

2022 State of the Church Report

Aldersgate United Methodist Church

As we wrap up the 2022 year, AUMC has fully reopened and continues to adjust to the impacts of post COVID-19 world in which we are thriving and growing.

Aldersgate's mission and core values remain "to live and share God's unconditional love with everyone, make disciples, and serve others". In addition, we reaffirmed our five core values, while bringing them to life by articulating what they mean for us as a congregation. They read:

- **Joyous:** Embrace fully the joy of the Lord: it pours out from us and strengthens us as we live, serve, give, worship, and praise in the name of Christ. We embrace fully the joy of the Lord; it pours out from us and strengthens us as we live, serve, give, worship and praise in the name of Christ. (Nehemiah 8:10)
- **Risk-taking:** Courageously step out in faith to pursue the vision that God has given us for Aldersgate and the community. We courageously step out in faith to pursue the vision that God has given us for Aldersgate and the community. (1 Corinthians 16:13-14)
- **Welcoming:** Show hospitality at all times to all people and welcome them with open arms as we serve God together. We show hospitality at all times to all people and welcome them with open arms as we serve God together. (Mark 9:37)
- **Generous:** Selflessly give our time, talents, money, and resources to bring about God's kingdom on earth with gratitude for all God has so generously given us. We selflessly give our time, talents, money, and resources to bring about God's kingdom on earth with gratitude for all God has so generously given us. (2 Corinthians 9:11)
- **Faithful:** Dedicated to Great Commission to "go and make disciples by growing our faith and our relationships as we love God and others. We are dedicated to the Great Commission to "go and make disciples" by growing our faith and our relationships as we love God and others. (Hebrews 10:23)

To live out these values in today's environment, AUMC continues to capitalize on the momentum from last year's development of our Strategic Plan. We will focus on the following priorities:

- **Financial Health/Wise Stewardship**
- **Innovative Ministries/Fresh Expressions**
- **Missional Outreach/Social Justice**
- **Digital Ministry**

Our strategic planning had seen all Discipleship Pathway and Infrastructure teams organize with many members joining each team to "lead" together. These teams are Engage, Connect, Equip, Send, Financial Health, Trustees, Staff-Parish Relations, and Digital Ministries. These ministries have completed their first Ministry Action Plans (MAP) to specify goals for the coming year that connect directly to AUMC's mission of sharing God's unconditional love with every day, with everyone, everywhere.

Below is a summary of some of the results of God's work within AUMC.

Engage. The Engage team had a productive and exciting year as COVID loosened its grip on our community. We hosted and collaborated on six main events and a number of Fresh Expression events, an exciting concept of forming Christian communities where they don't yet exist. All were well received and well attended. As a team, we had the opportunity to see God's work in all of us as we served as His hands and His feet. We look forward to the coming year and have many exciting ideas to continue our mission of engaging with our community.

Connect. Since COVID restrictions have been lifted, the Connect Team has been busy in 2022. Sunday worship attendance is trending upward, currently 150 worshipers on average. More people are volunteering to serve as ushers and communion servers. Volunteers are using Signup Genius and Realm to sign up. Also, some people volunteer on the spot if we are short on volunteers at a particular service. We look forward to welcoming 1,000 worshipers to the Christmas Eve services. We have had multiple retirement celebrations as well as funerals this year. People have expressed gratitude for the in-person events. We have had three "Meet the Pastors" events this year. More and more people are attending these events. Coffee Service has returned to Fellowship Time, which likely has contributed to increased attendance. Fellowship Time is where you can find out about the life of the Church plus grab a snack and coffee. We are still serving prepackaged snacks. The number of new visitors to Aldersgate has increased. New visitors love the welcome bags. The welcome bags consist of a large, green shopping bag with the Aldersgate logo, mug or water bottle, and candy. The Connect Team has started making follow up calls to visitors to let them know about upcoming events at the Church.

Equip. The mission of the Equip Group is to Courageously live and share God's unconditional love every day, with everyone, everywhere by equipping all as disciples. 2022 has been a year of coming back together. Adult Sunday School classes began meeting in person again. Some small groups, such as Christian Meditation, met in person and added new members. Other in-home groups continued meeting by Zoom. New offerings in 2022 included a House Church experience led by Pastor Jon Poarch. After piloting the program with a group of 12 congregants who met for 4 weeks, Pastor Jon is offering this unique experience to a new group of members, and he is planning a training event with a House Church trainer. There was also a short-term Spiritual Gifts class offered, as well as a well-attended Women's Prayer event, led by certified lay speaker Lee Anne Orndorff. One of the most exciting new additions to Equip Ministries is a new member class, which is being led by a retired Methodist pastor who is new to the congregations herself. The regional Emmaus retreat program started up again after a hiatus during the pandemic. Both men and women are being recruited to attend upcoming Emmaus weekends. The Emmaus Men's Alumni group earned kudos for meeting consistently throughout the pandemic and into 2022. The Equip Ministries leaders have completed a Ministry Action Plan, which includes a plan to survey congregants in order to ascertain their specific interests in small group topics. In that way, we hope to continue to increase our numbers of Equipped Disciples!

Send. As things are opening post COVID, the SEND team has re-evaluated our goals and developed a Ministry Action Plan to continue our ongoing support for various local organizations. We continue to look for ways to help the church and local communities, and also look for opportunities to serve globally. AUMC continues to support our local missions including:

Phoenix Rising - Once a month, roughly 10 volunteers make 160 bagged lunches and deliver them to hungry people along the Rt.1 corridor.

Mondloch House - Each week, approximately 3 volunteers shop for and deliver a specific list of fruits and vegetables to the Mondloch House which serves chronically homeless and those in need.

Ventures In Community (VIC) - December through March 9th, Aldersgate supports the VIC Hypothermia Shelter by providing dinners to the guests of the shelter each Tuesday and breakfast the next morning - roughly 360 meals through the season. We also donate cold weather gear. Pre-covid we have also provided volunteers who stay overnight to assist.

Rising Hope - We currently support several programs at Rising Hope and we look forward to developing additional projects with them in the very near future.

- * Food Pantry - We continue to collect and deliver several tons of food per year to the Food Pantry at Rising Hope. We also collect and donate diapers and other baby items throughout the year.

- * Over 400 cans of YAMS and \$1,000 worth of gift cards donated for Thanksgiving

- * Sunday Luncheon at Rising Hope - On the second Sunday of each month, Aldersgate provides and serves lunch to the worshippers at Rising Hope and all others who come in for lunch.

Mission Trips - In June 2022, several folks from Aldersgate went with a volunteer team from Annandale UMC to White Mountain Apache Reservation in Arizona. We hope to have a mission trip in 2023 to Honduras and possibly a local mission trip with youth to Jeremiah Project or some local area.

Go Corps - We gave a one-time gift of \$3,000 and monthly support of \$300 to Go Corps - an organization that supports young people to find their place in God's global work through two year mission placements.

Flood Buckets - Aldersgate members will contribute to and purchase supplies for about 14 Flood Buckets/Cleaning kits to be donated to the ???District storehouse??? Each bucket costs around \$75-100.

Woodlawn Food Pantry distribution - Volunteers from AUMC help with food packing and distribution. Also made a one-time \$1,200 donation.

Alternative Giving - For roughly 20 years we have continued to bring Alternative Giving options to Aldersgate during the Christmas season. Folks can purchase items such as food, livestock, scholarships and equipment on behalf of a loved one and the gift will benefit a needy person or family in Cambodia and Vietnam.

Fort Hunt Elementary Food and School Supplies Drive - In May our mission focus is to collect food for food insecure families from Fort Hunt Elementary School. Before school begins each year Aldersgate helps supply school supplies to needy children in the Fort Hunt School Community

Direct \$\$\$ donations

\$20,000 to AUMC towards Apportionments

\$1,000 to help Ukraine through Lutheran Social Services

\$3,000 to Go Corps - One time gift

\$3,600 yearly support for Go Corps

\$1,200 Woodlawn Food Pantry *** (donation in the works)

\$10,000 NTFFH fund

\$1,000 Rising Hope Food Pantry Thanksgiving grocery gift cards

Youth ministry. 2022 was both a great year and challenging year for our Youth Ministry. We saw 17 Confirmands join the church on Pentecost with two of them being baptized. For the 2022-2023 school year, we have 18 Confirmands. These groups have done retreats, field trips to the Museum of the Bible, learned church history, and distinct Methodist theology. Molly Johnson has faithfully taught this group and has invited others to share in the teaching on music, the sacraments, and other rich topics. We also saw more normalcy return for our youth as we experienced more normalcy overall for our church. Some highlights included a great kickoff event that saw about 20 youth present, and we had our largest gathering of youth since the pandemic during our Harvest Escape Room with 32 kids. We also have two youth who have been active with the Journeys band this year. Our Youth Sunday School resumed October 30 after its hiatus during the pandemic. While we celebrate all this great ministry, as of this report, we are still seeking to fill the Student Ministries Director role. Our team has adapted well by trying to share the load and many parents have gone above and beyond to support the ministry. While this time of transition has been challenging, we continue to see God inspire our students to courageously live God's unconditional love.

Young Adults ministries. The position for a Young Adult representative was established July 2022. Since then, there have been a couple of events: a brewery meet-up over the summer at Port City brewery and an Oktoberfest lunch in October. Attendance in the young adult events has decreased since its inception, and a survey will be going out in November to this age group to help determine ways in which we can improve interest and attendance.

Children's ministry. Children's Ministry continued in full swing this year. Our Sunday school program offered single grade classes from ages 3 years old through 5th grade. Enrollment in 2021 grew from 55 to 70 students, and the program had 15 volunteer teachers. Fall 2022 began with 45 students but quickly crept up to 60 by Halloween. As more families discover and join Aldersgate, the numbers will continue to increase. The Nursery added 2 more staff members to ensure enough coverage for our new families. A new bookcase and new activity bags were added to the church vestibule to offer more choices for children to keep busy while attending worship. The acolyte program continues to be offered at both services with an incentive for confirmation students to serve as acolytes as part of their Faith Extender challenge.

Another service opportunity was our Summer Book Drive. We collected over 600 books which were donated to the Hybla Valley Community Center. Outreach events are also a priority to children's ministry. Crafty Kids had 18 kids at their first session. Crafts, games, and food are always a winner with young kids! We collaborated with the Day School for our Preschool Valentine Party and community Trunk or Treat – always a favorite for families! Other outreach activities included Easter Sunday crafts and eggs, Summer Water Slide Party, Picnic at the Playground, Pizza and Games, and our Christmas Pageant.

AUMC Day School. The Weekday Education Program at Aldersgate, better known as Aldersgate Day School, provides classes for children ages one through kindergarten. This program is offered as an outreach ministry of the church. The school was founded in 1962. The Day School was excited to start the 2022/23 school year on September 7th. Currently there are 151 children enrolled with 32 staff. Staff members are chosen for their ability to relate to small children as well as for their training and experience. The major program goals include but are not limited to providing a positive supplement to

home environments, so children grow in self-awareness and discover that group experiences are gratifying. Our school environment shows that children can find and accept love and care from adults other than parents, while they mature in awareness of God and achieve a sense of belonging in the church environment. ADS provides a rich program that affirms each child's self-worth, develops unique skills and talents, and aids in social development. We offer a happy and rewarding preschool experience that prepares children for success in kindergarten.

God is Good and continues to bless Aldersgate United Methodist Church!!!!