

The Epistle

THE NEWSLETTER OF APOSTLES LUTHERAN CHURCH

Gloucester, Virginia

www.apostles-elca.org

February 2023

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

A Word from Pastor Jay

Who is this?

For what purpose?

This February is a month of transition.

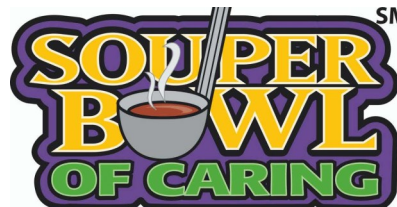
Throughout most of the month the season of Epiphany shapes our worship and focuses us on the question, "Who is this?" Seamlessly flowing from the Christmas celebration the season of Epiphany begins to tell the story of who this Jesus is. We see Jesus at the Jordan River and hear John the Baptist call him "The One." We find Jesus out among the people, beginning to call those first few folks who will become part of the twelve, the disciples who go on this journey with him. The narration of the text shares with us that Jesus preaches a message of repentance, heals all who are broken and tells all who would listen that the kingdom of God is touching them in his presence. The Gospel of Matthew helps us to hear this Jesus expound on Scripture and what relationship with God is about as we read through the Sermon on the Mount. In all of this, we come to recognize, along with John, that Jesus is the Promised One of God, the Messiah. Then Jesus takes a few of his disciples up on a mountaintop and is transfigured before their eyes, holding a conversation with Moses and Elijah. This Transfiguration, this transformation, abruptly changes everything in the Gospel, foreshadowing what is to come. Now that we know who Jesus is... the Messiah... we are drawn immediately into a new direction, a critical question.

For what purpose? What is this Messiah to do? How will this Messiah fulfill God's mission? As Jesus leaves the mountaintop, coming back down again, the season of Lent begins, and the face of Jesus is turned toward Jerusalem. Now that we know the identity of Jesus (Epiphany), we move toward learning the mission of Jesus (Lent).

This February is a month of transition. Over these coming weeks we will be renewed in our continuing discovery of who Jesus is. Then, shaped by this knowledge, we have our focus changed in an instant as Jesus is Transfigured and our journey is transformed. We, the beloved children of God, then have the awful, awesome opportunity to hear and see the rest of the journey unfold, following Jesus as we witness the fulfilling of God's plan of redemption.

February is a month of transition. Join us for the journey.

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**SM Souper Bowl
of Caring**

Support your favorite team—
either the Kansas

City Chiefs or the Philadelphia Eagles by making a donation to the Souper Bowl of Caring on **Sunday, February 5th**—all donations will be given to ELCA World Hunger. Just put your donation in the soup pot that Betsy Liljeberg will have available after the worship service.

A Recap of the Annual Congregational Meeting January 29th

What a GREAT meeting!! Thanks to everyone who participated!! Special thanks to Doug Dalager, Congregation Council President, for leading the meeting. After the call to order and establishment of a quorum, we received an oral report from Pastor Jay, the officers of Congregation Council and also from our Ministry Teams and the Mission Outreach Fund. Elections were then held for Congregation Council (re-elected for a 3-year term were Doug Dalager, Ray Scholz and Nancy Wagner); Synod Assembly Delegates (elected were Chris and Jennie Hawkins with alternates Ben Grimes and Sue Turner); Nominating Committee (Janet Gomez, Ben Grimes and Ingrid Peterson are automatically members as outgoing Council members and elected were Jennie Hawkins, Nate Peterson and Barbara Runk); and Mission Outreach Fund Committee (re-elected for another year term 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. Pastor Jay installed our new leaders.



House Blessings

As part of our Lenten journey this year, and as a way of becoming more familiar with the congregation and its members, I would like to invite you to invite me to visit you at your home and lead your family in a House Blessing. We Lutherans have an occasional service called “The Blessing of a Dwelling” which involves offering prayers that the presence and light of God may dwell in your home and God’s rich blessings may rest upon all who live and visit there. During the season of Lent, which begins at the end of the month, we will lift up House Blessings as a point of emphasis in our congregation’s ministry, and I would welcome an invitation to share in this observance with you and your family. All that is needed is our setting up an appointment together and your having a candle and a way to light it when I get to your home. This service works in any type of dwelling and even may be modified for places of business. While this will be an emphasis during Lent, I am available at any time of the year, by appointment, to share with you in the blessing of your dwelling. Give me a call and we can start planning this special service of asking God’s blessings and grace to remain in the place which you call “home.”

Pastor Jay

(Editor’s note—you can e-mail Pastor Jay at j80j84@msn.com or call him at 570-205-7506.)

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Thank You, Thank You

- + **To everyone** who helped with the memorial service for Opal Baker—it was a beautiful service and the reception was lovely.
- + **To everyone** who helped with the rescheduled Blue Christmas service—it was a very meaningful service to those who attended.
- + **To Keith and Juanita Sturdy** for the new coffeepot!

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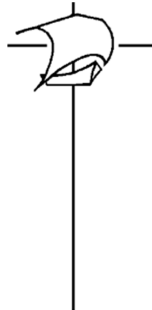
Your Help Is Needed!!

We need people to **clean the church** and serve as **tellers**—training is provided. Please talk to Ray Scholz if you are interested in helping!

Our Mission Statement

Do you know what our mission statement is? A mission statement is a shared vision for the future. In 1 Corinthians chapter 1, Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians and us how important it is for groups to share a common purpose, “Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose” (1 Cor. 1:10). Paul even offers the reminder that when there is no shared purpose people tend to argue over trivial things, like who baptized them. Here is our Mission Statement:

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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First Sunday Potluck Fellowship

The first Sunday potluck fellowship will be the **Sunday, February 5th**. Please bring a dish to share!

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Congratulations To . .



Pete and Betsy Liljeberg upon the birth of their first grandchild—little Anja June was born on Friday, January 27th—parents Katie and Andy are doing fine! They live in Minneapolis, MN.

Ministry Team Meetings

The following ministry team will meet in February:

+ **Worship** - Tuesday, February 21st at 7:00 PM

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Happy Birthday To . .

Ray Scholz	February 1
Keira Anby	February 2
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

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Happy Anniversary to.

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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A First for the ELCA



On Sunday, January 22nd, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) for the first time ordained a

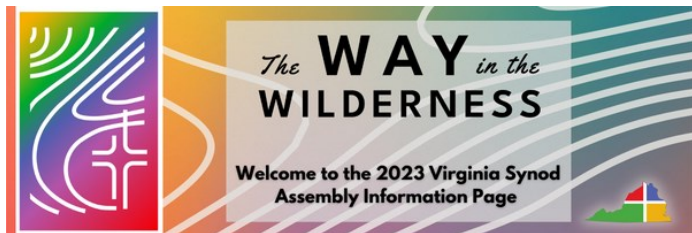
woman into pastoral ministry, Sally Azar. Lutherans from all over the world gathered at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem to bear witness to the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in that place. Presiding Bishop of the ELCA, The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton joined with 18 of synod bishops and church leaders, in this hopeful occasion in the life of Christ's church. This was the result of the prayerful discernment, theological reflection and concerted effort of the ELCJHL – the first member of the Lutheran World Federation to adopt its Gender Justice Policy. This is an example for us all. In 2020 the ELCA celebrated the 50th anniversary of U.S. Lutheran churches' decision to ordain women. We give thanks for the LWF's steadfast commitment to the ordination of women into pastoral ministry as a calling of God and a gift to Christ's church.

(Editor's note—thanks to Pastor Elizabeth Yates for this information.)

The Way In The Wilderness: Preparing for Synod Assembly Together

As Virginia Lutherans prepare to gather for the 2023 Synod Assembly, everyone is invited to join in a five-session bible study to explore the theme, The Way in the Wilderness. God is always with God's people, including joining us in all the wildernesses of life. Jesus calls us in many and various ways to share God's expansive love in our unique contexts. We are united in the wilderness, even if our journeys are different.

In each session, participants will hear a story about God's presence in the wilderness, will learn how that story has impacted a synod leader, and will have opportunity to share their wilderness stories too. Each session will help prepare our hearts and minds for the Synod Assembly, assured of God's presence with us as individuals and together as a synod. Everyone is welcome to attend: Lay and rostered, voting member or visitor, even if you won't be onsite for the Assembly in June, you are welcome to join the conversation. Portions of the sessions will be recorded and shared. Thank you to our session leaders: Bishop Bob Humphrey, Pastor Kelly Bayer Derrick (Assistant to the Bishop), Pastor John Wertz Jr. (Director for Evangelical Mission), Charles Downs (Synod Council President), and Blythe Scott (Synod Council Secretary). **February 27, March 27, April 24, & May 22 7-8:15 pm on Zoom—register at www.vasynod.org.**



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Please Keep In Your Prayers

Eddie Freeman, Manning Freeman, Don Garfield, David Muse, Michael Schlemmer, George Thomas, Jewel Thomas, Sue and George Turner, and Jerry and Lena Woodlief.



Ash Wednesday and Mid-Week Lenten Services

Please join us on **Wednesday, February 22nd, at 7:00 PM** for the Ash Wednesday worship service. The following Wednesday, March 1st, we will have a mid-week meal of soup and bread at 6:00 PM—you are welcome to bring a sandwich if you want—and then we will have a Service of the Word starting at 7:00 PM. There will be a signup sheet in the narthex for you to sign up to bring soup and bread. Please join us!!

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God's Work, Our Hands

Despite the freezing temperature (it was only in the mid-30's—burr!!), Ray Scholz, Doug Dalager, David Leunig and Gene Gomez with the help of Danny Joyce completed the back steps for Michael and Samantha Crocker on January 14th—the front steps were done last year.



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Looking Ahead

- + **March**—Apostles will be hosting the “Faith-Based Breakfast” meeting with representatives from Gloucester County and area churches
- + **March 12th**—Commissioning of the Guatemala Medical Mission Team during worship
- + **Sunday, June 4th**—Reconciling in Christ Celebration
- + **Thursday-Saturday, July 13th-15th**—Summer Power In The Spirit at Roanoke College

i VAMOS A GUATEMALA !



Apostles Lutheran Church is returning to Guatemala! After a 2 year hiatus because of COVID, we are heading back this coming March 19-26. We will once again be working with our brothers and sisters in Mazate and Xojola', providing medical care in their clinic and installing wood stoves in the village. There will be 9 of us traveling from Apostles including Ray, Janet, Linda, Barbara, Donna, Chase, Chris, Pete and Betsy. We will again be bringing health kits to pass out at the clinic, so you may begin to collect supplies at home. Each kit contains 1 towel, soap, 1 washcloth, toothbrush and paste, safety pins and bandaids. It works best when people collect supplies for an entire kit. We will be having a Guatemala journuda (work day) after worship on March 5th! Bring your assembled health kits or bring the pieces and we will assemble them together on that day. We will also be collecting infant clothing, children vitamins, saline eye drops, and powdered baby formula Muchas gracias por su ayuda y sus oraciones!

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Congregation Council Meeting

The Congregation Council will be meeting on **Monday, February 13th, at 7:00 PM.** Anyone is welcome to attend!

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New Church Directory

An updated church directory has been sent out by e-mail—if you would like a printed copy, copies are available in the narthex.

Look What's New At Apostles!



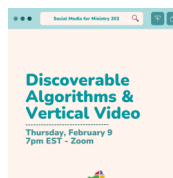
Jade Hawkins has donated an adult and infant CPR Rescue Mask kit to the First Aid Kit located on the coat hooks in the Narthex with the AED Lifepac. Jade and Jennie participated a CPR and first aid class in January to become certified. During her class, Jade learned the

importance on the AED in public places and how they can save lives. Being encouraged to know where they are located and making sure they are in working order, she did so on her next visit to Apostles. Jade has inspected the church's AED and tested the battery, made sure shock pads are in good condition and ready to use should in ever be needed.

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Social Media for Ministry 202: Discoverable Algorithms & Vertical Video

Being a friend, follower, or subscriber to someone on social media is no longer the only way to connect. All major social media platforms are building in discoverable algorithms to connect people with new creators based on their interests and interactions. Understanding how this new type of algorithm works and being able to create content for it (vertical video) is a huge opportunity for evangelism for churches of all sizes. Pastor Colleen Montgomery from the Virginia Synod will be teaching a class on **Thursday, February 9 from 7-8:15 PM** on Zoom. In this class, you'll learn what makes discoverable algorithms



different from their predecessors and the basics of how to brainstorm, film, and edit vertical videos. Edited recordings of the class will be shared with the registration list. Register at vasynod.org.

Paint Party Fundraiser for Jade Hawkins

As an active eligible member of Girl Scouting, Jade Hawkins has been given the opportunity to travel to Puerto Rico in 2024. Let's work together to help her get there. There will be a "paint party" at Apostles on Friday, February 10th, from 5-8 PM. The art instructor for the evening will be Gloucester's own Janet Griffin. SEATS ARE LIMITED TO 30 AND ARE \$30 EACH. A taco bar dinner will be served and additional donations will be collected then. Interested in attending? Interested in helping with the Taco Dinner? There is a "Sign up Genius" with 30 seats to reserve—you can also sign up to help setup or help with the taco dinner—there are 10 spots for those interested in helping. Please contact Jennie Hawkins at photojenic02@yahoo.com for the link or type in the following code:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080D4BAEA72AABFC1-paint1>

Please review the available slots and click on the button to reserve your spot today. Please contact Jennie if you have any questions—you can call Jennie at 571-359-7617.

If you would you like to make a donation to her trip please use the following link at anytime:

account.efexploreamerica.com/donations/VoK514. This is a important milestone for Jade and the support of Apostles is so important. Thank you!!

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Worship In The Park is Back!!!

Mark you calendars for Sunday, September 10th—we will be worshipping

again in park—at Whitcomb Lodge at the beautiful Beaverdam Park.



Wanted: Prayer Shawls

This is a wonderful ministry—recently we were able to give prayer shawls out to people who attended the Blue Christmas service, to the niece of Betsy Liljeberg and to David Muse whose friend, Tonia, texted “Yesterday we received an amazing gift from our wonderful church family at Apostles Lutheran Church. Many thanks for the beautiful handmade shawl and the lovely card. David was so happy to receive it and to know you all have him in your hearts and prayers.” If you need patterns, please contact either Pam Moore or Janet Gomez. A suggestion was made at the annual congregational meeting to have a prayer shawl workshop—stay tuned for details about that. There will be “blessing” of prayer shawls on Sunday, March 26th, during the worship service.

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For the Congregation's Information

At the annual congregational meeting, Pastor Jay talked about several things. Pastor Jay said he has been appointed by Bishop Humphrey, Bishop of the Virginia Synod, to serve as our Interim Pastor for six months. That is to say that the Bishop has some say in Pastor Jay's call here at Apostles. Pastor Jay said he would be working on (1) looking at what happened last year and the conflict we went through, (2) helping us to work on normalizing things and getting back on our feet again and (3) helping us take a look at our ministry here and identify who we are and what we want to do and be. Pastor Jay hopes to have a Congregational Council retreat in the near future. Pastor Jay said that his call as our interim pastor could be extended after the six months or if the Spirit directs us, we could work on calling Pastor Jay to be our permanent pastor. Pastor Jay asked for our help by wearing our nametags and also because he is not familiar with the area, to let him know where you live by giving him directions like north or west, etc. Pastor Jay is part time and his office hours will normally be Monday and Wednesday from 10:00 AM–1:00 PM.

7th Day

7th Day is the Virginia Synod's annual, overnight, faith sharing event for youth in 5th and 6th grades and their adult advisors. In 2023, 7th Day will take place from noon Saturday, March 4th to 1:30 Sunday, March 5th at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center. During the weekend participants are part of a "Shepherd Group" with other youth and adult leaders. Participants will explore, in their Shepherd Groups, a story of the Bible through drama, games, crafts, and music. In the evening youth and adults will have time to relax in their Cottages with their congregation, and other congregations from Virginia, to discuss how 7th Day is going. The Cost is \$125 per youth or adult participant. **Early Registration discount – \$115 – ends February 6, 2023.** If you have additional questions, contact Synod Youth Director Dave Delaney at delaney@vasynod.org. Christina Badger and her daughter, Regan, are planning to attend—if you know of any other 5th or 6th grader who would like to attend, please contact Christina at 804-854-5633.

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Lenten Devotionals

Lent
Devotions



Return to the Lord...

We have been invited to join with Abingdon Episcopal, Ware Episcopal, Kingston Parish and Grace Episcopal churches in sharing reflections and thoughts for the season of Lent this year. Apostles has been asked to provide reflections for the readings for 9 days of

Lent—this will be similar to what we did for Advent devotions in 2021. You will be asked to take one of the days, read and reflect on the readings for that day and write a short reflection on them—200-300 words. All of reflections will be put into a booklet that will be used for daily devotions during Lent. Reflections will need to be submitted by February 12th. If you are interested in participating, please contact Janet Gomez at 804-693-5738 or thezemogs@gmail.com.

First of "Truth in Love" Workshops Held

Several members of the Congregation Council and the congregation attended the first "Truth in Love" workshop on introduction to conflict management held by the Virginia Synod. The workshop focused on the normalization of conflict, mutuality, active listening, and following and responding. Conflict is a natural part of living in community; *managing* conflict in Christlike ways *doesn't* always come naturally. The workshop provided some tools to healthily approach conflict management. The workshop was led by the Virginia Synod Truth in Love Coordinator, Rev. Liz Radtke. There will be additional workshops held—stay tuned for details.

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February Opportunities



The Wren Masters are an early music quartet, playing renaissance and baroque music on period instruments. Hailed by The Washington Post for

their "crisp ensemble, mellowness, and admirable stylistic awareness," the four members are performing artist faculty of the College of William & Mary, playing harpsichord, baroque violin, viola da gamba / baroque cello, and recorder. This concert is partially funded by the Virginia Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts. The concert will be Sunday, February 12th, at 4:00 PM at Reformation Lutheran Church in Newport News and is free and open to the public. Contributions will be accepted to help support the Concert Series.

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First Communion Instruction To Be Held

Pastor Jay plans to have "first communion" instruction for children and parents sometime in the Spring—stay tuned for details. There will be a sign up sheet posted in the narthex for anyone interested in this instruction.