Sunday and how, despite there being just the one, lonesome backpack up by the altar for most of the service, when it came time to receive the blessing and mark that moment's commission, people came out of the woodwork to receive it—kids, teachers (and many asked for some of those blessing cards to take home with them for their siblings and children). Who knew at the beginning of Sunday's service that that lone backpack was standing in for so many?

When Joshua and the Israelites crossed the Jordan, they took twelve stones from the riverbed and set them up on the other side as a memorial of the occasion (Joshua 4). They took twelve stones—one for each tribe—and they named the place where they set them “Gilgal” (which means “circle”). Does that mean that the stones were arranged in a circle or that the people gathered in a circle around the twelve stones? We'll never know. But what we can be sure of is that this sacred act was intended to mark a holy moment, like drawing a thick line on a shared, imagined timeline. *This* moment, *this* occasion is a new beginning. It puts a period on what came before and, for that we pause, reflect, and give thanks, and it marks the starting point of a brand-new chapter. It had to have gathered their collective thoughts around what's next, around possibility, around where they might be heading from there.

It fascinates me to think about the fact that the Israelites marked their land with so many reminders of who they are and where they've been. Everywhere you looked, it seems, there was some feature of the landscape calling out every day saying, “remember: we crossed that”, “remember: we learned a lesson there, marked a threshold in our people's life there.” They surrounded themselves with a reminder of who they were and where they'd been in stone so that they could remember their history, remember their journey and keep travelling forward. They were tacitly being called back, over and over, to think about where they had been and where they were going. Perhaps this week's sacred transition asks us to do the same.

The journey continues!

Pastor John

Coming Up at Aldersgate September 2026

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

9:45 am Adult Ed

10:45 am Worship & Bible presentation to 3rd Graders and
Kindergarten Children

Noon Potluck lunch for all

Red Cross Blood Drive: Aldersgate UMC, October 3, 9 am – 2 pm

World Communion: Sunday, October 4

Fall Plans for Aldersgate!

We are excited to be returning to our fall routine soon! 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 on **Rally Day, Sunday, September 13:**

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 - 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 all Kindergarten children and 3rd grade children during the 10:45 am worship service.

Adult Education will meet in the Concord Room on September 13 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 20 in the Concord Room and via Zoom at 9:45 am. Early Bird will commence via Zoom on Tuesdays at 10:00 am in September. The Thursday Morning Bible study will begin later in September in the Concord Room and via Zoom at 10:00 am. Please watch for details.

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 on 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, now is great time 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!

Feedback on the New Video Monitors

The worship planning and live-stream/recording teams have been experimenting this summer with different ways of using our new monitors during the service. As we try different ways to use, or not use, the monitors, we are looking for your feedback on the ways in which you find the monitors helpful or distracting. During the summer, in what ways did you like how they were used and in what ways did you dislike how they were used? Please share your thoughts with Pastor John, Bob Peterson, Val Shupe, or Peter Smyton.

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 people 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.

Women's Daytimers Breakfast Club

Breakfast club. Join us again in September – date to be determined.

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 September 26th at 1pm at Princeton Station. **Please** RSVP by Thursday September 24th 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 lunch or 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

Black Cake by Charmaine Wilkerson, September 29, Judy's pick
The Woman by Norah O'Donnell, October 26, Liz's pick
Being Wrong by Kathryn Scholtz, Mary's pick Nov. 24
Immense World by Ed Yong, Dec. 29, Melinda's pick
Altar of Eden by James Rollins, January 26, Faith's pick
This Is Also a Love Story by Sally Hayden, February 23, Betsey's pick



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

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

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

October 3rd. please 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.

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

Rally Day Sunday, September 13



Join us as we rally together to start our fall program!

- 8:30 a.m.: Worship
- 9:15 a.m.: Church School Welcome & Registration (or pre-register*)
- 9:30 a.m.: Church School for Children & Youth
- 9:45 a.m.: Church School Parent Reception in Library
- 10:45 a.m.: Worship and Bible Presentation to Kindergarten and 3rd Grade Students

12:00 noon – Potluck Lunch for all! *Please bring a side dish, salad, or dessert to share. We will provide hot dogs, hamburgers and veggie burgers.*

*Skip the paper and [pre-register for Church School](#):



Church School Teacher needed for Fall

Some people come into our lives and go quickly. Some stay awhile and leave footprints in our hearts, and we are never the same! Our church is asking you to prayerfully consider making a difference in the lives of the children of Aldersgate. We are looking for a 3rd- 5th grade assistant teacher for the fall. Please contact Lee Williams if you are interested in helping or for more information.

Youth Mission Trip Sharing Time!

Saturday, September 19

6:00 – 7:30 p.m.



The youth and adults who attended our Youth Mission Trip this summer will host a free dinner and share a special presentation with you about our experiences serving at Mission Central. We have many stories and photos to share with you.

Come join us - all are welcome!





Senior Youth Fun!
Sunday, September 20, noon – 1:30 p.m.

All youth in grades 8 - 12 are invited to join us
as we begin a new year of youth group!
We will play games and talk about ideas for this year!

Junior Youth Pizza Party!
Friday, September 18, 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!



Confirmation Class

Confirmation Class - Sunday, September 27, 12:00 noon – 1:30 p.m.

The next class for confirmation students and mentors will be after the second service in the Concord Room.

Our 2026-27 confirmation class is using *Confirm*, a United Methodist Church curriculum. Watch for our new schedule of classes for this Fall!

Green Team Meeting - Sunday, September 27, 7:00 p.m.

Aldersgate's Green Team will meet by Zoom. Join us as we plan our Fall projects and share ideas on how we can make our church even greener!

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 to offer a Braille version of the lyrics to the hymns we sing during worship!



Thank you to Elaine Brown, Joanne Coughlin, Chantale Shepard and Sofia Rodriguez (not pictured) for indexing the pages with written page and hymn numbers. This allows non-Braille readers to select the appropriate pages needed each Sunday and keep the binders organized. The Braille edition is now ready to use!



UBS Highlights!





Youth Mission Trip!



Floor Waxing – Thank you!

Thank you to David Jones for cleaning and waxing our tile floors! They look so clean and shiny, and our church building looks more inviting. This was a big job, and we appreciate your hard work.



Vacation Bible School Appreciation

We had a great time at our Operation Overboard VBS this year! We learned Bible stories at the Underwater Passage, created Aquatic Arts, played fun games at the High Tide Hangout, ate delicious snacks at the Diver's Diner, sang songs at the Choral Reef, performed science experiments at the Exploration Station, and watched funny puppet shows with Ocho and Oogle. We also collected items for the New England Seafarer's Mission ditty bags. Special thanks to Deana for creating a beautiful ocean setting! Thank you to Chris for joining us as our guest speaker with a special presentation.

Many thanks to our amazing group of adult and youth volunteers who helped make this year's VBS a fabulous week for all of us!

Adult Volunteers

Deb Benson, Rebecca Biggar, Betsy Campbell, Janet Chaput, Maylis de la Fe, Betsey Driscoll, Robin Dye, Kate Henderson, Suzanne Hevelone, Jillian Jones, Harriet Kinnett, Robin Knox, Jean Morland, Deana Peterson, Samuel Rodriguez, Sofia Rodriguez, Chris Sargent, Val Shupe, Dan Ward, Pastor John Whitley, Laralin Worsham, Wendy Xu.

Youth Volunteers

Matthias, Charlie, Liam, Alyxis, AJ, Andrew, Will H., Shmuel, Melinda, Eliana and Gabe.

Looking for Volunteers to the New England Seafarers Mission



The Goodicks and Teals had the privilege of Volunteering for a shift on Sunday, August 23 for our second time at the New England Seafarers Mission on the waterfront in Boston. Don and Ken were assigned to the mailroom – the crews routinely have packages forwarded to the mission for pickup when they dock and we did our best after a brief training. Melinda and Deb staffed the Mission Shop which has a variety of items for sale similar to a general store with food, candy, toiletries, electronics and even souvenirs.

It is a wonderful experience lasting about 5.5 hours.

Please consider experiencing this wonderful service as we strive to ‘welcome the stranger’ into our lives. Here is the link to

volunteer: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F054EACAC29A2F94-61407845-nesm#/>

PS: Outreach will again be organizing the Ditty Bag project this fall – stay tuned for more information

Turn your food waste into ‘Compost Gold’:

The Aldersgate Green Team has been meeting regularly this summer and will continue to develop suggestions for our community on how to best use and, later, dispose of those resources that we are entrusted with. Along this line, we are hosting a demo of a home composter at Aldersgate on October 10 from 9am-11am. Spend 10-15 minutes at the demo and learn how simple and effective it is to move food waste from your trash bin to the composter. The average household disposes of 10-14 pounds of food waste weekly (food waste is approximately 90% water) so this is a wonderful opportunity to minimize waste with the benefit of creating compost. It is easier than you might imagine. Ken Teal will be leading this and will be prepared to answer your questions.

Ken Teal



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

Schedule:

Fridays (3 more weeks) - (no class September 4), September 11, 18, 25, 1:00-1:45 pm – Cardio Boost and 2:00-3:00 pm – Beginner Line Dance

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.

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Big Thank you from Evelyn Heinrich

“Thank you with all my heart for the months of good wishes, cards, prayers, and treats. I missed being in church in person, but the streaming was perfect! I appreciate all the people and effort that make it possible. The depth of my appreciation to everyone is impossible to express! I can even sing along!

Mostly, I am grateful to God — for the faith and His love that bring us all together! Blessed!”

CONCERNS AND PRAYER LIST...

Please let us know if you would like your loved ones included on this list.

Our Church Family

Jean Morland
Betty Champeaux
Carol Prasad
Ann and Ed Harris
Laurel Ash
Melvin Kinnett
Deb Benson
Ed Wetterwald
Joann Nichols
Evelyn Heinrich
Louise Kuzmich
Ann Isler
Ortolf Family – Jim and Jen
Norah K.

Relatives and Friends

Steve Chapin (Jane Vooy's)
Lee Maynard (Bev Macklin)
Brian (Holly Fipphen)
Bobby Cole (Deana Peterson)
Carol Johnson (Jane Vooy's)
Lisa Stuka (Jan and Frank Shumbata)
Dean Draper (Diane/Marty van Buren)
Ryan (Cate Lehan)
Jim Worthylake (Deb Benson)
Nathan (Robin Knox)
Christine Maille (Cancer)
Karen Leonard
Kara Cornia (Rich/Linda Regan)
Beth (Betsy Campbell)
Arline Morgensen (Betsy Campbell)
Barbara Quintiliani (Maylis)
Cyndy Cain (Nell Hevelone)
Carlos Borges (Jane Vooy's)

World & Community Concerns

For our Youth headed to Mission Central in Pennsylvania.

For those affected by war in Iran and the world

For Our Nation's leaders and People

For those in Cuba who are without power and water

For those affected by war in the world

For all our church families

Our covenant with the Sierra Maestra school in Nicaragua

Our Military and Families

Gavin Fucarile –(Linda/Rich Regan)

Ryan Conole (Evelyn Heinrich)

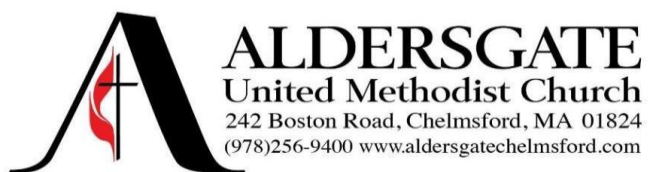
Josh Briggs (Evelyn Heinrich)

1Lt J. Swan, US Army (Ken Bair)

Reginald and Josephine Lewis

George Cole (his family)

David and Alyssa Buemi (Holly F)



To: