



1976  
2016

*celebrating*  
40 years  
40 days of prayer  
40 more

Aldersgate United Methodist Church

2016 Devotional

## **Aldersgate UMC Pastors (1976-2016)**

Chris Andrews 1976-1984

†Tommy Dunbar 1984-1986

*Assoc. Pastor Tom Howe*

William D. Peeples 1986-1988

*Assoc. Pastors Cliff C. Wright, Jr. / Bryan Dauphin*

John Winn / Carole Cotton Winn 1988-1990

Cliff Wright 1990-1994

Don Cottrill 1994-2000

*Assoc. Pastors Tim Smith (1998) / Walter L. Parker, Jr. (1997)*

Dave Fortuna 2000-2003

*Assoc. Pastor Josh Milliron*

Nick Evans 2003-2005

*William E. Thiele, Pastoral Council*

Marie Williams / †John Williams 2005-2010

Gary Willis 2010-2014

*Assoc. Pastor Lane Cotton Winn*

Nancy Wofford 2014-2016

*Assoc. Pastor Mike Palermo*

Tracy L MacKenzie 2016

*†deceased*

*Monday, November 21st*

**Getting to know you...  
...getting to know all about you... c'mon, sing with me...**

WoW! What a whirlwind of three months it has been... and, yes, I am still getting to know you... and, your history.

If you and I have spent any time together, one on one or in a small group, I have tried to ask one question consistently, "How did you (and your family) become a part of Aldersgate United Methodist Church?"

The answers have varied, of course. Some of you have been here from the very first meeting on the top of Young's restaurant. Some of you came just a "hot minute" later. Others have come, gradually, throughout the years. Some of you rushed to find a church... a United Methodist Church... the minute you moved into town. Some of you have been back and forth, several times, because of job moves.

All pretty expected. Here is the unexpected: In almost every conversation in gathered small groups, there was an "Aha" moment... an "I didn't know that" moment... and, I realized that friends who had been friends for a long time still have pieces of life to reveal to one another.

So, yes, I am still getting to know you... but, you are still getting to know me, as well.

This is a large church. A key to growth in large churches is for people to find places and spaces for us to "get to know one another" better and for us to "share life with one another."

In these pages are history and story... reflections from time spent here connecting through the community called, "Aldersgate UMC" and memories of the church from her earliest beginnings.

My hope is that within these pages, we will get to know one another through our shared faith. My further hope is that you will take the next 40 days to pray earnestly about this church, her ministries and her future.

Aldersgate United Methodist Church, you have come a long way from that first meeting but you have a long, long way to go before you can rest your weary head... How will this future course be charted?

I can tell you that I have no idea. What I do know is that every tomorrow begins in prayer today.

Blessings on the journey.

*rev. Tracy*

*Tuesday, November 22nd*



Ground breaking &  
Completion of the current  
Sanctuary



Genesis Hall

## In The Beginning

Our family, my husband David, and our three children Ina, Scott, and Martin moved here in July of 1976. About the third or fourth day after arriving in Slidell this young man rang the doorbell. I answered the door and he was welcoming us to the neighborhood. After talking for a few minutes the subject of church came up and I said that we were Methodists. He grabbed my hand and said "Let me introduce myself, I'm Chris Andrews and I am the minister of a new Methodist Church that is just starting." We went to service the following Sunday, which if I recall was the second service held in The Upper Room.

The Upper Room was the second story of Young's Pizza Parlor. We brought our lawn chairs and sang to Julie Council playing the accordion.

The Church quickly outgrew that and next came the dance studio which was on the corner of 14th and Florida Ave. It was at that setting the choir was formed and we met for practice in Ann Gampp's living room and I believe Dawn McCord was the Director at the time.

The Church was quickly outgrowing that venue as well and ground was broken for our Sanctuary which is now Genesis Hall. The first wedding was held in the dance studio. It was the union of Lois Haas and Ron Skinner. It took place after the church service with the whole congregation as witnessed. Every week our Call to Worship was Lois Haas (and then Skinner) and Rosalie Black singing "Surely the Lord is in this House." It was a glorious day when the church moved into our first permanent building.

As is so frequently said... and the rest is history.

Rhea Snyder

### Prayer:

I pray that our church continues to grow as it did in those early days, in our love for the Lord and will continue to reach out to the many un-churched in Slidell.



Thursday, November 24th



Since November 1999 Aldersgate United Methodist Church has partnered with several local churches in the community to help provide a Thanksgiving meal to those who need one. Whether dining with us in the John Wesley Center or having a meal delivered to your door, Aldersgate has touched thousands of lives over the years one meal at a time. From the words of Tim Dunn in the article below,

"Our hope is that the seniors and elderly who usually spend the holiday alone will come, share dinner and give thanks with us. Nobody should be alone on Thanksgiving Day."

With those words, what started out small has blossomed into a community wide outreach that takes place the week of Thanksgiving each year. The Aldersgate Men's Club now smokes over 80 turkeys here on campus and the congregation donates over 150 pies to help



cover the need for desserts. Other churches in our area donate green beans, stuffing, mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce and dinner rolls. It all comes together on Thanksgiving day and we give THANKS!

## Meal

Continued from page 6A

The men's group presented the idea of using the school cafeteria to Alton Principal Gwen Wade who not only agreed but has already sent notes home with students asking parents to let them know how many will be attending.

"We are trying to get an estimate but since this is the first year there is no way of telling until that day. But we're determined not to run out of food," said Dunn.

The Men's Club is accepting donations for the meal that will include turkey, dressing, potatoes, gravy, mixed vegetables, jelled cranberry sauce, rolls, drink and dessert.

The group has been holding fund raisers to be able to foot the bill but were elated when the Kiwanis Club came in and agreed to pitch in with some financial support. The public can also help by calling the church office at 641-5829.

Dunn and some of the others in the Men's Club are planning to take off from work during Thanksgiving week so they can spend the time in the kitchen putting together a meal large enough to feed a community family of hundreds.

Page 6A Thursday, November 11, 1999

Slidell Sentry-News --

# Aldersgate Men's Club plans free meal for Thanksgiving

By Gilda Perkins  
Feature Writer

SLIDELL — The Aldersgate United Methodist Men's Club is planning to whip up Thanksgiving dinner for hundreds of people they hope will show up on November 25 in the Alton school cafeteria.

"We have been thinking about serving a Thanksgiving

dinner for the needy and the elderly for several years but it didn't come together until now," said chairman Tim Dunn, who is being helped by co-chairman Tony Burnell.

The plan is for the group to station themselves in the kitchen where they plan to prepare a meal of 50 turkeys, buckets of dressing, tubs of mashed potatoes, mixed vegetables and serve dinner with

all the trimmings free of charge to those who come from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Thanksgiving Day.

"Our hope is that the seniors and elderly who usually spend the holiday alone will come, share dinner and give thanks with us. Nobody should be alone on Thanksgiving Day," said Dunn.

See MEAL, page 7A

*Friday, November 25th*

## **Invitation To Visit Aldersgate**

As a recently married young couple in the spring of 1979 (37 years ago), Franklin and I moved from New Orleans East to Slidell and purchased our first and only home. Shortly thereafter, a co-worker of Franklin's invited us to a Saturday afternoon swim party at his house off of Gause Blvd. We knew very few people at the party, but as we mingled, I eventually met Denise Liuzza. At some point, Denise said that she was getting ready to leave to go to softball practice. As a sports enthusiast, this peaked my interest and I asked about the softball team. She told me about her church and their women's softball team and then invited us to come to the church's worship service on Robert Road. I had never belonged to a church that had a women's softball team and was immediately intrigued. So, the next morning we made our way to 360 Robert Road and attended our first Aldersgate worship service in Genesis Hall. Afterwards, we all folded up our chairs and put them away. That's the way we did it then. We were hooked that first Sunday, and never visited another church. I immediately joined the softball team and within the year we were serving as Youth Counselors.

We, at Aldersgate, are fortunate to have so many events and activities that we can share with others. Just by talking about these activities with our friends, neighbors, and co-workers, we are giving someone the opportunity to ask about an interest which turns into an invitation to join us. I was raised Baptist and Franklin was raised Catholic, so we were probably not going to go looking for a Methodist Church. No telling where we would have ended up if Denise had not invited us. We are forever grateful to our Aldersgate family that has been our foundation for the last 37 years, helped us raise 2 daughters and is now helping nurture our grandchildren and showing them the love of God!

**Happy 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Aldersgate! Take the time to share your Aldersgate stories and invite someone to come to worship! They might just stay for 40 more!**

Cindy Kemp

### **Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, thank you for the charter members who were inspired to start a new church named Aldersgate. Thank you for church members who have been brothers and sisters in Christ. Thank you for pastors, leaders, musicians, teachers, staff members and others that have given of themselves to serve, nourish and fellowship with our congregation. What a blessing it is to be surrounded by those who love You! Amen.

*Saturday, November 26th*

Romans 1:16-17 reads, “<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’”

A few years ago when I was packing up Christmas decorations, my then two year old daughter taught me a lesson that I will never forget. There I was hard at work packing away the ceramic nativity when my two year old yelled “STOP”.

I was not sure what she wanted me to stop doing so I turned and asked “What’s wrong?” “You just put Jesus in a box. Don’t put Jesus in a box.” she demanded. I was truly struck dumb by this revelation that my two year old had just delivered to me.

Sometime after Thanksgiving every year, I take out all the Christmas ornaments and trimmings and decorate for the Christmas season. While I am doing this I take Jesus out of the box to put Him on display. Then at the end of the season, while I am packing away all the Christmas ornaments, I put Jesus back in the box.

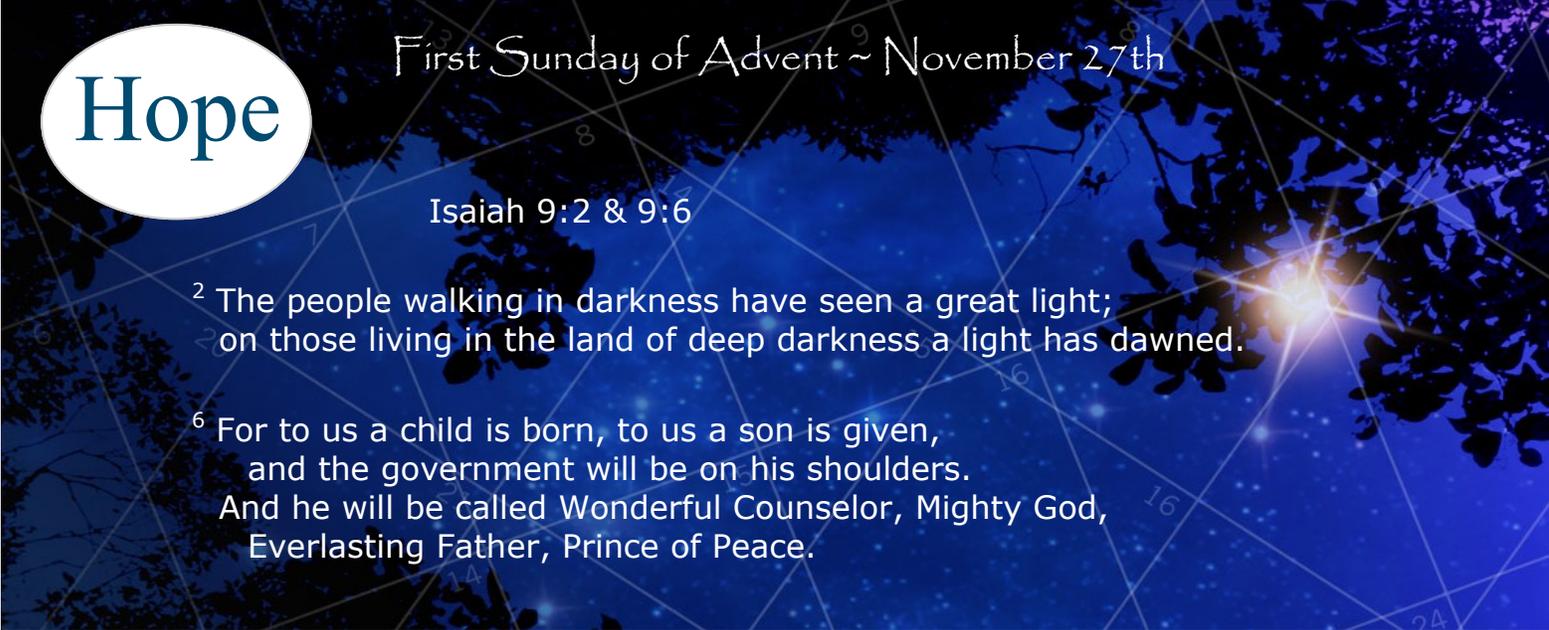
How often do we take our Savior out when it is convenient or when we think the time is right? And how often do we then put our Savior back in the “box” when it is not convenient to have Him on display? Can we make a commitment to display our Savior every day and proclaim to the world our faith?

I still put the ceramic Nativity away at the end of the Christmas season every year, even the baby Jesus, but I try to keep my Savior and my salvation on display year round. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes”.

### **Prayer:**

Lord my Savior, thank you for all you have done for me and all that you will do for me. Help me to remember that it is because of your love and sacrifice that someone like me can claim salvation and have a place in your father’s house. Give me the strength Lord to keep you out of the box in me and to keep you in my life *and* on display for all to see, even when it is not convenient. Amen

Adam Moore



Hope

First Sunday of Advent ~ November 27th

Isaiah 9:2 & 9:6

<sup>2</sup> The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

<sup>6</sup> For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

## And a time to every purpose under heaven

I've never been one who handles change very well. This is not a recent development in my list of quirky personality traits, either. I can remember how as a child, I actually got sick when I had to change from the small elementary school I attended for seven years, to a much larger junior high school. The same thing happened when I moved from that school to an even bigger high school.

I've gotten significantly better at adjusting to change the older I've become, but still, it's not something I always enjoy. Kids "leave the nest," friends and neighbors move away, pets go on to the Rainbow Bridge, and in recent years, I've had to deal with the most difficult changes of all – saying good-bye to my parents, my youngest brother, and my sweet mother-in-law.

In almost 35 years of worshipping at Aldersgate, we've seen a lot of changes there as well. Some of our good friends moved away, while others were called to their eternal rest. Staff members who were invaluable in their assistance, moved to other jobs and locations. And pastors, who helped us through some of life's most difficult situations, were moved to other appointments. The dynamics of our church family seem to be always changing, and I'm not always happy about those changes.

But through all these times, one thing remains true, and that's what helps me deal with my own personal hang-up regarding change. ***God is so faithful!*** God comforts us in those most difficult times of change and loss. God sends new staff and pastors who bring their own gifts to our amazing church. And God brings fresh new people, situations and experiences into my life that direct my focus away from the more unpleasant times.

Through God's love and direction, I've made it through the tough times and learned to embrace each new season.

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: <sup>2</sup>a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; <sup>3</sup>a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; <sup>4</sup>a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; <sup>5</sup>a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; <sup>6</sup>a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; <sup>7</sup>a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; <sup>8</sup>a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace." *Ecclesiastes 3:1-8*

*Rick Lightfoot*

### **Prayer:**

Faithful and loving God, you see us through all the seasons of our lives. We give you thanks and praise for your constant presence with us. Hold us and guide us through every situation, whether it is good or bad, happy or sad. *Amen*

*Tuesday, November 29th*

**“How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all: the earth is full of your creatures.” Psalm 104:24**

Feeding the birds is one of my favorite activities. I love watching them bathe in the bird bath, heck I even enjoy watching the squirrels hang upside down from the bird feeder eating all the bird seed. We feed the doves, finches, woodpeckers, cardinals - we even have bluebirds that occasionally peck on our window for us to bring out the dried worms.

One Sunday morning at Aldersgate, I volunteered to pick up the remaining communion elements. The custom for disposing of the bread is that a human may eat it or you can scatter it for the birds and the juice is poured onto the ground. That afternoon the bread was scattered and the birds enjoyed the feast. The next day there was still bread, so once again I scattered more bread. Sometime later as I passed the window, I saw these big, ugly crows land next to the bread. Oh no, they were not going to take that bread! As I started out the door to chase them away, one of the crows put a piece of the bread in his beak, jumped up on the bird bath and dipped the bread in the water and ate it as if he was taking communion. Talk about stopping me in my tracks!

Wow! What a lesson, especially for me. I have always thought the most beautiful part of the Holy Communion Celebration is when the minister proclaims that this is not a Methodist table, it is open to all who repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ and all are welcome. How could I deny this consecrated bread to any of God's creatures?

Judy Farrow

**Prayer:**

God of the sun and stars, with all the creatures of the earth we give you praise! Thank you for continuing to teach us lessons. Thank you for the gifts of bread and wine. May they nourish us and make us whole. Amen.



**MARK 7:31-37**

<sup>31</sup>Then Jesus returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. <sup>32</sup>They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. <sup>33</sup>He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. <sup>34</sup>Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” <sup>35</sup>And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. <sup>36</sup>Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. <sup>37</sup>They were astounded beyond measure, saying, “He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

**REFLECTION**

Whether I take this literally or metaphorically,  
the “Jesus Way” has called me to live life now,  
not only with eyes of faith, but also with ears of faith,  
released from physical impediments  
that may limit me in my quest to be fully alive.

My attraction to this “Jesus Way”  
is not because of his magical prowess  
or miraculous capabilities.  
My faith is best preserved in quiet places deep within.

Hopefully, the life I live will be the “loosened tongue”  
that will speak in its own way.

**PRAYER**

Thank you, O God,  
for showing me the difference  
between being “cured” and being “healed.”

Though I may move slowly now from place to place,  
my heart runs swiftly and far-ranging before me  
to places I may never see with my own eyes.

I am gratified, too, for those dear friends,  
who wait for me patiently until I walk with them  
into an even fuller sense of well-being.  
Companions on The Journey are life-giving.

In the name of the one who is  
the way, the truth, and the life.  
Amen.

*John Winn*

Former pastor Aldersgate United Methodist Church

*Thursday, December 1st*

## **Aldersgate United Methodist Church 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Devotion**

It was the summer of 1990 when Cindy and I moved to this place called Slidell, Louisiana due to me getting transferred here from Texas with my job. We were both born and raised in Central and South Texas and had really never lived much farther than a couple of hours from our “homes” and our families. We also had in tow our two sons who were 4 and 2 years old at that time. Although we both grew up in church, we had really just recently begun getting involved in church again, and we knew that one of the first things we needed to do was to find a church family in order to survive this new chapter in our lives, especially since we had no family or friends here in South Louisiana. We were both raised in the Methodist Church, so we began our search at the two Methodist Churches in Slidell. We visited First Church in Olde Town one Sunday and decided to drive by Aldersgate right after the service to find out more information on it. Pastor Cliff Wright was outside greeting the congregation after their service and Cindy and I and our two boys walked up to him and introduced ourselves. He told us all about what Aldersgate UMC had to offer, so we visited the following Sunday. Cliff immediately remembered our names and our story, and we were impressed by that, and we immediately felt welcomed and loved. We joined Aldersgate shortly after that and right away we felt like we were home. It was the best decision we made.

We immediately plugged Nathan and Kyle into Sunday school and watched in wonder as both of them grew in their love of God and involvement in Aldersgate through amazing Children’s programs, Youth programs, Music and Drama programs, and unbelievable Mission opportunities. I must say that our joining Aldersgate United Methodist Church made our jobs as parents much easier. They have both grown into mature, loving, Mission minded Christian men, and I attribute a lot of that to them being raised here at Aldersgate.

Cindy and I have strengthened our Christian walk with Jesus over the years because of the wonderful loving church family that we have here at Aldersgate, as well as the exposure to God’s grace from working with the Youth program for many years as well as the opportunities to attend many of the wonderful Mission trip opportunities that this church has provided. For that, we will be eternally grateful to our church family at Aldersgate United Methodist Church.

It has been a blessing to work with all of the Senior pastors that we have seen here over the years – Cliff Wright, Don Cottril, Dave Fortuna, Nick Evans, John and Marie Williams, Gary Willis, Nancy Wofford, and now Tracy MacKenzie, as well as all of the wonderful Associate Pastors we have seen – Walter Parker, Josh Milliron, Lane Cotton Winn, and Mike Palermo. What a journey this has been! Thank you Aldersgate United Methodist Church, and Happy Anniversary to us all!

Blessings,  
Ron Davis

Psalm 100:5 For the Lord is good;  
his steadfast love endures forever,  
and his faithfulness to all generations.



*Friday, December 2nd*

We moved to Slidell in November 1976. While we were looking for a church to attend two of our neighbors invited us to attend Aldersgate church and so we thought we would give it a try. At that time the worship services were held in Genesis Hall. I can't imagine everyone fitting into Genesis Hall today for worship, but in 1976 we did. We really enjoyed the pastor, Chris Andrews, and the people were very friendly. So we started attending on a regular basis.

Because of John's job, we moved several times over the years but we always were able to come back to Slidell. Aldersgate became home for us. We have actually joined Aldersgate four times over the years. The Sanctuary was built during one of the times we were living away so when we moved back to Slidell, what a homecoming that was!

I had an "Ah Ha" moment one Sunday. I remember it like it was yesterday. It was about the mid-1980s. During the worship service I thought, you know I love worshipping here but I am just a pew sitter. What can I do to give back? I can't sing and I'm not good working with computers. I'm also not a teacher, although John and I have taught 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Sunday School. I can and do care about people so maybe I can join the Care Team. That was a defining moment for me and one that started me on a journey that has blessed me beyond words. I have served with many wonderful people and with every pastor that has served at Aldersgate. What a blessing.



I have made many friends through Care Team ministry and they have become my church family. Care Team meetings are very meaningful as we pray for each person on the prayer list and also write cards for many on the list as well. I have also lost friends through death or relocation. I have attended church my entire life but feel that I have really found God right here and have also found a true sense of belonging. I have learned so much through the many bible studies I have attended and have enjoyed the discussions as each study unfolded. I also enjoy serving with the Worship Design Team and am so honored to serve communion to those unable to be in worship. I even served communion to a young salesperson in Dillard's one time.

I am looking forward to what God has in store for Aldersgate. I know that He has big plans for us and together we can make it happen. There are lots of places we can all serve. Think about it and remember the verse from Isaiah 6:8.

**<sup>8</sup>Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,  
"Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?  
And I said "Here am I. Send me!"**

Charlotte Clifford

*Saturday, December 3rd*

How has Aldersgate United Methodist Church impacted my life?

There are so many answers to this question. We moved to Louisiana 22 years ago and Aldersgate has been a part of our lives since then. There are too many things to share but a few highlights include:

- The Fishing Rodeo was lots of fun and a great way to share our faith with the community
- The theater dinners were a great way for our talented congregation to share their gifts and to show the Slidell community what a church can do
- The Music Ministries provided my family many ways to use their gifts and grow in their faith including the children's choirs, youth choirs, youth praise band, youth sign choir, adult choir, and special music events.
- The Angel Alzheimer's Program provided so much care and respite for the Alzheimer clients and their families

These ministries along with all the others have given me special memories and helped me grow closer to God.

Kathy Stevens

## Search

Second Sunday of Advent ~ December 4th

Matthew 2:1-11

**2** After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem <sup>2</sup> and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

<sup>4</sup> When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

<sup>6</sup> "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." <sup>9</sup> After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Jeremiah 29:11-13

<sup>11</sup> For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. <sup>12</sup> Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. <sup>13</sup> You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Monday, December 5th



## Life is a Journey, Not a Destination

“Stand at the crossroads and look;  
ask for the ancient paths,  
ask where the good way is, and walk in it,  
and you will find rest for your souls.”

Jeremiah 6:16

Along the way our journey led us to Aldersgate.  
It was like Coming Home to a place of Grace.  
There we found people of deep faith and glad hearts.  
They took us in and called us friend.  
They laughed with us about sock-sock, shoe-shoe or is it sock-shoe, sock-shoe?

We baptized babies at the altar, and even once on Christmas Day.  
We married the ones who fell in love and buried some of the best we have known.  
Still we remember.  
Still we claim Aldersgate as a thin place on our journey.  
A place in which heaven and earth are so close they seem to meet ...  
as near as breath.

Though our journeys parted soon and too soon  
Our love and longing for Aldersgate hovered near, ever close.  
Now we return and find you there, still closely present.

On this day I relive that Journey that brought us to Aldersgate.  
And my heart is strangely warmed.  
Memories flood back for me from those we first knew while here.  
The People, The Events, The Unforgettable Experiences, The Sacred Space  
They makes me know again that  
*Life is a Journey, Not a Destination.*

Rev. Carole Cotton Winn,  
Former Pastor, Aldersgate United Methodist Church

*Tuesday, December 6th*

## **–Psalm 23 –**

Some years ago John and Marie Williams were pastors at Aldersgate and Marie asked me to read the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm at a Sunday service. She then asked to relate that Psalm into what Aldersgate meant to me. I would like to share my thoughts with you.

*“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want”*

**(So He gives me Aldersgate)**

*“He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside still waters,  
He restores my soul.”*

**(Through His disciples here in this church, He takes care of me.  
He has blessed me with teachers, pastors and friends that have helped  
me discern my journey to them)**

*“He guides me in path of righteousness for His names’ sake. Even though I walk through  
the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me:  
your rod and staff they comfort me.”*

**(Life is not easy, but with Him and this congregation,  
I am continually encouraged to live in Him)**

*“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.  
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”*

**(Blessed with leaders, friends and family that hold me accountable  
for who I am in Christ)**

*“Surely goodness and mercy and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell  
in the house of the Lord forever.”*

**(His constant love and grace surround me. I see that in your faces and hearts.  
I feel it in His music. Aldersgate is my home. Our Father lives here and in you.  
He calls us by name to this holy ground. I am so blessed loving Him.  
My heart is filled to overflowing)**

### **Prayer:**

Awesome, holy God, Thank you for the gift of this church. Even in our darkest hours, you are with us and Aldersgate. Help us to discern your works, as we travel to another year of being your true disciples. Amen.

Happy Anniversary, Aldersgate!

*Cheryl Smith*

P.S. Thank you, Marie.

*Wednesday, December 7th*

**Many are the plans in a man's heart, it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.  
Proverbs 19:21**

From the moment I walked through the doors of Genesis Hall, which at the time was the Aldersgate sanctuary, I knew I was home. Our first pastor, Chris Andrews was awesome and always spoke his sermons "right to me".

Our son, Ryan, was baptized in Genesis, our daughter, Beth, in our current sanctuary right after it was in service. This church did a great job not only nurturing me and Dick, but also our children. I'm happy to say, Ryan and Beth both have their families active in their local churches. I believe Aldersgate did that. We got them on campus, the church did the rest.

Many friends have been made here. Over the years they have come and gone.

Aldersgate will always hold a special place in my heart.

Now, this beloved church with God's direction brought forth another awesome man, Jimmie Watts, for me after Dick went home. God does mighty things here and I'm looking forward to many more years.

Debbie Watts

**Prayer:**

Lord, I praise your Holy name and thank you everyday for the life you have given me. In my dark times you gave me comfort and the joy that followed is beyond my wildest dreams. You have known the desires of my heart and answered them over and over. I love you and trust you. Amen

*Thursday, December 8th*

**With God's help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ. We will surround this child with a community of love and forgiveness that she may grow in her service to others. We will pray for her, that she may be a true disciple who walks in the way that leads to life.**

**From: The United Methodist Hymnal**

This is my precious child. She has the kindest heart. I know this because of the kind of child she was, and the caring and good friend she was as a teenager. I am blessed to see her as a loving mom, a caring friend, supportive wife but, most of all, a woman convicted in her faith of Jesus Christ as her Savior and Savior for all. For that, I thank my Aldersgate family who surrounded her in love around her, lived the faith we express and gave her avenues to learn how to use and express her faith.

In this picture, she is holding the ribbon to the balloon getting ready for the Easter release. She doesn't know that yet. She just knows that she was given a beautiful balloon. Everyone around her has a beautiful balloon. Then, suddenly, balloons are floating up into the sky. She lets go and her balloon joins the others floating away. She doesn't cry or ask for another one. She looks around and no one is crying. She has had balloons before. She would insist on holding the ribbon herself, open her hand, not realizing the balloon would fly away. Tears would flow with demands for another one. Other times, I would tie it to her wrist. That would only last a while before she would want to hold it for herself. It took many lost balloons before she would learn when to hang onto her balloon or let it go.

As a community, you have lived the promise you made at her baptism 40 years ago even though the promise was made in Grand Isle, La. If I have to fall, let it be with the Lord's faithful around me. You have inspired, supported and prayed for me and my family. You have been the light of Christ.

Phyllis Mitchell



**Prayer:**

Gracious God, I thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit. You have made sure I am never alone. As your light shines on me, may I live my life as an example of Christ's life with the family of faithful about me. When you have me step out of that comfort, I pray for courage and strength that only you can provide. For all the blessings you have given me, I thank you. For all the sorrows I have had, I thank you for holding me close. **In Christ's name, Amen.**

Friday, December 9th

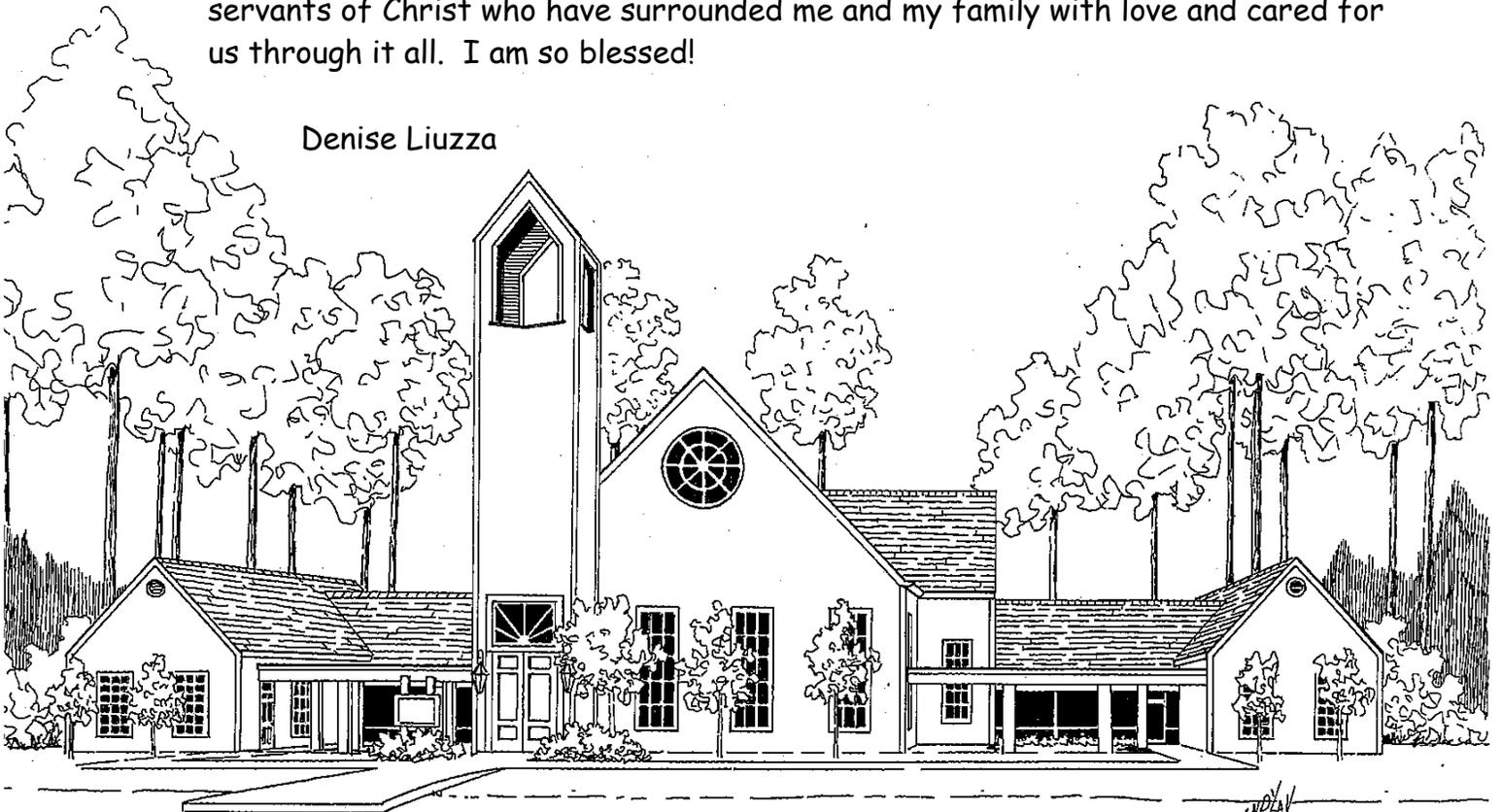
There are several constants in my life--God, my family, my friends, and my church family, especially my Sunday school class. I was fortunate to join Aldersgate in the summer of 1978. The church was in its third year of existence and booming, especially with people my age. I had known its first pastor--he was fresh out of seminary and the pastor of my mother's church in North Louisiana before coming to Slidell to begin a new church. So it was just expected that I would join this congregation.

Always a Methodist, I was very excited to become a member of this vibrant, bustling church. We had services in the Genesis Hall, the only building we had. Then we added the Cokesbury building. Everyone pitched in to help work inside the building as it was being built to help cut expenses. I was even taught how to wall paper by Lynn Bradley!!! So many lessons learned at Aldersgate!

Many pastors have come and gone since then and Aldersgate has experienced many changes. Not ever did I consider leaving this church when times were tough and believe me, we had some tough times. Church is so much more than a building or a mode of worship or a pastor! It is the feeling you have when you walk in and see lifelong friends. It is watching your children grow up while being nurtured by extraordinary people who guide them, sing with them, teach them, put up with them!--sharing their love and passion for Christ.

Aldersgate is my church, part of me. Through all of the joys, celebrations, and trials in the past 38 years, this church has been my constant--filled with servants of Christ who have surrounded me and my family with love and cared for us through it all. I am so blessed!

Denise Liuzza



SANDY  
KINDSAY

*Saturday, December 10th*

***In repentance and rest is your salvation; in quietness and trust is your strength. Isaiah 30:15***

Whether sitting against the tall windows in the sanctuary during services or quietly alone in my car under that great shade tree in the parking lot, the Aldersgate campus has been a refuge for me for more than 20 years.

I have come to know it as a place that welcomes me. I can sit, reassess, pray and sometimes just breathe when the workings of daily life become oh so heavy.

In the quiet of this campus, I can stop to put things in perspective and to listen for guidance. Looking up at the strong wooden beams in the sanctuary or into the leafy branches of the ancient oak out front, God helps me find solace in a busy world.

For that, I am thankful.

Suzie Hunt

Third Sunday of Advent ~ December 11th

MORNING  
Star

Celebrating the  
Everlasting  
Light of Christmas



*Join us this Sunday for our Christmas Cantata  
"Morning Star"*

*8:30am Service and 11:00am Service  
Come hear carols familiar and new as they paint images  
of promise, faith, and love.*

*Come back on this evening to enjoy Sounds of the Season  
at 5pm*

*A concert of Christmas Music featuring our Children & Youth music  
ensembles, and our special guests, Apple Tree Pre-School children!*

But now, says the Lord—the one who created you, Jacob, the one who formed you, Israel: Don't fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters I will be with you; when through the rivers, they won't sweep over you. When you walk through the fire you won't be scorched and flame won't burn you. I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your savior. I have given Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in your place. Because you are precious in my eyes, you are honored, and I love you. I give people in your place, and nations in exchange for your life. Don't fear, I am with you. From the east I'll bring your children; from the west I'll gather you. I'll say to the north, "Give them back!" and to the south, "Don't detain them." Bring my sons from far away, and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name and whom I created for my glory, whom I have formed and made.

*Isaiah 43: 1 – 7*

In addition to being my favorite passage of scripture, these words from the prophet Isaiah became my mantra when I (along with my late husband, John) was appointed to pastor at Aldersgate. It was only a short two and a half months after we arrived in Slidell that Hurricane Katrina blew through our part of the Gulf Coast wreaking havoc in this entire area. The waters rose and the winds blew, but our God was with us through it all. We shared food and shelter with each other; we gave out supplies and supported each other with prayer, hugs and words of encouragement. That one-day event defined much of who we were going to be for the next years. God sent us people from the east, west, north and south to be with us, to love us, to support us, to help us and to pray with us. The church was "the Church".

In early 2007 when John was diagnosed with prostate cancer and the waters of despair and hopelessness threatened, Aldersgate surrounded our family with love and prayer. It was what enabled us to get through his surgery in Houston and his recovery back in Slidell. An Aldersgate member even flew to Houston to ride home with us the day after John was released from the hospital. Even when we moved to Baton Rouge and John had to go on disability, your prayers, calls and visits did not cease. The afternoon of the evening he died, an Aldersgate member came to our house in Baton Rouge and shared love and support. The church was "the Church".

In May of 2007 when our second granddaughter was born with heart issues, Aldersgate was again there with us with prayers and phone calls of love, encouragement and support. "the church was "the Church".

The theme of my time at Aldersgate was love, care and support; prayers, presence and service. My prayer for Aldersgate is that the Aldersgate United Methodist Church will continue to live as "the Church".

**Prayer:**

*God help us to live out Your call to be the Church in all that we do. Amen.*

*Tuesday, December 13th*

## **Authentic Relationships – A Core Value of Aldersgate United Methodist Church**

When I joined Aldersgate alongside of my mother in the early '80's, we knew we had found Authentic Relationships. We had real relationships with good friends. She made friends in bible study, friends who were her "sisters" in Christ, my "Aunts" to this day.

I made friends with youth, young adults today that I take joy in watching grow up and start their sweet families who now come to Aldersgate.

One of my mother's favorite ministries of Aldersgate is not really a defined one, but one she named, the "Parking Lot Ministry", the time between worship and Sunday school. It was the opportunity to visit, to share, to care with those we have become friends with in this body of Christ. When mom was diagnosed with ovarian cancer and began chemo-therapy, she only came to church on special occasions. When she did, she would come in just after the service would start and leave just as it was coming to an end, so she would miss the Parking Lot Ministry to avoid getting a "bug" from someone who just wanted to give her a hug.

She really loved that part of a Sunday morning at church. I must say, that is an inherited gene, for surely, I love to spend time after worship hugging my friends, catching up with those we care and pray for and see what the little ones have been up to. It is my opportunity to share the Authentic Relationships with my friends in the Aldersgate family.

So happy 40 years of Parking Lot Ministry and Authentic Relationships Aldersgate...and I pray I see many, many more!



Michelle Badon

2 Corinthians 13:14

<sup>14</sup>May the grace shown by the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. May the love that God has given us be with you. And may the sharing of life brought about by the Holy Spirit be with you all.

*Aldersgate UMC, Celebrating 40 years of service for Christ*

**Home Is Where the Heart Is**

*No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. (Matthew 5:15, NRSV)*

Home—just the mention of the word offers warmth or safety or comfort for many. But that is not always the case. For some, home may have been broken shattered by fear or drugs or loneliness. But either way, you can't deny the wisdom and truth rooted in the adage, "home is where the heart is." As followers of Jesus Christ, we know that our true home is where our Lord is. And it is our faith journey, nurtured by the Holy Spirit and lived out in these days here on earth that guides us to be where he is and that gives us hope. Faith and hope—faith that provides us strength and courage in the face of adversity, hope that puts a smile on our face when our heart is breaking; but where oh where can we go to find such treasure, such peace in this moment, in this place that is life lived this side of heaven?

I come back to "home is where the heart is!" You see there is another home for many who have passed through her doors. There is a home that people will take time out for and will journey to visit her from time to time. Oh, some things will change, that's true enough, but there is something that never changes! What could that be you may be thinking to yourself? It's the place that forever holds the hearts of those who have come before the ones there now. The memories of them live in her halls. Their legacy guides those charged with her care now. And she lives up to the task of shaping our lives forever, even after so many have moved on.

Surely you must be thinking this some sort of fairytale. But it isn't. The place I speak of, is Aldersgate United Methodist Church of Slidell. So, if you are charged with her care, know that so many are praying for you. It is a bit of irony though—something to always keep in mind, while you are taking care of her, the mystery, power, and miracle that is the Holy Spirit is taking care of you. There is another kind of home—a home that claims our hearts. May God continue to richly bless you Aldersgate, for in you so many have found life in Christ.

Rev. Mike Palermo  
Friend and benefactor of  
Aldersgate United Methodist Church

*Thursday, December 15th*

**“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.  
I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you  
will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.”**

~ Philippians 1:3-6 (NRSV)

For months, a group had been gathering for meetings and workshops in preparation for that first service, to be held June 27, 1976. Their momentum was growing and they were ready to launch! On the eve of June 27th, several leaders got on the phone and asked folks to bring folding lawn chairs with them the next morning so everyone would have a place to sit. Young’s Restaurant, on “Robert Road,” as the oldtimers still call it, agreed to host this new congregation for their first worship service.

The upstairs banquet hall at Young’s was the perfect location for the birth of Aldersgate. Some will remember that there used to be a steep, outdoor metal staircase that led to the “Upper Room.” Those gathered for that first service had to ascend, single-file up a narrow staircase in order to reach the worship space. Steep stairs and folding chairs didn’t deter. They were ready to take that next faithful step in answering the call to share the Living Christ.

One couple they were not expecting to see that Sunday was Tom and Audrey Mayfield, who were second-generation members of First United Methodist Church of Slidell. Though the Mayfield’s had expressed an interest in there being a Methodist church closer to where they lived, they had not attended any of the planning meetings leading up to this day. Nobody knew they were coming. Could it be, that the Mayfield’s would say goodbye to their beloved home church and step into the future with this new congregation?

When Audrey Mayfield showed up, with her walker in hand, one of the organizers leaned over and said to Lynn Bradley, “If Audrey can climb the stairs and go through the door, it’ll confirm for me that Aldersgate will succeed.” Supported by several helpers, step-by-step, Audrey made it up the stairs and walked into that makeshift sanctuary atop Young’s Restaurant.

As she walked through the door, Lynn turned to his friend and said, “Our journey has just started.” Someone else yelled out in excitement, “All aboard!” and those still downstairs bounded joyfully up the steps. It was the start of something special that continues today. You’ve come a long way from a folding table as the altar, an assortment of lawn chairs, and 50 worshippers, but you still carry that same sense of adventure and excitement for answering God’s call.

The stained glass window behind the altar in Aldersgate’s sanctuary is in memory of Audrey and Tom Mayfield. They are just two of the countless individuals that have helped Aldersgate be the forward thinking, “all board” church that is it today. And now, it’s up to you. There will be other metal staircases that you will be called to scale. I pray you will follow the lead of your Charter Members and help one another up those stairs. There’s no turning back.

God began a great work in you 40 years ago when the congregation of Aldersgate was formed— but, truly, you have only just begun. The future is in your hands. All aboard!

Rev. Lane Cotton Winn,

*Associate Pastor, 2010-2014*

# Aldersgate is "born" in Louisiana Conference



Doug Holmes, Chairman, New Church Task Force, and Bill Massaker, Chairman of Parsonage Committee, are pictured on the site of the Aldersgate Church in Slidell.

Phil Woodland, Pastor of Slidell's First Church, presents the keys to the new parsonage to the Rev. Chris Andrews and Mrs. Andrews. Also in the picture are members of First Church, Al West and Hal Province.

The second United Methodist Church to be "born" in the Louisiana Conference within the last year, Aldersgate, in Slidell, will hold its first service on Sunday June 27. The Rev. Chris Andrews was appointed by Bishop Crutchfield and the Cabinet to fill the post of pastor of the new church.

Both Aldersgate, and its one-year-old family member St. Timothy on the North Shore in Mandeville are in the Hammond District, of which the Rev William Fraser is District Superintendent.

Ten years ago the New Orleans District Board of Missions acquired a 3½ acre tract of land in north Slidell, which today

is in the center of one of the most rapidly growing population areas in the state. The connectinal strength of the United Methodist Church has been mobilized to help this new congregation get started.

In addition to the land, the Aldersgate Church has received a \$10,000 grant from the Conference Board of Global Ministries and has been promised the third 1000 Club Call for 1976-77. Churches of the Hammond District have pledged 1% of their operating budgets to underwrite the Pastor's salary this year.

A task force from First Church, Slidell, the Rev. J. Phil Woodland, Pastor, has been at work laying the foundation, surveying families in the area, securing

a new parsonage, and obtaining temporary facilities for worship. This has been done under the leadership of the Reverend Mr. Fraser.

Initially the congregation will meet in the "Upper Room" which is the second floor of a private dining room of a local restaurant located near the new church site.

Instrumental in overall planning for the church is Doug Holmes, a prominent member of First Church, Slidell, who has headed the special task force and has given leadership in the organization. Bishop and Mrs. Crutchfield gave the first pledge to support of the new church

LA METHODIST  
6/25/76

ALDERSGATE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
June 27, 1976  
Chris Andrews, Minister

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions." (Joel 2:28)

THE PRELUDE Mrs. Julie Council  
THE CALL TO WORSHIP

Minister: Why do you come here?

People: WE GATHER AS A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY TO WORSHIP THE ONE LORD, THE LORD OF LIFE.

Minister: What is the great excitement and anticipation among you?

People: WE HAVE BEEN CALLED TO BE A NEW PEOPLE... A CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD... GOD'S OWN PEOPLE, WITH ALL OF THE POTENTIAL TO BECOME A NEW CHURCH.

Minister: Let us praise God for this wonderful thing.

People: INDEED, LET US PRAISE GOD!

+ "God of Grace and God of Glory" 470

+ The Apostles' Creed 738

THE PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Eternal God, we raise our voices to you in thanksgiving as we come together for the first time. We give you thanks for those whose commitment to this new church is strong. We give you thanks for those who will remain part of other fellowships but support us with their prayers and love. And most of all Father, we give you thanks for your life-giving spirit which gives us life together. Help us, as we begin this new church, to grow in our love for you and for each other. In Jesus' name. AMEN.

SILENT MEDITATION  
THE LORD'S PRAYER

SPECIAL MUSIC Mrs. Lois Hass

THE SCRIPTURE LESSON Mark 8:27-34  
THE PASTORAL PRAYER  
GREETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE OFFERTORY PRAYER  
THE GIVING OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS

SERMON - "The Life of the Disciples" Rev. Andrews

THE RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD

"The Church's One Foundation" 297

THE BENEDICTION

\*\*\*\*\*

We welcome you to the first service of worship of The Aldersgate United Methodist Church. In the days ahead we anticipate a great experience as we come together to build Christ's Church. Each person is important in this great adventure and we invite you to participate as fully as you can in the life of this new congregation.

A general church meeting will be held at the home of Doug Holmes, 315 Country Club Blvd., at 7:30 on Tuesday, June 29th. This meeting is open to everyone and we hope that you can attend.

You are invited to a reception for Rev. and Mrs. Andrews in the Fellowship Hall at First United Methodist Church at 7:00 this evening.

The parsonage is located at 161 Fountain Drive. The telephone number is 641-5829.

Next Sunday, July 4th, our service will involve a special bicentennial theme in honor of our country's 200th Anniversary. We hope that you can be here.

Leading the congregational singing is Mrs. Penny Mutz.

We appreciate all those who have worked so hard to make this service possible. Your efforts today will produce great results for God's Kingdom tomorrow.

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*Saturday, December 17th*

Aldersgate United Methodist church has been my church since I was a child. However I believe calling it a church does not even begin to show what it has done for me. It has been a place where I have grown and leaned. I have made friends here, learned life lessons, and come closer to God. Aldersgate has been a place of unwavering support in everything I have done, and it has played a pivotal role in making me the person I am today. Attending church on Sundays has become a part of my life since I was a child, and participating in church youth activities has always been a joy. The unconditional love I have received from this church is unbelievable, and I truly feel like part of the church family. I have served with the church in a myriad of ways such as mission trips and work days, and the church has served me also through life changing fellowship. It has been a place of solid ground when experiencing uncertainty and it is an anchor that I may cling to in the rough storms of life. No, calling Aldersgate a church is nowhere near to what it really is. It is my family, my home, and my refuge. I would not be the person I am without the love shown to me by this church. I truly believe that this congregation is the hands and feet of God working in our world, and it has not only changed my life, but the lives of everyone that has ever come in contact with it.

Chris Barron

Follow

Fourth Sunday of Advent ~ December 18th

Luke 2:8-16

<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

<sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." <sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

**Jeremiah 31:33**

**But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.**

Five years ago I arrived at Aldersgate in the midst of our 35 Alive celebration. My introduction to this church was overwhelming to say the least. The number of ministries, the copious ways Aldersgate serves and reaches out, the level of engagement of so many folks, all took me by surprise. Aldersgate was, and still is, on the move with the Holy Spirit. I've said before, and still find it to be true, that there is an active and electric presence of the Spirit at this church and its members. There is an awareness of who we want to be as a church, but more importantly, there is a knowledge of who has called us here. We belong to God, and this is God's church. No matter the ministry, or the work, or the gathering, Aldersgate has shown to me and the community time and again, that we belong to God.

There is a drive to help, there is an awareness of neighbor, there is a concern for the benefit of our brothers and sisters. There is an openness to finding new ways to share the love of Christ, with strangers and friends, to those near and far. There is a hunger to learn more about this God who calls, and has redeemed us through Jesus. And there is a joy in worship of our great God and thankfulness for the multitude of blessings we have shared in. These are wonderful testaments of our identity, and give us great direction for our future.

My prayer for Aldersgate is that we spend the next 40 years continuing to respond to our community and God's greater community in the same love that has been the hallmark of this church, sharing Christ's love in ways we haven't even dreamed of yet.

Scott Clausen

**Prayer:**

O Holy Father, we give you thanks for calling us to you, giving us your law, redeeming us through your son, and showing us your love. Be with us, we ask, as we continue to search out our neighbor, showing them the same love you have shown us. Help us to continue to find ways to build your kingdom, right here, right now. In Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen.

*Tuesday, December 20th*

## ***6 Years in the making***

It was a Tuesday afternoon in November 2010 when I pulled onto Aldersgate's campus and asked a gentlemen where the church office was. He didn't point me in the right direction, but rather walked me to the front door and opened it for me. His smile was welcoming and I felt at ease. That man was Dale Kimball.

I sat at a new desk in a new office and wondered how I was ever going to learn all of these things in order to do my job well. The Office Manager pulled up a chair right next to me, smiled and said, "Ready? Let's do this one step at a time, together." That Office Manager was Cheryl Mann.

A few years later, and a few office position changes later, my tasks grew and my job description increased as a result. Not so busy days became pretty busy days, with more than enough on my plate to get done before the week end. A fellow employee told me and several others at a staff meeting that "maybe not all of us who work at Aldersgate have a label of Director of *this* ministry or *that* ministry, but we truly each have our own ministry here at Aldersgate Church. Not one of us is needed more than the other. Each of our ministries matter, from answering phones at the front desk, to the cleaning of floors, we each need to be celebrated for the ministry that we perform on this campus each and everyday." After that, my tasks took on new meaning and I felt needed more than before. That fellow employee was Scott Clausen.

Here recently, 6 years in the making, I have made the biggest move ever as an employee of Aldersgate Church, and that was going from the front desk as a Receptionist to the back office as an Office Manager. This change has brought me great excitement, huge changes in what I am use to doing to what needs to be done, all the way to full on tears as I make my way through all the ins and outs of what it truly means to be in this position. People have seen me at my best and at my worst. One person in particular took my hand and said "I can see it on your face, you are overwhelmed and burning the candle at both ends. You need to do what you can and give the rest to God. He is just waiting for you to hand it over so he can take it from there." I knew she was right, so I took a deep breath...and let go. That person was Charlotte Clifford.

I am blessed to be but a small part of Aldersgate's 40 year celebration. I am thankful and grateful to those who have come before me and for those, who in the next 40 years, will come behind me.

Erin Core

### **Prayer:**

Lord I give you thanks for this Church and these People who have come into my life and made me better for it. I pray for Aldersgate Church and all those who have gone through the Sanctuary doors and have been made better for it as well. God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good. Amen.

## Home

### John 15 <sup>4a</sup>“Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you...”

In 1977, Barbara and I had been gone from Slidell for seven years, and were coming back home. One problem that we hadn't resolved was which church to go to. We said we'd try them all but hadn't started visiting when my co-worker Jimmy Pollard (RIP) invited us to come to Aldersgate. We never went to another church, but joined AUMC a few weeks later.

As we became more and more involved in church, we renewed our marriage vows near our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1979. We were originally married in a Catholic church on June 7, 1969. Barbara was

Catholic. I was Presbyterian. We had met at a Wesley Foundation. (But that's an entirely different story).

Then our daughter, Theresa, was confirmed at AUMC in 1983. I think it was the next year we went with her on vacation to Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Mexico, along with a dozen or so other teenagers and a couple chaperones on a Reflections choir trip. Ten days, 3,172 miles, 10 concerts. Seriously, I would leave again tomorrow, but I'd need another driver.

Aldersgate and Theresa were our life. Dinner club, Bible studies, youth activities, Disciple, Bethel, Care Team. Theresa graduated college, got married (AUMC), and she and Mark moved in, and then back out.



Then came 1995. We collected about 10" of the 24" of rain (in 30 hours) in our house in the May floods. Aldersgate to the rescue. We had almost 30 mostly AUMC folks come to our house to give us a hug, gut our house, and help us rebuild in more ways than one. Lived for 12 weeks with Nancy Jackson (RIP). During that time, Barbara's mother died, and Aldersgate comforted us.

Another significant event happened in 1995. We left. I was transferred to Pennsylvania. Leaving Slidell was hard. Leaving Aldersgate was harder. We had no clue where to find a church like Aldersgate with its family atmosphere. We looked at a big church. And we looked at a small church. The one we chose was the antithesis of AUMC. Membership was 150, not 1100; the church was 175 years old, not 25. We spent 11 happy years there.

When I arrived in Pennsylvania, I was most often asked the question, "What will you miss the most, your daughter?" My answer surprised some. What I was going to miss was not my daughter. I would talk to her frequently and visit her. What I was going to miss was Aldersgate, because I knew it would change. And I did miss it. And it did change.

Fast forward to 2007 when we moved back to Slidell. We were going to do the church shopping thing again and go to all the churches. Yea, right. We really did talk about it. Seriously, could we not go to AUMC? The first church we had known as a family, the church where we renewed our marriage vows, the church where our daughter was confirmed and married (with 350 of our closest friends), where our niece's wedding took place (pictured to the right), the church that we had suffered through floods and death with? No way. We rejoined Aldersgate after a few weeks home in Slidell. And then we really were home.



Blessings, Carl & Barbara Fuglein

*Thursday, December 22nd*

**Psalm 23**

*The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul.  
He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.  
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.  
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.  
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.  
Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

I would venture to say that Psalm 23 is one of the most beloved and well known verses. For me, it is the first verse I memorized in its entirety, a task I was given from my elementary Sunday school teacher. I certainly didn't realize the impact this verse would have on my life and how beneficial memorizing it would be. I also cannot begin to count the number of times I've caught myself reflecting on the words of this verse and how much comfort I find in doing so.

As a child, rote memorization was boring, something I did not enjoy and did not connect me in any way to the assignment. As required, I would read the verse several times and regurgitate the information on demand...skill & drill, a technique educators frown upon today. Of course, the proverbial assumption was the more Bible verses one memorizes the more spiritual one becomes.

At the time, I wasn't reading for comprehension and I never fully understood what I was saying. The words may have flowed out of my mouth but I never once stopped to reflect or ask questions about what this powerful Psalm meant. I went through many more verses over the course of my Sunday School years without regard for content because I placed more value on the popsicle, donut hole, or stick of candy my teacher would hand out when achieved. While I may have been proud to successfully memorize verses, I didn't feel any more spiritual.

It wasn't until adulthood and being introduced to small group study that I began to revisit the verses from my childhood and dive into the meaning of each word. I love Psalm 23 more and more each time I read it, not because I am able to recite it perfectly, but because I am in awe of the content.

My days of skill & drill are over, I now pause to reflect and simply dwell on the word of God. In small groups I have felt led to discuss scripture in depth, ask questions, and then apply it to my life. When I am in community with others I am recharged. I can no longer be satisfied with simply memorizing scripture finding community is imperative to spiritual growth. Aldersgate is a huge part of my community, and my cup overflows.

Cheryl Mann

*Holy Father, Your never wavering presence throughout my life is incomprehensible,  
yet nothing about you is short of amazing.  
I pray that I may continue to find comfort and solace in your word.  
Amen*

*Friday, December 23rd*

# *Merry Christmas from the Aldersgate Staff*



*May the light of Christ shine within you this  
Christmas season as we welcome the new year.*

*In His service,  
Pastor Tracy, Ashley, Gary, Scott,  
Adam, Karen, Erin, Sally Ann,  
Cheryl, Stacey, Suzie and Sasha*



**Believe**

Christmas Eve ~ December 24th

## *Christmas Eve Services*

*4:00 pm*

*O Holy Night ~ Carols, Communion and Candlelight*

*5:30 pm*

*The Nativity Story as told by the children*

*7:30 pm*

*Celebrate Christmas: Communion and Candles*

*11:00 pm*

*Joy to the World ~ Carols, Communion and Candlelight*

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Luke 1:31-33

<sup>31</sup> And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David, <sup>33</sup> He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end."

**Rejoice**

Christmas ~ December 25th

## *Christmas Day*

*10:00 am Combined Worship Service*

Luke 2:22-33

<sup>22</sup> When the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary brought him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup>(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), <sup>24</sup> and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons."

<sup>25</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. <sup>26</sup> It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.

<sup>27</sup> Guided by the Spirit, Simon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what the customary under the law, <sup>28</sup> Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: <sup>29</sup>"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word: <sup>30</sup>for my eyes have seen your salvation, <sup>31</sup>which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." <sup>33</sup>The child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him.

## **“You don’t need to find your place in life, it’s everywhere.”**

Loved by Pentecostal and Lutheran grandparents, formed in Air Force Base Protestant Sunday School, educated in the 60s “free” everything, married into High Episcopalian, delicately urged to move on from the church of my young adulthood, and now at a point of traveling many weeks out of each year, it’s only natural that I... “church around.”

But I come home to Aldersgate.

When I joined Aldersgate in the early 80s, I’d held out for a number of years. I was not and—remarkably—had never been Methodist. Work friends invited me, and Slidell was abuzz about the church on Robert Boulevard. But not wanting to do what everyone else was doing, I balked. Finally, a turning point pushed me through the doors of what I mistakenly judged and feared a mega church of the popular group.

Aldersgate spoke to me. The accepting words of the sermons spoke to me. The playful, inclusive family activities spoke to me. The newcomer’s handbook spoke to me, lending clarifying words to my heartfelt personal beliefs and practice. And the congregation literally spoke to me and welcomed me. When the minister stopped by my house one evening and asked to come into my kitchen while I was in the middle of cooking dinner, he said, “You have to think of Aldersgate as a lot of little churches, and you have to find your place in it.

Through my years as a member, Aldersgate has indeed been “a lot of churches.” Its personality, appearance, approach, and direction have fluxed, but Aldersgate has never lost sight of its identity: a place of ministry. I have always told my children—one who is Methodist, one who is non-denominational, and one who’s tried even more affiliations than his mother—that they must choose life work that helps others. So should a church. Indeed, Aldersgate helps others, reaching forth to touch “wherever God’s people are in need.”

It’s hard to realize that I have worshipped at Aldersgate for roughly 30 years. I think I recall that Sunday worship programs used to be printed with the words. “All are ministers.” The spirit that is Aldersgate has given me varied and valuable ministry opportunities. In all aspects, Aldersgate embodies Peter’s words, “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others.”

My Aldersgate family has tenderly ministered to me. Additionally, by the example of her servants in action for God, my Aldersgate family has equipped me to minister to others wherever He leads.

I have found a place for me,... so I come home to Aldersgate.

Renee Swalm



*Tuesday, December 27th*

## ***Walking in Stillness***

by William Thiele

I started the morning with a slow meditative walk around our property and down to the Pearl River at sunrise. The smells were rich and musky. The water flowed gently. The fish, alligators, nutria, and otters were breaking the river's smooth surface in search of breakfast. The mist moved across the water and toward me, nudged by a tiny breeze.

As the light topped the trees it fell on a fragile/strong spider web. Then another web appeared in the shifting light. Soon I was observing ten webs of varying designs as the breeze blew the morning mist through each one. The webs would shimmy and shift with the breeze, completely vulnerable to the power of the winds and moisture, and yet they retained their essential nature. Each unique spider web design was fragile and strong at the same time.

I am fragile/strong, like those webs. So are you. The winds and the mists of this life blow across us, and we somehow withstand whatever comes because we are made of fragile/strong stuff. Our essential nature is unchanged by whatever life throws at us.

Experiencing two kidney transplants and a breast cancer with my wife, and walking beside thousands of hurting people as a counselor and spiritual director, has taught me this: there is a wholeness beneath our brokenness. Wholeness is our essential nature. Creator made us fragile/strong, and whole beneath our brokenness, so that we can endure and even thrive toward abundant living no matter what comes.

But we do not remember our True Home, the wholeness of our fragile/strong nature, unless we use spiritual practices like walking in stillness to awaken us. May we dedicate our lives to walking in stillness, and sharing such practices in contemplative communities. May we experience our fragile/strong essential nature and find our way Home again this day. Amen.

## *The Future of the Church*

*Since the day I walked on Aldersgate's campus I have felt at home. My first experience here was with Apple Tree when my baby boy started the Mother's Day Out program and I fell in love. Little by little I started to spend more time here, the next thing I knew I was teaching at Apple Tree and serving as the Children's Ministry director. It happened so fast and I have loved every minute. It is an honor to love, guide, and invest in the Future of this Church. Nourishing their souls, guiding their hearts, letting them explore and learn about God have been such blessings. There is something amazing about the optimism and innocence of a child. They see new things every day, and stop to appreciate them. I learn from the children I teach and lead every day.*

*I'm certain that this is the life God intended for me. I am home.*

*-Stacey Boerner*

People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

Mark 10:13-16

### **Prayer:**

*Gracious God,*

*Thank you for the gift of children! Help us to learn from their examples of unconditional love, patience, and optimism. Remind us that they are our future, and help us to always guide them to YOU! In Jesus'*

*Name we pray,*

*Amen*



*Thursday, December 29th*

## **The Nurturing of a Child Throughout our Journey**

Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it. Proverbs 22:6

For two people who have grown up and were practically raised in this church, Aldersgate means a lot to us. The church itself has offered us a safe haven while all of its members created a support system that we could not have gotten anywhere else. Aldersgate has created so many memories for us and has helped to solidify an incredible friendship. From Sunday school and faith friends to confirmation and youth, our relationship with God has blossomed and strengthened, and our quest for knowledge has always been answered by our helpful Sunday school teachers and youth leaders. God has been omnipresent throughout our journey. Starting in preschool, the Bible stories that we were taught and lessons that we learned helped to shape us into the individuals that we are today. Our connection with God only grew stronger as our time progressed through children and youth ministries at Aldersgate. Adults who rose the challenge of teaching us began to bring us closer to God by instilling in us the importance of prayer and the role that we can play in the church, regardless of our young age.

Transitioning into high school, the strong bonds that were first formed in the youth group played a significant role in us keeping our faith throughout these challenging years. Just as the seniors helped us when we were freshmen, we wanted to reach out and touch the lives of the younger youth today. The opportunities that this church offers young people are incredible and we have both become better people because of them. As we are about to begin our college journey, there is no doubt that we will keep Christ in the center of our lives by joining many faith-based organizations that are available to us. This is no doubt because of the time and dedication that Aldersgate has offered to us. So, congratulations Aldersgate United Methodist to the 40th year anniversary, and may it continue to impact others just as it has touched us for many more generations!

Jane Kathryn Burriss and Clark Malchow

*Friday, December 30th*

## **The Question**

Looking back to the years of 2000 – 2005, there are so many good memories from my time at Aldersgate. This was the era of your 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and I was in my late 20s. My wife, Allison, and I were newlyweds, and it was during these years that Shellie and William were born and baptized at Aldersgate. These were the years of experiencing incredible love, support, and encouragement by you as I became ordained, and these years were filled with ministry moments that still bring a smile to my face. There were so many good moments in Traditional & Contemporary worship, with Family Night Live, with the Care Team, on Reflections choir tours, with Nameless, in adult Bible studies, on youth & college missions, at Christmas Eve Candle Light Communion, and in personal moments of counseling and care just to name a few.

It was and is a blessing to have served as your pastor those years, but time has gone by. You are celebrating your 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and I am in my early 40s. The past is gone. We can only remember it and cherish it. All each of us has is the present. It is the gift of God, and it creates our future. What will we do with that gift? What will we make of our present? How will we spend our time?

Several years ago I came across a quote from Maxie Dunnam, former editor of the Upper Room. He said, “What if there are some things that God cannot do or will not do until people pray?” In my journey I continue to find his words are true. Things happen when we pray that don’t happen when we don’t pray. Today’s holy moments and tomorrow’s grace-filled memories are born in a life of prayer, and the deepest yearnings of our heart for God’s Kingdom to come on earth are found through prayer. Inspiration. Insight. Holiness. Recovery. Hope. Salvation. Freedom. Unity. Joy. Provision. These all are realized and experienced when God’s people pray.

From my heart to yours, I want to leave you with the question I regularly ask myself. How will you order your present life so that prayer happens? It is through our prayers that the next 40 years will be born.

With great hope,

Rev. Josh Milliron

*Saturday, December 31st*

*Below, please find a "Prayer for the New Year."  
This prayer comes from the United Methodist  
General Board of Church and Society website.  
Today I share it with you (with a few adaptations).*

### ***A Prayer for the New Year***

**Holy God,  
who calls the worlds into being,  
who calls us into Christ's church,  
we thank you for the mission of the church  
that gives life to all the world,  
for the ministry of the church  
to which every Christian is called.**

**We thank you for pastors and people  
who seek to serve you faithfully  
in the midst of despair and destruction,  
in a world of chaos and confusion.**

**We confess, O God,  
that sometimes we forget  
that You have created us,  
so we wander away  
from your Son's teachings and example.  
Thus we abuse your creation,  
the sustaining gift You have given to us.  
Recover in us a sense of awe and responsibility.**

**We live by teachings, hopes and dreams  
that are rooted in Scriptural holiness.  
Yet we confess that we condone torture  
against those we perceive to be our enemies.  
We hide our eyes from the deaths of those  
we deem to be foreigners,  
and we think peace is an unattainable ideal.  
Reconcile in us what we expect with what we do.**

**We thank you for the ministry  
of the United Methodist Church,  
for our heritage of justice and peace,  
our concern for the homeless,  
the helpless and the harassed.  
Our mother, the Church,  
has nourished us, taught us,**

**reprimanded us and sent us  
into the world to serve faithfully.**

**We pray, dear God,  
for those who are survivors of storms  
and floods and earthquakes,  
of violence, domestic and random acts,  
for all who are experiencing heartache  
and suffering of any kind,  
for all who live in fear and doubt,  
Empower us to help restore them to well being.**

**We confess, O God,  
how self-satisfied we so easily become.  
Our comfort and contentment  
often prevent us from showing mercy.  
Forgive our neglect and strengthen us to serve.  
As we pray so easily and so often  
that You will forgive us as we forgive others,  
help us to recognize our sins,  
our shortcomings and our self-righteousness.  
Bring us from arrogance to empathy,  
from indifference to enthusiasm,  
from fear to faithfulness.**

**One more thing:  
Do not let us utter words of agreement  
too easily, too quickly.  
Focus our eyes as well as our hearts  
on what you desire for us.  
Challenge us to move  
from complacency to commitment,  
from clichés to compassion  
and from old habits to new opportunities.**

**We pray all this through the Spirit  
of Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord.**

**by Jim Winkler**

**Blessings**

*Sunday, January 1st*

**New Years Day**

**10:00 am Combined Worship Service**

Monday, January 2nd

# Aldersgate Charter Members

## October 3, 1976



Jane Anderson	Mary Ellen Davidson	James Little
Jerry Anderson	Duane Dendinger	Bill Massaker
Gloria Andrews	Lynn Dendinger	Mary Massaker
Fred Arce	Chris Dobbs	Patsy Massimini
Bill Baker	James Dobbs	Vince Massimini
Susan Baker	Ronnie Durosett	Audrey Mayfield
Roger Black	Shirley Durosett	Tom Mayfield
Rosalie Black	Jane Easterwood	Earl Meyer
Betty Bowie	Richard Easterwood	Barry Moore
Terry Bowie	Leo Ehrhardt	Sue Moore
Judy Bradley	Billie Jean Felder	Carol Onega
Lynn Bradley	Jerry Felder	George Onega
Judy Brainer	Jane Freise	William Orr
Ken Brainer	Shelby Freise	Audrey Pearson
Mary Susan Brett	Will Freise	Joe Pearson
Thelma Brett	Ann Gampp	Kevin Pearson
Vernon Brett	David Gampp	Jack Rennie
Merna Bridgeman	Peter Gampp	Margaret Rennie
Joe Brown	Connor Hammond	Mary Rich
Sherry Brown	Fran Hammond	Betty Ryals
Ben Alice Farron Buchholz	Frank Harrod	Robert Ryals
Betty Byrd	Hazel Harrod	Lois Haas Skinner
Harry Byrd	Douglas Holmes	Ron Skinner
Glen Carlson	Julie Holmes	J.W. Smith
Liz Carlson	Mark Holmes	Rhonda Smith
Kerry Cockrell	Nancy Holmes	David Snyder
Lizabeth Cockrell	Gwen Hopper	Ina Snyder Lock
Elsie Cornett	Miriam Hruby	Rhea Snyder
Howard Cornett	R.C. Hruby	Gladys Sollberger
James Council	Suzanne Jabbia	Bill Speer
Julie Council	Carolyn Kelton	David Tschopp
Laura Council	Curtis Kelton	Susan Tschopp
Johnny Crow	James Kirby	Charles Wooten
Phyllis Crow Morgan	Joy Kirby	Evelyn Wooten
Barbara Curtis	Edna Little	Rubin Wooten
John Curtis		



Tuesday, January 3rd

I have been a member of Aldersgate for 6 years and through those 6 years I have experienced many “firsts”.

My first Bible study on the Book of James opened my eyes to God’s word and how the Bible applies to my life on a daily basis.

My mind is like a sponge for it now, always searching for more understanding of the Bible and the context behind single verses, parables and stories.

My first mission trip to Butler, AL opened my heart to be in service to others.

I realized on that first mission trip the reason I am blessed is to bless others, and I need to look around to see the world outside of mine, because there are so many without the everyday necessities I have in my life.

My first witness, to over 200 people at an Epworth worship service, relieved me of my anxiety of talking to people about how God works in my life.

Sharing this testimony forced me look back to the path I was on, the mistakes I’ve made, the people I’ve hurt and what I can overcome with God beside me.

My first time singing in the choir showed me a new way to worship...through song.

A powerful and beautiful way to experience worshipping God.

My first spiritual retreat, one with women and one on my own, offered me a time of respite I never knew I needed and a time of reflection to learn things about myself I didn’t even know were there.

My first time leading youth was scary and fun and amazing!

Building relationships with our youth is vital to their faith journey, and takes time and commitment.

It’s not an obligation - it’s a privilege - to be included in their world, earn their trust, understand their struggles and yes, to get SnapChats from them!

I am thankful for these and so many other “firsts” at Aldersgate (Sunday school teacher, Confirmation leader, serving on the finance committee, year-long Disciple class) because those “firsts” have turned into seconds and thirds and some I’ve lost count! Aldersgate offers many opportunities to get involved, plug in, connect – WORSHIP, GROW, SERVE.

Six years ago, I decided to choose a different path. On this path, I have learned how to be a follower of Jesus and what it means to be part of a faith family...and I haven’t looked back since.

Sasha Massel



Wednesday, January 4th

In September 1997, Susan came home from the doctors with a big smile on her face. She told me she was pregnant. A few days later, with a big smile on my face, I went to the credit union and opened an account for college. I knew back then college would be expensive. I set up the account with payroll deduction. I never touched the money and never missed a payment to the account.

Over the summer of 2015, Susan and I had some long discussions and did lots of praying. After 37 years with ExxonMobil, years of saving, a good pension and council of a financial advisor, on September 1, 2015 I retired.

One of the things that I planned to do in retirement was volunteer at the church. Cleaning up, fixing things, just trying to help out a little. One Sunday, Pastor Nancy Wofford asked me what I would be doing with all the extra time. I told her she would be seeing a little more of me around here and maybe get a part time job.

That August Katie started college. You know, college is pretty expensive. This was a new and exciting adventure for her. Wow... Did I mention that college is expensive? Glad I saved up that money. Soon we started adding things up and I definitely would be getting a part time job. Nancy told me that Dale Kimball was retiring and that his job at the church would need to be filled. I applied and was rewarded with the job.

There is a song called *Count Your Blessings*. I wouldn't know where to start. God has been great to me. Better than I deserve, that's for sure. I now have a great part time job. I love working for the church and I work with wonderful people. It sometimes has its challenges, and like most things there are good days and not so good days. I get to do some things that I have never done before and I have enjoyed learning them. What a great experience it is working for the church. I hope God is pleased with my work here.

Gary Grant

**When you look at others with their lands and gold,  
Think that Christ has promised you his wealth untold;  
Count your many blessings. Wealth can never buy  
Your reward in heaven, nor your home on high.  
Count your blessings; Name them one by one.  
Count your blessings; See what God hath done.**

Thursday, January 5th

***“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Acts 20:35***

What started in a small room above a restaurant became an active church that has touched thousands in our community. Those individuals put down roots so that, over the years, the members of Aldersgate UMC could branch out to offer shelter for the rainy days, shade when life grew stifling, fellowship when we needed support and beauty to remind us God is in our midst.

How has Aldersgate’s programs touched you? How did you help someone else through the work of this church?

Did the Angel Alzheimer’s Day Care give you respite to help meet the rest of the day with a calmer spirit? Did you visit with one of the participants and share a laugh again and again over a story from their childhood?

Did your child find a safe and nurturing place to stay at Rainbow Child Care while you made a better life for your family? Did you help paint a classroom or gather books to start an innovative type of day care center in Slidell.

When our city was devastated eleven years ago, did you come to our campus to hand out water, cook meals for the army of volunteers we housed, or sort donated clothing? Did you come looking for help and found sustenance through both food and prayer?

Were there years when you thought you lived on campus due to bringing your children to youth meetings, choir practice and confirmation classes? Were you both exhausted and blessed because you shared your time during Sunday school or perhaps on a mission trip where you got to witness our church’s children grow and absorb God’s word.

Did you sit in our sanctuary and ask why? Did you linger in the chapel to say thank you?

For four decades, Aldersgate has been a place where people could come to find help or to give of themselves. As in the past, now is a good time to let God know, “I’m ready. Where do you need me now?”

Anonymous

*Friday, January 6th*

## **An Unknown Future**

Often, during the wedding homily, I will say something like this, “Indeed, such a union begins with a leap of faith that says, “I do and I will” before an unknown and unknowable future.”

This unknown and unknowable future is a universal metaphor. We, as Christians, each and every day wake up to that day’s “unknown and unknowable.”

I have an unforeseen and unknowable future. You have an unforeseen and unknowable future. Aldersgate United Methodist Church has an unforeseen and unknowable future.

On January 8, 2017, we will gather to celebrate and remember our baptism in a very special worship service.

On this day, we will, also, renew our vows of commitment and membership to Aldersgate United Methodist Church.

You will be asked, “As members of Christ’s universal Church, will you be loyal to the United Methodist Church, and do all in your power to strengthen its ministries?”

...and, you will be asked, “As members of Aldersgate United Methodist Church, will you faithfully participate in its ministries?”

The response is:

**We give thanks for all that God has already given us. As members of the body of Christ and in this congregation of The United Methodist Church, we will faithfully participate in the ministries of the church by our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service, and our witness, that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.**

Why renew our baptismal vows and our vows of membership in the church?

I think that it is a good thing to remember. I think that it is a good thing to reflect upon our past and renew our spirits for a new day forward...even if into an unforeseen and unknowable future.

What’s next? I do not know the future but I know who holds the future in his hands...so, for me, I will continue to lean in, breathe deep and trust in God. What about you?

Blessings,



Rev. Tracy L. MacKenzie

We thank those who shared devotions from their hearts.  
Thank you!



**ALDERSGATE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

360 Robert Boulevard  
Slidell, Louisiana 70458  
985-641-5829  
[www.aldersgate-slidell.org](http://www.aldersgate-slidell.org)

*sharing the Living Christ through life-changing service and love*