

# The Epistle

THE NEWSLETTER OF APOSTLES LUTHERAN CHURCH

Gloucester, Virginia

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

March 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*

“Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. “

Matthew 16:24

Have you ever noticed how many different types of crosses there are? If you have access to the internet you might google “types of crosses,” and I’m sure you would be surprised by how many ways the symbol of the cross has been depicted throughout history. The cross has become a symbol not only of the simple execution instrument on which Jesus died, but also of particular expressions of theology or doctrine or heritage or office. Because it is such a powerful symbol, Christians from the beginning of the Jesus movement used the cross to communicate to each other the depth and richness of a faith that forever will be tied to a grisly death. Early Christians, even during times of persecution, etched the symbol of the cross into rock near meeting places and hideaways to express their constancy of faith to those who gathered there. Different geographical areas depicted the cross in unique ways and passed this sacred symbol on to the next generation and to the future as a way of grounding their faith in the holy acts of God and of sharing the importance of God’s saving acts to those who

would take up the faith. Some crosses are simple, relying on the story of the crucifixion alone to speak to those who view it, while others are very ornate or shaped/angled/modified in various ways to help to tell an aspect of the story the bearer of that cross deems worthwhile.

During the season of Lent our focus on the cross is intensified. We look at the mystery of the cross and of God’s gracious and merciful acts for us through Jesus and we wrestle with the implications of our sinfulness, God’s mercy and love and this amazing story which restores our broken relationship with God. The cross forces us to honestly and openly assess ourselves as humans separated from God by our selfishness, our sin. Regardless of how we imagine we stack up when compared to others, the cross communicates to us the simple truth that we fail God and break relationship with God constantly. It is, after all, ultimately human sinfulness which places Jesus on the cross. Human willfulness, the human desire to have our way prevail instead of God’s way, to claim power and authority for ourselves over against God’s call to loving relationship, ultimately causes the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus. We refuse to let God be God. We refuse to be God’s creatures, made in God’s image and called to live in service and love. Some first century authorities and people rejected the call to follow the way of God, and instead, got rid of the one who came to make God’s way known. We, too, are complicit in the cross when we refuse to

follow God's way and seek our own instead. Therefore, the cross is a reminder for us of how we fail, but also of a God who does not ever give up on us. God's ultimate power, unleashed in weakness and humility and death, offers a love so deep and tried and true that we never can remove ourselves from it. The cross, therefore, is God's claim on us that God will bear anything, even death, so that we might be bound to God, have our relationship restored, and find the fullness of life we can't provide ourselves.

So, during this Lenten season, perhaps in our busyness we can find time to contemplate the cross, and to recall God's acts of unfailing love which claim us now and always. We know the cross has been a symbol countless generations of Christians have revered because it reminded them of God's love. Maybe we, too, can appreciate better the symbol itself and all that it means for us today. Then, inspired by the cross and by the God who gave himself for us, we, too, might be energized to take up our cross and follow this Jesus as we live in service to God and to others, secure in our understanding of God's never-ending love for us, and the gift of life made known by this symbol cherished by followers of Christ.

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### **Souper Bowl Results**

Thank you to everyone who donated to the Souper Bowl—a total of \$169.28 was collected and has been given to the Bread for Life Food Pantry—we hope your favorite team won!!

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### **Easter Lilies**

We are taking orders for Easter lilies to adorn our sanctuary for Easter—the cost is \$14—if you would like to purchase one, please signup on the signup sheet in the narthex at the church. The deadline to order is **Sunday, March 26th.**



## **The Season of Lent at Apostles**

The season of Lent started at Apostles with an Imposition of Ashes

worship service on Ash Wednesday, February 22nd. There are lots of opportunities to help your 40-day Lenten journey at Apostles:

- + **Lenten Devotion Booklets**—members of 5 churches in Gloucester, Mathews and Yorktown (including Apostles) have written devotions for each day in Lent—copies of the booklet are available in the narthex—there are also ELCA World Hunger devotion booklets available.
- + **Mid-Week Services**—Come be with your church family for a meal of soup and bread followed by a Service of the Word worship service on Wednesdays starting at 6:00 PM. The theme of the worship services is scripture that makes you go “Hmmm.” Pastor Jay, Pete Liljeberg and Ingrid Peterson will be leading the worship services.
- + **House Blessings**—Contact Pastor Jay to schedule a House Blessing during Lent—this is a way for Pastor Jay to become more familiar with the congregation and its members. All that is needed is your having a candle and a way to light it when he gets 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, Pastor Jay will be available at any time of the year, by appointment, to share with you in the blessing of your dwelling. You can e-mail Pastor Jay at [j80j84@msn.com](mailto:j80j84@msn.com) or call him at 570-205-7506.

*(The picture is of the Lenten roses in the front of the church yard.)*

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### **Happy Anniversary to.**

Barbara and Bernie Runk  
Don and Jane Garfield

March 1st  
March 20th

## Meet Your Congregation Council



Pastor Jay Serafin  
Interim Pastor



David Leunig,  
President



Ben Grimes  
Vice President



Tina Britt  
Treasurer



Janet Gomez  
Secretary



Heinz and Irene Albert  
Financial Secretaries



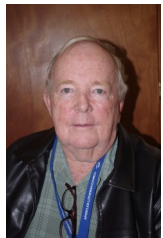
Doug Dalager  
Member



Chris Hawkins  
Member



Ingrid Peterson  
Member



Ray Scholz  
Member



Sue Turner  
Member



Nancy Wagner  
Member

The next Congregation Council meeting will be **Monday, March 13th, at 7:00 PM**—anyone is welcome to attend.

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## Happy Birthday To . . .

Phil Dunn	March 1
Tina Britt	March 11
Makayla Hess	March 15
Judy Wright	March 20
Steve Hanson	March 22
J. Dillon	March 27
August Crocker	March 27
Margaret Grimes	March 28

## First Sunday Potluck Fellowship

The first Sunday potluck fellowship will be the **Sunday, March 5th**. In addition to the potluck lunch, we will be putting together health kits for the Guatemala Medical Mission trip. Please bring a dish to share! We'll also have some special Guatemalan dishes.

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## Guatemala Medical Mission Team Commissioning

The team going to Guatemala will be commissioned during the worship service on **Sunday, March 12th**.

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## Prayer Shawls Needed

Our supply of prayer shawls is very low—please consider knitting or crocheting one or two shawls—we will be having a special blessing of the shawls on **Sunday, March 26th**, during the worship service. If you need patterns and/or prayers, please contact Janet Gomez at 804-693-5739 or [thezemogs@gmail.com](mailto:thezemogs@gmail.com).

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## Look What's New at Apostles



### HOLY COMMUNION RECORD

Envelope no. \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Desire pastor to call  I am a visitor   
 Home congregation \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_

*Please return this card as a record of your Communion*

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In the next few weeks, you will see these cards in the pews—we are asking that everyone fill out a card one time during the year—this will help with the statistics needed for the parochial report that has to be completed once a year—thank you from the Worship Ministry Team!!

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## Thank You, Thank You

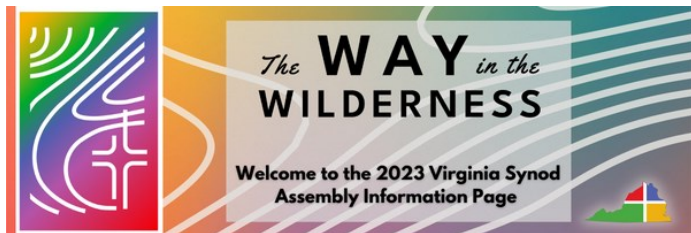
- + To **Ray Scholz** for power washing the front of the church.
- + To **Jennie Hawkins** for her photography skills!!



## *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). **March 27, April 24, and May 22 7-8:15 pm on Zoom—register at [www.vasynod.org](http://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.

# 7<sup>th</sup> Day

March 4-5,  
2023

"And on the Seventh Day, God finished the work of creation"  
-Genesis 2:2

VIRGINIA SYNOD ELCA-YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES

## 7th Day

7th Day is the Virginia Synod's annual youth retreat for youth in grades 5 and 6—it's a 24 hour event filled with lots of activities for the youth. This year, Christina Badger and her daughter, Reagan Jay, will be attending—we look forward to hearing about there experience!!

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## *Faith Based Breakfast at Apostles*

Apostles will be hosting the next Faith Based Breakfast on **Wednesday, March 15th, at 9:00 AM**. Representatives from churches in the area come together periodically for networking and information sharing. The guest speaker will be Investigator Holt from the Gloucester County Sheriff's Department. He will be discussing Human Trafficking and how we can make an impact in our community. The meeting will close with a brief discussion on preparedness for the 2023 Hurricane season. Anyone is welcome to attend—you can RSVP by calling 804-693-1390.

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## *Welcome to Facebook!!*

Did you know we have a Facebook page? You can use the search feature to find the Apostles Lutheran Church - A Reconciling in Christ Community, Facebook page. You will recognize the RIC logo that accompanies the page. Please find and "FOLLOW" button that appears in blue. And once activated it will change to "FOLLOWING". Once you become a "Follower", you will be able to see any post made concerning news and events at Apostles as this is a public page it can be seen by anyone. Pastor Jay will be creating content and monitoring the Facebook page regularly. We encourage you to share the page with your friends and contacts, and visitors coming to our area. If you use Facebook regularly, we would like to consider being part of a private chat group that is just for Apostles Lutheran Church members. If you would like to be added to this group, please see Pastor Jay or Jennie Hawkins for more information.

## Looking Ahead

+ Sunday, June 4th—Reconciling in Christ Celebration

+ Thursday-Saturday, July 13th-15th—Summer Power In The Spirit at Roanoke College

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## Paint Party Fundraiser for Jade Hawkins

In February, Apostles came together to help sponsor Jade Hawkins and her trip to Puerto Rico, with a Taco Dinner and Paint Night. We had about 42 people attend the event and just under a thousand dollars was donated towards Jade's fundraiser. Many members of Apostles attended and fun was had by all. You can see an example of Sunset Birds painting made by Doug Dalager on display in the fellowship hall. Jade would like to say "many thanks" to all who came out.



## Correspondence

“Dear Apostles Family,

We want to extend our most heartfelt thanks for all of the love, prayers and support you have given us over the past several weeks. The gift of the shawl was a beautiful surprise and we will treasure all of the love and care that went into it. David continues to improve and we hope to be home within the next month. Thanks again for everything! You have been a true blessing to us!

Love,

David and Tonia”

*(Editor's note: David came home on Friday, Friday, February 24th, after 2 months in the hospital – if you would like to send David a card, you can mail it to David Muse, P.O. Box 218, Shackelfords, VA 23156.)*

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## Website Update

Gerald Britt, our Website guru, has been updating the website with upcoming event dates and times—an information sheet will be sent out with the newsletter with details—check it out. A big THANK YOU to Gerald for keeping the website up to date and current!!

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## Apostles Members Traveling to Guatemala This Month!

Nine members of Apostles will be traveling with a medical mission to Mazatenango, Guatemala from March 19th-26th. We ask for your prayers as we prepare for and travel abroad. Those going on the trip are: Ray Scholz, Barbara Runk, Janet Gomez, Donna and Chase Ambrose, Linda Hodges, Pete, Betsy, and Chris Liljeberg. MarySue and Dennis Fonkert will be joining from South Dakota.



This year during Lent, why not try one of the many resources offered by the ELCA. In the Narthex you will find Lenten devotionals. Online, you can subscribe to a Lenten email at: [https://community.elca.org/40-days-subscription?\\_ga=2.27875836.1197297519.1676986484-2085026792.1676986484](https://community.elca.org/40-days-subscription?_ga=2.27875836.1197297519.1676986484-2085026792.1676986484) Other resources for Lent can be found at: <https://www.elca.org/40days> Because of war, earthquakes, drought, and epidemics, the world is suffering from hunger. Your contributions help people around the world and here in the U.S. Your prayers strengthen the community and your own spiritual life. Practicing a spiritual discipline during Lent are a wide reaching blessing to all.

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### **Ministry Team Meetings**

The following ministry teams will meet in March:

- + **Caring Community**—Tuesday, March 7th, at 7:00 PM
- + **Service and Sharing**—Tuesday, March 14th, at 7:00 PM
- + **Worship**—Tuesday, March 28th, at 7:00 PM
- + **Reconciling in Christ**—Thursday, March 30th at 7:00 PM

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### **Happy Baptismal Anniversary**

Kayla Hautz	March 2
Carson Riordan	March 26
Emily Riordan	March 26
Sean Riordan	March 26
Jack and Juliet Baur	March 31

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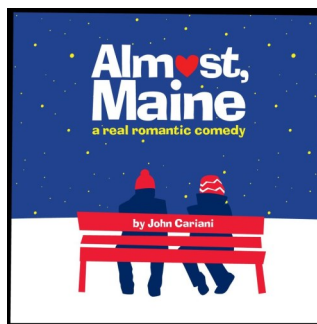
### **First Communion Instruction To Be Held**

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.

### **March Opportunities**



**Naho Bessho** is an accomplished pianist of lyrical and delicate tonality. Naho Bessho was born in Japan. She began playing piano when she was five, and she won the second prize in a competition in Nagoya when she was 13 years old in junior high school. This enabled her to play piano with select members of Nagoya Philharmonic Orchestra. She came to the United States in 2002 and commenced her advanced study at Boston University. Through 2004 to 2005 by invitation she became a summer resident of Brandywine Piano Institute of Westchester University, Pennsylvania. In 2006 she graduated from Boston University with a Performance Diploma. Since then she has given piano recitals in Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Virginia, and Maryland. The concert will be Sunday, March 12th, at 4:00 PM at Reformation Lutheran Church in Newport News. The concert is free and open to the public. Contributions will be accepted to help support the Concert Series.



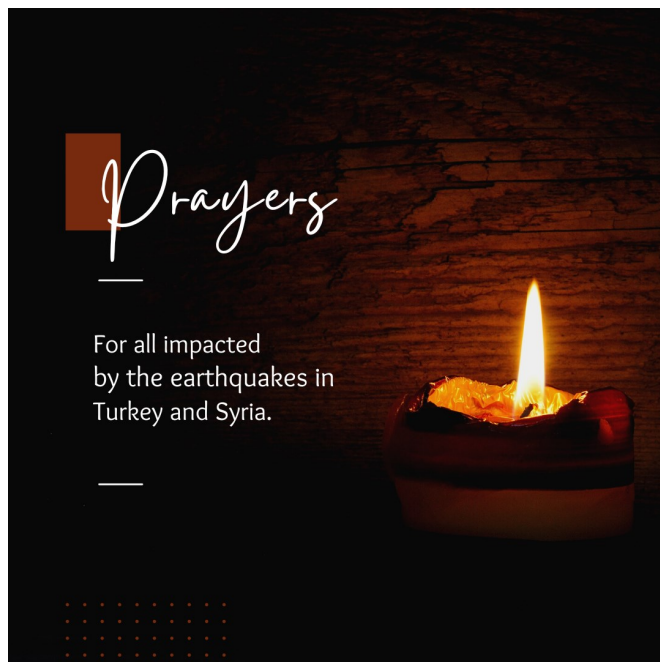
**Almost, Maine** by John Cariani, is the next production of The Courthouse Players. It's about a town in Maine that's so far north, it's almost not in the United States--it's almost in Canada. And it almost doesn't exist. Because its residents never get around to getting organized. So it's just...Almost. One cold, clear Friday night in the middle of winter, while the northern lights hover in the sky above, Almost's residents find themselves falling in and out of love in the strangest ways. Knees are bruised. Hearts are broken. Love is lost, found, and confounded. And life to the people of Almost, Maine will never be the same. *Almost, Maine: It's love. But not quite.* Shows will be Friday through Sunday, March 24-26, at the Piankatank Ruritan Club, Hudgins.



## *February was Black History Month*

February was Black History Month, and in honor of this observance, the ELCA celebrated the contributions of members of the African-descent community. But it's important to note that we celebrate these contributions every day, not only during the month of February. Many believe that the Lutheran Church is a predominantly European, Anglocentric denomination, but the history of the African-descent Lutheran church is an essential part of who we are as Lutherans. The history of Black Lutheranism is as long as the American Lutheran tradition. By most accounts, the Black Lutheran church began in the 1600s. There are many significant African-descent Lutherans in the history of our church, but here are a few notable "firsts." We remember Pastor Earlean Miller, who in 1979 was the first African American Lutheran woman to be ordained in North America. She served in a number of congregations across the country. Pastor Miller died in 2014, but her legacy lives on. The ELCA Fund for Leaders established a scholarship fund in her name that supports women of color who are attending seminary to become future leaders in our church. We also remember Pastor Nelson Trout, who in 1983 became the first African American elected as bishop in U.S. Lutheranism. He served as professor and director of minority ministry studies at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. But this month we also honor the historic ministry of all members of the ELCA African-descent community who make up the American Lutheran tradition. For generations African-descent Lutherans have brought their unique stories to the larger story of the ELCA. Their ministry is making a difference in communities across this church, building up the body of Christ. We honor these contributions and remember that we are all ELCA Lutherans, partners in doing God's work in the world together. Be well, dear church.

The Reverend Elizabeth A. Eaton  
Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church In America



Tens of thousands of people have been killed and many more injured after a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck southern Turkey on Monday, February 6, just 50 miles from the Syrian border. Since the earthquake there have been hundreds of aftershocks. The strongest was 7.5 magnitude, adding to the devastation. Additionally, just two weeks later on February 20th, a 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck Hatay province, southern Turkey. Tremors were felt in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq, with reports of more buildings collapsing and further fatalities. Many of the hardest-hit communities are in northwestern Syria, where people who have already been displaced several times by the ongoing conflict are among those whose homes were destroyed in the quakes. They are without adequate shelter, food and basic necessities as temperatures plunge well below freezing. You can help by donating to ELCA Lutheran Disaster Response. Let us pray: O Holy One, Be present with our sisters and brothers stricken by earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. Give strength to rescue workers. Grant resources to health care providers. Enfold the weeping. Tend the wounded. Draw near to those who are desperately seeking their loved ones. All of these are your children. Abide with them today, and in the weeks to come. Do not let us turn away from the need at hand. Amen.