

The Epistle

THE NEWSLETTER OF APOSTLES LUTHERAN CHURCH

Gloucester, Virginia

www.apostles-elca.org

February 2022

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



Reminiscing From The Reverend

“Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist

on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth.”

~1 Corinthians 13:4-6

Listen, most people believe that once upon a time, Valentine's Day a Pagan celebration. Others think that this annual celebration has been beaten into submission by the Hallmark company in order to sell flowers, candy, and cards with more cheese than Arepas con Queso. Well, they would be right on both accounts. Valentine's Day was an attempt to Christianize the Pagan holiday of Lupercalia in the same vein of synchronizing these multi-deity traditions with Christmas and Easter if you can believe it. There were many saints who claimed the name Valentine were martyred on February 14th. However, most of these saints were not committed to romance. The love connection probably appeared more than a thousand years after the martyrs' death, when Geoffrey Chaucer, author of “The Canterbury Tales” decreed the February feast of St. Valentinus to the mating of birds. He wrote in his “Parlement of Foules”. Now-a-days, this day is largely target towards females for better and worse while our male counterparts catch all kinds of Hell should

they forget to oblige with tradition. I personally recommend waiting until the day after when just about everything white, pink, and red is half off. Perhaps, this year you'll celebrate Valentine's Day with your Sweetheart, or Galentine's/Palentine's Day with your same-gendered group of friends, or Single's Awareness Day with yourself indulging on pity gift chocolate and cheap wine. It doesn't matter because a day is only celebrated when you acknowledge it. Fortunately, the love of God is celebrated in our rising and resting every day. This month, we continue the third Season of Winter with our Caring Communities Team. I hear it will be an explosion! Now, since I *love* ‘Love’ in any form, I have a task for each of you to complete for our Sunday Worship on February 13th. Find your favorite Bible Verse or Lutheran affirmation, e.g. Saved by Grace, and write that on a Valentine's Day card that you give to yourself. We'll be sharing them during the Sermon before I repurpose what I've learned for Children's Chapel. I'm looking forward to seeing what cards and verses you've selected, especially if you go the extra mile and make your own cards. Be well, stay safe, and remember that you are loved now and always.

“There is always some madness in love. But there is also always some reason in madness.”

~Friedrich Nietzsche

In God's Abiding Love,
Pastor Jeniffer Tillman, M.Div, M.Dev.

Return to In-Person Worship

The Safety in Worship Team met on Sunday, January 30th and made the following decisions—**we will return to in person worship on Sunday, February 20th.** Ministry Teams and Bible studies may meet again in the church building starting the week of January 31st (if they wish to and as long as they follow social distancing and wear masks). These groups must provide a Zoom option for anyone who wishes to attend virtually. There will be no after church fellowship activities or meals at this time.

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Ministry Team Meetings

The following ministry teams will meet in February:

- + **Service and Sharing**—Monday, February 7th at 7:30 PM
- + **Worship**—Wednesday, February 16th at 7:00 PM
- + **Caring Community**—Thursday, February 17th at 5:30 PM.

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Happy Anniversary To . . .

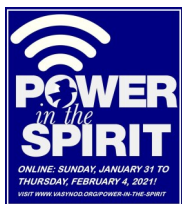
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| Roy and Carolyn Ryman | February 1 |
| Nancy and Dave Wagner | February 7 |
| Linda and Spencer Hodges | February 18 |
| Ben and Margaret Grimes | February 21 |

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Midwinter

Power In The Spirit

It's still not too late to register for Midwinter Power in the Spirit (Digital) event **Sunday, January 31 to Wednesday, February 2, 2022.** Our virtual doors will open at 5:30 PM each night and by 5:45 PM, we will be enjoying lectures and worships from a variety of leaders. At 7:00 PM, we will close with worship. The Rev. Kevin Strickland, Bishop of the Southeastern Synod of the ELCA, joins us as our keynote speaker. Bishop Strickland brings a wealth of knowledge regarding worship practices and how our worship forms us for mission. Register at <https://www.vasynod.org/event/midwinter-power-in-the-spirit-2022/>.



A Recap of the Annual Congregational Meeting January 30th

What a GREAT meeting!! Thanks to everyone who participated!! Special thanks to Pete Liljeberg, Congregation Council President, for leading the meeting and to Gerald Britt for setting up at church for an in-person option. After the call to order and establishment of a quorum, we reviewed reports from Pastor Jeniffer, the officers of Congregation Council and also from our Ministry Teams and the Mission Outreach Fund. Elections were then held for Congregation Council (elected were Chris Hawkins, David Leunig and Sue Turner; Trustees (elected were Gene Gomez, Ben Grimes and Linda Hodges); Synod Assembly Delegates (elected were Ben and Margaret Grimes with alternates Chris and Jenny Hawkins); Nominating Committee (Pete Liljeberg and Gerald and Tina Britt are automatically members as outgoing Council members and elected were Ben Grimes, Lynn Scholz and Nancy Wagner); and Mission Outreach Fund Committee (elected were Margaret Grimes, Donna Ambrose and Linda Hodges). The congregation approved the proposed plan for expenditure of the Mission Outreach Fund in 2022—\$2,500 for local needs (Virginia and surrounding areas) and \$2,500 for global needs. The congregation voted to amend Apostles' mission statement and to amend the constitution by adding an indemnification clause for the Trustees. We installed our new leaders and recognized the outgoing Congregation Council members, Gerald and Tina Britt and Pete Lilejberg.



Apostles Mission Statement Revised

The congregation voted unanimously at the annual congregational meeting to revise our mission statement—our mission statement now reads. . .

Our mission is to be a caring *inclusive* Christian community responding to God's grace through worship, service and sharing the Gospel.

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New Congregation Council Highlights

The new Congregation Council met immediately after the annual congregational meeting on January 30th—the Council will continue to meet on the second Monday of each month—the next meeting will be **Monday, February 14th at 7:00 PM**, and the following people will continue serving: Irene and Heinz Albert as Financial Secretaries, Tina Britt as Treasurer and Janet Gomez as Secretary.

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Welcome Chris Hawkins!

Chris Hawkins was welcomed into the membership of Apostles on Sunday, January 16th—he went right to work and was elected to serve on the Congregation Council—we are so glad you are part of our community here at Apostles!!

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Poinsettias for Christmas

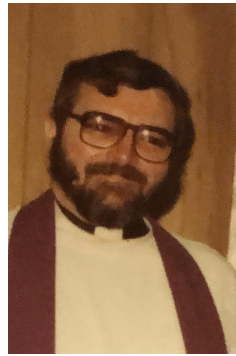
Thank you to everyone who signed up to provide the beautiful poinsettias for our sanctuary on Christmas. If you haven't paid for yours, please make your payment to the church—the cost was \$12 each. Thank you!!

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Congratulations To . . .

Tina Britt for being named the 2021 Employee of the Year by her employer, Calspan Systems, in Newport News, Virginia.

(Editor's note—we welcome news of the members of our congregation—please send your news to thezemogs@gmail.com.)



Remembering The Rev. Ralph W. Spears

The Reverend Ralph W. Spears died on December 16, 2021—he was 83. Pastor Spears was the first pastor of Apostles Lutheran Church (formerly known as Gloucester Lutheran Church). Pastor Spears is survived by his wife, Sallie, and children Maureen, John and Josh.

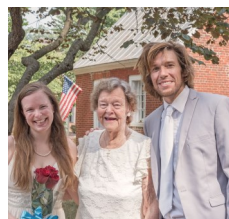
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Our Deepest Sympathy To



Lynn Jaeger upon the death of her father, Edward “Eddie” Pascale—Eddie was 94. Lynn said he always worked a job that highlighted his strengths. Eddie joined the Merchant Marine and served in World War II— he went on to run his own improvement company and was a gifted storyteller. In later years, Eddie took up painting on wine glasses—granddaughter Kayla shared a birthday with Eddie—January 25.

Reida and Chris Avery upon the death of Reida's cousin, Al Whitcomb—Al was 81 and was a U.S. Army veteran—he served for 26 years and served in Vietnam. He was a avid rose gardener and golfer.



Lilly Frost upon the death of her grandmother, Asta Frost—Asta was 87. Asta was a former member of Apostles Lutheran Church and was very involved with the women's group.

David and Mary Leunig upon the death of their dear friend Anthony Mancini—Anthony was 68.



May God comfort all of you.

Apostles To Host Peninsula Conference Gathering

Apostles will be hosting the monthly Peninsula Conference gathering on Tuesday, February 1st – ELCA churches in the Virginia Synod are grouped into conferences—Apostles is part of the Peninsula



Conference which also includes Gloria Dei and St. Paul in Hampton, Reformation in Newport News, St. Mark in Yorktown, and St. Stephen and Our Savior in Norge. The Reverend Joel Neubauer is our Conference Dean.

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Look What's New At Apostles



Pastor Jeniffer has been setting up her office at church—she has purchased new desks and chairs—it looks very nice.

A new laptop has been purchased for the church—it should help to make our in-person gatherings more immersive.



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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 . .

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|-------------------|-------------|
| Ray Scholz | February 1 |
| Keira Anby | February 2 |
| Chris Avery | February 7 |
| Jade Hawkins | February 7 |
| Lara Jaeger | February 10 |
| Billy Moore | February 17 |
| Krystle McMahan | February 18 |
| Shawn Jaeger, Jr. | February 20 |
| Betsy Liljeberg | February 23 |
| Lynn Scholz | February 24 |



Reconciling in Christ Ministry

The RIC logo has been updated to include blue, pink and white to represent transgender siblings. Also added are black and brown to represent black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). By using this logo, our welcome at Apostles is extended to all people. We recognize that some people who have never felt welcome, need an outward sign of welcome and inclusion. The Reconciling in Christ team is working together to provide growth and learning opportunities to enable the congregation to extend its welcome graciously and humbly. Opportunities for discussion and learning will be available in upcoming months. If you have ideas for adult forums, or would like to learn more about welcoming certain groups of people, please contact anyone on this ministry team: Pete and Betsy Liljeberg, David and Mary Leunig, Irene Albert, Janet Gomez and Pastor Jeniffer.

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Correspondence

+**From Bread For Life Food Pantry**—“Thank you for your generous donation of \$500—your support in providing Bread For Life the opportunity to serve the community is always appreciated.

Ray Scholz

Chairman of the Board”

+**From the Gloucester Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)**—“Thank you for your generous gift. . .we are thrilled to have your support. We will be able to continue the mission of the NAACP which is to secure the political, educational, social and economic equality of rights to eliminate race-based discrimination and ensure the health and well-being of all persons. Our vision is to ensure a society in which all individuals have equal rights without discrimination based on race. Thank you again for your donation of \$500. You truly make the difference for us and we are extremely grateful! Much thanks.

Brenda Dixon, President”

(Copies of the letters are on the “Correspondence” bulletin board in the fellowship hall.)

Readings for February

+ **February 6—Fifth Sunday After Epiphany**
Isaiah 6:1-8[9-13] (Isaiah says, Here am I; send me), Psalm 138 (I will bow down toward your holy temple), 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 (I am the least of the apostles), Luke 5:1-11 (Jesus calls the disciples to fish for people)

+ **February 13—Sixth Sunday after Epiphany**
Jeremiah 17:5-10 (blessed are those who trust the Lord, they are like trees by water), Psalm 1 (they are like trees planted by streams of water), 1 Corinthians 15:12-20 (Christ has been raised, the first fruits of those who have died), Luke 6:17-26 (Jesus speaks blessings on the poor and hungry, woes on the rich and full)

+ **February 20—Seventh Sunday after Epiphany**
Genesis 45:3-11, 15 (Joseph forgives his brothers), Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40 (the lowly shall possess the land; they will delight in abundance of peace), 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50 (the mystery of the resurrection of the body), Luke 6:27-38 (love your enemies)

+ **February 22—Transfiguration of Our Lord**
Exodus 34:29-35 (coming down from Mount Sinai, Moses' face shown), Psalm 99 (proclaim the greatness of the Lord; worship upon God's holy hill), 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2 (with unveiled faces we see the Lord's glory as we are transformed), Luke 9:28-36[37-43a] (Jesus is transfigured on the mountain)

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Resources for The Day

sundays
and
seasons



We at Apostles have a WONDERFUL resource for ideas to help connect our Sunday readings to the rest

of our week—it's called Sundays and Seasons—in this new column of The Epistle, we will be sharing some of the things we found—if you would like access to this resource, please contact Janet Gomez at thezemogs@gmail.com.

February 6th—The image of hard-working, exhausted fishermen toiling all night but catching no fish resonates with the precarious state of today's oceans, in which overfishing, pollution, and the acidification, coral bleaching, and warming produced by climate change

threaten coastal and marine ecosystems and the sources of food upon which billions of people worldwide depend. Wherever we live, let's thank the ocean for every other breath we take: half the world's oxygen is produced by phyto-plankton, microscopic organisms in the ocean. But the oceans are dying. How can Christians share in Jesus' miracle? We can let down our nets into the deep reservoir of our faith and take action. We can initiate or join local efforts to clean up water-ways and beaches and we can support bans on single-use plastic bags, containers, and bottles, and avoid products containing "microbeads."

February 13—Roughly two millennia ago, Jesus spoke to the people on a level plain. How might Jesus invite us to experience God's presence in a new kind of level place in a digital realm? In some ways, technology has helped foster more equal access to resources for people across income levels, work schedules, and geographic locations. People can attend conferences, classes, or events in a more affordable way, creating more opportunities for more people. Social media, access to research via the Internet, and wider sharing of information allows space for more voices and perspectives. Some video call platforms, like Zoom, change our perceptions of physical space, visually putting participants shoulder to shoulder. There is no head of the table, elevated podium, or center stage in Zoom gallery view! Online ministry creates new opportunities to wrestle with power, privilege, blessings, and woes in our increasingly digital world.

February 20—Jesus' words in Luke are challenging. Krista Tippet, host of the podcast *On Being*, interviewed the late congressman John Lewis in a 2013 episode called "**Love in Action.**" Lewis speaks of his commitment to nonviolence and change-making for the sake of beloved community and his belief that the divine dwells within every human being. He says, "It was love at its best. It's one of the highest forms of love. That you beat me, you arrest me, you take me to jail, you almost kill me, but in spite of that, I'm going to still love you."

Welcome to The Winter Edition of Seasons of Stewardship

Featuring

The Caring Community Ministry Team's Amazing Grace Race!!

The Race has begun!!! Phil (aka Nate Peterson) got our 2 teams (the Golden Girls and the Blue Women Group) started on Sunday, January 30th with their first challenge of delivering annual reports and goodies to members of the congregation for the annual congregational meeting. If you missed seeing the first challenge episode, you can watch it on our website at apostles-elca.org. During the month of February, you will watch the teams handle other challenges and detours that are designed to help you get to know what the Caring Community Ministry Team is all about. In Episode 2, the teams will encounter a detour and have to choose between "Cooking is Caring" or "Planning is Patience." In Episode 3, the teams will face their next challenge - "All We Need Is A Little Love" and in Episode 4, the teams will have to figure out a puzzle. You won't want to miss the final episode, "God is Calling" and see who wins The Caring Community Ministry Team's Amazing Grace Race!! Save the date of Sunday, March 20th, for the celebration of the work of this team!!

The **Caring Community Ministry Team** is responsible for encouraging and supporting the growth of members' faith and for strengthening the congregation's sense of Christian community. the team:

- (1) **provides** on-going opportunities for learning about the Bible, the Lutheran faith, and Christian spirituality (Sunday church school, Vacation Bible school, Bible study, study groups, small spiritual growth groups, synod-sponsored programs and retreats, and the like);
- (2) **coordinates** the congregation's caring ministries to members in time of need;
- (3) **fosters** the congregation's sense of community through fellowship activities

(Sunday fellowship hour, special events & programs, family game and movie nights, and the like);

(4) **encourages** members' growth in generosity as a grateful response to the abundance of God's blessings in their lives;

(5) **supports** the growth of our youth through a program of activities that help develop a sustaining faith marked by joy in living, mutually supportive relationships, compassionate service to those in need, and growth in understanding of God's purposes for life.)

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Some Thoughts On A Caring Community

I recently read a reflection on the Gospel for Sunday, January 9th—the baptism of Jesus. In it, the author says that John the Baptist's baptism of water is a bold exhortation for people to repent publicly and join a covenantal community with a particular way of life. The people John is preaching to are hungry for a sense of belonging. Jesus' baptism accomplishes something specific—it is the beginning of a community inspired by the hope of a messiah. Jesus wants all people to have a strong sense of belonging to this community he came to establish. For us today, this new year will continue to reveal the impact of the pandemic, of political polarization, of the ongoing oppression of people of color, and of the growing indifference to organized religion and an active worship life. People are craving spaces where they can belong. We have the opportunity today to be an example of what it means to belong to a community in which people really care for one another and for all humanity. We cannot ignore that the last two years have revolutionized how people relate to one another, how they search for a place to belong and how they decide to commit to a community, especially a community of faith. I am so thankful for our community of faith here at Apostles and am thankful that I am a part of the Caring Community Ministry Team. I hope you will join us!

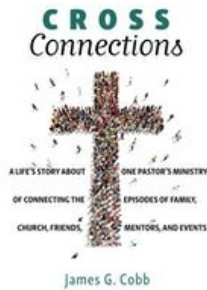
Janet Gomez

Update on Hiring An Administrative Assistant

We have had 4 people apply for the position—initial interviews have been held for 3 of the applicants—the interview of the 4th applicant is being scheduled. Stay tuned—we will provide updates as we get them!

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New Book By The Reverend Jim Cobb



Pastor Jim Cobb has written a new book entitled, “Cross Connections—A Life’s Story About One Pastor’s Ministry of Connecting the Episodes of Family, Church, Friends, Mentors and Events.” A pastor’s life and ministry have many poignant and humorous moments, yet such

stories usually stay within a small circle of family and friends. Pastor Cobb shares such moments of grace and gratitude that many will enjoy through reading and reflecting. Every life has a story where “threads” of connections form a wondrous mosaic in a life of unexpected surprises and joys. An archive of ministry memories is shared in this volume, which is truly summarized by the word “blessed”—blessed to share a life of unending pleasures in ministry where pastors and parishioners remember and celebrate, often with laughter the episodes of grace encounters. Humor, especially, is God-given grace. The book is available from Amazon. (Editor’s note—Pastor Judy Cobb was our interim pastor after Pastor Larsen retired.)

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Save the Date!!

- + **March 17th**—A new book study of “White Fragility” by Robin Diangelo led by Pastor Jeniffer and Pastor Sandy Wisco
 - + **April 2nd-3rd**—Daffodil Festival (we are hoping to have a booth)
 - + **November 3rd-5th**—All Lutheran Women’s Retreat at Natural Bridge Hotel and Conference Center.
- Stay tuned for details on all of these events!!



Mildred McDaniel Concert Series Presents...

Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad on Sunday, February 20th, at 4:00 PM at Reformation Lutheran Church in Newport News. Harriet Tubman and the Underground

Railroad is a play that Virginia Repertory on Tour (formerly Theatre IV) has been touring since 1990. While doing the extensive research into the life of Harriet Tubman, the author included many of the scenes in the life of Harriet Tubman; in fact, the whole premise of the play are the accounts as set forth in the Sara Bradford’s book, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* published by W. J. Moses in 1896, from interviews with Harriet Tubman herself. The play focuses on the brilliantly dedicated person that Harriet Tubman was in spite of enormous odds. *This performance is partially supported by funding from the Virginia Commission for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.* The concert is free and open to the public. Contributions will be accepted to help support the Concert Series. **Bring your mask.**

(Editor’s note—The Mildred McDaniel Concert Series presents concerts each year from September to May—with a variety of performers on the annual agenda, the concert series has touched every genre from handbells to jazz events. For more information about the series, go to <http://reformationlc.org/mildred-mcdaniel-concert-series/>.

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Synodwide Gathering Announced

Please reserve July 14-16 for Power in the Spirit or July 15-16 for the Synodwide Celebration of Service. We look forward to seeing you at the first in-person gathering of the entire Synod since 2019.