



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

June 12, 2009

Beside the Alabaster Jar ...

Dear sisters and brothers,

Back at the beginning of May when I shared with you that I would be leaving Aldersgate, I thought we had plenty of time to say good-bye. But now that it is the middle of June, I am feeling there has not been enough time to thank you and God for the blessing of being your pastor during these last seven years. I wish I had the time to visit with each and every one of you on an individual basis and know that that is not possible. This letter seems to be the place for a formal goodbye and I hope that you will be able to join us for a fun farewell on June 28th. I was pleasantly surprised that Aldersgate does such a great job of saying goodbye. I think maybe it's because we like having parties.

As I think back over the years, I am aware of the way our lives have different seasons. For me personally this has been a season of seeing my daughters married, discovering the pleasure of grand-parenting, and letting my hair go grey. It is with a little humor and a little seriousness that I say thank you to the grey-haired women among you who have given me courage.

I suspect that a congregation also has seasons in respect to their life together. These last seven years have seen growth in our adult education program, improvements to our landscaping and physical plant, and moving out into cooperative relationships with other faith communities through St. Paul's Feeding Ministry and the Merrimack Valley Project. I know and trust in God that Aldersgate will continue to grow and mature during these coming years, under the leadership of Rev. Lisa Bruget-Cass.

I cannot leave without also expressing my gratitude to the many who took time to participate in a mystery play, learn more about the medieval mystery play, and/or watch the movie of the contemporary adaptation of the Chester Mystery Play by a South African Theater Company. Your comments gave me insight for inclusion in my dissertation and I thank you for helping me complete the work for my Doctorate in Ministry. It was fun, enlightening, and faith provoking as grew in my understanding the Bible as living word, speaking out f history to us today.

Finally, Richard and I both want to thank you for the gift of representing you in your sister church relationship with Sierra Maestra. We keep trying to find the words to tell you what this has meant to us and encourage more of you to be involved in this incredible life-changing partnership. I have seen the ways that it has changed individual lives and also this congregation over the years. We will continue praying for you and for our sisters and brother in Nicaragua.

Thank you for the many kindnesses expressed to Richard and I and for inviting me into some of the key transitions in your lives. It has been an honor to pastor this congregation.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Sharon



To those who have helped provide rides to physician's appointments, we thank you! It is wonderful to know that there are those who care and can take the time to assist our people who are experiencing a special and unexpected crisis. If you can help provide this service, please let Joanne or Jane know of your availability! Special thanks to Jane and Dan, to Kathy and John, to Dottie, and Walt for your help!

PRAYER CONCERNS

Please pray for Pastor Sharon and Richard as they prepare to leave Chelmsford for their home state of Maine. Please hold our new pastor and her family; Pastor Lisa Bruget-Cass, her husband, Loren and their children, Landon and Levi in your prayers as they join our congregation. Even as we say farewell to Pastor Sharon – we welcome Pastor Lisa – that is our Methodist tradition. May you be moved to say thank you to Sharon and Richard, and welcome to Lisa and her family. Please keep Dirk and Ginny in your prayers.



Directory Update

Thank you to all the families and individuals who came to be photographed for our new church directory! We had 109 family groups, so far. If you have not yet been photographed by Olan Mills but would like to be included in the directory, please contact Betsey through the church office at (978)256-9400. We are finalizing our collection of group and candid photos for our ministry pages--let me know if you have some you'd like to add. We are delighted to be including photos of Pastor Sharon and Richard as well as Pastor Lisa and her family. In this time of transition the directory is a great tool for communicating with our church family, both near and far. We hope to have it delivered by fall.

Betsey

THE BOOK GROUP

Books have been chosen for the year ahead. The list is below and you can begin to do some reading ahead throughout the summer. The Book Group meets the last Tuesday of the month in the Concord Room at 6 PM. Please join in if you enjoy reading, discussion, and fellowship!

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald – July
The Friday Night Knitting Club, by Kate Jacobs, August
The Color of Water, by James McBride, Sept.
The Zookeepers Wife, by Diane Ackerman, Oct.
The Winding Ways Quilt, by Jennifer Chiaverini, Nov.
Back When We Were Grown-ups, by Anne Tyler Dec.
The God Game, by Andrew Greeley, Jan.
Water for Elephants, by Sara Gruen, Feb.
Just Take My Heart, by Mary Higgins Clark, March
While I Was Gone, by Sue Miller, April

THANK YOU - CHURCH SCHOOL FAMILIES

Thank you for gathering and delivering the glider rocker, diapers, and Clorox Wipes. Your donation and generosity blessed us!

God bless, the residents and staff at My Father's House



OUR PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

We will not meet during the summer but we have prayer shawls available if you know of someone who would be helped by receiving one. Please contact Joanne in the Office if we can help you. We will be working on items for the fair, so if you enjoy knitting, please think of making something for the Craft Table and giving it to Joanne or just holding it until September when we will meet again. We are also thinking of expanding our Prayer Shawl Ministry to one night a month at the church in the fall, so if you are interested in that idea, please let Joanne or Gigi know of your interest.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

The first months of this year are an affirmation of Aldersgate's faithful generosity and commitment to mission and ministry! Your giving has enabled us to fund our commitments to date this year. Please remember your church family as you travel and vacation this summer. We recognize the ongoing uncertainty of the current economy and celebrate how the Aldersgate family pulls together.

Blessings, Bonnie - Finance/Stewardship Committee

HOMELESS HOSPITALITY

Several families who worshiped with us while housed in Chelmsford have continued to communicate with me - sharing their adventures and accomplishments.

We continue to support them and others living in temporary housing in a variety of ways and with resources at the WISH Project.

If you are interested in helping, please contact Bonnie 978-846-1260.

EARLY BIRD - EARLY EVENING

Charles will lead our Wednesday Bible Study and light supper on July 15, 29, and August 19 from 6 - 7:30 PM. Everyone is welcome!

CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS

Thank you Church School Classes!

Our church school classes helped in leading worship on Sunday, May 17th during the 2nd service. The theme of the morning was "You Are My Friends". All of the classes illustrated their interpretation of what friendship is and they also illustrated the fruits of the spirit. Each of the students of the preschool class created personalized bulletin covers. The Kindergarten class was creative by dancing with



ribbons during the offertory. Gabe and Alex greeted the congregation and introduced the theme for the service. The Call to Worship and Opening Prayer were led by the 5th & 6th grade class. Our 7th & 8th grade students were the greeters for the morning. Becca, Lauren and Nicole read the scripture lessons of the day. Our 3rd & 4th grade class were ushers and acolytes. Our 1st & 2nd grade class led us in the Lord's Prayer. After the service we all gathered in the Fellowship Hall for a barbecue and potluck luncheon and our annual softball game.

Confirmation Sunday

Each of the following youth were confirmed on Sunday, June 14th:

Jeff, Alex, Brad, Sergei, Rebecca, Charlotte, Micaela, Lauren, and Ashley.



Please take time to get to know each of these young people as they continue in their faith journeys.

July and August Book & Craft Time

During the summer months, we will offer a special class for 3 year olds – 4th grade that will meet downstairs after the theme conversation. We will listen to a special story, and do a craft related to the message of the book. If you are interested in helping, please see Cheryl Ortolf or sign up on the sign up sheet located in the Fellowship Hall.

Worship Arts Program

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

Children, ages 4 through 6th grade, are invited to join us each Tuesday afternoon from 4:00 – 5:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. **The last class for worship arts is June 23rd.**



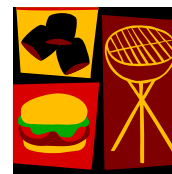
Church School Teachers needed for Fall

Some people come into our lives and go quickly. Some stay awhile and leave footprints in our hearts, and we are never, ever the same! A child needs you to be the special person in his or her life. Our church is asking you to prayerfully consider making a difference in the lives of the children of Aldersgate. We are looking for 2 preschool teachers and a 3rd & 4th grade teacher for the fall. Please contact Cheryl if you are interested in helping or for more information.



RALLY DAY - SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13th

**Worship Services: 8:30 & 10:45 a.m.
Church School Registration: 9:15 a.m.
Church School and Adult Reception: 9:30 a.m.**



All adults are encouraged to join us in the Fellowship Hall at 9:45 for refreshments and information about the church school program and adult spiritual growth opportunities.

10:45 a.m. Worship Service: Bible Presentation

Noon: Potluck Luncheon for all – Bring your favorite side dish or dessert, we will provide hot dogs, hamburgers and drinks.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

AUGUST 18 - 20, 2009



Cost: \$20.00 per child, family max: \$60.00 – make checks out to
Aldersgate UMC

Scholarships are available – please see Cheryl

Under Construction: A Habitat for Humanity Vacation Bible School is a Christian education resource 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, and learn about the Bible Theme Story through play and be refreshed by a healthy snack. Your children won't want to miss learning about how they are part of a community that helps one another! Register them today and let's get moving and help our neighbors! **Please see display in Fellowship Hall for information and registration forms.**

Junior Youth Kick-Off Celebration!

Friday, September 11th – 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

All new 4th graders will join our 5th & 6th graders for a pizza party, games and fun as we kick-off the new season. Parents and other family members are also invited to join us. After our meal together, we will split up into two groups: the youth will get to know one another by playing fun games, and the adults will get to know one another and learn about our program for the year, and ask any questions they may have.

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!

Church Car Wash

Sunday, June 21st from 9:00 - 12:00 noon

If you enjoy getting wet and having fun, come join us as we wash cars to help raise money for our trips this summer. If you have any hoses, sponges, or other helpful equipment for washing cars, please bring it along. Friends are always welcome to join us!

Senior Youth Lock-In Retreat

Friday, August 28th – Saturday, August 29th

Friday, 7:00 p.m. – Saturday, noon

What is youth group? How does it work? What is youth ministry all about?

Each one of you has different needs, interests and gifts. A strong youth



group will not happen by itself. All are welcome as we talk about youth group and plan for the fall. We will review past activities, dream about what the future may be, and of course have fun. Please bring your ideas, friends, and a snack to share. We will cook a pancake breakfast, and go out for lunch.

YOUTH MISSION TRIP

SUNDAY, AUGUST 2 - SATURDAY, AUGUST 8



MISSION CENTRAL

MISSION EDUCATION, MISSION OUTREACH & DISASTER RESPONSE

We will be working at Mission Central in Mechanicsburg, PA, visit the Amish, have fun at Hershey Park and experience Philadelphia. We will stay at the Paddletown U.M.C. (the church that hosted us last year), stay in a cabin or hotel for 2 nights, rent a van, and will need adults to travel with us. The cost will be contingent on how much you have helped with fundraisers this year.

To my fellow parishioners,

This year I'll be riding in the Pan Mass Challenge (PMC) on August 1st and 2nd. I'm riding the PMC with a team out of Westford, MA and have set a goal to raise \$4,200.00 in support of the Dana Farber Institute - Cancer Research. I was inspired to ride in this year's event because of some people whom I've worked with over the years that have been stricken with cancer. It seems like every where we turn we know someone who is in the battle of their lives, literally! Some church members have ridden in this event over the years and if you supported them in the past, I encourage you to continue to support them! If you haven't sponsored or contributed to this cause in the past, it might something worth looking into! There's nothing more gratifying than contributing in whatever way you can; we all know the feeling of accomplishment when we give!

With great love and thanks for your gifts,

Greg

Check out my personal site, photo gallery, story and ride history. I keep this site up to date!

<http://www.pmc.org/GP0056>

PS: Not only will we be riding from Sturbridge to Provincetown for the event, but on Friday, the day before the event, we'll be riding 100 miles from Stockbridge to the start of the event in Sturbridge. We call this Day-Zero! I will especially have our closest friends, family and parishioners on my mind for the first 100 and throughout the ride! I have a couple other crazy, endurance rides including the B2B and 6-Gaps (yikes). Check out these links on my history page.

Also, Marcia will be riding for her husband, Greg (not the Greg above). Greg has benefited greatly from his excellent care and treatment for Cancer; we rejoice with the Family on his

remission! The success of his treatment, together with all the prayers offered by you and others for Greg. in partnership with God made a difference! Marcia and Greg appreciate your prayers.

Contact Marcia through the church office at (978) 256-9400 or go on the website www.pmc.org, then, eGiftID=MD0202