



January 2024

A significant place where disciples are made

The Messenger

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The Anna Anointing The Rev. Dr. Kyung-Hee Sa

My favorite incarnation story lies in the Gospel of Luke. The Holy Child Jesus was born. When the time came for a purification rite according to the Law of Moses, Mary and Joseph traveled from Nazareth to present the Holy Baby Jesus to the Lord in the temple. They received blessings and prophecy from the devout and righteous man named Simeon. His anointing goes like this: ***"This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed and a sword will pierce your own soul too."*** (Luke 2:34-35)

Then the Prophetess Anna was empowered by the spirit of prophecy to testify of Jesus to those who looked for redemption. At 84, Anna as an elderly widow never left the temple, but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day for over 60 years. She immediately recognized the Christ Child as the Savior of the world and blessed Jesus at the temple (Luke 2:38). The Anna anointing is an expression of the Holy Spirit who anointed the widow to prophesy the Messiah to all who looked for redemption. The Anna anointing came when she fasted and prayed in the temple day and night. Her prayer, worship in the temple, perseverance and watchfulness were the four keys to activate the Anna anointing.

What would the modern-day Anna anointing be like for us? At the threshold of New Year with Christmas season around, I think ahead and look forward with deep desire for God's anointing upon our church and God's blessings for our spiritual growth. Do you experience thirst for God this season? I do. I pray for a collective sense of longing and anticipation for something like the Anna anointing by the power of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

Jesus came with a sword that will pierce our own souls! Our inner thoughts will be revealed. We will live a life of prayer, worship, perseverance, watchfulness and holy abandonment to the purposes of the Lord Jesus. The error of the church of Ephesus was to do Kingdom work without prayer and intimacy with Jesus. Those with an Anna anointing must be careful not to bear false burdens and develop a mentality of human work. We need an Anna anointing in which our souls will be pierced by Jesus. The lifestyle of the modern-day Anna may be a wake-up call to apathetic Christianity.

Are you eager to bless Jesus, just like Simeon and Anna? Simeon praised God like this, ***"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."***

This New Year, let us be a house of prayer to BLESS Jesus with an Anna anointing!

Emmanuel Dining Room Ministry 2023

Thanks for a great year! Because many volunteered to prepare a meal we were able to cook almost every month in 2023. Thank you to Karen and Tim Browne and Barb Johnson who made the meal in December!

Also thanks to Jung Moon Kim for helping to serve and Pastor Bob for coming down as well!

God Bless you all! I hope preparing a meal was a blessing to you! I know it is for me. ❤️
Here are a few of the beautiful faces of the EDR staff!

Anne Murray



EDR Managers Linda and Sister Kathleen



Kwon who helps us in the kitchen



Sisters Renu and Josephine who serve every day!



December 16 Servers: Karen, Anne, Tom, Jung-Moon, Barb

November Lead Team Meeting

Commitment Sunday Program

Bob Reis

Commitment Sunday was held on December 3. The congregation was invited to bring their commitment cards to a special box when they came to the altar for communion.

Readiness Congregational Meeting

Henry Daum

The Readiness Team has received feedback from the congregation regarding the Town Hall presentation on the Catalyst initiative. They will be meeting on December 11 to review the input from the congregation and prepare a recommended next step for Aldersgate to be submitted to the Lead Team.

Pastor Kyung-Hee emphasized trusting God and one another as we work to find clarity on Aldersgate's vision and mission. Trust among us is needed in preparing for a rapidly changing ministry environment. We need nimble and effective decision-making to stay current with the changes. Based on her experience as a former District Superintendent, she believes we need to tap into the Conference's help and resources if we decide to participate in the Catalyst initiative. It was agreed that the Lead Team will have a special, one-topic, hybrid meeting on December 19 to review the Readiness Team recommendation.

Wildly Important Goals (WIGs) for the New Year

Pastor Kyung-Hee

Pastor Kyung-Hee shared some initiatives planned for 2024 including:

- Readiness – 21 days of prayer during the Lenten season
- Bible Study – a program to read the total bible in the next year
- Covenant Groups – small group ministries
- Nomination/Leadership Academy – February
- Spiritual Growth/Accountability

THANK YOU

“This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other.” John 13:35

During the season of Advent, if we allow it, we can become overwhelmed in the details of Christmas stress - decorations and presents and parties. For some families, the Christmas stress includes keeping their children fed, warm, and safe during a period of uncertainty seeking permanent housing. We're grateful for our volunteers who gave up an evening or provided resources during this busy season to walk with our Family Promise guests to help lighten their load by providing seven warm dinners the week of December 10th.

Please join me in thanking our dedicated volunteers: The Fresconi Family, Nancy Hough, Laura Parrish, Carey & George Cross, Jeff and Matt Walters, Don Temme, The Johnstons, Troop 67, Mt. Lebanon Emmaus Group, Joanne Smeltz, & Sarah Hopkins.

Thank you Aldersgate for covering the families and volunteers in your prayers!

The number of families with children experiencing homelessness in Delaware has almost tripled since 2020. Family Promise of Northern New Castle County serves 130-150 families with children experiencing temporary homelessness each year. Aldersgate is an essential piece to this network of over 2,000 volunteers!

We hope that you will prayerfully consider joining our volunteer team and sign up to help in 2024!. This is a great opportunity to partner with friends or family outside our church who may be looking to give back to our community. Families or friends with young children are also invited to serve as there is no age restriction for volunteers with Family Promise.

Please reach out to Brian at bjmerritt@outlook.com for more information. Thank you, Aldersgate, for being the hands and feet of Christ for our neighbors in New Castle County.

- The Merritt Family

2024



Confirmation

Youth and parents, you are invited to a Confirmation Information Meeting on January 9 at 7 p.m. Please plan to attend if you are considering Confirmation in 2024.

Any questions, please contact Pam at pam.downey@aldersgatede.org.

HOPP Food Distribution

Friday, January 26, 2024

Volunteers are needed to distribute free food boxes/bags provided by the Longwood Foundation's HOPP Ministry to anyone in need in our community. We gather in the Aldersgate parking lot at 12:15 p.m. to set up and get organized, and then distribute boxes from 12:30 p.m. until 1:30 p.m. Volunteers are needed to hold up signs at the curb on Concord Pike, direct the flow of cars to our distribution point as they come in, and place boxes/bags into cars. This is a rewarding, hands-on ministry that directly serves our local community and also provides opportunity for fellowship.

Read the BIBLE in a YEAR Chronologically



Pastor Kyung-Hee is excited to challenge the congregation to continue growing their faith and spiritual practice in 2024 with daily readings of the bible and the goal of completing it in ONE year! We will offer it two ways: digitally using the Bible App/computer OR with a book. We would also like to create a bulletin board with all of our participants to watch the progress throughout the year. If you accept the challenge and complete it, Pastor Kyung-Hee is going to give prizes! Contact Kyle Smith if you are interested.

From the Worship Committee

Celebrating communion is a very meaningful sacrament. Prior to the pandemic, we were in the habit of serving communion by way of intinction. In response to health concerns and in order to maintain social distancing, we began serving communion using individual cups with wafers. We are on the other side of the worldwide crisis, and some have begun asking if we might not return to our former style of serving communion. For some, the little cups are difficult to open and some have reported missing out on the experience while struggling with the cellophane top. For others, handling bread and sharing a common cup causes seems risky. To respect all choices, might we not offer it both ways? The Worship Committee has considered this question, and will continue to discuss whether we are ready for a change. If you have thoughts on this important aspect of worship, please contact **Amy Honisch, the Worship Chairperson**.

If you know of shut-ins who would like to receive communion at a local nursing home, please contact the office.

From Your Lay Leaders

*Sharon Owens and
Anne Murray*

A Prayer for the New Year

Lord and Giver of all good things, the magi travelled for miles to bring the Christ child the first Christmas presents. So may we, too, remember with thankful hearts the love that came with each present we opened this Christmas. We also thank you for the love you have for each of us, and we thank you for the many gifts that you give us all through the year especially the gift of life itself. Amen. (Author Unknown)

Best wishes for a joyous new year for our church, our pastors and staff. We wish everyone a 2024 filled with love, happiness, and prosperity. Sharon and Anne

Come let us
Adore
Him



Welcome to Ryan McKeever

Audio Visual Technician

On Sunday, December 17, Ryan joined the Aldersgate Staff. He will be in the "booth" each Sunday. Ryan will also schedule AV Volunteers and create the slides for the services. Please stop by to greet Ryan.



Reconciling Ministries

Pastor Kyung Hee, Betsy Diemer and Anne Murray recently attended a Zoom gathering entitled A Conversation with Reconciling Churches. It was led by Reconciling Ministries leaders and clergy. Attendees were from all over the country. This year the UMC split over the question of LGBTQ+ inclusion. Congregations that stayed with the UMC - a big majority - actively support members of the LGBTQ+.

Participants in this gathering were reminded of the Reconciling Ministries (RM) Charge. Key points are:

- LGBTQ people are beloved and should be affirmed and fully included in the life of the church - not just tolerated.
- Anti-LGBTQ+ language and discrimination regarding ordination and marriage should not exist in the UMC going forward.
- Reconciling congregations must embody our stated values of social justice re members of the LGBTQ community.



Plans were summarized for the Charge Conference in 2024. Many dedicated people are working hard to change the negative language in the Book of Discipline in order to be inclusive and affirming of the LGBTQ community including clergy.

Attendees were encouraged to support Reconciling Ministries' mission by engaging in work leading up to General Conference and Annual Conference. We can help shape the future of the UMC! These are important dates for next year:

- General Conference in 2024 (April 23 - May 3, Charlotte, NC)
- Annual Conference in 2024
- Jurisdictional Conferences in 2024 (July 10-12)

If anyone wants more information or a copy of the slides from this gathering or is interested in Aldersgate's Reconciling Ministry team, please contact Anne Murray asmpelican@gmail.com.

Reconciling Ministries does not collect any fees from churches. Should anyone wish to make a donation to the work of Reconciling Ministries this can be done at rmn.org. You can make a donation in honor of or memory of a loved one.

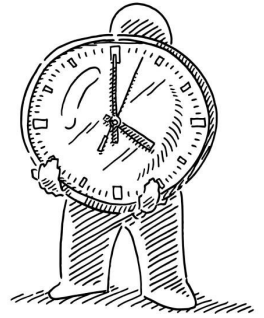
THANK YOU and BEST WISHES To Mandy and Rob McFarland

On Sunday, December 5, a reception was held to offer thanks and best wishes to Rob and Mandy. Their last worship service with Aldersgate is Christmas Eve.



Photos by Al Moore





THE MARKING OF TIME

As I have been honored to visit the elders in our community, I have been struck by how many have outlived their children. While I lost Justin to suicide at 30, many of these dear friends saw their children die in their fifties and sixties of cancer, heart disease or other ailments.

What is universally true is that neither the *timing* nor the *cause* of death matters. To outlive one's child is always excruciating. Entering a new year often brings such losses to the surface.

Often, when a child dies, there is only Before and After. There is life Before the death and life After the death. Many grieving parents can tell, without thought or internal calculation, how many years, months and even days it has been since their child's death.

When we see a friend or family member exhibit such behavior, be aware that it is perfectly normal. It is NOT a sign of unproductive mourning, but a new system to mark the earth's relentless rotation. Someone might say "this Christmas was the fourth since John died." They may speak of the anniversary of the death coming up or having just passed.

As a friend, remember that the statement that can meet **every** such occasion is "*How is this time for you?*" Open ended questions allow a person to lead the conversation. Their response could be anywhere from "This is such a hard time" to "It helps to keep her in my heart." All our friend needs from us is eye contact and a listening heart. And so, we embody the Living Christ.

In Jesus precious name,

Pastor Bob



Sign up for the Rummage Sale in April

For your planning, here are key dates and actions for our big rummage sale:

Volunteer: Sign up to participate starting in January. Watch for sign-up tables in the Narthex or contact Stacie DiGiacoma (staciedigiacom@msn.com) or Nancy Hough (houghn1@hotmail.com) to volunteer.



- **Donation Dates:** Saturday, March 30th and Monday through Wednesday April 1st – 3rd.
- **Donations of jewelry:** please contact Kitty Lugar now to arrange delivery or pick-up (kittyannlugar@msn.com).
- **Set-up and Sorting Dates:** March 30th and April 1st through 5th.
- **Sale Date:** Saturday, April 6th 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- **Clean-up and loading leftovers** to other nonprofits: Saturday, April 6th 2 p.m. – 5 p.m.

There is fun and fellowship for everyone, so come to enjoy working together with your fellow parishioners to benefit our church and the community.



Patricia Overdeer November 11, 2023

Julia Meredith December 5, 2023

Gary Gleason December 9, 2023

Brien and Sherrie Graveline

January 1 23 years

Reginald and Kimberly Haile

January 10 25 years

Brian and Cheryl Merritt

January 12 22 years

Suhas Chandrashekar
and Nalini Sekar

January 19 11 years

Michael and Ann Ashmore

January 21 29 years



Leadership Development at Aldersgate UMC



We invite all people worshipping with us to develop a personal and spiritual growth plan that will help fulfill our mission: *Aldersgate United Methodist Church is a significant place where disciples are made!* The gift of service is vital to a church and its ability to grow and sustain its mission. We are asking everyone to complete the spiritual gifts survey so you can determine the best use of your strengths with our ministries. The United Methodist Spiritual Gifts survey is found here:

[Discipleship Ministries | Spiritual Gifts Inventory \(umcdiscipleship.org\)](https://umcdiscipleship.org).

Please complete it by February 1. Mark your calendar for our Ministries Fair on 2/11, 2/18, and our Leadership Academy on February 25, after our unified worship at 10 a.m.



**ALDERSGATE
CHURCH OFFICE**

Will have limited coverage

December 25 through December 29.





The Annual **Advent Workshop** was filled with fun fellowship, creative crafts, decorating cookies and take-home gingerbread houses, too! Thank you for all the elves with volunteering their time, crafts and cleaning up. Thank you especially to Sandy Anderson, Elaine Chester, Theresa Baker, Amanda, Don, Jonas and Evelyn Moyer, Fiona Kelly, Sophia and Brandon Harrington, Wendy, Val and Cheyenne Pease, Lindsey, Matt, Jacob, Ryan, Cooper and Charlotte Anderson, Kerri, Daniel and Annie Halbedl, Julia and Bennett Shay, Chris, Elise and Addie Burket, Ryan, Nitasha, Emma and Greyson Smith, Troy, Noah and Cecelia Schaffer, Nancy Hough, Joy, Ilana, Jenna, Lelia Burgomaster, Pastor Kyung-Hee Sa and John Jennelly.

Aldersgate
PRESCHOOL

Registration for Aldersgate Preschool has begun for Fall 2024 classes for our current families and alumni. Enrollment for the community starts in January! Signup for your preference of class and day before we fill up! Go to our webpage at www.aldersgatede.org for tour times, registration forms, calendar, and information about Aldersgate's nurturing Christian Preschool part-time program. Please contact the director Sharon.Jennelly@aldersgatede.org for a tour to be sure this is the "best fit" program for your individual child, as well for teaching and substituting our littles. We also have a Facebook page! We do follow the Brandywine School District for inclement weather closings and if the BSD opens late, we are closed for everyone's safety. Be on the lookout for the pictures of the beautiful Christmas Program with our PreK Nativity Pageant and January's -Donuts for Dad and Pajama & Book Donation days, ideas for a new ALDERSGATE PRESCHOOL sign and updating the playground & fence.

SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

Aldersgate Safe Sanctuary Policy is being renewed for 2024. Please contact Sharon Jennelly, Director of Children's Ministry or Pam Downey, Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministry if you are willing and able to join us on the Safe Sanctuary team. Plans are being made for a training on Sunday, January 21 at Noon-1 p.m., more details to follow!

Christmas Concert, December 10

Photos by Al Moore



Chancel Choir



**Praise Band rocking to
Jingle Bell Rock**



Vocal Impact



Chancel Choir joined by Vocal Impact

Financial Update

Our Stewardship Scorecard Operating Budget Fiscal Year July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024

Giving Income Budgeted through November:	\$268,750
Giving Income Received through November:	\$207,117
All Income through November:	\$333,326
Budgeted Income through November:	\$440,402
All expenses through November:	\$362,918
Budgeted Expenses through November:	\$440,581
Operating Deficit through November:	\$(29,582)

December is usually a very good month financially. This year we need it more than most. Our operating expenses have been curtailed thanks to judicious spending; but our giving and income have lagged significantly. It is the time of year for giving and making the most of our ministries. Let's think about how important it is to keep Aldersgate's doors open and staff working so our ministries can do all we plan as we think about donations this year.

Bob Reis
Finance Committee

Readiness Team

Following the November 12th Town Hall meeting, the Readiness Team collected feedback from the congregation concerning the potential adoption of the Catalyst initiative. We want to thank you for sharing your thoughts and questions with us.

Your feedback was generally positive with some hesitation expressed due to the lack of details regarding how individuals in the congregation would be engaged and impacted. However, there's an understanding that the Catalyst initiative would create change and you're okay with that.

The Readiness Team will use your feedback to help develop our recommendation to the Lead Team regarding Aldersgate going forward with the Catalyst initiative. Once the Lead Team determines a path forward, that will be communicated to you.

The Readiness initiative demonstrated the importance of communication with the congregation and, if we go forward with the Catalyst initiative, we will build on what was learned from the Readiness initiative to do a better job of keeping the congregation informed and engaged.

Upcoming Events





UWF Cookie Walk was a success !

We raised over \$ 3800 to benefit **Neighborhood House** and **Camp Pecomouth**. Alleluia!!
It is exciting that this event brings in many people from the community along with our faithful Aldersgate family.
This year was no exception.

Each year all goes just a little differently, but God is good!! People were lined up at 8:05 a.m. (doors open at 9 a.m.). We had an abundance of volunteers. Cookies were beautiful and candy canes were festive, filling the tables. The people came early and once the doors opened, there were no “lulls” in the line. Cookies sold out quickly, yet sales continued at the New to You, Holiday Food and Craft tables. One newcomer commented saying that it was great and she would be back next year. Truly, it was a wonderful walk!

Thank you bakers, volunteers, shoppers and donors!

UWF would like to express our thanks and gratitude to all who contributed or helped in any way. All of your efforts make a huge difference in the success of this event. Most importantly, it benefits missions that serve women, youth and children. Thank you once again, one and all, for your time and generosity.



United
Women
in Faith



Link to Sign Up for Epiphany Meeting: <https://eeumw.wufoo.com/forms/uwf-epiphany-program/>

Worship Schedule

Contemporary 9 a.m.

Sunday School 10:05 a.m.

Traditional 11 a.m.

You can find the live stream

<https://www.facebook.com/AldersgateDe/>

Or YouTube

www.youtube.com/c/aldersgatede



All are Welcome!

Come Join us in Worship

Upcoming Events

Christmas Eve -10 a.m. Unified Service

4 p.m. Family Nativity

9 p.m. Traditional Candlelight
with Communion

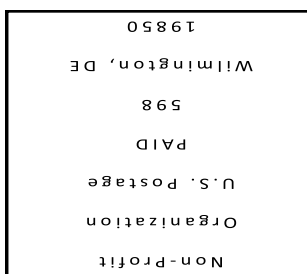
December 31—10 a.m. Unified Service

January 7—12:15 p.m. UWF Epiphany Meeting



Aldersgate United Methodist Church—A significant place where disciples are made!

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



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