

Dear Church Friends,

To say this has been an unusual year for our local Body of Christ at Aldersgate could be the greatest written understatement of my adult life! Who knew what the spring, summer, and now fall would bring? Had we been able to guess, would we have reacted differently? One could philosophize on these matters for many moons and not have solid answers. In times like these, the only answers seem to be related to the peace that faith brings. Have faith my brothers and sisters, and be patient.

As this Stewardship Chair, I have had an opportunity to work with some fantastic folks. We began developing a solid plan in the prior year to enter this year's campaign with help from a consulting firm, Generis, who was vetted by a large group of church representatives. Feeling very comfortable with the company, the people from the company we'd be working with, and the process itself, we set about working toward launching a two-year commitment campaign to help strengthen our current ministries and expand into some new and exciting journeys for our church which would require additional funding. With the introduction of COVID into our world and all the changes that has brought, we decided to postpone the implementation of the program with Generis. The Lord sometimes works in mysterious ways, but I count this delay as a blessing. Our Church has now been honored by inclusion in a Conference process called the Transformation Journey. This is an intense strategic look at where we are and where we want to go as a congregation and local Church within our community. Having this opportunity will afford us the knowledge needed to be intentional in the ways we move forward. The strategies we desire will guide and direct our approaches to worship, outreach, and all the Kingdom work we will do moving forward. Since a big part of our Generis process would look at funding new opportunities, in addition to strengthening our existing operations, the introspection from the Transformation Journey will dove tail in guiding our investments into future endeavors.

We will not have a formal Stewardship campaign this fall. We do still need to operate the church. Really the only major thing we are missing is the in-person worship. That won't last forever, and as soon as we can safely return to the sanctuary, we will. Our staff is still working, arguably harder than ever, and still needs to be paid. Our utilities and insurance still have to be paid. We still cut the grass and maintain the facilities.

Our Church's support of Graham School continues in numerous ways. We still feed the homeless. We still support the Playschool. We're here for the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and so many other groups. We continue to support various missions in Shelby, Cleveland County, the United States, and around the world.

You get the idea – we need to continue to support the Church financially. Our resources are multiplied by grace, and our service to the Kingdom continues.

Please complete the enclosed Time and Talent worksheets and pledge forms. We have just completed the task of forming the leadership committees for next year, and the Time and Talent forms are always helpful in finding a service spot for those interested. We also need to budget as we do every year, and your pledge form is the way our finance committee gets an idea on how to proceed.

Thank you for your support of Aldersgate United Methodist Church. May we all thrive in the Kingdom together!

Jamey Davis
For the Stewardship Committee

I echo all that Jamey has said on the previous page. In the midst of a pandemic, Aldersgate UMC continues to be the church. I hope and pray that you will complete and return the Time & Talents sheet and your pledge form.

In-person Worship: On October 26, 2020, Church Council decided we would resume in-person worship on Sunday, December 6, 2020. At this point we will offer one worship service at 10:00 am. Reservations are required, and we will follow all safe practices outlined in our COVID-19 worship policy, which was approved by Church Council on November 9, 2020. We have updated our technology and will live stream the service on Facebook and YouTube. All of this is subject to change as we will continue to follow guidance from Bishop Leeland, Governor Cooper, and the CDC.

Hanging of the Greens & Chrismon Tree: As we have for the past four years, we will celebrate the first Sunday of Advent with our Hanging of the Greens service. We, as a church family, hanging Chrismons on the Chrismon Tree is a highlight of the service. You will still have that opportunity. The service will stream on Facebook and YouTube at 10:00 am on Sunday, November 29, 2020. That evening, from 4:00 pm—6:00 pm you are invited to come to the church and hang Chrismons on the Chrismon tree. We will practice all COVID-19 safe procedures. Reservations are required and can be made by calling the church office or via a forthcoming link.

Finally, I am thrilled to announce that Aldersgate UMC has been selected for *The Transformation Journey*. There are approximately 1100 churches in the Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, and we are one of ten churches chosen for this honor. According to the conference, *“The Church Transformation Journey is a three-year process of discovery for local churches where they will prayerfully engage with scripture, identify recommendations that God is calling the church to achieve to fulfill God’s vision for the church, and then partner with a Navigator and Guides, to embark on a journey of living into God’s calling for their church and their role in transforming the world.”*

The deep and intense work we do in *The Transformation Journey* will have implications well into the future for Aldersgate UMC, our ministries, and the ways we connect people to Christ. There are several major components: church self-study, 30 days of prayer, church-wide Bible study, and a Discovery Weekend. As we speak, the church is collecting data about the church, our history, and our community as part of the self-study. On January 24, 2021 the entire church will embark on 30 days of prayer and a Bible study on Romans 12:1-18. This study will take place in Sunday School classes and small groups. **Please mark our Discovery Weekend on your calendars for Saturday, March 6, 2021 (8:30 am—12:00 pm).** During this time everyone is invited to a time of presentation and sharing around the importance of relational evangelism, clarifying Aldersgate’s vision and mission, the life cycle of a church, and discernment of God’s call for our church at this moment in history.

As you can see, we have a lot going on, and Aldersgate UMC continues to be the church. As always, please continue praying for Aldersgate’s pastoral leadership, our staff, our leadership, and our congregation during these trying, but exciting times.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Randy