



But we have this
treasure in jars of
clay to show that
this all-surpassing
power is from God
and not from us.
2 Corinthians 4:7

Aldersgate Advocate

January 22, 2009

Beside the Alabaster Jar...

We have begun a new liturgical year... we have started a new year ... and we have inaugurated a new president. I was quite intrigued by the poet that President Obama chose for his inauguration and struck by her closing words:

What if the mightiest word is love,
love beyond marital, filial, national.
Love that casts a widening pool of light.
Love with no need to preempt grievance.
In today's sharp sparkle, this winter air,
anything can be made, any sentence begun.
On the brink, on the brim, on the cusp –
praise song for walking forward into that light.

Elizabeth Alexander

From her inaugural poem, "Praise Song for the Day"

During these months of new beginning may we also look to the story of God's love in our lives.

When asked by the Massachusetts Bible Society what one thing would I like to share about the Bible I answered in this way: the Bible is not a story locked in history; it is alive and well as it speaks to us in our lives today.

In the Middle Ages, Christians viewed their lives through the lens of scripture by telling Bible stories as if they were happening to their lives. I am sure that they did not realize that by acting the Bible in real time, they could impact our lives, yet, for me, they have.

Most recently, some of our Aldersgate members helped to tell the story of Nehemiah and rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem relating the wall to the safety net in our communities that keeps marginalized people from falling into the vacuum of having no names and no one caring if they live or die. As a Christian, I believe that God loves all people and therefore calls me to care for and give voice to those who are marginalized

Last year, I witnessed a gathering of religious leaders in the Merrimack Valley looking at the 21st century issue of immigration in the United States, through the lens of Abraham's sojourn in Egypt and the danger he encountered by lying about his relationship with Sarah. I learned that, like Abraham and Sarah, many immigrants witness to their faith and risk life to find freedom for themselves and their families.

Several years ago, I experienced a conversation about blended families following an exercise exploring Genesis 21:8-14, Isaac's weaning party and the concurrent disinheritance of Ishmael,

Abraham's first-born son. It was amazing that this biblical story could speak through the ages to what we all thought was a twenty-first century issue.

The Bible is alive and speaks to us this week about new beginnings. "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." (Isaiah 43:19) This verse comes out of a time when the people of God had lived in exile. Today, we read it and take hope for the new thing that God is doing in our lives. Paul tells us in Second Corinthians that that new thing is in us: "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new. See I make all things new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Our God is a God of hope reaching out to us through Jesus, Christ who reveals the God of love. May we be open to his story during this season of Epiphany. Please join us for worship as we explore God's story and its impact on our lives.

Grace and Peace,
Sharon Jones

Worship News

During February, our gospel lessons come from the early chapters of Mark's gospel and are partnered with Epistle lessons from First and Second Corinthians. On Feb. 1, Pastor Sharon will be leading a workshop on Spirituality and Immigration at Living Waters retreat Center in Winslow, Maine. Rev. Larry Peacock, director of Rolling Ridge will be leading worship. He will be focusing his sermon on Mark 1:21-28 and looks forward to being at Aldersgate. His sermon title is "Only Half Right."

On Feb. 8, 2009, the lessons include Mark 1:29-39 which will be the text for Pastor Sharon's message. She is intrigued by verse 13, which tells us that Jesus lifted up Simon's mother and she began to serve the disciples. The sermon title is "Lifted Up for Service. The Angels and Choristers will offer the introit at the 10:45 service. We will also celebrate Boy Scout Sunday as we recognize leaders from Aldersgate who contribute their time to our Cub Scout Pack and Boy Scout Troup.

Pastor Sharon will be on vacation over the weekend of Feb. 15, 2009. and Joanne will be offering the morning message. Joanne was recently approved as a local lay speaker at our Charge Conference on Jan. 11, 2009. She will be basing her sermon on Mark 1:40-45 and will focus on healing – spiritual and physical.

On February 22, 2009, we transition between Epiphany and Lent with Transfiguration Sunday. The narrative of Elijah's passing helps to set the scene. The gospel story of Jesus' visit with James and John and to the mountain marks a transition in his journey as well.

We begin the season of lent on Ash Wednesday at our joint service with West Chelmsford UMC. This year Pastor Sharon will be preaching as we worship together at the West Chelmsford UMC, 242 Main Street, North Chelmsford. Our Aldersgate Chancel Choir will combine with the West Chelmsford choir to lead the music in our service. Please plan to join us for this annual gathering with our United Methodists sister and brothers in Chelmsford.



We wish our friend Beverly well as she moves to her new home in Maine! Bev has been a member of Aldersgate since 1968 – has given of her special gift of voice to our church and to the community – has served on the Board of Trustees at Aldersgate. Bev was given a send off by our church family on a snowy Sunday (January 18) and enjoyed a brunch prepared by our Congregational Life Committee.

We thank you for your friendship, Bev, and your willingness to share your talents with your church family. We will miss you!

A Presentation: The Epworth United Methodist Church, 64 Salisbury Street in Worcester will present *Women of the Gospel The New Testament* on Sunday, March 8, 2009 at 2:00 PM. Tickets are \$8.00. Linda Gray Kelley has received numerous accolades for her expertise bringing this dramatic collection of happy and healing stories of women's encounters with Jesus to life. For ticket information, please call (508)829-9334. Coffee and refreshments will be provided following the performance.

A Belated Happy New Year

We have begun a new year with a new president of our country – optimistically and with faith that God will bless our president and his family and all the people in our world; that we each one commit in faith to making our little space better for our world. Happy New Year, everyone!

We need to step back and look with gratitude at some events that occurred in the latter part of 2008:



OUR AUMC CHRISTMAS FAIRE

GIVING THANKS!

So festive the Season
Our church mission the reason,
For crafting and making,
Creating and baking!

Our Faire was fantastic,
The Elves were ecstatic,
The Desserts were delicious,
Kringle's Kitchen stupendous!

The beautiful greens and the swags were a hit,
The Band entertained us again, quite a bit!

A quite busy marketplace
With bidding and dealing,
The children loved crafting,

And found St Nick appealing!

So thanks for the talents, the prayers and your *presents*,
AUMC fellowship is a sign of God's *presence*!

A BIG THANK YOU - to all the talented people who donated to the craft table for the Faire. I received so many compliments on the items for sale, especially the quality of the work. And we've already begun thinking about what we can do for next year. If you have any suggestions for projects or what we might do differently please let me know. We hope to have more workshops during the year and will be organizing some kits in the library for you to take and work on at home. Stay tuned for future announcements. Thank you! Nancy

FROM OUTREACH

A big thank you from Outreach for the congregations support with the Christmas tree gifts. You always amaze us.

Audrey and her Dance Expression Troups made a donation of food and toys to our pantry again this year. Thanks to Audrey and all her classes.

Our change for change for January and February will go the Lowell Open Pantry. There is a great need in the Lowell area at this time of the year.

A big thank you for your donations to the Lincoln School. Between our Aldersgate family and Gail's bridge group I believe they are well set for these cold months. THANK YOU!!!

Lincoln School Appreciates Its Many sponsors *(appeared in The Lowell Sun and used by permission from Sandra Dunning, Principal of the Abraham Lincoln School, Lowell)*

For the past 15 years, the Northeast Association of Realtors has provided Christmas gifts to many of the boys and girls at the Abraham Lincoln School in Lowell. Each December, Lynn Shattuck and various other Realtors arrive in trucks and vans with loads of gaily wrapped presents for Lincoln students in need of holiday gifts. The gifts are tagged from "Santa," and parents are called to come and receive the gifts to take home and put under their trees.

In addition this year, the organization, "It's All About Kids," also donated gifts for some of our neediest students, as well as providing us gift cards to Payless Shoe Store so that we can respond immediately to students and families in need of boots and shoes during this winter season.

Earlier this year, Gail and her Bridge Club dropped by dozens of new winter coats, sweatshirts, hats, mittens and jeans for our clothes closet. Ladies from Aldersgate Methodist Church in Chelmsford also provided us hats and mittens, and it is not unusual for one of them to drop by our school with additional donations throughout the year. Other donations to our clothes closet have been provided by ladies from the Lowell Senior Center, as well as from the Community Project Committee of the College Club of Greater Lowell Schools. Because we have students coming to school each day in need of warm winter clothing, these donations make it possible for us to immediately respond to their needs.

During these challenging economic times, it is the children who most often suffer the greatest. Because of the kindness and generosity of our community friends, the children at the Lincoln School had a merry Christmas. Lincoln students will also continue to have warm winter coats, hats and mittens throughout this long winter season.

On behalf of everyone at the Abraham Lincoln School, we offer our heartfelt thanks and appreciation for the kindness, the support and the generosity of our benefactors. We are truly blessed to be part of a community that cares so much about our children.

SANDRA DUNNING, Principal
Abraham Lincoln School, Lowell

Thank You

A heartfelt "thank you" to everyone for their generous contributions of toys, clothing and gifts to the Santa Tree Program.

This year the weather was difficult and I could not have done this as successfully without the help of Holly Fipphen who brought the gifts to the various schools many times and in time for Christmas!

The needs were great – your spirit of generosity - overwhelming!

Thank you all so much! Maureen

From the Finance Committee

Thank you!

On behalf of the Finance Committee and all the ministries of AUMC, we thank you for your continued support through your Pledge or regular giving. Life may be unpredictable, but God's love is dependable and inspires us to be generous and consistent in our thanks-giving.

Annual statements for 2008 have been prepared and sent out to your homes. If you have any questions or need giving envelopes, please contact Kelly, Financial Secretary.

And, if Mother Nature continues to disrupt our worship attendance, please continue to give thanks regularly as our missions and ministries continue....come snow or shine!

Our 2009 budget, adopted at the Charge Conference, challenges us to receive about \$18,000 more than our current pledge commitments. We invite you to prayerfully consider your giving commitment and be part of the AUMC ministry miracle this year. In addition to cost saving projects, we trust our blessings will grow this year. For more information about the budget, please feel free to contact me.

Blessings, Bonnie, Finance Chair

Almost three months ago I was seriously injured in a fall from the stairs. A week later, I suffered from congestive heart failure. Since then I received enormous support from my friends at Aldersgate consisting of visits by our pastor and others, many phone calls, flowers, cards almost daily and car rides as needed. But most of all, the prayers on my behalf gave me great comfort. The power of prayer cannot be overstated.

Last, but not least, I would like to mention the dedicated daily care from my wife, Gigi.

My most sincere thanks to all of you!

God bless, Dirk



From the
Thank you for your Christmas gifts that suddenly appeared on my desk during the Christmas season! I am touched by the love and support that has surrounded me from that day in August of 2001 when I began a new journey in my life. Thank you for being my church family – you are dear to me and always will be!

My love and gratitude – Joanne

Thank You to our Musicians

We cannot go forward without noting with thanks the outstanding music program at Aldersgate! We are so blessed to have a talented Chancel Choir, Shepherd Bells, Miller Bells, our new Youth Music Ensemble, the Choristers and Angels and an organist and Director of Music who are dedicated and enthusiastic about praising God through music!

Thank you to all who participated in the Christmas Eve worship services – to our choirs and to all our musicians and bell ringers and to the beautiful “Mary” – Laura – our interpretive dancer. Aldersgate is so proud of your talent and dedication to the music program at Aldersgate.

Looking to the Future

The Garden Club will be meeting on Sat Feb 7 at 9:45 directly after the Mighty Men's breakfast. Last year our big project was to create a vegetable garden near the front parking lot. We had a great harvest which was shared with our congregation, the food pantry, and St. Paul's.

Here is the final tally for the season.

46 Butternut Squash - 120lb
Green beans - 6.25lb
Pickling cucumbers - 34.25lb
Brussels Sprouts - 12lb
Rainbow Swiss Chard - 5lb
Yellow onions - .5
Tomatoes - 104lb
Bunches of lettuce, parsley and basil
Eggplant - 4.75lb
Yellow Summer Squash - 11.75
And one gnarly little green pepper.

These weights are a bit less than actual because there was definitely produce harvested that did not get weighed and recorded. Hopefully we will expand the garden and make it more “user friendly” so more people will come in and partake.

Please join us at our first meeting of the year. New seed catalogs are out and it is time to start planning. Even though we have lots of snow right now spring will be here before you know it.

Deana

Attitude Check

While driving to New Hampshire last week
I witnessed a bumper sticker which
read "MASSHOLE" on a van with NH plates. Well my first instinct was to
think, "well we don't like you either!".
Luckily, before I opened my mouth,
I corrected myself and said to my daughter;
we should make stickers which read;
"We like you anyway."
I have been noticing lately that it seems to be
the human condition to have a negative reaction to things or to remember most vividly
the unpleasant things in one's day.
One could have a perfectly
fine day at work but the awful traffic jam
or road rage experienced on the way home
will be all that is remembered for the rest of the evening. It is quite a job to remember
all of the small blessings God gives us every day, and leave behind the inconveniences.
I think it is well worth it to keep trying.

From Deana

To All Women

Welcome All women!

The monthly bible study held at Ginny's the last Thursday of every month is starting a new book!

Please join us as we begin the study of Joyce Meyer's "Battlefield of the Mind" We will use the book and the study guide. The price of the Book and Study Guide will be \$20.50. You can find used books on Amazon for as little as \$3. If you would like to join the group, but cannot afford the book and study guide, one can be provided for you.

We start this new study on Thursday February 26th. Dinner starts at 6:30 and we proceed to bible study at 7:30. You are welcome to join us for dinner and study, or just study. All women of the church and community are welcome. This is an informal fellowship of women. We gather to support, study and mentor each other. We would love to welcome you into our arms ladies!

Any questions please call Ginny.

Battlefield of the Mind: Winning the Battle in Your Mind By JOYCE MEYER

There's a War Going On And Your Mind Is The Battlefield. If you're one of millions who suffer from worry, doubt, confusion, depression, anger or condemnation, you are experiencing an attack in your mind. Overcoming negative thoughts that come against your mind brings freedom and peace. Find out how to recognize damaging thought patterns and stop them from influencing your life. In this powerful book, best-selling author and conference host, Joyce Meyer, guides you through an honest self-appraisal by sharing the trials, tragedies and ultimate victories of her own marriage, family and ministry- including the truth she learned about what she was thinking and feeling every step of the way.

Joyce has taught on emotional healing and related subjects in meetings all over the country, helping multiplied thousands. She has recorded more than 230 different audio-cassette albums and over 75 videos. She has also authored 49 books to help the body of Christ on various topics.

WOMEN'S MINISTRY NEWS

At this writing, the Women's Ministry Secret Sister Reveal Event will be on Sunday, February 22. All women are invited to participate in this annual event. More information as to time will be in forthcoming bulletins. If you have any questions, you may contact Sherri.



Our Aldersgate Prayer Shawl Ministry is alive and well! We ventured forth a little to help with the Craft Table at our church fair and enjoyed it! So, we are meeting on Monday afternoons from 2:30 – 4 PM temporarily at Gigi's home in Billerica, but will resume our usual spot in the Concord Room soon. We invite you to attend! We also remind you that we have a number of completed Prayer Shawls and Lap Robes ready to be given to someone you feel would benefit by this gentle reminder of God's love and care. We will also keep the Church Fair in mind to again help by making things throughout the year.

Also, if you would like to give a donation of yarn to the Prayer Shawl Ministry, we would be happy to receive it. It takes three skeins of yarn to complete a Prayer Shawl. If you have any questions, please contact Joanne in the office or Gigi for additional information.

We enjoy knitting – we enjoy the fellowship of being together for a worthwhile purpose and we welcome you to join us!



THINK SPRING

Crafters wanted! Aldersgate will be host a **Spring Fair on April 4th**. Hours are from 9am to 4pm. The deadline for applications is March 4th. For an application for table space and more information please contact Robin.

Please Note:

The Early Birds are grateful to their leader (Charles) for changing the time of the Early Bird Bible Class to 7 AM instead of 6 AM every Tuesday morning. With the new change in time we are pleased that several "new birds" have joined us "older birds" and we would love it if you could join us.

This class is bringing the Gospel to our every day lives – the reality of daily living presents some difficult as well as joyous times and this class is one way to come together – share and learn and yes – laugh together.

Remember – Tuesday mornings at 7 AM. As I write this – I am reminded of our class serving our guests through the St. Paul's Feeding Ministry at Eliot Church in Lowell. Our guests enjoyed the meal prepared for them – always express their gratitude for what they have received – and we as their hosts receive much more than we give – this is such an important outreach and Aldersgate has taken hold of this program thanks to Debbie Benson's leadership.

So, thank you Charles for your continued leadership of "the birds" and to our church for their continued generosity to help others. JS

CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS



Epiphany Sunday

The Wise Men visited our church school classes on Sunday, January 4th and shared the story of their journey to find the new king. Thank you to Tom, Bob and Jim for playing the role of Wise Men. Thank you to Wendy, Sherri, Kathy and Dawn for making cupcakes. Our honorary kings for the day were: everyone!

Offering Envelopes

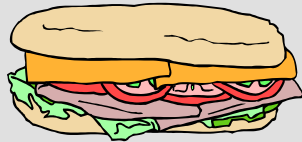
The church school offering envelopes are now available. If your child did not receive a box, please see Cheryl.

Valentine's Day

Each of our church school classes will be making valentines on Sundays, February 1st and February 8th for home bound members and friends, college students and servicemen. **If you would like us to send a Valentine to someone special, please tell Cheryl.**

Confirmation Class Beginning

Our first confirmation class will begin on Sunday, January 25th, from noon – 2:00 p.m. We have paired up each of our confirmation youth with a mentor to help them in their confirmation experience. Please pray for the following youth as they prepare for their confirmation journey: Alex, Charlotte, Jeff, Rebecca, Brad, Lauren, Sergei and Micaela.



SUPER BOWL SUB SALE

Our senior youth group will be taking orders for subs on Sunday, January 25th after both services and downstairs during church school time. You can also write your order down on the sign up sheet in the Fellowship Hall or downstairs in the hall or e-mail your order to aumc-education@comcast.net. You can pick them up after each service on Sunday, February 1st. This is our first fundraiser for our mission trip to Mission Central in Pennsylvania this summer.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1st
ITALIAN SUBS
TURKEY SUBS
VEGETARIAN SUBS
\$5.00 A PIECE WITH CHIPS

Worship Arts Program

Tuesdays, 4 – 5:30 p.m. Ages 3 years old – 6th grade



What a wonderful group of talented and gifted children we have participating in worship arts! During worship arts, the children learn different art techniques with a corresponding faith lesson, led by Cheryl and assisted by Becca. The children also participate in music by learning songs and playing instruments under the musical direction of Carol and Jane. Please let Cheryl know if you would like her to pick your child up at South Row School.



Children & Youth Music Programs

Angels: Sundays, after theme conversation – for children ages 3 – 1st grade; **Tuesdays**, 4:55 – 5:30 p.m.

Choiristers: Tuesdays, 4:10 – 4:55 p.m. – for children in 2nd – 6th grade

Miller Bells: Thursdays, 6:00 – 6:45 p.m. – for children and youth in grade 5 and higher

Youth Music Ensemble: Thursdays, 6:45 – 7:30 p.m. – for youth in grade 6 and higher

JUNIOR YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

This fellowship group is for young youth in grades 4th, 5th and 6th grade. Our mission is to provide your children with a safe, healthy and loving environment to help them grow and experience Christianity

Children's Play

Friday, January 30th from 6:30 – 10:00 p.m.

We will be going to the Chelmsford High School's children play. Please see Cheryl if you can chaperone, and for the cost of a ticket.

Valentine's Fun

Friday, February 13th from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Wear something red and bring some valentine's sprinkles for cookies – we will be making heart shaped cookies and decorating them. We will also play games, and have some fun crafts.



Trip to the Ecotarium

Saturday, February 28th from noon – 5:00 p.m.

All junior youth and their families are welcome to join us as we travel to the Ecotarium in Worcester, MA! If we have at least 10 people, we can get a group rate. The cost of \$12.50 a person – includes museum pass, a train ride and a planetarium program. Please let Cheryl or David know if your family is interested by Friday, February 13th.

SENIOR YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

We are a fun group of spiritually focused youth who celebrate Christ's presence among us by engaging in community and group activities, church participation and mission projects.

All youth in grades 7 – 12 are welcome to join us at any time and friends are always welcome!

Saturday, January 31st - Sub Sale Prep

Saturday, 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Come join the fun of assembling the subs for our



sale.

Sunday, February 1st - Church Sub Sale

Sunday, 8:30 – noon

Sign up for a time to work and sell subs for Sunday morning. Please see Cheryl Ortolfo to sign up for a time.

Confirmation Class

Sunday, February 8th

Time to be determined

Saturday, February 14th - Lowell Wish Project

Saturday, 8:45 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

We will meet at church, and then drive to the Lowell Wish Project to volunteer for 2 hours. Friends are always welcome to join us as we help the community.



Sunday, February 15th - Youth time

Sunday, noon – 2:00 p.m.

Bring money for pizza or subs and any games, music or movies you would like to use during our time together in our youth room.

Friday, February 20 - Sunday, February 22nd - Maine Ski Trip

Please see Cheryl for details about this trip.



Aldersgate United Methodist Church

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Chelmsford, Massachusetts 01824

(978) 256-9400 aumc@comcast.net

www.chelmsfordumc.org

January, February 2009

*You are welcome to join us for
Worship at 8:30 & 10:45 AM
Church School for all ages 9:30 AM*

**FAITH
HOPE
& LOVE**

**Join us as we share our faith together, knowing that God gives us
hope for tomorrow and loves us without reservation! What a gift!
What can we give God?**

**Our Vision: Aldersgate United Methodist Church:
A beacon of God's love radiating faith, hope and joy....everywhere!**

**Our Mission: Aldersgate is a family of faith called out by Jesus Christ
to serve our congregation, community and the world
by loving, witnessing and teaching God's Word.**