



ALDERSGATE ADVOCATE

July/August 2023

Pastor Bob's Letter

Pastoral Letter – July & August 2023 “Continuing to Grow in Love”

One of my joys during the week is to bring my two boys to Taekwondo in Lowell. When I was a kid, my parents also sent me to Taekwondo. I always feel regretful that I did not quite get the black belt. Daniel practiced Taekwondo for a few years before we came to Chelmsford last year. Well, his red belt was downgraded to orange since he had forgotten much of the movement for the past year. But Daniel loves his new teachers and appreciates the intensity of the training program.

After watching his brother doing Taekwondo for two months, Joshua asked me to register him for the program. I asked him, “Joshua, are you sure? You tried to do this a couple of years ago, and the grandmaster thought you were not ready.” “Daddy, I can do this. I want to do this.” So, Joshua has been training alongside his brother for the past four months. A few weeks ago, he said, “Daddy, I do not want to go anymore. I am done.” I reminded him that it was his idea to start Taekwondo. Since he committed himself to getting the black belt, I told him he would need to go. He looked at his white belt and responded, “Daddy, if I go, can I get the black belt after the class today?”

Why do I find joy in bringing them to Taekwondo? It is because I can see them grow gradually, gaining confidence in what they can do. I see Daniel gaining some more skills in sparring. I see Joshua learning some new moves like double-kick and jumping-kick. When they master a new move, they look at me with a happy smile. They want me to be proud of them. So, I look at them with my thumbs up and signal, “Great job!” I find joy in witnessing my children grow in their height, strength, confidence, and love. Sometimes I wonder if that is how God feels as He watches us doing the work of God. “Great job, my child!”

John Wesley also emphasized the importance of our continual growth in our Christian faith and love. Even after his conversion experience at the Aldersgate meeting in 1738, he realized he still had no joy and peace in his heart. He was convinced later that while we are saved by faith alone in Christ, God calls us to continue to grow in our love for God and our neighbors. Jesus said, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). We strive for perfection, not in our intelligence, ordinance, or governance, but in our love for God. Wesley calls this process “sanctification,” which is concerned with inward transformation, not necessarily outwardly, that makes one holy in one’s love for God and her neighbors.

And I see the people of Aldersgate UMC and give thanks to God. Sitting in my office, I always hear the door open. Someone is entering to clean some space so that it would look nice and welcoming to others. I hear people working in the garden, harvesting the vegetables so they can share on Sundays and donate to the food pantry. I hear choir and bell choirs entering to practice so they can praise God and share the joy in music with others on Sunday. I hear the sound of people entering the building to sit and discuss the vision of our church, to be more attentive to where God is calling us in the future. I hear those who gather outside so they can go out to the community to serve and share the love of Christ.

Summertime is often considered a slow time for churches. Many families travel with their children. People go camping. Sunday school is on break. However, according to the Christian calendar, summertime is assigned as the ordinary time. The color for this liturgical season is green. Green symbolizes life and growth. As a seed grows to be a tree and bears fruits, our shared lives as Christians also invite us to continue to grow in our love for God and our neighbors. Whether we fully give our attention to our spiritual life or not, I believe that God is God who continues to work in our hearts to grow in our love for God and for our neighbors. And it is my privilege to be part of your spiritual journey as your pastor.

Pastor Bob

Info Sessions on the United Methodist Church's Stance on LGBTQI+ and Impact to AUMC

The Church Council has recently been discussing how to ensure we are an inclusive, welcoming church to all here at Aldersgate. Some people have been confused about or are unfamiliar with the United Methodist Church's (UMC's) stance on the LGBTQI+ community, how our New England Conference is addressing this stance, and what that means for Aldersgate. We invite the congregation to learn about the current situation and the future of the denomination as a precursor to engaging in discussions about Aldersgate's viewpoints, and how we welcome and value all, regardless of age, race, nationality, ethnic background, gender, sexuality, ability, and physical appearance.

There will be several opportunities to attend info sessions led by Pastor Bob and Maylis, as our clergy, and Bonnie Marden, our representative to the UMC General Conference, where these topics will be discussed. The sessions will consist of an overview of the denomination's stance and the impact on local churches, followed by a Q&A. Look for more details in the coming weeks. To learn more, check out the books displayed in the lobby and visit the church web site for our new statement of inclusivity that explicitly identifies groups excluded by some in society.

These sessions are open to all as we discuss and discern how we as a church family are inclusive to all. We hope you will join us! In the meantime, if you have questions, please talk to Pastor Bob, Maylis, Bonnie, Jim Ortolf (Lay Leader), or Peter Smyton (Council chairperson).

Visit the Aldersgate Booth at the Chelmsford July 4 Country Fair

Come visit Aldersgate's booth during this year's Chelmsford's July 4 Country Fair! We will be selling our famous chocolate chip ice cream sandwiches – regular and vegan – along with drinks. Cornhole will be available for the kids, and everyone wins a prize! Hours are Monday July 3, 5:00 – 9:00 pm and Tuesday July 4, 8:00 – 1:00. Come to celebrate the holiday, enjoy some fellowship, and support the church! Proceeds support the youth mission trip to Youth 2023 later in July.

Clean Sweep – Help Needed

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 make arrangements to borrow one or when to come. Thank you! Samples of the tasks this year include cleaning pew cushions, weeding around the church building, and cleaning windows.

Highlights of the New England UMC Annual Conference

The New England Annual Conference consists of the clergy and laity of the ~ 550 Methodist churches in New England and meeting for three days once a year to conduct Conference-wide business, led by our bishop, Bishop Peggy Johnson. This year's Annual Conference was June 8 – 10 in Manchester, NH. Aldersgate was represented by Pastors Bob and Maylis, Bonnie Marden, Sofia R as a youth representative, and Cheryl Ortolf and Peter Smyton as laity reps. The theme this year was “Draw the Circle Wider Still . . .”

We want to share a few of the highlights from the Conference. Statistics about the Methodist churches in New England were presented and show a shrinking number of churches and attendance, though the level of participation in missional work and financial giving remained strong. We were struck by the fact that only 4% of the churches have an average weekly attendance greater than 75 people. Aldersgate is blessed to be very healthy church compared to many. The attendees endorsed the Strategic Vision Forward team's plan to address the declining church membership by seeking ways to expand the use of churches' buildings and to share resources – people, property, and finances – across small churches. We sadly agreed for 14 churches' request to disaffiliate from the denomination due to the NE Conference's response to the denomination's doctrine regarding human sexuality. That doctrine prohibits having openly gay pastors or for Methodist pastors to officiate same sex weddings. Twelve churches disagree with the NE Conference's willingness to not follow the doctrine, and two churches felt the Conference was not doing enough to defy the doctrine. These churches were across all 6 New England states. There were several actions taken addressing social justice issues, such as land reparations to indigenous people in the region, better financial support to historically Black churches, and increasing training of pastors on intersectionality issues.

The two biggest highlights for Aldersgate were:

1. The ordination of Maylis as a full Deacon. Her family and over 25 members of our church family were there in person to celebrate, as well as numerous congregants watching on-line, and we were able to embarrass her by making the loudest noise of any group cheering the ordinands 😊
2. The appointments of the pastors for the church year beginning July 1 were announced. We are thrilled to announce that Pastor Bob has been re-appointed to Aldersgate for another year!!!

We are truly blessed to be led by two very special members of the Methodist clergy!

Single Ladies Dining Out

Singles Ladies Dining Out will have dinner on **July 15th** at 5 pm at Bahama Breeze which is located at 413 Middlesex Road, Tyngsboro, MA 01879.

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 RSVP by Thursday July 13th to Betsy Campbell 978-256-9400 or by email to aldersgatehelmsford@verizon.net.



Women's Daytimers Breakfast Club

Women's Daytimers will take July and August off. See you in September. Enjoy your summer.

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 Birthdays

July 7 – Andrew P.

July 15 – Jeff Thurlow

July 29 – Marty van Buren

August 17 – Daniel J.

August 24 – Harriet Kinnett

August 28 – Melvin Kinnett



July/August Anniversaries

June 19 -Melvin and Harriet's anniversary (sorry we missed this)

June 30th -Kathrine and Jake's anniversary(sorry we missed this)

July 3 -Clewis and Dave Howe's anniversary

August 23 - Diane and Marty van Buren's wedding anniversary

If we have missed your big day, 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.

Book Club in the Concord Room and on Zoom

On July 25 we will discuss "The Keeper of Lost Things", (Deb Teal's pick)

Let Deb know if you want to join by Zoom.

On August 29th is Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson, (Melinda's pick)

On September 26th is True Biz by Sara Novic, (Betsey's pick)

On October 31 is The Measure by Nikki Erlick, (Judy's pick)

Hope you all can join us! Blessings, Deb

Adult Ed

Adult Ed classes on Sundays and Thursdays are taking a break for the summer, but be sure to keep on reading! We will see you in September!

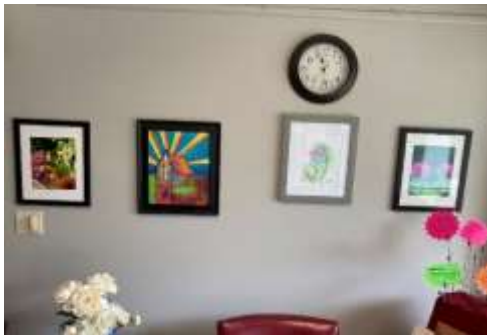
Lobby Window book display

The books in the lobby windows are available for you to borrow and return at your leisure. You will find books on prayer, books that discuss Christian LGBTQ+ folks and books on creating deeper community. We welcome you to spend some time this summer expanding your faith and understanding of God's church.

We also have a selection of fiction to choose from for your summer beach read. Check out the cart in the Concord Room for many of the books the Book Club has read in the past. You are sure to find something to captivate your imagination!



Parishioners' Art Wall



The art on the lobby wall is provided by our fellow members of the Congregation! Joining the original piece from Charlotte Bair, the photography is from Val Shupe and the oil pastel was done by Sara Williams. We'd love to see what you love! Contact Betsy in the office to get on the schedule. We can even help you hang and display.





Custom-made Crocheted Animal Slippers with non-slip soles (pre-order)

\$12 child size (≤ 9 inches)
\$15 youth/adult sizes (> 9 inches)

All proceeds for AUMC Faire

Design: _____

Size: _____

(IMPORTANT! measure length of foot in **inches** or trace foot on reverse of this form)

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Return form to church (box in lobby) or contact Elaine Brown EMBedel@aol.com regarding questions or custom requests (additional \$3/pair).



Custom Orders- additional \$3

Protestant Prayer Bead Workshop

Join Kim Ward, Melinda Goodick and friends in late August (date TBD) to discover a new way to enhance your prayer life! We will spend a bit of time making a set of prayer beads and then discuss a variety of prayer practices. No experience necessary- just you and a desire to spend time with other believers.

Books on making and using prayer beads are available in the lobby and the downstairs library, or check out this website. <https://www.kristenevincent.com/prayer-beads/>

Use the summer to look for beads and a cross pendant you'd like to use! Yard sales, Grandma's old jewelry, or shops like Beadles in Nashua or Michaels are all good options to find what sparks a bit of JOY in your soul. Kim has some materials to offer. Contact her to see what she has available or if you want to contribute or help in some way. mikdraw@aol.com or 978-256-2014

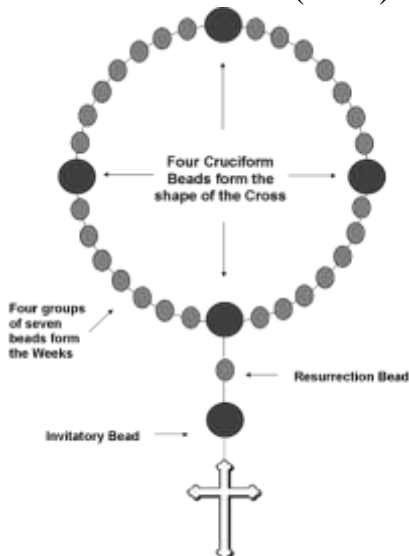
Here's a list of specific materials if you want to collect your own supplies over the summer:

Materials Needed

- 5 large (10mm – 12mm) beads
- 29 medium (8mm – 10mm) beads
- 36 seed (size #6 or #8) beads
- 1 cross or other pendant
- 2 crimp tubes (size 2 x 2)- **Kim will supply this**
- 20 – 24 inches of wire (49-strand, .019 or .018")- **Kim will supply this**

Tools Required- Melinda and Kim will have these available to use if you don't have your own.

- 1 pair of chain nose pliers
- 1 set of side (flush) wire cutters



You can also buy a kit on line to assemble with us. <https://www.etsy.com/shop/prayerworksstudio/?etsrc=sdt>

If you don't want to make your own, you can buy a pre made set online and join us to talk about how to use them. <https://fullcirclebeads.com/> or check out the wide variety on Etsy.com.

We look forward to spending some time with you and hope you will join us for a time of creating, fellowship, discussion and prayer!



Music Notes



THANK YOU to all the musicians who have contributed so beautifully to our worship during this last year!

Chancel Choir participants: Peter Boettcher, Tara Boettcher, Elaine Brown, Garth Brown, Cheryl Cruickshank, Kate Cruickshank, Holly Fipphen, Peter Fipphen, Melinda Goodick, Faith Jameson, Marti Kane, Mike Kane, Susan Lewis, Dottie Newcomb, Rick Newcomb, Carol Prasad, Sofia Rodriguez, Jane Vooyoys

Additional vocal soloists: Charles McCrea, Kelly Moore, Jenna Ward

Instrumentalists: Sara Antonitis, Peter Boettcher, Kate Cruickshank, Amelia Hughes, Finn Hughes, Gabriel Rodriguez, Samuel Rodriguez

Handbell ringers: Jill Angel, Alyxis Diefenbach, Evelyn Heinrich, Marti Kane, Mike Kane, Kelly Mongiovi, Jay Nichols, Kirby Nichols, Susan Lewis, Dottie Newcomb, Rick Newcomb, Carol Prasad, Gabriel Rodriguez, Samuel Rodriguez, Sofia Rodriguez, Perry Villanueva, Jane Vooyoys, Vicki Vooyoys, Wendy Xu, Jay Yang

We are blessed by your gifts of time and talent, and your faithful participation and enthusiasm for our music program.

We are looking forward to the wonderful music that will be shared throughout the summer!

A Note of Thanks~

Dear Aldersgate family,

My most sincere and heartfelt thanks for all you did to make my Ordination weekend memorable and exceptional. It was truly a “mountain top” experience for me, and your love and care contributed greatly to that.

Thank you to the Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC), our Church Council, and all who took leadership in planning the caravan on Friday evening and the potluck lunch on Sunday. Thank you also to Pastor Bob and our staff for their support. I am still in awe of it all.

It was such a joy and privilege to introduce you to some very special people who have been colleagues and mentors throughout my journey. I hope the events of the weekend were also of blessing and inspiration to you.

In the words of the Apostle Paul... “I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now... And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.” Philippians 1:3-5, 9-11

Well, my usual prayer might be less formal than Paul’s writing to the Christians of Philippi :), but the sentiment is very similar. I thank God for you, and for the many ways in which you, as individuals and as a community, share the Good News of Christ through your witness, service, and love.

In Christ’s love, Maylis

Photos courtesy of my family, Pastor Lisa, Peter Smyton, and Perry Villanueva

Pictured (besides our Aldersgate family):

Mark Miller (musician and friend), Rachel Fisher and Steve Garnaas-Holmes (my sponsors), Bishop Hector Burgos (NY Conference, invited preacher, former colleague in NJ), Bishop Peggy Johnson (New England Conference Bishop). In group photo: our family friend Helen Sung (also musician), District Superintendent Megan Stowe (also putting Deacon stole on me at ceremony)



Why I Ride 2023

Dear Sponsors,

With Spring comes warmer weather, and the start of my 2023 Pan-Mass Challenge outdoor training. The PMC is an annual bike-a-thon that raises more money for charity than any other event in the country. Last year we raised \$69,000,000 for Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. 100% of every rider-raised dollar goes directly to DFCI.



That's all good info to know, but you're probably wondering why I'm still riding the PMC after 18 years.



I started riding for Erika, who succumbed to a brain tumor when she was just 6 years old. She used to tell people she “spells her name with a “K” because it’s strong and straight, and she’s too bold for a curlyque “C.”

Then I kept riding for my husband Greg, who was treated at Dana-Farber for three years for a rare form of non-Hodgkins lymphoma. Despite the excellent care we received, they couldn’t achieve a sustained remission. We lost him in 2012.



I ride for my niece, Emily, who was diagnosed with leukemia when she was 6 years old. Last December, she celebrated her 40th birthday!



I ride for my partner, John, who is a 2 time cancer survivor. I'm grateful to have someone special to share my life with again.

The list goes on, but you get the idea...

Researchers are making great strides in cancer treatment and care. Survivors are living longer with improved quality of life and every penny I can raise toward that end is a triumph. That's why it's so important to me to continue to ride and raise money to

help Dana-Farber in their fight against cancer. This is my 18th year riding, and my goal is to raise \$18,000. Won't you help by giving what you can?



If there is someone special that you would like me to ride for, please share their name and whether it is in honor, or in memory. You can donate online by clicking on this link: <https://profile.pmc.org/MD0202>. If you prefer, you can write a check made out to PMC and mail it to me at 6 Sterling Lane, Westford, MA 01886.

I thank you in advance for your generosity and your continued support.

Blessings,
Marcia



NATIONAL YOUTH 2023 TRIP!

We have 12 youth and young adults, and 5 adults signed up to attend the United Methodist gathering of youth from all over the country for worship, workshops, mission projects and fun in Daytona Beach, Florida this summer.!

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



ALDERSGATE U.M.C.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

FOR CHILDREN AGES 4 - 12

WEEK OF AUGUST 14th – 18th

Deadline to sign up is Monday, July 31st

Cost: \$20.00 per child, family max: \$60.00

Scholarships are available – please see Cheryl Ortolf

Under Construction: A Habitat for Humanity Vacation Bible School is a Christian based curriculum that uses a construction metaphor to help children learn about community.

Children will learn a Bible lesson each day, create, assemble, and produce projects which can help care for needs of people in the community or for use by Habitat for Humanity volunteers and partner families. We will also have games and snacks!

We are also looking for adult and youth volunteer helpers, please e-mail Cheryl at aumc-education@verizon.net if you would like to help.

There will be a VBS meeting on Sunday, July 16th at 10:30 a.m. in the Concord Room.

Registration forms are in the welcome area.

You can also find them on our website: www.aldersgateumc.us.

New Committee Members Wanted for the Fall

Over the summer we will be working to fill our slate of committees for the Fall and we wanted to extend an invitation for you to think about where God might be calling you to use your gifts. We ask that you send in your reply to the office by August 15th

Committees Include:

Adult Education, Children's Ministry Team, Finance and Stewardship, Garden Club / Landscaping, Membership & Congregational Events, Memorial Gifts, Outreach, Staff Parish Relations, Trustees, and Worship.

Please contact the office or Jim Ortolf if you are interested in serving in one of these areas or if you have any questions!

God's Garden

God has sent plentiful rain to give our church garden a good start, and now we just need a little warm sunshine for the plants to really take off. We enjoyed sharing some fresh asparagus last month, especially at the Mother's Day breakfast! We're harvesting peas and radishes now, with lettuce to follow. In July, we'll start bringing some of the harvest to the Chelmsford food pantry as well as offering some in the fellowship hall after the Sunday worship service. Thanks to all the garden club members for your planting, weeding, and picking. In the garden, as in life, it takes people to share God's gifts with others.

