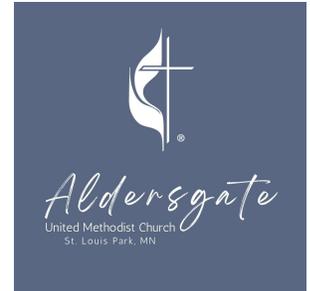


Hello Beloved Community of Aldersgate Church!

This letter usually comes out in October or November, but because we were in some relative uncertainty at that time, we decided to wait until we had more and better information to reach out to you all about giving in 2023. Thank you for continuing to give in this time!



As we hope you know by now, we have decided to move to having a half-time pastor and I will be receiving a new appointment in July. Both of these decisions were difficult to make, but we believe are the right ones. A letter explaining this in greater detail was mailed and emailed out in early January. If you would like a copy of that, let us know. Clarity on our pastoral status and an all-church meeting (which was held on January 29th) were the main reasons we decided to wait to reach out about your estimated 2023 giving. Also, if you would like a copy of our annual report, that is available on the main page of our website or we can mail one to you.

It has been a wild year at Aldersgate! As you know, we closed on the building sale on the Wooddale Ave property, we relocated as renters at Spirit of Christ Lutheran, and we are now settling in there. While it was hard to say goodbye to the building we loved so much, renting has simplified a lot for us, both financially and practically. We've also found the sanctuary works well for us, and we have some new friends in the Spirit of Christ community. We will be doing a joint Ash Wednesday service with them on February 22 (soon!) and Lenten services with them and Vista Lutheran beginning on March 1. We also worked together on our annual collection for the St. Louis Park Bird Feeder and anticipate doing so for the STEP Minnesota Foodshare Drive.

As we move forward, we will likely hear about our new pastor in the next couple of months. As we do so, our Church Council will be working from the Emerging Vision Document created by our vision team last year to begin putting that plan into action. If you would like to be a part of that work, let us know! If you would like a copy of the Emerging Vision Document, that is also available on the website and from the office.

If you have been uncertain about your relationship to and connection with Aldersgate UMC through all this transition, that is more than understandable. But I want to encourage you to stick with it. We are beginning to settle into our new space, we have a plan in the emerging vision document we will be working to implement, and with a new pastor will come a fresh vibe, new ideas, and renewed energy. And in all of that, remember that the Church is not a building, a vision plan, or even a pastor; it's you. You are the Church! These are your people!

So attached with this letter is an estimate of giving card (pledge card) for the remainder of 2023. On the other side of it, there is a place for you to express where you're at with your relationship to Aldersgate and to let us know if you'd like to be contacted about questions, input, thoughts, or concerns. This part is merely about where you're at right now. It is not about where you may or may not be in July or October or in 2024. We added this part of the card this year for two reasons:

1. We thought it would be good for you to reflect on for yourself. In destabilizing times, it can be easy to simply react. So if you haven't already, take some time to reflect on and pray about where you are, and what you feel God is calling you to do.
2. In all of the destabilization of COVID and the move, it's been difficult for us to know where people are at in their relationship to Aldersgate. We have tried to keep an open line of communication and reached out through phone calls, mail, and email, but it's simply been difficult to stay connected and get re-connected since COVID. So this information will be helpful to us as well.

So take some time, pray about all of this, and then please submit your card by March 12th. Lent is actually a really great time to slow down and reflect on this! If you determine that you simply cannot give financially right now for whatever reason, knowing that is helpful to us, as is knowing where you're at right now in relation to Aldersgate. It's been a rough couple of years, but we believe that calmer, more stable waters are ahead. And our hope is to hold this beautiful community together the best we can, because when it's all said and done, it's about the people.

God bless you all and please reach out if you have questions, thoughts, input, or concerns. God is with us, God is leading us, and most of all, God is loving us along the way.

Pastor Paul

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