

END OF SUMMER REPORT 2022



ALDERSGATE
Camp & Retreat Center







DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Aldersgate's 77th camp season was another fantastic summer, fully open and bustling.

Day camp programs continue to fill, and with almost 100 campers per week, it is becoming the place to be in town!

Overnight programs returned from COVID hiatus with high attendance at Adventure Camp and another full production at Living Arts. FROZEN Jr. kept us thinking cool thoughts through the July heat this year.

A feeling of normalcy prevailed at camp, a welcome change from the pandemic closures and isolation we have all endured over the past few years. Our campers are learning how to be in a group, make friends, and work together.

It was amazing to see all of our campers again and I look forward to more campers joining next year.

JOHN MICHAEL SPELMAN

**ALDERSGATE CAMP AND RETREAT
CENTER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



CAMPER EXPERIENCE

"Perhaps you were born for such a time as this." (Esther 4:14)

This summer, Aldersgate's weekly theme explored the story of Esther. This story was unfamiliar to the majority of our campers, even those with a long standing church home. What really resonated with our campers was the message that one bad choice does not define a person. One camper wrote in their end of week evaluation,

The story of Esther helped me understand the gray area of people and the importance of judging people on ALL of their choices, and understanding that one choice can make someone seem bad even when they aren't really

Campers had authentic discussions about how God loves everyone, even if they make bad decisions.





DAY CAMP

Aldersgate's Day Camp program continues to grow!

The Aldersgate Day camp ran for 9 weeks of camp averaging 89 campers each week, with a high of 99 campers. Many camps struggled to remain open due to staffing, COVID, and supply chain issues. Aldersgate was able to provide quality programming throughout the summer.

A change in the day camp experience included schedule changes that allowed each group to experience all that Aldersgate has to offer. All age groups participated in nature, sports, arts and crafts, waterfront, and a special event every day. This diverse developmentally appropriate programming allowed campers to enjoy and succeed at higher levels this summer.



OVERNIGHT CAMPS

A return to overnight camp after a two year hiatus.

While overnight registration numbers were slightly down, this is a common trend among summer camps this year after returning from a COVID hiatus.

Adventure programs flourished with four different camps offered; Trailblazers (ages 7-8), Camper vs. Wild (ages 8-10), Aldersgate Adventure (ages 11-13), and Challenge Camp (ages 14-16). Each camp experienced nature and adventure programming at their own level. Trailblazers slept in a tent outside the cabins, while Challenge Camp roughed it all week long at Pioneer Field.

Living Arts produced another amazing musical with Frozen Jr. Again, campers built the sets, made the costumes, and performed after only 12 hours of preparation.

All summer, campers experienced the story of Esther in Morning Worship. During afternoon Faith Chats they had the opportunity to process the story and dig deeper as they prepared and planned the Thursday night Collaboration Worship. Campers said they enjoyed collaborating with their peers, they loved creating songs and skits, they enjoyed performing skits/plays, and they thought it was fun to be part of an interactive worship experience.



STAFF

This year, 31 seasonal staff helped Aldersgate's campers have an amazing summer!

This year, Aldersgate welcomed international staff again. As embassies around the world were reopening, it was quite a challenge for staff who had committed to Aldersgate to obtain their J-1 visa. Nevertheless, we were able to welcome staff from England, Scotland, Wales, Mexico, Ireland, Poland, the Philippines, and South Africa.

The staff started their summer with a two week staff training that included guest speakers from the UMass Dartmouth Unity House, Youth Pride, and professional camp speakers. In addition to the "hard skills" of being a camp counselor, there was a focus on camper mental health and personal self care coming out of the pandemic.

Weekends were spent engaging in cultural experiences throughout Rhode Island the southeast New England, including trips to Waterfire, the beach, Boston, and Fourth of July celebrations. For the first time, Aldersgate offered bussing for all staff so that all staff were able to have access to these experiences. The international staff were extra excited to ride a yellow school bus!



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Aldersgate awarded 2 staff scholarships in 2022!

Staff were given the opportunity to apply for a scholarship through Camp Aldersgate. Staff submitted responses, in whatever form best expressed their feelings to the question:

"The Aldersgate mission is to be "a sacred space, empowering all in faith and friendship to change the world." After living and working in this community this summer, how has this mission impacted your life?"

The 2022 recipients of staff scholarships are:

Abigail James-Vickery ('20, '22)

Alicja Nogala ('22)



SPIRIT OF ALDERSGATE

The Aldersgate staff recognized two of their own for living out the mission of Aldersgate.

The 2022 staff selected two staff for living out the mission of Aldersgate:

Alicja Nogala ('22)

Jose Alberto "Beto" Ojeda Serrano ('22)

These staff were chosen by their peers as the best representatives who lived out the mission of Aldersgate by keeping Aldersgate a sacred space, empowering all staff and campers, living out their faith, being a good friend, and changing the world.

Alice was described by her peers as welcoming, generous, and nurturing. She put so much love into all the food we ate but still had so much time and energy to give to the community. Overnight counselors noted how she always came to campfires to support them and how she gave up her free time to be part of Frozen Jr. She is generous with her time, talents, and hugs. She makes other people feel special, included, and valuable.

Beto is someone who always has a smile on his face no matter how long his day has been or how hard he has been working. He was described as a thoughtful person who always looks out for others. During his break time, he is often playing 9 square with campers or making time to check up on his costaff. One person said, "he always checks up on me and makes sure I am feeling great. Whenever I need a chat, he listens and gives support. He makes me feel safe and empowered." A common theme is that he is welcoming, accepting, and compassionate.



REGISTRATIONS

Aldersgate hosted almost 1000 weeks of camp this summer!

Day Camp numbers have steadily grown over the past few years, especially after returning from COVID. We expect continued growth at Day Camp and are planning innovative and new ways to welcome even more campers.

Overnight registrations were slightly lower than average, an expectation after a two year hiatus. We're looking forward to overnight programs returning to full capacity in the near future.





CAMPERSHIPS

12% of Aldersgate campers received campership support this summer (38 campers).

Due to lower enrollment at overnight programs we provided fewer camperships than a typical summer. However, all requests for camperships were filled.

Aldersgate remains committed to providing camp experiences for campers who would not normally be able to attend camp due to financial restrictions.

To further this mission, Aldersgate partners with a number of United Methodist churches who provide scholarships for children and youth from their congregations to attend Aldersgate camps.

The year began a partnership with Angel Tree Camping, a ministry that provides camp experiences for children and youth with an incarcerated parent. These campers are able to attend camp at no cost to their family and encounter a sacred space that empowers them to grow in faith and friendship.



ALDERSGATE

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