



Advocate April 2020

Dear Aldersgate Family,

It has been almost three weeks now since we have been able to gather together in person. I truly miss seeing you! We are a close-knit community, and we are seeking ways to maintain our connection to God and one another during this time of necessary social distancing.

We have been blessed to be able to offer video worship from our sanctuary, hopefully helping you feel the comfort of that space as we continue to gather to praise God each week, wherever we may be. My kids remind me the lessons they have learned from the Sunday School Song, “The church is not a building, the church is not a steeple, the church is not a resting place, the church is a people!” (We Are The Church – UMH 558)

More than ever before, we are living that reality. I always think of the building as our home base... our “spring board” for ministry. We come together to be strengthened to go back out into the world to live ministry among people. When we cannot be together in our building, we are reminded that we are the church wherever we are. And I am thankful for the creative ways we are being the church for one another, and for the larger community. You will find examples of that in the pages of this newsletter.

I am thankful for our staff, who continue to work remotely while the office is physically closed. I am thankful for our Church Council Chairperson, for our Committee Chairs, Church School Teachers, our Prayer Partners, and for the new ministries that have been formed to help us through this unprecedented time. Beyond our church family, I am thankful for people who make daily life possible for each of us...for those healthcare workers and first-responders who put their lives on the line so life can continue for others. I am thankful for those who continue to stock our grocery stores and pharmacies, and for those small businesses that stay open so we can pick-up take-out food. There are so many unsung heroes of this time in our lives. May we continue to pray for one another and for our church leaders, our community officials and our nation’s leaders as we live in these days.

We know that God is with us. In these uncertain and fearful times, we continue to be people of hope.

In faith,

Pastor Lisa





Holy Week Schedule

This Sunday we will celebrate Palm Sunday in our video worship. Like those long ago, we cry out, “Hosanna! Save us!” A video link will be sent to your email Sunday morning.

Holy Thursday – We remember Jesus gathering at the table with His disciples for His Last Supper. We will hear again His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane and His final words from the cross. We will send a video link on Thursday for you to experience Holy Thursday worship at home.

Good Friday – We invite you to light a candle and to spend time in silent prayer as you reflect on God’s love for you in Christ.

Easter Sunday – We will celebrate Resurrection in a video worship proclaiming that Christ is Risen and we are people of resurrection hope! A video link will be sent to your email Sunday morning. A list of Easter remembrances is included at the end of this newsletter.





Ways to connect

Ways to Connect with One Another

During this time of social distancing, we continue to need human connection and interaction. Although we are not allowed to reach out physically, we can still connect by phone, or a wave to a neighbor over the fence, by sending a card or text message, or connecting over Facebook or Zoom. Hearing one another's voices, and/or seeing one another's faces can go a long way to reassure us that we are not alone. Please continue to reach out to others during this time and reach out to one of us in the church family if we can support you in any way.

Caring Calls Are Underway!

To keep us connected and supporting each other as a church family during the pandemic, a team of your fellow congregants have started calling every family in the congregation. These calls are to check in on each other, see if there are any concerns or celebrations to lift up in prayer, and to learn if there is anything we can do to help each other during this time. Please be looking for a call from one of the following members of the Caring Calls team:

Debbie B. Betsy C. Robin D. Nancy G. Evelyn H.
Suzanne H. Christine K. Ann M. Dottie N. Cheryl O.
Sherri P. Peter S. Jane V. Kim W.

Please be looking for a call about once a week so we can all stay in touch as we walk this journey together as a family of faith. If you are not receiving a call, please notify the church office (978-256-9400 or aldersgatehelmsford@verizon.net) to be added to the list.





Education News

Adult Education News

Sunday and Thursday Bible Study Groups: Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, we had to end our in-person study of The Lord's Prayer early. However, Pastor Lisa has continued to guide us through the remaining topics in her sermons the past Sundays. We are exploring the possibilities of a new Adult Study for after Easter and will let you know once we settle on a plan.

Early Bird will conclude the study of the Lord's Prayer over the next two weeks. In the meantime, all are invited to read Acts 2 - 3 and ponder the question "How to be an Acts 2 Christian in an Acts 3 World?" Exploration of this will be done through email and possibly online. If you would like to be a part of the study, email Charles M. to be included. Every day is a blessing. Give thanks. Show kindness. Stay safe, Practice physical distancing while staying close to the cross.

CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS

Our senior youth and 6th- 8th grade classes have been using zoom to meet on Sunday morning at 9:30 a.m. The 3rd – 5th grade class will also start meeting on Sunday mornings at 8:30 a.m. Thank you to the teachers for setting this up.

We have also been sending out weekly activities for families to do together that connect to our worship theme.

Seeing each other and connecting with each other is so important during these challenging times. If you have not received an e-mail to join a group, please let Cheryl know.

WORSHIP ARTS NEWS

The worship arts children met for the first time using zoom this week. We had story time, a craft and a song. It was so wonderful having the children see each other and have some fun. The Moms were also able to spend some time together in conversation. If you are interested in joining worship arts, please e-mail Cheryl.

SENIOR & JUNIOR YOUTH GROUPS

The senior and junior youth groups will be meeting using zoom starting next week. The junior youth will meet on Fridays, from 6:30 – 7:30 p.m. The senior youth will meet Wednesdays, from 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. More information will be sent out via e-mail.





Outreach

Ways to Help

Grocery Shopping – If you are willing to add a few things to your own grocery list to help someone who cannot or should not be shopping on their own, please let the office know. If you need groceries brought to you, please let us know through the office as well.

Face Masks - Last week I attached a link sent to me by Victorine J. requesting folks to sew face masks for local hospitals. Many of you jumped right in to that project and are making a difference! The Lowell Sun interviewed our own Gay R. and Melinda G. yesterday. The link for the article is here: <https://www.lowellsun.com/2020/04/01/locals-pull-together-send-hand-sewn-masks-to-health-care-workers/>

St. Paul's update

In the interest of Public Health all meal programs in the City of Lowell have been consolidated into one central location.

If you would like to provide support to the meal programs, here are a few ways you can help:

Direct financial donations to Life Connections, marked for COVID 19 support, at

<http://www.lifeconnectioncenter.org>

Financial donations to your existing programs who are helping support the meal program

Donate through the Amazon link - <http://a.co/5OjueDD>

In order to maintain health and safety for all involved, Life Connections respectfully requests that any donation of dried goods or prepared meals is coordinated with the program before delivery.

Please contact them at 978 505 7984 or email vinny@lifeconnectioncenter.org

JFON update

During this time we continue to receive client names and contact info, as well as assess cases. Clients will be represented by the Justice Center attorneys who work with us and we will open the clinics once we are given the okay by public officials.





Music

A heartfelt THANK YOU to the musicians who have contributed to the recordings for our worship services during this unprecedented situation. We appreciate your time and the sharing of your gifts for the glory of God and the spiritual enrichment of our congregation. We miss making music together and look forward to whenever we are able to meet in person again. In the meantime, we encourage you to look through the wealth of musical resources now available online. Music is a universal language and one that the Spirit of God uses to speak to us and bring us God's peace. Keep the music playing, and keep singing along! Prayers for health and safety.

In Christ's love, *Maylis and Cheryl*

Spring Ring Cancelled

Given the present health and safety concerns, this year's Spring Ring has been cancelled. Next year, 2021, will be the 35th Anniversary of the MA Spring Ring. We look forward to a wonderful celebration then!





Stewardship

Ways to Give

Many of you have asked how you can continue to give your tithes and offerings during this time. You may choose to mail your gift or use bill-pay to have a gift sent to the church. You may also drop off your offering in the outdoor mail slot located beside the front door to the lobby of the church. We continue to receive mail daily. Pastor Lisa will place those gifts in the offering plates she raises each week after the Doxology in our video worship services. God understands, and we are sensitive to the changes that have taken place in many people's financial situation. We are grateful for any way you are able to respond with your gifts during this time.

Stewardship Update in the Midst of Covid-19

"Give us this day..."

As we walk through the uncertainty of our current social distancing, we are so grateful for the faithful givers of our Aldersgate Church Family.

While we have "not been in the pews physically," we have been fulfilling our promises to uphold the Church with our prayers, our "virtual presence," our gifts and our "virtual services." We want to share that we do have ongoing financial obligations which we have maintained to date as a result of your generosity and faithfulness in sending your pledges to the office. We are taking special safety precautions each week to count and deposit your offerings. And through March 29th, we are in good shape!

As a result of the current circumstances, we will not be sending out the first quarter 2020 giving statements that we would normally distribute in early April. If you would like to have your Q1 2020 giving statement emailed to you, please contact Kelly M. directly and Kelly will email you a copy of your statement on a case-by-case basis.

We thank you again and we hope you will continue to fulfill your pledges as you are able so that Aldersgate may continue with God's Will for God's Work in God's Kingdom on earth.

"Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow!"

Ann M. Finance and Stewardship chairperson

