

# The Epistle

THE NEWSLETTER OF APOSTLES LUTHERAN CHURCH

Gloucester, Virginia

[www.apostles-elca.org](http://www.apostles-elca.org)

December 2021

Our Mission is to be a Caring Christian Community responding to God's grace through  
Worship, Service, and Sharing the Gospel



## *Good Tidings From the Good Shepherdess*

*"God is not distant or  
impassive to the pain and confusion we are left  
with, but is a real and present Comforter  
among us."*

*~Jamie Arpin-Ricci*

It's the most wonderful time of the year! Can you believe that it's almost over? We made it through half of 2021 without a second Lockdown, so that's wonderful news. Many of us are still riding the Thanksgiving high all the way until New Years, and why wouldn't you? It's been wonderful to see family and friends in person as opposed to on a screen. It's been wonderful to travel freely between States and Counties without fear. It's been wonderful to partially be liberated from masks in certain spaces. Still, amongst all of these wonderful things, one might wonder when the other shoe will drop? Yes, we are still in the midst of a novel Pandemic, and life is not quite the normal that we'd like for it to be. The truth is that the vaccines did not fix everything for a plethora of reasons including but not limited to vaccine hesitancy and disparity between nations and people. We are all in our own way waiting for the world to change for the better. Waiting with anxiety, doubt, excitement, and hope. We've all been waiting for an end to COVID-19 and

subsequent tragedies that have been born from it. Fortunately, the Season of Advent is all about waiting. There is a saying that a watched pot does not boil, but when it does, the boiling water is changed into something new. Not quite what it once was, but still, in its essence, itself in spite of the transformation. We have all been changed these past two years in ways that we are still coping with during this period of waiting. I believe that it will be healthy to take time to process these changes as a worshiping community. In response to this unspoken need, our Seminarian, Ingrid Peterson has agreed to host a Blue Christmas Service on the longest night of the year, December 21<sup>st</sup>. In leading up to this event, I will be crafting a sermon series based on Kathy Escobar's [A Weary World: Reflections for a Blue Christmas](#) during the Sundays of this Bluest Season. Our Council Members will also present an Offering Expression based on each week's theme. Week 1 was Honoring Reality, Week 2 will be Practicing Honesty, Week 3 will be Embracing Paradox, and Week 4 will be Borrowing Hope. All of these weeks will lead us to the central theme of our Christianity, that God is with us on Christmas Eve and always. We have all lost something these past two years: identity, purpose, occupations, health, homes, and loved ones. We have also gained something these past two years: discovery, redirection, friendships, and renewal. Between the good and the bad of what we have endured, God is with us. Remember that that as we close out this year in

anticipation for a new one. . .

*"For a child has been born to us,  
a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders,  
and he is named  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."*

~Isaiah 9:6

In God's Abiding Love,  
Pastor Jeniffer Tillman, Mission Developer

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### ***Opportunities for Worship in December***



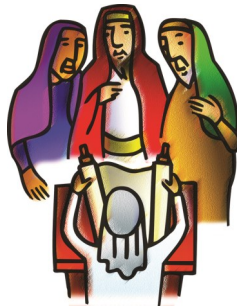
**Advent Worship Services with  
Lighting the Advent Wreath—  
December 5th, 12th and 19th  
at 9:30 AM**



**Blue Christmas Service—A  
Service of Comfort,  
Remembrance and Hope—  
Tuesday, December 21st at  
7:00 PM**



**Christmas Eve Candlelight  
Service with Holy  
Communion—Friday,  
December 24th at 7:00 PM**



**First Sunday of Christmas—  
Sunday, December 26th—The  
Office of the Bishop of the  
VA Synod will be providing  
the on-line worship service—  
there will be no in-person  
worship service (details will  
be sent out by e-mail)**

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### ***Ministry Team Meetings***

The following ministry team will meet in  
December:

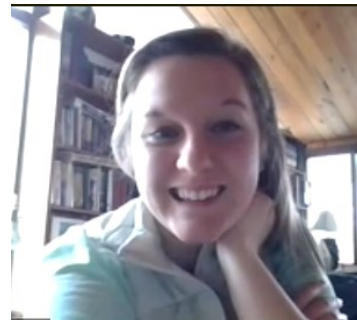
+ **Worship—Saturday, December 11th, at 12:00  
PM.**

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### ***Happy Anniversary To. . .***

Dan and Teresa Grantham

December 16



### ***Congratulations To Ingrid Peterson***

"It is with joy that I let  
you know I have been  
accepted to Luther  
Seminary! I am very  
excited and humbled, and it would not have  
happened without your support. I am so  
fortunate to have such a strong and caring  
church family! On December 3rd, I will have my  
Entrance Interview with the Synod. I will keep  
you informed of how it all goes! Thank you  
again. Your support means more than my mere  
words can express.

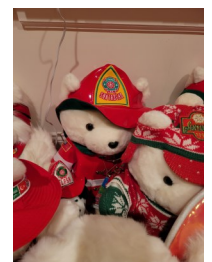
Sincerely,  
Ingrid"

*(Ingrid will start seminary in the Fall of 2022.)*

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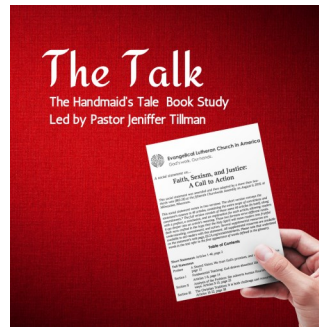
### ***Teddy Bears for Christmas Eve***

At the Caring Community Ministry Team  
meeting in November, Pastor Jeniffer suggested  
that we have members of the congregation  
donate a teddy bear to be given to children on  
Christmas Eve. When Teresa Grantham heard  
about it, she told us the following story about  
"Santa Bears". . ."It all began in 1985 when a  
store in Minnesota called "Dayton-Hudson"  
started a tradition. Every year they would  
design a "Santa Bear" for Christmas. My sister  
and I thought they were cute so we bought the  
first Santa Bear...well they were such a huge  
success that every year they would design a  
new bear...and so it my collection began. In 2000  
Santa Bear was married...(same year Dan and I  
were married). That year they designed a bride  
and groom...those bears were at our wedding!!  
Of course the Santa Bears had children so each  
year...since 2001 they designed a Santa, Mrs.  
Santa and baby bears...the last  
bears were designed in 2007, to  
my relief...I was running out of  
storage. They have adorned our  
home every year at Christmas,  
and now its time for me to give  
them new homes so others can  
enjoy them!!" Thank you, Teresa!!



## *What a November at Apostles!!*

On November 7th, we celebrated All Saints Sunday adorning our sanctuary with pictures of our loved ones and lighting candles—we also had a special blessing of our church building. On Christ the King Sunday, November 21st, the Service and Sharing Ministry Team continued their Seasons of Stewardship with a special game of Jeopardy complete with music and a final Jeopardy question. After worship, we enjoyed a wonderful time of fellowship and food. The following Sunday, November 28th, was the start of Advent and in addition to lighting our traditional Advent wreath, we celebrated the start of Hanukah with lighting a candle on the menorah.



## *The Talk The Handmaid's Tale Book Study Led by Pastor Jeniffer*

Winter is coming, and with it comes indoor activities.

"The Talk" will be adjusting to the change of seasons in the form of a Book Study led by Pastor Jeniffer. You are invited to this newest rendition of "The Talk." We will spend four weeks between November and December discussing Margaret Atwood's prolific novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*, in conjunction with several passages from our ELCA Social Statements. All are invited to attend a Zoom meeting at **7:00 P.M. on December 2nd, and December 16th**. Please purchase a copy of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* before November 4th. The ELCA Social Statements can be found at Social Statements - Evangelical Lutheran Church in America ([elca.org](http://elca.org)). To register go to [https://vasynod-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlvcOyvqTliH9aPwETCRlGFTd\\_RllqHjGw2](https://vasynod-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlvcOyvqTliH9aPwETCRlGFTd_RllqHjGw2). Page readings for the Book Study can be found at [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1c\\_QVmCrNCTZpPmikDfD6dHKi0IGm3P\\_p/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1c_QVmCrNCTZpPmikDfD6dHKi0IGm3P_p/edit) We can't wait to see you!

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## *Congregation Council Highlights*

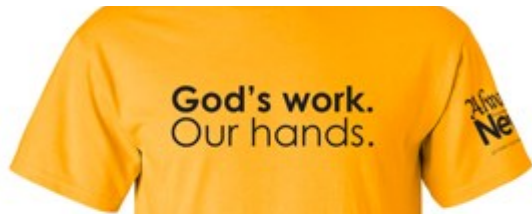
The Congregation Council will be meeting on **Monday, December 13th, at 7:00 PM**. Highlights from the meeting in November are:

+ **The audit of the church's financial records** has been completed and found to be in good order. Thanks to Ben Grimes, Sue Turner, Linda Hodges, Nate Peterson and our Treasurer, Tina Britt.

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## *2022 Ministry Spending Plan Approved*

A 2022 ministry spending plan of \$131,473 was approved by the congregation on November 21st. A BIG thank you to Tina Britt, our Treasurer!!



*God's*



+ On Saturday, November 13th, and Wednesday, November 17th, several members of the congregation helped people from our church and clients of Bay Aging with cleaning up yards, raking leaves, repairing fencing, power washing the house and trimming trees.

+ On Thanksgiving Day, November 25th, members of Apostles helped serve the annual community Thanksgiving Dinner at Abingdon Episcopal Church—Doug Dalager sent in the following. . .

“This year the plan was to fill 80 dinners between 11:00 AM and 12:30 PM. People started arriving at 10:30, so we started serving at 10:30 AM. My day actually began at 8:00 AM opening sweet potato and green bean cans, then carving 3 of 5 turkeys. The members of Abingdon Episcopal Church greeted me heartily and were thankful for all the volunteers. The volunteers from Apostles included the Hawkins Family—Jennifer, Chris and Jade who helped with directing traffic and meal to car delivery, Pastor Jennifer arrived and helped fill meal trays with me dishing out the turkey. The food donations arrived in 8 inch by 11 inch aluminum serving pans 3 inches deep. When we stopped serving at 12:30 PM we still had 3 pans of carved turkey, 3 pans of mashed potatoes, and 3 pans of stuffing. The sweet potatoes ran out at 11:30 AM and the green beans lasted until 12:20 PM. The rest of the meal included 2 rolls, 2 pats of butter, a condiment bag which included plastic cutlery, salt, pepper, and a cup of cranberry sauce. This annual Thanksgiving day feed has been going on at Abingdon Episcopal Church for 30 years and Apostles has been invited to help next year as well. Some years in the past they have fed over 300 people. Some of the members of Abingdon were still commenting on the Amazing Grace Race sponsored by Apostles and presented by Ingrid Petersen and would love to do it again. We served and took home leftovers.

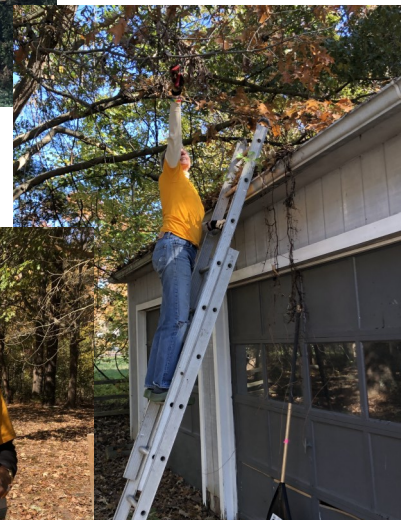
Doug Dalager



*Work*



*Our*



*Hands!!!!*



## ***Advent Devotions***

Thank you to everyone who participated in submitting their reflections for a devotion booklet for the season of Advent—the devotion booklets are available in the narthex—please take one and a set of

Advent candles.

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## ***Guatemalan Fiesta Time!!***

The Service and Sharing Ministry Team will be celebrating their work to encourage, strengthen and coordinate the congregation's outreach ministries and for supporting members in living out their Christian calling of service to others on **Sunday, December 12th**, immediately after the worship service. Please make plans to join us for special Guatemalan dishes and activities including a pinata, Christmas card making, and health kit assembly. If you missed the team's presentation, you can check it out at <https://www.apostles-elca.org/seasons-of-stewardship/autumn-2021>.

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## ***Please Keep In Your Prayers***

Opal Baker, Luise Buerkert, Eddie Freeman, Manning Freeman, Betty Hauch, Michael Schlemmer, George Thomas, Jewel Thomas, Sue and George Turner, and Jerry and Lena Woodlief.

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## ***Happy Birthday To . . .***

Taylor Badger	December 5th
Luise Buerkert	December 8th
Ellie Crocker	December 13th
Irene Albert	December 16th
Christina Allen Badger	December 30th

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## ***Poinsettias for Christmas***

Please take a minute to signup to purchase a poinsettia to adorn our sanctuary during the season of Christmas—the cost is \$12 and the deadline to order is December 10th. If you have any questions, please contact Janet Gomez.

## ***Happy Baptismal Anniversary***

*to . .*

CK and Chase Ambrose	December 1st
Linda Hodges	December 15th
Irene Albert and Luise Buerkert	December 17th
Jim Reinke	December 19th
Savannah and Kiera Anby	December 21st
Robert McMahan	December 23rd
Sue Turner	December 25th

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## ***Readings for December***

+ **December 5th—Second Sunday of Advent**  
Malachi 3:1-4 (my messenger is a refiner and purifier), Luke 1:68-79 (in the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us), Philippians 1:3-11 (a harvest of righteousness on the day of Jesus Christ), Luke 3:1-6 (prepare the way of the Lord)

+ **December 12th—Third Sunday of Advent**  
Zephaniah 3:14-20 (rejoice, the Lord is in your midst), Isaiah 12:2-6 (in your midst is the Holy One of Israel), Philippians 4:4-7 (rejoice, the Lord is near), Luke 3:7-18 (one more powerful is coming, baptizing with fire)

+ **December 19th—Fourth Sunday of Advent**  
Micah 5:2-5a (from Bethlehem comes a ruler), Luke 1:46b-55 (You, Lord, have lifted up the lowly), Hebrews 10:5-10 (I have come to do your will), Luke 1:39-45[46-55] (blessed are you among women/my soul magnifies the Lord)

+ **December 24th—Nativity of Our Lord**  
Isaiah 9:2-7 (light shines: a child is born for us), Psalm 96 (let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad), Titus 2:11-14 (the grace of God has appeared), Luke 2:1-14[15-20] (God with us)

+ **December 26th—First Sunday of Christmas**  
1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26 (the boy Samuel grew in favor with the Lord and the people), Psalm 148 (the splendor of the Lord is over earth and heaven), Colossians 3:12-17 (clothe yourselves in love; let the peace of Christ rule your hearts), Luke 2:41-52 (the boy Jesus increased in wisdom, and in divine and human favor)

## Look What's New At Apostles



A new stained glass window by Gene Gomez

A new set of communion ware from The Poddery



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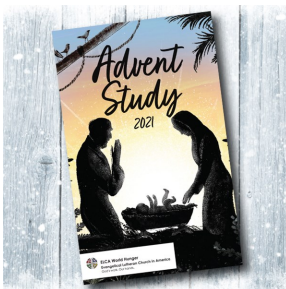
### We Will Sing Again!!

At the conclusion of the Christmas Eve worship service on December 24th, we will be given candles and invited to gather outside to sing "Silent Night." We are a singing church. We express our faith through song. We have missed hearing our liturgy and hymns and singing them -praying them-together. We yearn to lift our voices once again in song. We will sing again – it is all for the glory of God!

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### World Hunger Advent Resources

Please help yourself to a World Hunger Bible study and/or World Hunger Advent calendar—they are on the table in the narthex. Also remember that the third Sunday of every month is World Hunger Sunday—please remember your offering to help feed those in need.



Thank you to everyone who gave to the special offering to support the work of Reconciling Works on Reformation/Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Celebration Sunday, October 31st. A total of \$185 was given. Pete and Betsy Liljeberg and Janet Gomez have been invited to talk to the congregation of First Lutheran Church in Norfolk on Saturday, December 4th, about Apostles' journey to becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation.

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### Christmas Gifts That Make A Difference

Here is a list of Christmas gifts that can make a difference:

**+\$10** can buy (1) a supply of magic markers or crayons for enCircle (formerly Lutheran Family Services) Minnick School students, (2) 52 pounds of food for the Bread for Life Food Pantry or (3) purchase a hygiene kit for a GUEST homeless shelter client


**+\$25** can provide (1) supplies for a Paint Night Party for 4-6 resident of one of enCircle's group homes, (2) 130 pounds of food for the Bread for Life Food Pantry or (3) new work shoes and/or pants for a GUEST client for new employment

**+\$50** can purchase (1) a Family Pizza party for a new foster family to start building happy memories and positive emotional ties, (2) 260 pounds of food for the Bread for Life Food Pantry or (3) a rental application fee to help someone move into housing from GUEST.

**+\$100** can provide (1) sanitation supplies and PPE to enCircle Minnick schools and group homes, (2) a week of meals and snacks for a GUEST family of 4.

Donations can be made on these websites:

 [www.encircleall.org](http://www.encircleall.org)

 [www.breadforlifepantry.com](http://www.breadforlifepantry.com)

 [www.guestshelter.org](http://www.guestshelter.org)



## ***A Christmas Message from Our Bishop, The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton***

Remember the Beatles? John, Paul, George, Ringo! I was into it. I had Beatle boots, love beads and granny glasses. My big brother gave me a model of Paul (the cute Beatle) for Christmas one year. It was one of those paint-it-yourself kits. I knew the lyrics to the Beatles' hits better than I knew Martin Luther's Small Catechism. The early hits were pop and upbeat: "I Want to Hold Your Hand," "A Hard Day's Night." Even later "Yellow Submarine" was still whimsical. But then the Beatles got older, and the world changed. Vietnam, the Kennedy and King assassinations, the urban riots, the 1968 Chicago Democratic convention. Innocence—for those of us who had that luxury—was gone. Skepticism, even cynicism, was the lens through which the world was seen. A lot was broken, including trust in institutions and the church. In 1971, John Lennon's hit "Imagine" came out. It was evocative and, I'm sure, was meant to point us to the possibility of a better future. I found it disturbing. A world without religion. No heaven. No hell. No countries. No possessions. As if excising these things would cure humanity and the world would be as one. There was and is enough brokenness in the world to go 'round. But the brokenness is not outside of us—in institutions, politics, religion—it is within us. The only way to construct utopia is to get rid of people. Imagine. Except God has a different way. It is the way of Jesus. It is the way of love. It is the way of life. You see, God so loves the world and all of creation and all of us. God is right down with us in all of our messiness. In Jesus, God has reconciled the world to God's self, redeeming it and us in spite of our rebellion. We can stake our lives on the relentless, faithful, powerful, tender love of God. God has a different way. It is the way of love. It is the way of life. During the pandemic we dreamed great things and imagined

an ELCA that could envision a world experiencing the difference God's grace and love in Christ makes for all people and creation. We prayed and still pray that the Spirit will activate each of us so that more people know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice and love. And we set a goal—engage a million new, young and diverse people by the end of this decade. Why? Because the world deserves to hear the gospel. The world needs to look beyond itself. There is a heaven. Clearly this is not the work of the churchwide organization alone, nor of any one congregation. It is a mission for all of us. There are so many people who do not know that they need to know Jesus. There are so many people who think that God's grace is too good to be true. There are so many people searching for meaning. All are beloved by God. God longs to draw all people to Godself, to clean us up and wash our faces so that God's image shines clearly from all of us, so that we can see God's image shining from each other. New, young and diverse? What about those of us who are already here, have always been here, who have been doing the work and paying the bills? We are the 99 sheep that didn't go astray. We are the older brother who stayed home and worked hard. Of course we are! We have lived in the love of Jesus and walked in Jesus' way. *We* know the freedom of the Christian. We don't live in an unforgiving world, but in a redeemed world with a future. Why wouldn't we want to share that with as many people as we can? Even a million new, young and diverse people—why stop there? The flock was not whole until the one lost was found. The older brother did not realize that all his father had was already his as a gift. This is true for us. God has given this mission to invite more people into the way of Jesus. Imagine.

***God Has Given***

***Us A***

***Mission!***