

The Epistle

THE NEWSLETTER OF APOSTLES LUTHERAN CHURCH

Gloucester, Virginia

www.apostles-elca.org

July 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 Christmas in July

In so many ways, I am drawn to the beginning of the Gospel of Luke, and the story of the birth of

Messiah. The story portrayed there in the words written by the Evangelist so many years ago still captures our hearts and minds as it vividly tells the story of Emmanuel, of a God who loves us so much that this God will do anything, including taking on human flesh and entering into the limits of time and space to be with us in direct relationship. Much of my pondering about this incredible story, however, is centered around the figure of Mary. I hardly can begin to understand, let alone describe, the emotions, the thoughts, the uncertainty, the unparalleled realization Mary must have encountered as the words of the angel began to seep into her consciousness and the plan of God began to unfold through her. This unfolding would turn her life upside down, bringing her scorn and, to some degree, danger as the situation evolved. She has been told that she has been chosen by God to help bring about the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation for all people. Mary. A small-town girl without fame or notoriety or power or high education or prestige would be, of all people, singled out to carry God's Word to the world, to birth incarnation. What does one do when confronted with this realization?

Mary's response, which is one of my favorite pieces of Scripture, stands out as a defiant assertion. "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." While she didn't know the path ahead, she must have sensed this new reality would change her life in many ways, and that the future would not be easy.

Uncertainty is a part of human life. I don't need to tell you this. Each of us faces uncertainty often on our journey. Unfortunately, uncertainty often can provoke anxiety, and anxiety can be paralyzing for us as we face a future we cannot fully predict. While God indeed speaks promises over our lives, God does not promise to reveal to us ahead of time what course our lives will take. Much about the future remains unknown until we encounter it. That is why Mary stands out for me as a wonderful example of strength in the midst of uncertainty. She could have balked at the announcement and proclaimed her inability, her youth, her lack of credentials or understanding or life-experience. Instead, when faced with a possibility of God's working through her for the sake of the world, Mary says, "Ok, I accept. Lord, I am your servant and will do my best to walk with you in this uncertain journey."

In today's world, where everything seems to have changed so much, so quickly, and we do not know where the future will take us, perhaps Mary can shine forth as an example. Luke doesn't say she was without anxiety or doubt or fear. Luke simply tells us that Mary accepted

the mission God placed before her, and Christmas- incarnation happened. Moving forward as a congregation, we are heirs of this missional resolve shown by Mary. We don't know what the future holds for us, but we do know that we have been called, we have been chosen to do mission, we have been touched by God's grace and love and promise, so that, like Mary, we can open ourselves to the possibilities which the future might present. Perhaps the most faithful thing we can say in the midst of our uncertainty, our anxiety, our doubt, is "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Opening ourselves to God's possibilities in this way may allow the incarnate word to be revealed through us.

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Pastor Jay Serafin Called To Be Apostles' Pastor

It was UNANIMOUS!! At the special congregational meeting on Sunday, June 25th, the vote to call Pastor Jay as our pastor was unanimous—the vote on Pastor Jay's compensation package was also unanimous. Pastor Jay's call is part-time and he will be working 20 hours a week. *Almighty God, you have called us to labor in your vineyard and without you we can do nothing. Grant us your gracious presence in the days ahead that what we do together will build up your whole Church. Let your Holy Spirit direct us that we may work together peacefully, pleasing you with all that we say and do, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!!*

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Cookout to Celebrate July 4th!

The Caring Community Ministry Team cordially invites you to a cookout to celebrate July 4th on **Sunday, July 9th** after the 10:00 AM worship service. We will be providing hot dogs, buns, condiments and ice cream – please bring a “picnic” dish to share (baked beans, potato salad, chips, pickles, etc.) We will have some games and tie dying t-shirts for those who ordered them. Would LOVE to have you join us!!

Virginia Synod Assembly 2023



Pastor Jay and delegates Chris and Jennie Hawkins at the 2023 Virginia Synod Assembly on the campus of Roanoke College in Salem.



Delegates Chris and Jennie Hawkins with Virginia Synod Bishop-Elect, the Rev. Dr. Phyllis Blair Milton

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Happy Birthday to . .

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|-----------------|---------|
| Manning Freeman | July 4 |
| Kaleb Hess | July 9 |
| Janice Roe | July 13 |
| Dan Grantham | July 22 |
| Nate Peterson | July 22 |
| George Turner | July 23 |
| Brian Badger | July 24 |



The **WAY** in the
WILDERNESS

Report from the Virginia Synod Assembly

Lutherans from all around the Virginia Synod gathered at Roanoke College on June 9–11 for the 2023 Virginia Synod Assembly. The Synod welcomed **Deacon Sue Rothmeyer**, Secretary of the ELCA as our Churchwide Representative. The Assembly theme was The Way in the Wilderness. Hear the voice of the prophet Isaiah call out: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord” (Isaiah 40:3a).

Elections

With the pending retirement of Bishop Bob Humphrey, the Assembly undertook the process of electing the next Bishop of the Virginia Synod. On the sixth ballot, the **Rev. Dr. Phyllis Blair Milton**, Pastor at Holy Communion, Portsmouth, was elected with 175 votes to 172 votes for the Rev. Kelly Bayer Derrick, Assistant to the Bishop of the Virginia Synod. Bishop-elect Milton will take office September 1. She will be installed as Bishop on Saturday, October 21 at First Presbyterian Church in Waynesboro. The Assembly elected **Blythe Scott** (First, Norfolk) to serve as the new Vice-President of the Virginia Synod and elected **Judy Castele** (Good Shepherd, Lexington) to serve as the Secretary of the Virginia Synod. In addition to the election of the Bishop, Vice-President, and Secretary of the Synod, the Assembly elected lay leaders to serve on the Synod Council, the Consultation Committee, and the Committee on Discipline. A full list of those elected is available on the Synod website: <https://vasynod.org/2023-virginia-synod-assembly/>

Worship

The Assembly opened with a service of Holy Communion. **Pastor Liz Radtke**, Virginia Synod Truth and Love Coordinator, served as the preacher for worship and focused on the Assembly theme, ‘The Way in the Wilderness.’ On Saturday morning, **Bishop Humphrey** former Synod leaders who had presided at a service of remembrance for rostered ministers and former Synod leaders who had died in the last two years and also remembered congregations that had

closed. Saturday’s Assembly concluded with a Festival Service of Holy Communion that included commissioning eleven lay preachers **George Donovan, Laura Doughty, Janet Gomez, James Ingraham, Erich Lantz, David Mayersky, Sylvia Miles, Ray Riggan, Kristee Trumbo, Judith Wilfong, Leon Zimmermann**. The final day of the Assembly began with morning prayer and ended with a closing worship service featuring a sermon by **Deacon Emily Edmunds** (Chaplain, Virginia Baptist Hospital, Lynchburg) and the installation of those serving in leadership roles within the life of the Virginia Synod. This year the offering was designated to support the Lutheran Disaster Response and Virginia Synod Disaster Response.

Celebrations

We celebrated rostered minister ordination anniversaries, congregation anniversaries, lay leadership and five volunteers were recognized for the **2023 Serving Boldly Awards**. The award recipients were **Kisha Johnson** (Good Shepherd, Galax), **Carol Jones** (Christ, Richmond), **Robert Perry** (Zion, Edinburg Parish), **Diana Tiller-Dichtel** (St. Stephen, Williamsburg), and **Connie Watkins** (St. Mark’s, Roanoke). We will celebrate and honor Bishop Humphrey as he is concluding his term as bishop.

Assembly Business

The Assembly approved the 2023 and 2024 Investment in Ministry Plans, the 2021 and 2022 Synod Audits, and the Compensation Guidelines for 2024. Bishop Humphrey and the Officers of the Synod shared their reports and the Assembly heard from a variety of mission partners through ministry moment videos. **Nathan Rummel** (Trinity, Newport News), president of the Lutheran Youth Organization, presented the Youth Assembly report, centered on the Youth Assembly theme of “Followers of the Way and the Truth and the Life.” He spoke to the immeasurable value of youth events, and also expressed the gathered youths’ vision for the new bishop of the Virginia Synod. The next LYO Board president will be **Asher Porter** (Our Savior, Christiansburg).



Joining Our Congregation

New Member Sunday will be **Sunday, July 18th**. If you have any interest in joining our fellowship here at Apostles, please let Pastor Jay know. If you are not a member and wish to continue sharing in our worship and fellowship gatherings without joining, please know we are happy that you are here. We want you to feel welcome, and would be happy to have you as a member and include you in all aspects of our congregational life or to welcome and enjoy your presence in any of our gatherings.

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House Blessings

Pastor Jay invites you to invite him to visit you at your home and lead your family in a House Blessing. All you need is a candle and a way to light it. Call Pastor Jay at (570) 205-7506 or email him at j80j84@msn.com to plan this special service of asking God's blessings and grace to remain in the place which you call "home."

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Happy Baptismal Anniversary to . .

Matthew Hautz, Jr.	July 7
Preston Higgins	July 20
Willow Crocker	July 23
Janet Gomez	July 31

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Happy Anniversary to . .

David and Ann Albert	July 8
Shawn and Lara Jaeger	July 17
John Mayer and Lilly Frost	July 20

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Prayer Shawl Ministry

Thank you for my beautiful prayer shawl. I feel like I'm wrapped in the arms of God who is daily giving me strength to get through this tough moment. The inserts in my card and the card itself were beautiful. Thank you again. Sara Falk (Sue Turner's sister)



Power In The Spirit July 13-15 At Roanoke College

Power in the Spirit is an inspirational conference for people of all ages who wish to explore God's call to service through joyous worship, Bible studies, keynote addresses, workshops, games, and fellowship. In addition, congregational leaders—teachers, music directors, choir members, council and committee members, family life consultants, deacons, pastors, and others—will find Power in the spirit nurturing and challenging as they consider their mission and ministry. Registration information is at vasynod.org.

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A Big Thank You To . .

Ray Scholz, Pete Liljeberg, Pete's friend Quron and Heinz Albert for installing a handicamp ramp for an elderly couple. Thanks to Irene Albert for recommending that our church do this!

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Symphony Under the Stars—2023



Several members of Apostles enjoyed an evening of beautiful music, fellowship and food at Symphony Under the Stars!

New Banner Blessed on Pride Sunday



A beautiful new banner for Pride Sunday (June 18th) was blessed during the worship service. The banner was designed by Vickie Divelbiss and made by Irene and Heinz Albert. The design is based on our covenant relationship with God for all of God's people. When we are in a right relationship with God and one another, peace will ensue. Dove, with olive branch. Stars are for the Abrahamic covenant. Your descendants will outnumber the stars of the heavens. Rainbow for the promise to Noah. The Mosaic covenant is depicted by the ten commandments. I will be your God and you will be my people. The crown with purple streamers, is similar to the crown that David might of worn. The Davidic covenant promises that the Messiah would come from the lineage of David and sit on the throne of God. The rose represents Isaiah's prophecy that a rose would bloom in the desert. The red rose symbolizes love. As we wander through the deserts of life God's promise of love and presence sustains us. The shell is the daily promise of our baptism that we are children of God and nothing can separate us. We all are heirs to the kingdom. These promises belong to everyone regardless of color, sexual orientation, gender, etc.

Jubilee Churches to Meet

Representatives from a coalition of churches in Gloucester (Apostles is one of them) will be meeting at Abingdon Episcopal Church on **Tuesday, July 11th, at 9:30 AM**. This coalition of churches called "Jubilee Churches" are working together to address needs within the Gloucester community. If you are interested in being a part of this, please talk to Pastor Jay, Pete and Betsy Liljeberg or Janet Gomez.

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Presentation on Guatemala



Pete and Betsy Liljeberg, Linda Hodges and Janet Gomez made a special presentation to the Christian Women Fellowship (CWF) of Westville Christian Church in Mathews on the medical mission trip to Guatemala in March to provide medical care to the people in Xoljoa and Ixtacapa, Guatemala. The women put together health kits that the medical team handed out to patients. After the presentation, everyone enjoyed a tres leche cake!

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Update on "Living Lutheran"

Living Lutheran, the monthly publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), will cease its print publication with the November/December 2023 issue. This does not mean that telling stories of this church will stop when the print magazine ends. This transition will include a more robust social media presence and more opportunities for user-generated content with the potential for greater engagement with their loyal readers.

**Welcome to The Spring Edition
of Seasons of Stewardship
The Worship Ministry Team**

The Worship Ministry Team celebrated the conclusion of their Seasons of Stewardship with a wonderful Agape Meal and Worship on Sunday, June 25th. The earliest church, after Pentecost, gathered to worship and share in a meal together each week. We created a similar type of atmosphere as we met in the Fellowship Hall, gathered around tables and shared a meal and worship. It was a different and new experience for all of us. We connected with our ancient roots, celebrated our worship ministry here at Apostles, worshipped God who blesses us abundantly and communed in fellowship with each other.



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Please Keep In Your Prayers

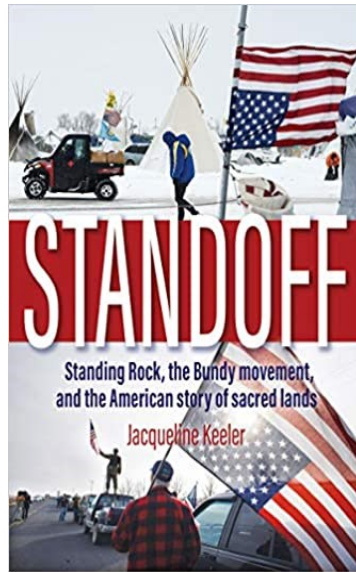
Eddie Freeman, Manning Freeman, Don Garfield, Michael Schlemmer, George Thomas, Jewel Thomas, Sue and George Turner, and Jerry and Lena Woodlief.

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Meetings in July

- The following meetings will be held in July:
 + **Congregation Council**—Monday, July 10th at 7:00 PM
 + **Worship**—Monday, July 24th, at 7:00 PM

Still Time to Join The Book Study



The Caring Community Ministry Team started a new book study on Wednesday, June 21st. Nate Peterson is leading the study – we will be meeting again on Wednesday, July 19th – we are reading “Standoff” by Jacqueline Keeler - **you will need to read the introduction and chapters one and two.** Bring a sandwich to eat at 6:00 PM and

the study still start at 6:30 PM. The book looks at the Standing Rock Oil Pipeline Protest from a current and historical lens. This was the probably THE defining moment of a generation for Native peoples. The book goes through "how did we get here" part of native history and it also compares it to the Bundy standoff in Oregon, and how that situation was handled differently. We hope you can join the discussion! The book is available on Amazon for \$14.

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What Are Your Favorite Hymns??

The Worship Ministry Team wants to know your favorite hymns so we can sing them during the worship services. Check out the display in the narthex in the next couple of weeks and let us know what your favorites are. Every month, the Worship Ministry Team selects hymns based on the scripture readings for the day and the theme for the day; e.g., Pride Sunday. If your favorite hymns go along with these, we will use them. If you have any questions, please contact a member of the Worship Ministry Team.



ELCA's Truth and Healing Movement

Here are some opportunities to learn more about the ELCA's Truth and Healing Movement—to learn the true history and current realities of Indigenous people. It is these truths, truths that have been ignored by most for hundreds of years, that will bring healing for both Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people.

+ National Indian Lutheran Board Discussion

Panel—There was a time, relatively recently, when Lutherans were committed to being in solidarity with Native people in the United States and leading others in issues of Indigenous rights. One of the ways the church accomplished this was to form the National Indian Lutheran Board, which operated from 1970-1987. In this panel discussion moderated by Vance Blackfox, three members of the National Indian Lutheran Board speak about their motivations for joining, the work they did together and ways we can continue that work in the future. The panelists are the Rev. Richard (Dick) Magnus, Syd Beane and Marilyn Liden Bode. You can watch the discussion on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_hLYDP-3mrQ.

+ **“Introduction to the Truth and Healing Movement”** - Tuesday, August 29th—11:00 AM—1:00 PM

+ **“Indian 101”** - Thursday, August 31st—11:00 AM-1:00 PM

Links to all of these opportunities can be found by searching for ELCA Truth and Healing Movement.

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Correspondence

“Dear Congregation,
Your kindness is deeply appreciated. I am a cousin to Nancy Wagner. I received a lovely prayer shawl from you. Thank you.
Fondly,
Linda Edwards”



Something to Think About

For many in the United States, the Statue of Liberty has historically and figuratively stood as a beacon of welcome. Soldiers and travelers crossing the Atlantic knew they had returned home when they could see Lady Liberty. Immigrants, longing to know welcome, dreamed of new life and opportunities symbolized by the one standing at the entrance of New York Harbor. In the poem by Emma Lazarus, “The New Colossus,” the first stanza lifts up the statue as “Mother of Exiles” whose lighted torch proclaims worldwide welcome.

The New Colossus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome;
her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep, ancient lands,
your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

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Our Deepest Sympathy To . . .

Karen Stark upon the death of her mother, Gisela Broughton on June 11th. Gisela was born on December 19, 1931 - she was 91 years old. The funeral was June 17th in Pennsylvania. If you would like to send a card, Karen's address is: 4034 Aspera Dr. Summerville, SC 29483. “O God of grace and glory, console those who mourn. Give us faith to see that death has been swallowed up in the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we may live in confidence and hope until we are gathered to our heavenly home. Amen.”