

# The Report of the 2011 Aldersgate Joel II Committee

## Introduction

*“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Romans 12:2*

As part of the Aldersgate UMC discernment process, a cross section of 41 members of the church began meeting in March 2011, as the Second Joel Committee (Joel II). The committee met seven times, culminating in a final meeting on May 3, 2011 that identified key initiatives to undertake in furtherance of Aldersgate’s mission to bring the Kingdom of God to our community.

*“For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members of one another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.” Romans 12:4-8*

Joel II set out to harness the various gifts of the body of Christ at Aldersgate and build upon the work and recommendations of the 2006 report of the original Joel Committee. Joel II also reviewed the results of an extensive survey completed in 2009-2010 into the demographics, values and concerns of the members of our congregation and considered immediate, mid-range, and long-range goals for the church.

## Joel Committee

The 2011 Joel II Committee, chartered by our Church Council, was formed in the spirit of the Old Testament prophet Joel, to create a shared vision for the future efforts of the Aldersgate Church community.

*“Then afterwards I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.” Joel 12:28*

The purpose of the Joel II Committee was to prayerfully consider and discern God’s will for our church, and how to put God’s will into action.

## Joel II Committee Membership

The membership of the 2011 Aldersgate Joel II Committee was approved by the Church Council, and included:

Cindy Amos	Paul Amos	Bill Armstrong	Carla Bouma	Cheryl Bratten	Judy Cook
Tom Cook	Bob Crandall	Mike Crane	Cory Culver	Kristen Culver	Tom Devine
Andrew DiAntonio	Heather Evans	Libby Hillenbrand	Andrew Hohman	Amy Hurd	Bob Hurd
Dick Lacquement	Steve Larkin	Ed Little	Jason Micheli	Nancy Murray	Jim O’Farrell
Christy O’Farrell	Dennis Perry	Mark Phillips	Julie Pfister	Shirley Pitts	Molly Prater
Will Prater	Gail Richmond	Jayn Rife	Jay Steadman	Judy Stevens	Pat Travis
Stuart Travis	Dave Wennergren	Arnie Westphal	Dottie Worden	Neil Worden	

The Joel II Committee Report is presented to the Church Council to identify critical initiatives for Aldersgate in the next 5 years.

## Our Mission and Guiding Values

*“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I tell you? I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it because it had been well built.” Luke 6:46-48*

Aldersgate understands that we must witness to the local community and the world our faith in Jesus Christ by our actions. Over the last several years, Aldersgate has embraced the *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* identified by Bishop Robert Schnaze: Radical Hospitality, Extravagant Generosity, Intentional Faith Development, Passionate Worship, and Risk-Taking Mission and Service.

*[B]e doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. . . . [T]hose who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.” James 1:22, 25*

### The Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations

Christ calls the church to lead the world—to love God and neighbor, and to share in glorifying and celebrating God. We answer this call by gathering people into large and small Christian communities that involve the five practices as described by Bishop Schnaze on his website [fivepractices.org](http://fivepractices.org):

**Radical Hospitality** – Hospitality involves “an active desire to invite, welcome, receive, and care for those who are strangers so that they find a spiritual home and discover for themselves the unending richness of life in Christ. *Radical* describes that which is drastically different from ordinary practices, outside the normal, that which exceeds expectations and goes the second mile.”

**Extravagant Generosity** – Generosity “describes the Christian’s unselfish willingness to give in order to make a positive difference for the purposes of Christ. Congregations that practice *Extravagant Generosity* provide ministries that address our spiritual need to give in ways that exceed all expectations and extend to unexpected measures. Fruitful congregations thrive because of extraordinary sharing, willing sacrifice, and joyous giving out of love for God and neighbor.”

**Intentional Faith Development** – “*Faith Development* refers to all the ministries that help us grow in faith outside of weekly worship, such as bible studies, Sunday School classes, support groups, and prayer teams. Congregations who practice Intentional Faith Development offer opportunities for people to learn in community for people at all stages of faith. They offer ministries that help people grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of God. *Intentional* refers to deliberate effort, purposeful action, and high priority.”

**Passionate Worship** – “*Worship* describes those times we gather deliberately seeking to encounter God in Christ. God uses worship to transform lives, heal wounded souls, renew hope, shape decisions, provoke change, inspire compassion, and bind people to one another. The word *passionate* expresses an intense desire, an ardent spirit, strong feelings, and the sense of heightened importance. Congregations who practice Passionate Worship offer their utmost and highest; they expect worship to be the most important hour of the week.

**Risk-Taking Mission and Service** – “*Mission and Service* refers to the projects, efforts, and work people do to make a positive difference in the lives of others for the purposes of Christ, whether or not they will ever become part of the community of faith. *Risk-taking* pushes us out of our comfort zone, stretching us beyond service to people we already know, exposing us to people, situations, and needs that we would never ordinarily encounter apart from our deliberate intention to serve Christ. Congregations who practice Risk-taking Mission and Service offer endless opportunities for people to make a difference in lives of others through service projects, volunteer opportunities, and mission initiatives.”

Aldersgate has aligned its ministries with the Five Practices, in order to emphasize our commitment to re-orienting our approach to bringing the Kingdom of God to our community.

## **Joel II Committee Recommendations**

### **Facilities Recommendations**

The first recommendations of the Joel II Committee, relate to the development of a comprehensive multi-media investment strategy and plan in order to enhance the ministry of the church, particularly Passionate Worship, Radical Hospitality, Risk Taking Mission and Service, and Intentional Faith Development. The plan will address the following:

- A comprehensive Audio Visual Technology plan for the entire facility including screens in the Sanctuary as well as other high visibility areas, and the ability to receive remotely transmitted programs, simulcasts, and video links.
- Internet access throughout the entire church facility
- Audio and viewing capabilities to a nursing/cry room as well as live, streaming video of services and other special events
- Multi-media presentations on our web site as well as for use on video screens throughout the facility

These improvements will enhance our ability to:

- Allow us to augment our own worship services with inspirational video and musical performances;
- Strengthen Aldersgate’s ownership of its mission programs by allowing real-time interaction between the congregation and those members working on mission trips;
- Deepen the membership’s understanding of what our mission work involves and the impact it has around the world.
- Make our worship services accessible to those involved in other church activities;
- Draw in members of the surrounding community who would otherwise not come to Aldersgate for religious services;
- Participate in simulcast worship programs involving nationally-known speakers, such as women’s worship programs;
- Inform the community at large of the work we do, and inspire others to join our efforts.

These proposals build on the earlier recommendations of Joel I. Many of the original recommendations have been accomplished; improved signs inside and outside of the church, new sanctuary lighting and sound system. The church was also blessed by an extravagantly generous

gift to renovate the original youth wing into the new Guback Center. Remaining facility goals from Joel I include:

- Renovate Founders Hall to meet the needs of the congregation and our expanding ministry.
- Create an enclosed atrium from the existing courtyard between the Guback Center and a renovated Founders Hall that could be used as an additional gathering space for the church.
- Create a multi-use garden area on the Collingwood side of the property and include additional landscaping

**Radical  
Hospitality**

*"[L]ove one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. . . . Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers." Romans 12: 10-13*

*"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." Hebrews 13:2*

Aldersgate established the Radical Hospitality Ministry in 2009. The church has undertaken several initiatives to make visitors and new members feel welcome (such as systematically following up with visitors to our worship services), and the Joel II Committee discussed potential means of making Aldersgate a welcoming church community.

- Work to create a church-wide environment where every member of the church, not just the staff, clergy, or a committee feels empowered to continually practice Radical Hospitality.
- Support all individual, group, and church-wide efforts and events to welcome visitors and new members.

**Extravagant  
Generosity**

*"Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, "How are we robbing you?" In your tithes and offerings! You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me—the whole nation of you! Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing." Malachi 3: 8-10*

- Continue to work to make Aldersgate debt-free
- Provide an opportunity for a congregational "Tithing Challenge," in which Aldersgate households will be encouraged to pick at least one month in the forthcoming year to practice true tithing. With different households picking different months to tithe, in every month there will be some families in the church committing 10% of their income to the church.
- Work to increase household giving by an average of 1.5% of household income over a three year period. For example, if a family gives 2.5% of household income to the church, our goal would be to raise that level to 4.0% of household income by the end of the third year.
- While the ultimate goal is true tithing (10% of income) year-round for all families, setting intermediate goals is a more attainable way to encourage regular, increased giving by every household in the congregation.

**Intentional  
Faith  
Development**

*"Now reason is the mind that with sound logic prefers the life of wisdom. Wisdom, next, is the knowledge of divine and human matters and the causes of these. This, in turn, is education in the law, by which we learn divine matters reverently and human affairs to our advantage." 4 Maccabees 1.*

*"It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me." John 6: 45:*

Aldersgate should provide:

- A stepped core curriculum (100-400 level) of classes for adults that will be given on a rotating basis (Carryover recommendation from Joel I)
- Classes applying Christian values to real world concerns that will be given on a rotating basis, such as Women's Studies and Christian Budgeting, as well as continuation of the Scholar-In-Residence Program implemented pursuant to Joel I;
- Training for all volunteers, Sunday school teachers, and small group leaders
- A rotating schedule for the class leaders and class rooms to ensure effective leadership and space
- Foster both large and small group experiences: large group retreats/picnics to involve the whole church communally and small group studies/speaking engagements to allow in depth discussion and the opportunity to form strong relationships with other church members.

**Passionate  
Worship**

*"Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Revelation 19: 10*  
*"Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."'*  
Luke 4: 8

*"Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises." Psalm 98: 4*

The facilities recommendations set forth above would greatly help Aldersgate enhance and expand its worship services to include:

- Allowing us to augment our worship services with inspirational video and musical performances;
- Strengthening Aldersgate's ownership of its mission programs by allowing real-time interaction between the congregation and those members working on mission trips;
- Making our worship services accessible to those involved in other church activities;
- Participating in simulcast worship programs involving nationally-known speakers, such as women's worship programs;

We have already implemented the Joel I recommendations to add a fourth service, the Saturday evening service, which blends ancient worship practices with modern music and weekly communion.

**Risk-Taking  
Mission and  
Service**

*"Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the world; for I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you welcomed me; I was naked, and you gave me clothing; I was sick, and you took care of me; I was in prison, and you visited me . . . Truly I tell you, that just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Matthew 25: 34-40*

Aldersgate should:

- Focus our mission activities on a few causes in each sphere (local, domestic & international) in order to maximize our impact, deepen our relationships, and allow the entire congregation to participate, directly or indirectly
- Create and support a new domestic mission at Ft. Apache, AZ
- Formalize the relationship between Aldersgate and Rising Hope to provide more hands-on participation for multiple age groups
- Make Aldersgate a destination for other mission groups to provide support to the Route 1 corridor and Rising Hope
- Create and support a local mission with Ft. Belvoir and the Wounded Warrior program. This could make Aldersgate a destination for groups coming to the area to work with the Wounded Warriors
- Establish a program for those who are unable to “do” mission work to provide scholarships for those who “can.”

## **Conclusion**

The proposals from the Joel II Committee flow from the following two biblical decrees:

*“[W]hat does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”* Micah 6: 8

*“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength . . . Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.”* Mark 12: 28-33

If Aldersgate adheres to the fundamental guidance contained in these two simple, but profound passages, as the church refines and implements its plans, the Joel II Committee is confident that Aldersgate can fulfill its mission to be “the light of the world . . . letting [our] light shine before others, so that they may see [our] good works and give glory to [our] Father in heaven.” Matthew 5: 14-16