

The Epistle

THE NEWSLETTER OF APOSTLES LUTHERAN CHURCH

Gloucester www.apostles-elca.org | www.facebook.com/ApostlesELCA September 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

“Do you intend to live in the covenant God made with you in Holy Baptism...”

These words are the beginning of a long question found near the end of our service of Affirmation of Baptism/Confirmation which serve as the center of the rite. The intention to live in this covenant God has made with us becomes the center of the promises made by individuals as they are confirmed or as they are brought into our fellowship as new members. We are reminded in this service of God's grace given to us in the promises spoken over our lives as we were baptized, and this remembering leads to our own promises we made at our own confirmation services.

Promises are important. We only can live in community because, for the greater part, we live up to promises we make. Certainly, we all fall short at moments and don't always live up to the promises we make, but even when we fail, we realize the importance of promises kept and how valuable working toward the fulfillment of these promises is. So, what promises did/do we make as we are confirmed? I wonder if it might be a good thing for us to examine these promises in order to consider how important these promises are.

“To live among God's faithful people...”

We promise as God's baptized children that we will live as active participants in the life of the congregation. We only can be members of a community in which we participate. It is in the fellowship of believers where the Church always has recognized that important aspects of Christian life and faith are incubated and helped to grow, and that these relationships we make with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ enrich our lives and our faith and continue to help focus our lives on God and God's continued relationship with us.

“To hear the Word of God and share in the Lord's supper...”

God comes to us in Word and sacrament. This is one of the core beliefs of Lutheran theology. In God's Word, through Scripture and proclamation (Sermon) we hear again and again of God's amazing love and grace for us, and we are touched once again by God's promise of forgiveness. In the meal we share, we take in to us the living Christ, and we eat and drink God's promises of forgiveness and life. Strengthened by this wonderful sacrament, we are empowered by grace to be God's agents of love active in the world.

“To proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed...”

Now that we have received the promises, the grace and the love of God, we become carriers of that good news which has transformed our lives. This is living the Christian call, the mission we have been given. God's love first

comes to us as we receive the promise. We then take this love and communicate this promise to others in the words and acts of love we share with them.

“To serve all people, following the example of our Lord Jesus...”

By connecting our mission with the mission of Jesus we live authentically Christian lives as we serve the needs of others. Through the hearing of the promise, the proclamation of the ministry of Jesus and the life given to us in the sacraments we are freed to become servants for others, knowing our future is safe and secure in a God who never will leave us. God’s promises are true.

“And to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.”

We also find our mission as God’s children in working for peace and justice everywhere. Where we find people and systems that oppress or use violence to control others or impress injustice, we, as the people of God, organize and work for better ways to serve the needs of all and to promote peace and life in all its fullness

That’s quite a list, yet these are the promises we have made. Our mission and ministry as a congregation depend on our members being strengthened in their faith in the promises God has made through Jesus. Every week we are touched by words of forgiveness and are reminded of God’s love for us, a love so strong Jesus died to share it with us. Reminded that we are God’s children we then are prepared and empowered to live out the rest of the promises we make and take our faith into the world. As we share God’s love we make Christ known and bring God’s promises to others. Yet, this work is intimately connected to the gathering, the coming together to be touched by God’s love in Word and sacrament. In Christian fellowship we understand that we are not alone, and by sharing the ministry with others, we become able to make a bigger impact upon the world and upon the lives of others. May we renew our promises to come and see, and to go and share.



You are cordially invited to attend the

Installation Service

for

The Reverend Joseph “Jay” Serafin

as Pastor of

Apostles Lutheran Church

7092 Main Street, Gloucester, Virginia

on

**Sunday, September 24th,
2023 at 2:00 p.m.**

A reception will be held immediately following the service

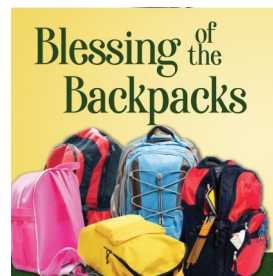
The offering has been designated for the Guatemala Medical Mission

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A Prayer for Back To School

“O God, source of all goodness, we give you thanks for the gift of reason and the opportunity for education. Bless our schools, that they may be places of learning and safety where teachers challenge the minds and nurture the hearts of students. Grant that those who teach and those who learn may find you to be the source of all truth and that together we may know and follow your ways; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.”

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Blessing of the Backpacks

Blessing of the Backpacks

Students of every age are asked to bring their backpacks to Worship In the Park on **Sunday, September 10th** for a special blessing—

we will also have a special gift for all students. “God, bless this bag and the one who will use it. Let them not be scared, be with them as they learn and grow this year. In Jesus name. Amen.”

Introducing Our New Members WELCOME!!!



Rich Bitting

Rich and his wife Betty have been married for 17 years—Rich was born in Pennsylvania and graduated from college in Rhode Island as a chemical engineer. Rich was in the Navy and also worked as a civil servant. He retired 7 years ago. He has 2 sons and 4 grandchildren, all who live in Maryland.

Jason and Cynthia Lowe

Jason and Cynthia moved to Hartfield from Georgia in April 2022. Jason is a Business Manager for Cox and Cynthia is a Program Manager for a company out of Georgia—they both work from home. They have 2 children and grandchildren. They enjoy working on their house, working out, woodworking, reading and relaxing by the pool.



Jamie Serafin

Jamie and Pastor Jay have been married for 15 years. Jamie grew up in Central Pennsylvania—she graduated from college with a degree in medical technology. Jamie is a Medical Technologist for Geisinger Hospital System and works from home. Jamie and Pastor Jay have 2 dogs, a cat and 2 horses—she loves to garden, enjoys walking and bargain shopping.



God's Work, Our Hands



It's that time of year again! The Saturday when we join with Lutherans across the country to serve those in need in our community. This year God's Work, Our Hands day will be **Saturday, October 14**, from 9 AM until 1 PM. We need volunteers to help with outside yard work, power washing, painting and light construction. No experience necessary! We need volunteers for our indoor project assembling health kits for Guatemala. We are also collecting supplies for these kits (hand towel, washcloth, toothbrush and tooth paste, bar soap, and Band-Aids). We need volunteers to make a simple lunch for everyone who participates. This is a great time of fellowship and a chance to answer Jesus' command that we are to love one another and we are to feed his sheep. There will be a sign up sheet in the Narthex. Please come and join us



Happy Birthday to . .

Lorna Hanson	September 3
Nancy Wagner	September 7
Jason Lowe	September 7
Ben Grimes	September 12
Linda Hodges	September 30

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Happy Anniversary To . .

Heinz and Irene Albert	September 16
Steve and Lorna Hanson	September 21
Keith and Juanita Sturdy	September 26
Jim and Judy Wright	September 28

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Happy Baptismal Anniversary To..

Doug Dalager	September 3
Jewel Thomas	September 28

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Worship In The Park



Please make plans to join us for our annual **Worship in the Park on Sunday, September 10th, at 10:00 AM at Beaverdam in Whitcomb Lodge.** We will have a wonderful worship service followed by a picnic lunch—we'll have a couple of games as well. Please bring a picnic dish to share.

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God's Work, Our Hands T- Shirts



If you would like to purchase a God's Work, Our Hands t-shirt, please sign up for one in the Narthex—deadline to order is **Sunday, September 3rd.**

Bulletin Sponsorships Available

Does someone in your family have a special birthday coming up? Is your parents' anniversary date in the near future? Is there someone special you would like to honor or remember? Apostles Lutheran would be happy to help you share a message honoring or remembering someone special through bulletin sponsorship. Much like altar flower sponsors, bulletin sponsors are able to pick the week they would like to sponsor the bulletins, and on that Sunday we will share your special date and commemoration with the congregation as a bulletin note. Typically, the note would read something like: "This week's bulletin is sponsored by Mary Doe in memory of her mother Jane's birthday on November 1." Or, " Joe and Sally Brown sponsor this week's bulletin to celebrate the graduation of their son Tom." This sponsorship is a way to celebrate/honor/remember the special people in our lives and dates which we hold important. As the congregation's cost for printing full worship service bulletins increases, this also will help Apostles to continue to make available the entire liturgy for each Sunday self-contained in the bulletin. If you would like to sponsor an upcoming bulletin, please look for the sign-up sheet in the narthex near the entrance. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Pastor Jay.

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Virginia Lutherans
FAITHFUL + BOLD + SERVING
Virginia Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

News from Our Virginia Synod

The Rev. Phillis Blair Milton began her ministry at the

Bishop of the Virginia Synod on

September 1st. Also, this week, the Synod Council affirmed Bishop Milton's request to have the current rostered staff of the Office of the Bishop continue in their positions and to extend a call to Pastor Liz Radtke to serve as the part-time Director for Congregational Leadership and Support. The Synod gives thanks for these talented individuals and the ways in which they support the ministry of the Virginia Synod.



Jubilee Churches

What are the Jubilee churches?? Jubilee churches of Gloucester is a coalition of local congregations (14 so far and growing) that

have joined together to serve those in our community in need. We provide help to those individuals and families that have needs which the social service agencies can't provide. It is our hope that by working together we can coordinate our efforts and avoid duplication of services by individual churches. By combining resources we can meet needs that are beyond the ability of any one congregation to supply.

What does this mean for Apostles?

At our annual meeting, the congregation voted to commit half of the mission outreach fund to needs within our community. The Service and Sharing Ministry Team, which oversees this fund, plans to allocate the remainder of this year's fund to needs that come before the Jubilee coalition.

What does this mean for YOU?

The Jubilee coalition is also providing services to victims of domestic violence. We are looking for volunteers for the following areas:

(1) **Victim Transportation.** Domestic violence situations can arise at any time. Volunteering in this capacity would allow a case worker to call you for assistance in transporting a victim either from their home to an emergency shelter (generally in Williamsburg) or from the shelter location to the courthouse. These volunteers are generally women.

(2) **Victim Relocation.** During a domestic violence dispute, victims will often need help moving to a new location. This can be to an emergency shelter or to a new residence. At any point in the process, a victim's personal belongings may need to be moved out of their former residence. We need individuals with trucks who are willing to help victims move.

(3) **Pet Fostering.** One of the leading causes for an individual to remain in a domestic violence situation is the inability for the individual to bring their pet to an emergency shelter. By "fostering" a victim's pet, we would give victims of domestic violence peace of mind that their furry friend is being cared for while they get the help and support they need.

If you think you can help, please contact Pete or Betsy Liljeberg, Janet Gomez, or Pastor Jay. Your neighbors need you!

*(Editor's Note—the next meeting of the Jubilee Churches of Gloucester will be **Wednesday, September 13th, at 9:30 AM** at Newington Baptist Church on Main Street.)*

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Look What's New. . .

Two new vacuums have been purchased for vacuuming the church—thanks to Ray Scholz for purchasing them. We are always in need of additional people to clean the church—you only have to do it once a month and training will be provided—if you are interested in helping, please see Ray Scholz.

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Presented by the Office for Youth and Young Adult Ministries in the Virginia Synod & Director Dave Delaney

Attention Youth and Young Adults

Five Petal Friday!!

Five Petal Friday (a.k.a. 5PF) is the biweekly newsletter from the Office for Youth and Young Adult Ministries in the Virginia Synod. This newsletter serves as a way for the Synod office to distribute materials, information, and announcements as well as keep in touch with youth, young adults, and leaders across the Synod throughout the year. If you'd like to learn more about 5PF, go to <https://vasynod.org/ministries/youth-ministry/>. You can also sign up to subscribe to the newsletter and there is the 2023-2024 Youth Event Schedule.



Bishop Eaton Addresses Christian Nationalism

In August, Bishop Eaton released a video addressing Christian Nationalism. She points out that this dangerous ideology “is a perversion of the gospel and a threat to our democracy. It’s precisely because I love my country that I warn against it.”

You can see Bishop Eaton’s video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgM_jsvLH5I.

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Farewell From Bishop Humphrey

To my beloved Virginia Synod,
As Barbra and I prepare to move into retirement and out of view “for a season,” I am genuinely thankful for so many opportunities of shared ministry and mission. We have indeed “been through a lot together,” in the last 6 years and I am grateful for my dear family, for our ELCA and ecumenical colleagues and prayerful companions around the globe! I am especially indebted to our Virginia Synod Office of the Bishop Staff, Rostered Ministers, Lay leaders and faithful members. I will forever be thankful to God for all of you and the privilege God and you gave me to serve in this office. Now, I join you in genuine hope and excitement as we prayerfully begin a new chapter in our long and rich history with our new Bishop, The Rev. Dr. Phyllis Blair Milton. I have no doubt God will continue to lead, inspire, strengthen and bless us!
Be well, dear Synod!



Peace!
Bishop Humphrey

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Please Keep In Your Prayers

Eddie Freeman, Manning Freeman, Don Garfield, Ellen Quirk, Michael Schlemmer, Keith and Juanita Sturdy, George Thomas, Jewel Thomas, Sue and George Turner, and Jerry and Lena Woodlief. Also, Sue Turner and Linda Hodges will be having surgery in September.

Lay Ministry Formation Program



Anyone feeling called to serve as a lay preacher or a Synod Authorized Minister will use ONE application process, which has gone live. The Virginia Synod launched a re-formed Lay Ministry Formation Program combining the Lay Preaching Academy and the Synod Authorized Ministry Formation Program into one, 2-part lay ministry leadership education and formation program. You can indicate whether you feel called to serve as a lay preacher or a SAM or are unsure. The roles and responsibilities of commissioned lay preachers and Synod Authorized Ministers (SAMs) will not change. The only changes are in the formation process for these lay ministry leadership positions. Applications are due by September 30, 2023—go to vasynod.org.

(Editor’s note—this is a WONDERFUL program—I was commissioned as a Lay Preacher at the Synod Assembly in June—I will be preaching for the first time at Apostles on Sunday, September 17th—I would LOVE to talk to you about this program if you are interested! Janet Gomez)

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Meetings in September

- The following meetings will be held in September:
- + **Congregation Council**—Monday, September 10th at 7:00 PM
 - + **Worship**—Monday, September 25th at 7:00 PM

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Save the Date!!

Saturday, October 21st—Installation of our new Virginia Synod Bishop, The Reverend Dr. Phillis Milton at First Presbyterian Church in Waynesboro at 1:00

News from the Pews



Once again Pete and Betsy Liljeberg will be embarking on a cycling adventure, this time along the Atlantic Coast of France. They will ride for 3 weeks. If you would like to follow their adventures, see their blog at: <https://ourvelodysseeadventure.blogspot.com>

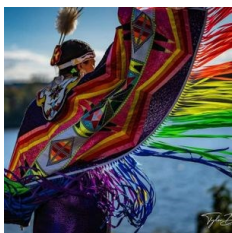
Betsy will be riding to raise money for children's cancer research. If you would like to support this cause check The Great Cycle Challenge: <https://greatcyclechallenge.com/riders/BetsySchraderLiljeberg>.

(Editor's Note—don't you just LOVE the title of this article—News from the Pews!! Thanks to Betsy for suggesting it—if you have some "News from the Pews", please send it to thezemogs@gmail.com)

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Adult Book Studies

The current book study of "Standoff" by Jacqueline Keeler will conclude on Tuesday, September 19th—we have a sandwich at 6:00 PM and the study begins at 6:30 PM. Another study will start in late October, early November—stay tuned for details! The group studying "Standoff" is planning an outing to the Rappahannock Tribe Pow Wow on Sunday, October 8th, after the



worship service—it is being held at Belle Grove Plantation in King George (about 1.5 hours drive near Port Royal) - tickets are \$15 in advance, \$20 at the gate. Anyone is welcome to come.

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Breakfast for Faith Leaders

The next Breakfast for Faith Leaders will be on Tuesday, September 19th at 9:30 AM, at Salem Community Church (formerly known as Salem United Methodist Church). Their address is 11408 Salem Church Road in Gloucester. If you plan to attend, please RSVP by emailing Hannah Bonar at hbonar@gloucesterva.info.



Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste Reduction

September 29th is the day that the United Nations has designated as Awareness of Food Loss and Waste Reduction. Reducing food losses and waste should be a priority in a world where the number of people affected by hunger has been increasing since 2014. Literally tons of edible food are lost or wasted every

day. Globally, around 14 percent of food produced is lost between the process of harvesting and retail. It is also estimated that 17 percent of total global food production is wasted through households, food service, and retail sales. Of that 17 percent, 11 percent is attributed to households. "When food is lost or wasted, all the resources that were used to produce this food - including water, land, energy, labor, and capital - go to waste. In addition, the disposal of food loss and waste in landfills, leads to greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to climate change. Food loss and waste can also negatively impact food security and food availability, and contribute to increasing the cost of food." Awareness of food loss calls for both the public and the private sectors to develop ways to reduce food loss and waste.

Remember that we observe ELCA World Hunger Sunday on the 3rd Sunday of every month. Did you know that Apostles is one of the top donors per member in the Virginia Synod? How about that!!

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A Big THANK YOU To. . .

- + Ray and Lynn Scholz for cleaning out the quilting closet—it was a BIG job!!
- + Chris Hawkins for recording the music for the 2 Sundays Janet was on vacation—we so appreciate all you do for us in technology!!