ALDERSGATE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

#585 **The GatePost** - The Monthly Newsletter of Aldersgate UMC December 1, 2017

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December at Aldersgate

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3 ~ FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT ~ HOPE

Worship at 9am

Holy Communion ~ Food Collection for Families Forward
Advent Study "Why This Jubilee?" after Worship
Christmas Miracle Mission Fair after Worship
Family Promise Hosting Week Begins
Caroling to Homebound Members, 5pm

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9

Christmas Candlelight Dessert, 6:30pm—contact Judy Dickinson regarding tickets

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10 ~ SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT ~ PEACE

Family Worship at 9am

Advent Study "Why This Jubilee?" after Worship
Youth Progressive Dinner & Gift Exchange

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14

Children's Center Christmas Program
6:30pm in the Fellowship Hall

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17 ~ THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT ~ JOY

Worship at 9am

Chancel Choir Christmas Cantata

Food Collection for Sunday Suppers
Advent Study "Why This Jubilee?" after Worship
Sunday Supper Christmas Party, 5:30pm at St. Paul's Episcopal Church

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24 ~ CHRISTMAS EVE

Family Worship at 9am

Miracle Movers ~ Children & Youth Choirs ~ Live Nativity ~ Carols

Candlelight Family Worship at 7pm

Chancel Choir ~ Miracle Movers ~ Carols ~ Candlelight

Candlelight & Communion Worship at 10pm

Chancel Choir ~ Carols ~ Holy Communion ~ Candlelight

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31 ~ NEW YEAR'S EVE

Family Worship at 9am

Potluck in the Fellowship Hall after worship

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Aldersgate Children's Center

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E-mail: Admin@aumctustin.org
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Staff Fun Facts

At our Staff Appreciation on September 24, we played a fun game of trying to guess trivia about our staff members. We will include some of the Fun Facts in each Gatepost for you to enjoy.

1. Who do you think?
   - •Was born in DeKalb County, Georgia
   - •Rode a Harley Davidson Sportster a lot in his/her younger days
   - •Spoils every punchline of a joke

   Answer: Jackie Kush, Aldersgate Children's Center Director
2. Who do you think?
   - •In the space of about six weeks this person attended: two Shakespeare plays, a techno musical festival, camped 25 miles from the nearest town, and visited the Sacramento offices of his/her state representatives

   Answer: Anna Ferraro, Organist and Accompanist
3. Who do you think?
   - •Is fluent and literate in Spanish
   - •Broke his/her neck as a high school sophomore varsity basketball player
   - •Was stranded with his/her spouse at Roca Bruja in Costa Rica. Monkeys ate their food, the water source was not potable, and a rain deluged their tent. They relied on the kindness of strangers to survive.
   - •Was Homecoming Queen at Tufts University in 2002

   Answer: Carrie Balmages, Miracle Movers Choreographer

Pastor Ken's Connection

Blessed Advent, Family and Friends of Faith!

I know we've just finished Thanksgiving festivities, but as I think about the upcoming Advent season, I feel like a little kid excited to open a present... because I know, like the child, that God has prepared something personal and exciting for each one of us this Advent! Are you ready to sing? As we sang Christmas hymns together at our recent Advent festival, *I can't wait* to sing along with the carols playing on the radio, in stores, in malls, and pretty much wherever we go. Yes, it can become overwhelming ☺, but in a world where sadness, longing, loneliness, restlessness, and despair abound, songs of rejoicing, fulfillment, peace, and hope are a welcome "intrusion"... like the very first Christmas.

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned… For to us a child is born, to us a son is given… And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."-Isaiah 9:2,6-7

What wonderful words… like a song rising up from the ashes... like a beaten down soul given a reason to sing. This is exactly what the people of the first Christmas experienced. In the midst of their obscurity, longing, restlessness, and darkness, they were given a reason to sing and rejoice!

Our theme for Advent this year is called ***"REJOICE! Something to Sing About!"*** Because our church family loves to sing, and because the Christmas hymns and carols carry such powerful words of hope, we are going to study the words and sing a well-known hymn each Sunday during Advent. So, are you ready to sing? More importantly, are you ready to remember and rejoice in the reason for the hope that we have?

Here are the key passages and songs we will reflect on each Sunday during Advent:

- **December 3- Advent 1- The Place-** Matthew 2:1-12, "O Little Town of Bethlehem"
- **December 10- Advent 2- The People-** Isaiah 9:2-7, "O Holy Night"
- **December 17- Advent 3- The Mother-** Luke 1:26-38, "Breath of Heaven"
- **December 24- Advent 4 & Christmas Eve- The Child-** Luke 2:1-20, "Away in a Manger"

This Christmas, just like He did the very first Christmas, may the Lord find you wherever you are... and may the presence and light of Jesus pierce any longing, restlessness, despair, or darkness... with a reason to sing. Let us rejoice! God's great gift is here! Merry Christmas!

In praise, adoration, anticipation, and wonder,

Rev. Ken

If you need prayers for yourself, a family member or a friend, you are invited to contact:

The Church Office
at (714) 544-3653.

All prayer requests are given to the pastors and office staff, who pray together weekly. Members of the prayer chain pray specifically for those who ask for prayers for themselves and/or others. If you are interested in becoming a member of the prayer chain, please contact the church office.

GRIEF SHARE®

A new 13-week session of Grief Share will begin on January 7, 2018. The group meets on Sundays at 2:30pm in the Church Library.

Contact Elsie Hale at (714) 838-4111 or Mary Lynn Norby at (714) 832-4678 for more information.

Prayer Shawl Ministry...

...meets on the **1st and 3rd** Wednesdays **from 3pm to 5pm in the Fireside Room.** If you are interested in being part of this important and meaningful ministry, please feel free to attend a meeting—even if you have no experience, there are knitters and crocheters willing to help those that are just getting started. Please feel free to contact the church office 714.544.3653 if you have any questions or need further information about the group.

BeFriender Ministers

BEFRIENDER MINISTRY
A Listening Presence

The BeFriender ministry of Aldersgate is a listening presence. This ministry is not a ministry of "doing", but of "being,"--being present and listening quietly. Everyone is, at times, on a difficult journey and needs a caring companion who will listen, empathize, and be a reminder of a caring, faith community. All requests and meetings are confidential. This ministry comes under the umbrella of the Care and Nurture team. If you are interested, or know of someone who might be, do not hesitate to contact the church office.

Environmental Ministries

Joyce Stenberg—EM Member

Caring for God's Creatures at Christmas and in the New Year

I love to watch wildlife, whether it be in my backyard, at the beach, in the mountains, or at a zoo. Observing "all creatures great and small" reminds me of the interconnectedness among us, as part of God's awesome gift of creation, and of our God-given responsibility to be stewards of life on earth. Sadly, we have not always taken this creation care responsibility seriously, resulting in the threatened extinction of many of the "wise and wonderful" creatures that share our planet (including the critically endangered Christmas frigate bird – see blog.arkive.org).

Fortunately, according to Anthony D. Barnosky (Berkeley Biology professor and author), there are things we can do to prevent what scientists are calling the Sixth Mass Extinction (only the sixth time in five hundred million years that so many species could go extinct so quickly). Biologists have successfully brought many species back from the brink of extinction, but the job of saving thousands more threatened species requires us to deal with the most important human-made causes: climate change, habitat loss, and killing species for short-term profit. Barnosky also suggests actions we can take as individuals to protect threatened wildlife:

- Spread awareness that the extinction crisis is real
- Reduce our carbon footprint (www.carbonfootprint.com)
- Buy products with sustainably produced palm oil (Union of Concerned Scientists)
- Eat fish from only healthy fisheries (see the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch App)
- Eat less meat
- Never buy anything made from ivory
- Enjoy nature
- Adopt a species or become a citizen scientist (see endextinction.org)
- Vote for leaders who protect our environment
- And don't give up! (I would add, pray for guidance in this work.)

We can also consider wildlife conservation as we send cards and give gifts this Christmas:

1. Buy Save Vanishing Species postage stamps for your Christmas cards to support Multinational Species Conservation Funds (these only cost 11 cents more for each beautiful amur tiger cub postage stamp).
2. Buy **Plant-a-tree Ornaments** from National Wildlife Federation (www.shopnwf.org) – a tree will be planted for every item purchased, increasing habitat for wildlife.
3. Give a loved one a Sea Turtle Nest gift through The Nature Conservancy "to help preserve safe places for weary sea turtle mothers and protect other vital habitats." (https://gifts.nature.org) – This gift includes a certificate and holder, bookmark, decal, and a sea turtle plush enclosed in a gift box.
4. Make a Symbolic Species Adoption through World Wildlife Fund (gifts.worldwildlife.org). "Give a gift that will help protect the future of nature. Your symbolic adoption supports WWF's global efforts to protect wild animals and their habitats." Each gift includes a plush version of the adopted animal, a certificate, a photo, a spotlight card, and a personalized letter to your gift recipient.
5. Google "Christmas gifts that protect wildlife" for many more ideas.

My prayer is that we will all take even just a few steps toward being better caretakers of God's creatures, during this joyous Christmas season and throughout the New Year.

Acolyte Training 2017

Jan Hanson & Cheri Payne

On Sunday, November 26, five fourth-graders were consecrated as acolytes: Rebecca Davis, Paul Ellis, Ksena Eve Jenkins, Josiah Suhr and Vianne Williams. The consecration was the culmination of nine weeks of training and practice.

Learning how to light and extinguish the altar candles was the most important (and most fun) aspect of the training, but there was much, much more to learn! In our classroom training, we learned all about what worship means, the rituals and liturgy of worship, the various styles of worship in our and other denominations, the names for the various areas of the house of worship, the Christian year and seasons, and the sacraments and symbols of our faith. We focused on the ways in which acolytes are a part of the experience for worshipers in our church.

In our practice session, we learned how to handle the candle lighters, how to assist with the offering and communion, and all the steps involved in Sunday morning worship. We were blessed to have Pastor Ken with us for the practice session, where he led us in a special communion experience after the practice was over.

Our five new acolytes are now ready to carry the light of Christ into the world!

Youth News!

Scott Wilmoth - Youth Director

Greetings,

We had a very eventful month of November. We started by showing a movie called "Screenagers" which is about how much screen time youth have today, and how parents can help leverage that time to help their relationships grow. Thank you Jeremy Davis and Pastor Karin for making that screening possible. We had a great turnout! We did a program on being thankful followed by our annual Thanksgiving potluck. We had such a good time being in fellowship together around the table with youth, parents, and even some alumni came back to join us. It was a great night! To finish the month the youth helped decorate the church for Christmas, followed by our annual Advent Festival.

Our Bible study classes have been going really well! Our junior high youth still continue to study the story of Joseph, and our senior high youth still continue to study the sermon on the mount. Thank you to Sue Conklin, Sahra Tanikawa, Dave Rhodes, Greg Mulligan, Cathy Standiford, and Jeremy Davis for helping with these Bible study classes. Your help is greatly appreciated!

Our confirmation class is going well, too. We have another group of incredible youth that ask insightful questions and have fun at the same time. Each youth has now selected a confirmation mentor to help them grow in their faith, and we've had two meetings already with the youth and their mentors. Thank you Sunnie Suhr, Jack Murrieta, Terri Rhodes, Kim Wilmoth, Dave Rhodes, Keith Kuntz, and Sue Conklin for being mentors and guiding them through the process, and thank you to Courtney Hunter for helping during our classes, too.

In case you haven't heard we have two youth going to Rwanda in February! Stella Fergin and Grace Conklin (along with their mothers Danielle and Sue and Courtney Hunter and Lynda Symonds) will be representing our church as they will meet the orphans in the ZOE program. We are really excited for them, and we can't wait to hear their stories!

We are truly thankful for each of you, and the support and love that you give to this youth ministry! Thanks be to God! Amen!

Blessings,
Scott Wilmoth, Youth Director

Family Ministries

Thank you to all who came to decorate the church and participate in the advent festival. We had a wonderful time decorating, crafting and preparing ourselves for the advent season. Please visit our table on the patio during the Advent season. We have Advent calendars with devotions for all ages, special Advent books for families, candles for your Advent wreaths and more!

REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

Please join us in our church wide advent project. We will be participating in making a reverse advent calendar. A reverse advent calendar works different than a typical calendar because each day you put an item in a basket. The items collected will be given to Foster Families of Orange County. We will be providing basic, household items for families. These items are much needed and are very much welcomed…especially for relatives who are caring for the kids and for the older youth/emancipated young adults! Please stop by the table on the patio to get a basket. Inside the basket is a calendar with suggested daily items. The calendar can also be found on our AUMC website.

Calling all sheep, shepherds, cows, donkey, wise men and angels!

On December 24th at the **9am** service the children will be reenacting the nativity story during the worship service. There are no rehearsals, but please let stop by the table on the patio or email families@aumctustin.org if you would like to participate and we'll have the costumes ready.

All 4th and 5th graders are invited to be readers during the reenactment. Please let contact Kim Wilmoth if you would like to participate.

ZERO GRAVITY will be taking the month of December off. All families are invited to join us for caroling on December 3rd at 5pm.

Zero G will resume on January 7th.

MISSION OUTREACH

The mission of the Mission/Outreach Team is to connect Aldersgate congregants with our neighbors in need, both near and far, by providing opportunities for ministry through our support and strength so that God's presence and unconditional love may be experienced.

Christmas Miracle Offering

Each year our church has the opportunity to support some special causes through the Christmas Miracle Offering. As you prepare for the holidays please consider how you can support this special offering to make Aldersgate and our community even stronger.

The three areas of support this year are:

- Upgrade of Church and Children's Center Facilities – As one of our most important ministries to the community, it's essential that we keep classrooms, bathrooms and play areas in top shape. The Trustees are developing a plan along with the Children's Center Advisory Board to identify which areas will be upgraded and when.
- ZOE – We are now in our fourth year of supporting orphan groups in Rwanda through ZOE. Our first group (Happiness) will soon graduate! And our second group (Light) is starting their second year in the three year program. This organization works with orphans in seven different countries to help them become independent and successful young adults.
- Anti-Human Trafficking efforts—Aldersgate has become an active part of the anti-human trafficking efforts in Orange County. Did you know that Harbor Blvd. in Orange County is the most active place for sex trafficking in the country? Our Abolitionist Group has identified two organizations to support this year—Salvation Army and Orangewood's Lighthouse program.

Aldersgate Children's Center

Come visit the Christmas Miracle Offering Fair in the Fellowship Hall after worship on December 3 to learn more about each of these opportunities. Your contribution to the Christmas Miracle Offering can be made anytime throughout the month of December. Thank you!

ZOE Helping Children Help Themselves

Aldersgate Abolitionists

Manna Bags

Remember that manna bags are available to distribute to those who need assistance. You can pick them up in the Sanctuary or by the Connection Center on Sunday mornings or in the church office on weekdays during office hours.

In addition to sustenance, the bags also contain lists of other places that offer assistance, including a flyer for Sunday Suppers!

These are great to keep in your car for the occasions that you are out and about and may see someone that could benefit from a bag of food.

MISSION OUTREACH

Sunday Supper

December 17 Christmas Party
Volunteers and Gift Card Donations Needed

Collection: December 3 and 10 after services
$20 gift cards
Food: Trader Joe's, Ralph's, Albertsons, Smart and Final, Subway, McDonald's, El Pollo Loco and other ***local*** fast food restaurants.
Retail: Target or Walmart. ***NO department stores or shopping malls.***

VOLUNTEERS: WE NEED YOU! Extra volunteers are needed to serve a big crowd – we expect 250 guests. Jobs include: serving food, plating food, cooking, setting up, decorating, cleaning up, and handing out groceries. If you are interested in volunteering on December 17, please contact the church office, (714) 544-3653. All Sunday Supper congregations are helping at the party, but it is AUMC's evening to provide the meal, so we need extra people to serve so many.

We are scaling back the scope of the Sunday Supper Christmas party this year. We are simply serving dinner and providing gift cards to our guests. There will be no "gift shopping" for families as we have had in the past. ***Please note: we are not advertising the gift cards in advance – it will be a surprise to our guests***.

Our goal with this change is to better serve our *regular* guests and to keep the event safe. Last year, many of our regular guests were overwhelmed by the extra people and did not get gift cards or a meal. The event as staged in the past outgrew the capacity of the St. Paul's campus. We will still have holiday decorations, music, Santa, a great meal, and, of course, the warm spirit of Christian hospitality.

Our Sunday Supper guests are our neighbors: parents who are between jobs, the working poor, seniors on limited income, families, and the homeless. For over seven years, we have offered a weekly healthy meal, groceries and friendship, no questions asked. Christmas is a time to extend extra support with the advent spirit of Emmanuel – God with Us.

Family Promise of Orange County
Building Community, Strengthening Lives

Save the Dates!

Our final Family Promise hosting dates for 2017 are December 3 - December 9. Look for more information on signing up to volunteer in Sunday bulletins, newsletters and e-Connections.

2018 Family Promise Hosting Dates:
Sunday, February 11 through Sunday, February 18 , 2018
Sunday, May 6, through Sunday, May 13, 2018
Sunday, July 15, through Sunday, July 22, 2018
Sunday, December 2, through Sunday, December 9, 2018

The mission of Family Promise is to help homeless and low-income *families* achieve sustainable independence through a community-based response. Thank you for your commitment to this important outreach!

Opportunities and Events

Our **Thank Goodness It's Wednesday** night dinners are every 1st and 3rd Wednesday at 6pm in the Fellowship Hall. If you are interested in providing a meal on a Wednesday, please contact the church office. All your expenses will be reimbursed.

Please join us for great food and fellowship! $5 per person and $15 maximum per family.

Sharing Our Stories (SOS)

We had a wonderful time learning all about Ruth McQuerry and her many adventures growing up and as a military wife married to Wayne.

Did you know?

-Missouri is really pronounced Mizzura?

-That Ruth and a friend learned to ballroom dance in order to meet…men?

-That Ruth was a home economics teacher?

-That Ruth lived in Florida, Virginia, Kansas, Indiana, and Michigan, before settling in California?

-I won't mention the Hobo party she and Wayne went to and ended up escaping through an open…window.

Wow! A rich life lovingly shared.

Please join us in January for our speaker: H Hanson

Fireside Room at 10am.

Pat Downie, Jeannie Wright, Sue Bishop

CHILDREN'S CENTER NEWS!

Children's Center ~ Christmas Program

Thursday, December 14th at 6:30pm in the Fellowship Hall. Come one; come all for this wonderful kick off celebration of the Christmas Season! Our children enrolled at the Children's Center will sing seasonal songs and our School Age Children will bless us with their version of the Christmas Story. This year promises to be another memorable evening!

The Children's Center wishes you Christmas Blessings!

Christmas Card Shutter

Would you like to send everyone at Aldersgate a Christmas card? It's easy to do! Just bring your Christmas card to AUMC and hang it from on the shutter in the narthex for everyone to enjoy. This allows you to wish all who come through our doors a "Merry Christmas" without having to buy, address and stamp individual cards.

Opportunities and Events

Hope Circle will meet one week earlier in December on Wednesday the 13th at 9:30 am in the Fireside Room. We will have a gift exchange and talk about the family we are sponsoring for Christmas at Mary's Shelter.

Elizabeth Circle

The December 4 meeting of Elizabeth Circle will be held at 6:45pm in at the home of Judy Dickinson. Please bring a white elephant gift for our annual gift exchange. Always a good time!

CHRISTMAS CAROLING

Our annual Christmas Caroling to our homebound members will take place on Sunday, December 3 at 5pm.

We will gather in the Fellowship Hall to decide where each group will be singing. Once each group has finished caroling, they are invited to come back to the church for hot cocoa and cookies.

We hope you can join us on December 3 as we share some Christmas music and joy with our members!

WHY THIS JUBILEE?

An Advent Study

During the season of Advent, we will be focusing on the theme of *"Rejoice: Something to Sing About."* Each week in worship we will look at a different character of the Christmas Story and a song to help us reflect on that character. We will also use the book, "Why This Jubilee?" for daily reflections and prayers. The book can be picked up on Sunday mornings or in the office. And beginning Dec. 3 we will have a weekly discussion group each Sunday after worship from 10-10:45 in the Fireside Room. Pastor Karin will lead this group, which will be an opportunity to share with one another what we found inspiring in the message and book. We look forward to seeing you on Sunday mornings as we sing the songs of Advent and Christmas together!

Joyful Noise Children's Choir

The Children's Choir practices on Sundays after worship in the Choir Room. The choir is open to all children from Kindergarten through 5th grade. Come make a Joyful Noise unto the Lord!

Psalm 96 Youth Choir

The Youth Choir is meeting in the Choir Room on Sundays from 4:30pm to 5:30pm, before Youth Group. The choir is open to all youth from 6th through 12th grade. Yes, "Sing to the Lord a new song…"

Dec. 31- New Year's Eve

New Year's Eve is on Sunday this year! We will begin the day with worship at 9:00 AM in the Sanctuary. Our worship will include some time to prepare our hearts and minds for the coming year. Following worship, we will have a *brunch potluck in the Fellowship Hall*. This is your opportunity to share that holiday dish (or leftovers) with your fellow church members. After all, pumpkin pie is good for breakfast! So let us look toward the New Year together as we gather to worship and break bread with one another!

ALDERSGATE
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Sunday Schedule

* Worship at 9am *
* Childcare provided for infants & toddlers starting at 8:30am
Christian Education for children offered after Children's Moment in worship *

Christmas Poinsettia Order Form

In celebration of Christmas, the Sanctuary will be decorated with Poinsettias.
If you would like to have a plant designed in memory of a loved one or in honor of a friend, please indicate below.
The cost of each plant is $10.00.

Please return this order form to the church office by **Monday, December 18, 2017**
or place in the offering plate by **Sunday, December 17**.

Order for Poinsettias

I would like to order _____ Poinsettias for Christmas.

Enclosed is my check for $ _____ payable to AUMC.

Donated by _____ *(Please print your name clearly.)*

(Please check below, as appropriate, and *print names clearly*.)

☐ In Memory of _____

☐ In Honor of _____

Please collect your plants after the 10pm Christmas Eve Service or after worship on Sunday, December 31.