

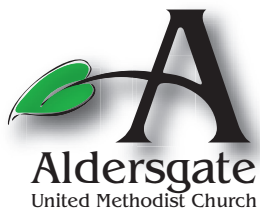
My Aldersgate Legacy

At the ripe old age of 12, I was the youngest charter member at Aldersgate. The rest of my family was there, so I was there – against my will, but there. But as I grew, this church began to work its magic on me. Where else would I have been encouraged to play the piano for services while still in 7th grade? Where else would I have had so many adult friends who listened to, laughed with, and encouraged me during the teen years when I was trying to decide if my parents were really on my side?

Aldersgate helped me stand on my own feet, trust my own convictions, try new things. Aldersgate helped me learn leadership skills. And Aldersgate is still helping me learn to respect all the people I encounter, no matter how different they may be from me.

Dear God, thank you for the gift Aldersgate has been and continues to be in our lives. May we live our lives in ways pleasing to you, so that the legacy of those who came before us can continue. Amen.

Marj Wiltse



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Gifts That Make Us Who We Are

Reflections on legacy from members, former members and friends of

Aldersgate United Methodist Church
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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Assurance of God's Love

I was brought up in the church. My mom was a Sunday school superintendent for a long time and my father a Sunday school teacher. I always attended Sunday school and youth group. When I was old enough I would take the bus to Alma to stay with cousins. It was in going to church with them that I learned to ask Jesus to come into my life.

I have had many times since then that I have been assured God was taking care of me. For example, when I did not have quite enough money to pay a bill, I would receive a call to play organ for a church, and the pay would be the exact amount I needed to pay the bill. While it is hard to understand how God can keep track of all of creation and know exactly what each of us needs, it is clear to me that somehow God does know and love all of us.

Eileen Van Horn



Learning from My Parents and Grandparents

The community that raised me started with my parents. My parents taught me the love of our Lord, ways to use the gifts God gave us, reaching out and showing love, respect and kindness to others.

I remember going to church when I was as young as 5. My dad taught Sunday school every week. My Mom also was involved. I loved the Bible stories and always looked forward to singing "Jesus Loves Me" in Sunday School. We went to church as a family. My parents showed me by their everyday life that they loved God and wanted us to love everyone as God loves us.

There were others in my community that taught me the love of God. Thank you Great Grandma Earhart, Grandma Van Dyke and my parents, Luella and Clark Rinkevicz. I learned by your examples and I love my Lord with all my heart.

Let your hope make you glad. Be patient in time of trouble and never stop praying. Romans 12:12

Sheila Bennett

The generosity of spirit of those who have shaped us is like fertile soil: its richness comes from many years of planting, growth and harvest, then giving back to the earth and making possible new growth. Here, we explore what this legacy of generosity has meant to our lives.



The Aldersgate Welcome

The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. Leviticus 19:34

Over the years, we have traveled extensively to many different places in the world. So we are quite familiar with how it feels to be a stranger. Through these experiences, we have met some amazing people that made us feel like family and a part of their community.

We hope part of our legacy can be to provide the same welcoming feeling to others who are new to AUMC or Grand Rapids. We hope that through our interactions with newcomers to our church or the community at large we can set a Christ-like example of inclusiveness and hospitality.

By acting in this way, we hope they will feel God's love and reflect their experience to others.

Carrie and Matt Albin

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Authentic Aldersgate

When I came to Aldersgate as pastor in 1992, I came from a church with many wonderful people and others who could not accept their female pastor. I had not felt free to be myself. I soon discovered at Aldersgate that, while my leadership was respected, it was clear that others offered their gifts to the program and outreach of the church. It wasn't all up to me.

I came to know quite quickly that I was accepted and encouraged to be my authentic self. This is what Aldersgate offers: a true church family where each person is free to be a growing person of faith who finds love and encouragement from other members of the family.

Returning to Aldersgate with John Ross in 2011, after we had both retired, we discovered that the same continued to be true. We were encouraged to enter into the life of the church, sharing our gifts along with the gifts of others. Together, this makes the church an authentic witness to love, the outreach of justice, and a welcome to all who come.

It is a joy to watch the church family surround new people when they come to visit, offering a welcoming church home. An old Marlo Thomas song is "Free To Be You and Me." That's the Aldersgate I know and love.

Ellen A. Brubaker, Aldersgate pastor 1992-2001

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Spiritual DNA

One of my brothers recently had his DNA tested to determine where our family might have originated. While the results were interesting, it made me pause and ask myself, "What difference does it really make?" It reminds me of the old nature v. nurture argument: Which is a more important determinant of one's personality, heredity (nature) or one's environment (nurture)?

When I look at the forces that have shaped my life, my Aldersgate friends are among the most influential. There were persons who saw leadership potential in me before I did and guided me as I gained confidence. There were, and are, those who live their faith and by example challenge me to grow and live mine. There have been innumerable examples of generosity that encourage me to do likewise.

"I am who I am because of who we all are" gives me hope that my life may in turn influence another for good. Heredity may give us a base personality, but the influence we have on each other shapes us all into the unique persons we are. May the best parts of us rub off on others!

O God, you have created us in your image and your DNA is part of ours. May we build on that inherited base of goodness and help others reach their potential.

Dave Wiltse

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schools and community services, community empowerment, sustainability, wildlife and natural resource conservation, all right now. Legacy is... hope for the future.

Linda Myers

Back at Aldersgate

I grew up in the Aldersgate community of faith. Jeanne Hendrikse's mother (Lorraine Christians) was my Vacation Bible School teacher. Lyn Jameyson and Rick Wiltse's grandpa (Bill Ranck) sent recommendation letters when requested. I babysat for church members, sang in three choirs, attended Sunday School, and learned about dating issues at youth group.

Summers, I now return to Aldersgate. I assist with Vacation Bible School and attend Sunday School and book discussions when possible. I try to support Aldersgate missions and do some grandma sitting. The parallels surprise me.

I remember the "saints who have gone before" me. Those Aldersgate days weren't perfect, but God was with us through them. That's what stays with me. On my uncertain journey, God stays with me.

"Our steps are made firm by the Lord, when he delights in our way; though we stumble, we shall not fall headlong, for the Lord holds us by the hand." Psalm 37: 23,24

Ann Bryan Nelson

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Legacy in Africa

“The State shall actively promote the welfare of the people by adopting policies aimed at: maintenance of ecosystems, biological diversity, and utilization of living natural resources on a sustainable basis for the benefit of all Namibians, both present and future.” A newly independent country only 25 years ago, Namibian leaders crafted Article 95 of their constitution, excerpted here, and laid the foundation for their legacy by considering not only what is beneficial right now, but what is needed to develop and protect their resources for future generations.

Namibia’s population of 2.3 million people sprawls across 320,000 square miles of desert and coast, mountains and plains, mostly in small communities. Eighty-five rural community conservancies currently operate, supported by abundant scenic and wildlife resources and a growing tourism industry. Creation of a new conservancy begins with an idea in the local community, develops into a business plan and is evaluated for community support, water supply, wildlife needs, facility needs, environmental impact and financial feasibility.

While the government allocates communal land, and outside start-up capital and management training are provided, ownership and responsibility lie in the hands of the community. Legacy is... jobs and business skills, funding for

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Guided by Our Mission

“...and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8

At Aldersgate, we are a community that aspires to grow in love and seek justice for all creation.

How?

We reach out to Northview Public Schools. We serve at NECM’s Supper House and Feeding America.

We support our youth mission trips.

We support quality childcare.

Our list of ministries goes on and on.

Hearing our mission statement each week and seeing how hard our congregation works in ministry reminds me that we have decided on a mission statement that sets the path for our congregation, and I am a part of that congregation. You keep inspiring me as well as challenging me.

“I am who I am because of who we all are.”

Desmund Tutu

Elaine Buege

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Growing Up At Aldersgate

Aldersgate United Methodist Church has shaped me from a very early age. I was raised at Aldersgate from birth but my memories really did not start until I was in elementary school. I can remember Jean Ranck teaching me how to read the music in the hymnal. Ernie Malkewitz shared his knowledge on how to build a campfire. Marj Wiltse had great patience in teaching my brothers and me how to sing. Dean Arnold loved soccer and even showed me a few tips on how to play the game. I cannot forget in my young adult life the enjoyable hikes within the Adirondacks, an experience shared with Jack and Elaine Buege by me and my future wife.

Bill Johnson arrived at about the time I was in first grade and was at Aldersgate until Nick and I graduated from high school. Often when pastors move on to another assignment that might be the last time paths cross. Through a unique situation at our church (Novi United Methodist Church), our pastor was out of the country and Bill stepped in to officiate at our wedding. A couple of years later, I took a new position here in Grand Rapids, which led Becky and me to Wyoming Park United Methodist Church where Bill served. A few years later, Bill baptized our kids. In due time, Bill and Judy found Becky and me appropriate leadership positions at Wyoming Park.

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Those Who Helped Me Grow

“I am who I am because of who we all are together.”

Desmond Tutu

This quote caused me to stop and reflect on who I am. I realize a large part of who I am is because of Aldersgate and the people who joined me on my journey since 1975. They continue to walk with me on a path that has crazy twists and turns.

It is because of people like Bill and Judy Johnson, who read an article about Parish Nursing and shared it with me saying, “We think you should do this”. Say what?

It is because of Shirley Myers, who unbeknownst to me, made necklaces to send me to a Parish Nurse symposium.

It is because of Barbara Libby who agreed to come with me to the symposium to learn all we could about this new ministry.

It is because of the people of Aldersgate who challenged, supported, and encouraged me that I dared to step out of behind-the-scenes work, my comfort zone, and become a leader in the church. Indeed, Aldersgate has a Legacy of Generosity. It is my prayer I may be that person of support and encouragement to others on their journey.

Wendy Clark

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My Family Wherever I Am

Although I was baptized at Aldersgate, I was raised in the Sparta United Methodist Church, returning to Aldersgate midway through high school. From both churches, the two things that were instilled in me were that the church is my extended family and, like family, it's good to be involved. For me this meant acolyting and junior high youth fellowship in Sparta and eventually youth group at Aldersgate.

When I moved to new areas, it was the church I searched out to find my "local" family. I grew up watching people participate in the life of the church. I couldn't just sit. I found myself teaching Sunday school in Chicago. In Livonia, I traded in teaching for singing in the choir, women's Bible study, and serving as financial secretary.

We may not always live near our family, but the church will be our family. We are always welcomed back when we return.

Lisa Buege



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"I am who I am because of who we all are."

I came to you, AUMC, alone, broken and in need of healing. You received me without question and gave me sanctuary, a safe place. You were, and are, a community in which I was able to rest, mourn, and then begin the journey of redefining myself.

With you, prayer, counseling, and the help of some very close family members and friends, my faith, which had been shaped within my birth family, survived and moved forward as I transitioned through all areas of my life. This included loss of a marriage and family (through divorce), learning a new vocation, and starting a business, moving to a new home, meeting and eventually marrying a new life partner, and later building a new home.

A key part of my healing was Stephen Ministry training, which I was invited to take, but allowed to wait until I was ready to take that step. Time with Stephen Ministry care receivers and the continuing supervision meetings helped the healing as my work with missions does now. There have been times of revisiting the losses, as we, as a congregation, have dealt with struggles within our church, and been given ways to work with them. Here I have been able to release or take another step forward in my own healing.

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You can say my life is grounded in the United Methodist Church and it started with Aldersgate. In college I attended Ypsilanti United Methodist Church and the Wesley Foundation. Out of college, I attended Novi United Methodist Church where I met Becky. Both Becky and I can say if we did not go to a United Methodist church we would not be the couple/family we are today. Becky and I continue to worship at Wyoming Park where our vision is to Seek God, Bring Hope and Share Love.

Andrew Kramer

Finding Myself

Who am I?" was a question I asked myself frequently after my husband, Mert, died. After being part of a couple for 45 years, suddenly I was a single person. What now?

The support I received from my family, church family and Pastor Greg (who walked with me through those first difficult months) was invaluable help in putting my life back together.

For me, Aldersgate is a home away from home. A place that sometimes takes me out of my comfort zone, and challenges me to look at a situation with new eyes (I think it's called growth), a place for spiritual enrichment and the opportunity to use my talents to give glory to God. May it always be so.

Shirley Myers

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Legacy of Encouragement

As I ponder what Aldersgate has meant to me over my adult lifetime, I immediately think of how the people of Aldersgate, in a very real sense, helped us raise our three sons decades ago. Aldersgate folks became our sons' surrogate grandmas and grandpas by providing respite child care and much more.

In the 1970's, Aldersgate's culture of encouragement allowed me to start "PM Core," a study/support group for women. This group was my lifeline to adult interaction while I was a stay-at-home mom of three preschoolers. PM Core provided a vehicle to talk about life concerns that transcended the day-to-day joys of raising children.

Encouragement abounds at Aldersgate! Our church is not bound by artificial limits that define what it means to "do church." If there is an area of mission, ministry or need that is personally compelling, one is encouraged and supported to pursue it and involve other like-minded folk.

This legacy of encouragement has become one of the main fibers in the tapestry of my life.

Ever-present God, give me a willingness to give and receive encouragement. Amen.

Cookie Kramer

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Christ's Legacy

I spent some time recently in reflection about Jesus' legacy and what it means in my life and in our world in general. Can you even begin to imagine what our world would look like without the example of Jesus to guide us in our everyday living?

I can envision a world where everyone put their own needs first, where fights broke out as people tried to take as much as they could for their own use without regard for their neighbors. The racial conflicts that continue to trouble our world would seem trivial compared to chaos that would ensue in a world without the example of Jesus' loving acceptance of everyone, regardless of race, social status, etc.

Having Christ's example as to how we should live and love is a priceless legacy and one that I think I will continue to ponder a while longer.

Marilyn Duperron

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My Second Home

We all are shaped by our families and those wonderful people who nurture us as we grow. We never stop growing. We are constantly being shaped in one way or another by the people around us.

Sometimes the people in our lives teach us how we should be – how we should live. Others teach us how NOT to be, but we learn from them all.

I was fortunate to have grown up in a loving family. My parents were very friendly and welcoming to everyone. I remember summer evenings sitting at the big round table on the porch with my parents, their friends, and my friends. We played cards and laughed and talked. My parents cared about, enjoyed and accepted everyone. In later years, their great strength of character became even more clear to me. Dad had bypass surgery and Mom took care of him. Then Mom's kidneys failed, and Dad took care of her 24 hours a day, even giving her dialysis at home. Those were hard times. Wow ... what a great example of love and devotion they set for my brothers and me!

Now Aldersgate is my second home. I love every dear person here. Once again, this family is setting a great example for me of how I should live. I see so much strength, character, love and acceptance in all of you! Thinking back over the

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In your midst I am able to be myself, hopefully a better self, moving into new areas of growth because of your openness, support and generosity. This has been and remains your legacy. Thank you, AUMC.

Sue Callihan

What I Learned From Coaches

I was raised in the small town of Eden, New York, about 30 miles south of Buffalo. I was able to participate in sports. Two coaches in particular, Coach Pacini (football) and Coach Sturm (basketball) taught me valuable life lessons. Besides the usual "don't give up", "get up after you're knocked down" and so on, they both stressed the importance of teamwork and doing things the right way. An emphasis on teamwork was that you were responsible to your teammates to "do your job" so they could do theirs and ultimately experience team success.

Doing things the right way also carries over into life. Examples are treating others with respect, living up to your word, not taking short-cuts, playing by the rules, and being law abiding. I think of these men often and am thankful for their dedication and their ethical approach to coaching.

Chuck Care

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For all the saints who have gone before and blazed the trail;

A path of wisdom, love, courage, strength and spiritual wisdom.

I mean to be one, too.

Laurie Haller, Aldersgate pastor 2012-2013, from her blog, "Swim With Me, God," August 22, 2016

Genesis 32:22-32

Who am I? James, Greek derivation Iakobos, Hebrew derivation Ya'aqov. My ancient namesake, Israel (One who wrestles with God), who used-to-was Jacob had it easy. Sure, he limped away from his holy smackdown introspective, even repentant, and with a new license for conniving in the name of "I am."

I am more like the rest of us; sojourners sustaining more debilitating injuries in their spiritual wrestling: unceasing, narcissistic, plastic ebullience; relentless self-absorption and depression; pervasive doubting and pessimism; and, yes, occasional glimpses of peace and forgiveness bejeweled by the sweat and tears of my striving. I am what I am: forever wounded; hopelessly, haplessly unfinished; a child of God.

Jim Hodge, Aldersgate Pastor 2013-

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For All the Saints

Where would I be without the saints?
The great cloud of witnesses that cheers me on.

Nurturing and guiding me, modeling what a Christ-like life looks like.

My beloved grandmothers, Mary and Martha, reminding me of the importance of both action and contemplation.

My mother and father, without whom I would be nothing;

Joan, whose tragic death inspired me to dare to sit on an organ bench and carry on her legacy;

The faithful in my home church, encouraging me, showing me what a faithful life looks like.

The nameless people whose kindness touched me when I was in need.

Why was I so blessed?

How many lives have I touched on my journey?

How will I be remembered?

She was too busy? She never stopped to talk?
She didn't know how to let go?

All I want, God, is to love you and bring in your kingdom on this earth for all people.

May I be faithful to you in the one life I have.

More hugs, more smiles, more mentoring, more inspiration;

More of you, less of me.

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Legacy of Love

I have pondered what legacy is, what my legacy is, or what legacy was left to me. Remembering what legacy my parents left, I can still feel the love, gentleness, and peace of my mother. Her legacy of love is strong with my brother and sisters. We often discuss how our mother's love affected our marriages, raising children and grandchildren. Today we see her legacy carry on by our children in their adult lives.

My father's legacy was the love of nature. When I see a butterfly on a milkweed, a deer standing in the field, or a fish swimming in a lake, I feel his legacy of love of nature. How beautiful nature is when we stop and see it.

My parents' legacy of love came from their belief in God and Jesus. They were the strength of their lives. The stories of miracles and healing by Jesus are key. The common denominator of Jesus' life was love for all human beings and living things. Jesus' legacy of love is there for everyone today and all we need to do is open our hearts, mind and soul and join in and make it our legacy.

Legacy is not how much money we give, or what we do for the church or the community. It is the love for ourselves, others, and all living things. Love, giving money and what we do for the church and the community is the legacy.

Linda Powrie

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years, I remember the strength and courage of Alice Gieseler, even when she was dealing with cancer and the end was near. I remember the love that Johnny and Marion Zenk shared with each other and with all of us. When I worked at Metro Hospital and Marion came in for treatment, Johnny was right there with his little spiral notebook in his shirt pocket. He could tell the doctors everything they need to know about her illness, medication, and past treatment. What a great example of love and dedication!

One Sunday a few years ago, Jack Buege stood up and announced that some area churches were putting up a billboard welcoming gay and lesbian people to their congregations. He asked if we wanted Aldersgate to participate. Time was short, and a decision needed to be made quickly. He asked those who were willing to support this to sign a form after church. After the service, there was a long line of church members in the narthex waiting to sign. It makes me feel so proud and happy to be a part of this welcoming and accepting congregation! This is where I belong.

I want to set a good example for my children. They are both adults, and are kind, caring and responsible. But it's still important to me, and I want to live up to the example that my family and my Aldersgate family set for me. I am trying. All of you are showing me every day how I should live. Thank you!

Lynne Hill

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A Generous Friend

Fred Kalis was best man at our wedding. I met him as a sophomore in college and we became fast friends, spending many an evening sharing pizza, talking about life, classes, sports and religion. We were kindred spirits at a tumultuous time in history and in our lives.

What impressed me most about Fred was his infectious generosity. We shared common interests and admired the same heroes. After graduation, we lived together in a rental house while teaching school, and his generous ways infected me.

As we grew older, we saw less and less of each other, but he made sure we connected from time to time as if only a day or two had gone by.

Fred died 10 years ago, but his generous spirit left an indelible mark on my life. I am who I am in part because of Fred Kalis, one of the "best men" I've ever known.

Bill Johnson, Aldersgate Pastor 1981-1992

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