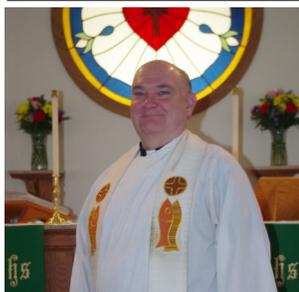


The Epistle

THE NEWSLETTER OF APOSTLES LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.apostles-elca.org | www.facebook.com/ApostlesELCA | March 2026

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

“O Lord, throughout these forty days, You prayed and kept the fast; Inspire repentance for our sin And free us from our past.”

These familiar words speak to us each year as we enter the Church-year season of Lent. In doing so, we join a tradition of observance which goes back, according to many scholars, almost to the beginning of the Church itself. In the First Century, the Church in its theology and practice centered around the cross and the empty tomb, what we call Good Friday and Easter today. These events in the life of Jesus stood out as the great acts of Christ by which the ultimate power of death is defeated, and God's great gift of life is made real for all. As a way of paying particular homage to this holy time of the year and as a way of preparing to enter into the celebration of the greatest mysteries of our faith and God's greatest acts of grace, early Christians began to set aside a period of time during which they equipped themselves emotionally, spiritually and physically to make ready for the truth of the cross and empty tomb to be shared. Firstly, because Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness after his baptism, and because so many other important Biblical stories were marked in time by forty days/ years, the early Church adopted

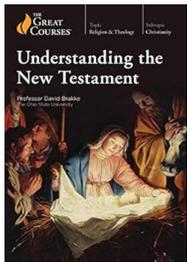
forty days as the appropriate length of time during which this preparation was to take place. Looking at the calendar, you might recognize that the time period between Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, and Easter surpasses forty days in length. That is because, in the tradition of many Christian groups, most Lutherans included, Sunday always is considered a “feast day,” because it is the first day of the week, the day of resurrection. The other days of the week throughout the Lenten season have been regarded by the Church for many, many centuries as days of fasting and repentance. Lent is considered to be a period of time devoted to spiritual exercise, similar to physical exercise, to become stronger, during which the believer works to strengthen his or her faith through various acts such as prayer, fasting, Scripture/devotional reading, regular worship attendance, giving toward worthy causes, self-sacrifice, loving deeds of service, charity, and greater recognition of our brokenness before God.

Traditionally, we Lutherans have observed the beginning of Lent, Ash Wednesday, as a worship experience which honestly speaks to our situation as human beings, both sinful and mortal. As always, we received ashes on our foreheads as a symbol of our need for repentance, for turning away from the ways of the world and back toward the ways of God, and of our mortality, represented by the words

spoken to us as we receive the ashes, “Remember brokenness is revealed in our human bodies which are touched by illness, disease and simple human ageing. Our brokenness is sharpened by our broken relationships, our loss of those precious to us, and all the ways we negatively impact family and community life. Our brokenness is measured in our emotional pain, our grief, our fear, our anger, our loneliness, our despair, our neediness and in our countless other emotions which keep us from leading full and joyous lives.

In truth, for some reason or other, every family is in need of our prayers because every family is touched by brokenness in some way. Lent is a reminder of that. So, as we transition from Epiphany to Lent this year and as we witness Jesus active in the lives of those who are broken, we are reminded of our mission, to be the light of Christ active in the midst of the darkness of this world. We, too, have the mission to share the very presence of a loving God with those who do not feel that presence. Part of that mission is to pray on behalf of those who are hurting, who feel broken. Then, too, during the season of Lent, we consider deeply our need, both individual and corporate, of God’s love and life. We see the brokenness in ourselves and this world. Then, understanding better the reality we face, we place our trust in God’s grace. In this we are not disappointed, for beyond Lent God has another surprise in store. We call it Easter.

+++++



New Adult Study to Start in April

A new adult study will begin in April on the 22nd—“Understanding the New Testament.” The class will be led by Pastor Jay—it will be held on the 2nd and 4th

Wednesdays of each month—bring a sandwich for dinner at 6:00 PM and the study will begin on 6:30 PM—please make plans to join us!!

A Recap of the Annual Congregational Meeting February 8th

What a GREAT meeting!! Thanks to everyone who participated!! Special thanks to Chris Hawkins, Congregation Council President, for leading the meeting and to Cynthia Lowe, Council Secretary, for taking the minutes. After the call to order and establishment of a quorum, we received reports 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 (elected for a 3-year term were Karen Johnston, David Muse and Judy Wright), Synod Assembly Delegates if the Assembly is held in 2026 (elected were Cynthia and Jason Lowe), Nominating Committee (elected were Barbara Runk, Cynthia Lowe, Irene Albert, Sue Turner, Chase Ambrose and Jennie Hawkins), and Mission Outreach Fund Committee for 2026 (elected was Betsy Liljeberg and re-elected for another year term were Donna Ambrose and Doug Dalager). The new Council met immediately after the congregational meeting and elected Cynthia Lowe for another term as Secretary, Doug Dalager for another term as Treasurer and Heinz and Irene Albert for another term as Financial Secretaries.



+++++

Congregation Council Update

The Congregation Council will **not** be meeting in March—the next meeting will be **Monday, April 6th.**

Happy Birthday To . . .

Tina Britt March 11
 Tonia Fallin March 8
 Makayla Hess March 15
 Judy Wright March 20
 J. Dillon March 27
 August Good March 27
 Margaret Grimes March 28

+++++

Happy Baptismal Anniversary

Kayla Hautz March 2

+++++

Happy Anniversary to . . .

Barbara and Bernie Runk March 1
 Don and Jane Garfield March 20

+++++

Please Keep In Your Prayers

Rich Bitting, Manning Freeman, Don Garfield, Heidi Henderson, Ellen Kendzierski, Doug Leip, Ellen Quirk, Michael Schlemmer, Ben Slider (IV), Keith & Juanita Sturdy, George Thomas, Jewel Thomas, and Lena Woodlief.

+++++

Ministry Team Meetings

The following Ministry Team will meet in March:

+ **Worship**—March 18th, 5:00 PM

+++++



World Hunger Sunday

Don't forget your world hunger offering on **Sunday, March 15th –UNTIL ALL ARE FED!!**

+++++

Apostles Women's Group

All women of Apostles are invited to attend the Women's Group meeting on **Saturday, March 21st at 10:00 AM.** We would LOVE to have you join us!!

+++++



Souper Bowl Results

The Seattle Seahawks won the Souper Bowl with \$91—\$45 was given for the he New England Patriots. The Seahawks won the Super Bowl with a score of 29-13!!

Meet Your Congregation Council



Pastor Jay Serafin
Pastor



Chris Hawkins
President



Barbara Runk
Vice President



Doug Dalager
Treasurer
(non-voting member)



Cynthia Lowe
Secretary



Heinz and Irene Albert
Financial Secretaries
(Heinz—non-voting member)



Janet Gomez
Member



Karen Johnston
Member



Pete Liljeberg
Member



David Muse
Member



Judy Wright
Member

+++++

Our Deepest Sympathy To . . .



Ellen and Amanda Kendzierski and Jennie and Chris Hawkins upon the death of son and brother, Michael Hall, on January 31st. Michael's memorial service was held at Apostles on February 15th.



Jubilee Churches News

The Jubilee Churches of Gloucester, a coalition of several congregations in Gloucester (including Apostles), will be meeting on again on Wednesday, April 15th, at

Abingdon Episcopal Church. The Rev. Dr. Ed Walker, pastor of Bellamy United Methodist Church, is the covener of the Jubilee Churches of Gloucester. In February, Jubilee Churches assisted 2 households with \$1,078 in Dominion Power assistance. In February, we were able to assist a hardworking mother who was facing a Dominion Power cut-off after an unexpected season of financial strain. Between supporting a family member in crisis, managing necessary home repairs, and navigating delays in assistance programs, she found herself overwhelmed despite doing everything she could to stay afloat. Because of your generosity, we were able to come alongside her at a crucial moment and help her keep stability in her home by preventing a cut-off from Dominion Power. She expressed deep gratitude for the support. Thank you for making this possible. **If you would like to learn more about Jubilee Churches, please contact Pete Liljeberg or Janet Gomez.**

+++++

Reconciling In Christ News

ReconcilingWorks
LUTHERANS FOR FULL PARTICIPATION



The Reconciling Ministry team has scheduled **PRIDE Sunday for Sunday, June 7th.**

The team has designated the first Sunday of each month as RIC Sunday and will soon start having brief educational discussions during fellowship on "Reconciling Scripture for Lutherans: On Sexuality and Gender Identity." Stay tuned for the date!

+++++



Spring Forward— March 8th!!

Remember to set your clocks ahead on March 8th!!



Apostles Hosted GUEST Winter Shelter

Apostles hosted the clients of the GUEST homeless winter night shelter the week of February 23rd. The clients arrived around 7:00 PM, had dinner and stayed overnight and went back to the day shelter at 7:00 AM. Over 40 volunteers came together to provide dinner and breakfast for the clients and volunteered to man the shifts during the evening. A big THANK YOU to everyone who made this possible!! +



+++++

Mid-Week Lenten Offering

The offering from our mid-week Lenten services has been designated for the organizations we support— Bread for Life Food Pantry, Gloucester Mathews Care Clinic, GUEST Homeless Shelter, Rural Housing Partnership and Jubilee Churches.

+++++

From Your Treasurer,
Doug Dalager

January 2026	
Planned Income	\$ 9,194.75
Actual Income	\$ 6,816.12
Delta	\$ (2,378.63)
Year to Date	
Planned Income	\$ 9,195
Actual Income	\$ 6,816
Delta	\$ (2,379)

Health Kits for Guatemala



Thank you to everyone who donated supplies and helped assemble the health kits for Guatemala—the kits will be blessed during the worship service on March 1st.

+ + + + +



Remembering Nancy Wagner

Nancy Wagner died at her home in Maryland on January 15th. Nancy also had a home in Gloucester. Nancy is survived by husband, David, and sons, Christopher and Scott and

their families. Nancy was a retired teacher and dedicated lab rescue adoption coordinator for countless rescued labs—she loved doing this. Nancy was a faithful member of Apostles and served on the Congregation Council and the Service and Sharing Ministry Team—she was passionate about helping with the GUEST homeless shelter and spent many hours coordinating providing meals for the clients of GUEST. There was a visitation to honor her life in Glen Burnie, MD on January 22nd. Nancy will be missed.

+ + + + +

New Members To Be Received

We will be receiving new members during the worship service on Sunday, March 22nd—please join us to welcome them into our community of faith!!



The Season of Lent at Apostles

We will be holding a mid-week Lenten meal (soup and bread) followed by a worship service on Wednesdays during Lent (through March 25th). The meal will be at 6:00 PM and the service will start at 7:00 PM. There is a signup sheet in the narthex to sign up to provide the soup and bread and also to set up and clean up. This year, we will have representatives from the different organizations we support with us to talk about their organizations: February 25th, Michelle Wells, Executive Director of GUEST; March 4th, Rev. Ed Walker, Convener of Jubilee Churches; March 11th, Arlene Armentor, Executive Director of Gloucester Mathews Care Clinic; March 18th, Tracey Reed, Executive Director of Bread for Life Food Pantry; March 25th, Babs Zuhowski, Executive Director of Rural Housing Partnership. We hope you can join us!!

+ + + + +

Italian Night And A Movie



A big THANK YOU to the Caring Community Ministry Team (Irene Albert, Karen Johnston, and Judy Wright) for the wonderful Italian Night and a movie on February 13th. We enjoyed a scrumptious dinner and dessert followed by a viewing of the movie, Saving Grace. It was GREAT!!!



“Neighboring Together,” the newest monthly publication of the Virginia Synod,

will share stories and resources about neighboring in Virginia and beyond. The Tapestry Threads, the World Hunger Team, and the Global Synod Companion Team will all have regular columns featuring updates about their ministries and how you can join in their neighboring. We most often see the word neighbor as a noun used to name a person that lives near to you. But Jesus expands our understanding of who are neighbors to include all people, especially those experiencing a need. Neighbors also include those who are different from us (Luke 10:25-37). To use neighboring as a verb then is the action of being a neighbor, showing mercy, building relationships, and living together. Thank you to all the ministry leaders that are contributors to this newsletter! You can subscribe to the newsletter at vasynod.org.

+++++

Look What’s New at Apostles

A new surveillance system has been installed on the outside of the church—thank you to Ray Scholz and Doug Dalager for doing the installation.

+++++

The new LivingLutheran.org is now live! Set up a free digital membership and enjoy a welcoming, easy-to-access format; a personalized, custom dashboard that priorities the stories that interest you; access to members-only content; and e-news email delivery options to get the stories you want, both online and in your inbox.

News From The Pews



Jamie Serafin recently travelled to the Dominican Republic for a DoTerra incentive trip. While the trip offered time to rest and connect with wellness advocates from around the world, the most meaningful part was serving the local community. Jamie’s team helped build a cement pad

for patients at a temporary hospital, refurbished a baseball field to give kids a safe place to play, picked up litter along the beach, painted more than 30 homes, and planted over 200 pots to beautify the streets. Jamie was part of the tree-planting team, which warmed her Master Naturalist heart. It was a joy to give back, get our hands dirty, and leave the community better than we found it.



(Editor’s note: We LOVE to share stories about what you are doing outside of church—please send your pictures and stories to Janet at thezemogs@gmail.com.)

+++++

Thank You To . .

Thrivent!!! We have applied for several Thrivent Action Grants of \$250 each for things like supplies for the health kits. We are so thankful!

Save the Date!!



The Spirit Enlightens, Equips, Empowers

July 16-18, 2026
at Roanoke College

Bible Study Leader: The Rev. Susan Briehl
Keynote Presenter: The Rev. Drew Tucker
Musician: Michael Benshish
Special Guest: Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry



ELCA Homeless and Justice Network

The Homeless and Justice Network of the ELCA is a coalition of ministries called to serve with those on the margins who are struggling with poverty, homelessness and justice issues. This unique network is a ministry with, rather than for, those experiencing poverty, homelessness and injustice. We in the network believe that all God's children deserve an opportunity to gather and be the church together, inside or outside the church walls. The HJN gathers pastors and leaders of these ministries to connect, refuel, bring new ideas to the table, share stories that ignite passion, and equip each other as leaders from within so that, as we stand on the margins with Jesus, all are included. The eight principles of the Homeless and Justice Network are:

1. Community is vital to all that we do.
2. Jesus stood on the margins so that all could be included, and so do we.
3. God loves all people, no matter what.

4. We respect the dignity and value of all people, without condition.
5. We minister with – not to or for – one another.
6. A church is the people, not the building.
7. Everyone has something to offer, and we need every person if we are to be whole.
8. We see lives transformed and are transformed ourselves.

+++++

Cinco De Mayo Event Coming!!

The Caring Community Ministry Team's next event will be "Cinco De Mayo" tentatively scheduled for Friday, May 8th—stay tuned for details!!

