

The Epistle

THE NEWSLETTER OF APOSTLES LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.apostles-elca.org | www.facebook.com/ApostlesELCA | July 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

As the United States prepares to celebrate Independence Day and the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration

of Independence, I pray that this time of celebration and reflection is meaningful and thought-provoking for each of you. As a way of bringing our Lutheran heritage into view as we approach this landmark event, I thought it might be of interest to share some of Martin Luther's thoughts on the relationship between the Church and the State. Luther is famous for creating what is known as the "**Two Kingdoms**" or "**Two Realms**" theology which attempts to describe how God acts in the world through human institutions. Luther, upon reading Scripture and contemplating human society in its setup and function, discerned that God is at work in the way we humans order our lives. In fact, God created these orders so that we can live our lives relatively free from chaos and disorder and find the hand of God at work in the places where we live our lives. These God-ordained orders are a blessing to us from God meant to create the necessary foundations upon which we humans can live and work and worship and enjoy the hands of God at work providing us with the structures we need to promote daily living.

The **first realm**, for Luther, is the **Spiritual**

Realm. This is the realm in which the Church functions as the hand of God active in fulfilling its commission of preaching the Word of God, administering the Sacraments, sharing God's grace, calling the faithful to lives of service, reaching out through Law and Gospel to proclaim the message of God's saving works for God's people. For Luther, it is the Church's mission to share the fulness of the Gospel, and Christ instituted the Church to be the vehicle through which this message is proclaimed. The Church alone has the full authority, given to it by God through Christ, to shape itself to ensure that Word and Sacrament are shared and God's good news is made known. For Luther, the worldly powers of government should not encroach on these duties or tasks of the Church.

The **second realm**, for Luther, is the **Realm of Civil Authority**. Government in all its institutions is created by God for the benefit of humans to provide society with order through the Law so that all may benefit in relative peace and security. Of course, Luther knew very little of democracy, as government in his time was the province of princes and kings. Luther saw, however, how the church's encroachment on this realm often led to theocratic results. Government best functions as an institution separated from clerical rule by providing benefits to citizens through discerning government leaders, court systems, police and other forces which secured peace for its citizens and dealt with those who were a danger to

society. Of course, government was smaller in that time, prior to all of the agencies and systems we have today. For Luther, this civil realm should not encroach on the work of the Church to proclaim the Gospel, to forgive sins, and to actively work in the world to share God's love.

In this theology was planted some seeds which, during the Enlightenment, would grow into some of the ideas which became part of our modern framework of a state which does not govern the inner workings of the church and a church which does not rule over the people as a government. In Luther's time, neither of these possibilities was assured. Popes went to war and ruled kingdoms and kings enforced the edicts of the church.

For Luther, who was an orderly thinker, this way of proper identification for the realms through which God works in the world made sense. Of course, the church always had the privilege of voicing concerns when the government moved in ungodly directions, and the individual Christian, who lived in both realms, had the duty to influence the government leaders in setting up society in a way that better mirrors God's justice. While these ideas may seem rather tame by modern standards, in Luther's time these thoughts were radical, and helped to shape streams of thinking which would change the way societies would be built in future years.

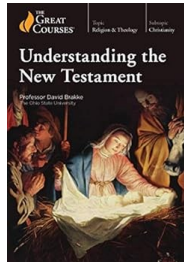
Both church and civil society are amazing gifts from God to be celebrated, even though both are tainted by sin. As we move toward our celebration of the Declaration of Independence over the coming days, we do so with open eyes, knowing neither church nor state is perfect, but that the most inspirational and aspirational ideas of both guide us and continue to give us a deep gratitude to God, who has blessed us with these as gifts out of love for us.

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World Hunger Sunday

Don't forget your world hunger offering on **Sunday, July 19th – UNTIL ALL ARE FED!!**



Join Us for Adult Bible Study

Our current Bible study is "Understanding the New Testament." The class is being led by Pastor Jay—it is being held on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month. In July, we will be meeting on **July 8th and July 22nd**. Bring a sandwich for dinner at 6:00 PM and the study begins on 6:30 PM—please make plans to join us!!

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Congregation Council Update

The Congregation Council will be having their regular meeting will be on **Monday, July 13th**.

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Happy Anniversary to...

John Mayer and Lilly Frost July 20

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Happy Birthday to...

Manning Freeman July 4
Keegan Slider July 21
Nate Peterson July 22
Miles Frost-Mayer July 23
Brian Badger July 24

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Happy Baptismal Anniversary to...

Matthew Hautz, Jr. July 7
Willow Crocker July 23
Karen Johnston July 24

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Please Keep In Your Prayers

Rich Bitting, Manning Freeman, Don Garfield, Heidi Henderson, Ellen Kendzierski, Doug Leip, Cyndi Lowe, Ellen Quirk, Michael Schlemmer, Ray Scholz, Keith & Juanita Sturdy, George Thomas, Jewel Thomas, Sue Turner and Lena Woodlief.

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Women's Group Meeting

Apostles Women's Group will **NOT** be meeting in July—next meeting will be **August 8th**.



Pride Sunday—June 7th, 10 AM!!

A big **THANK YOU** to everyone who helped make our **Pride Sunday** worship and fellowship possible!! The cake and flowers were beautiful - thanks to Irene Albert and Betsy Liljeberg!!

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Hunger News: Pasta with a Purpose!

The Virginia Synod Hunger Team is sponsoring a food drive during the upcoming summer months. Often food giving is down during the summer and children don't always get meals from summer lunch programs. Pasta with a Purpose is a way that congregations can joyfully respond to the food needs of their neighbors. Congregations will be entered in a synod-wide competition (!) with 3 top collectors receiving \$250 to donate to the food ministry of their choice. People of Apostles....we got this! Let's get competitive and generous this summer!! Watch for more information!

ReconcilingWorks will be holding a monthly Bible study online via Zoom on the **third Thursday** of every month through December starting on **July 16th at 4:00 PM**. Registration is required and information to register can be found at ReconcilingWorks. The Zoom link will be emailed two days in advance to those who register. The Bible Study is led by a rostered leader. The text for the Bible Study is for the Sunday ten days after the Bible Study Zoom gathering.

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Meet Bobbie Hanson

Apostles has contracted with Bobbie Hanson to clean the church once a month. She will normally be cleaning on the fourth weekend of each month as well as any fifth weekends. She will usually clean on Friday or Saturday.

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Our Deepest Sympathy To...

Betsy, Pete and Chris Liljeberg and their family upon the death of Betsy's father, Arnold Schrader, on Sunday, June 28th. Betsy will be travelling to Las Vegas to be with her mother, Dorothy. *Loving God, your heart overflows with compassion for your whole creation. Please surround the family of Arnold Schrader as they mourn his death. Help them to know that you claim them as your own and deliver them from fear and pain; for the sake of Jesus Christ, our healer and Lord. Amen.*

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How Many Did You Get Right?

Last month, Pastor Jay in his monthly column, challenged us to look at several quotes and answer, "Is Martin Luther is the originator of the quote?" Pastor Jay wanted us to know that **ALL** of the quotes were authentic Luther quotes!!



Jubilee Churches News

The Jubilee Churches of Gloucester, a coalition of several congregations in Gloucester (including Apostles), will not be meeting

in July—the next meeting will be **on Wednesday, August 12th, at 9:30 AM at Gloucester Seventh Day Adventist (SDA)**. The Rev. Dr. Ed Walker, pastor of Bellamy United Methodist Church, and Pete Liljeberg are the co-moderators of the Jubilee Churches of Gloucester. Jubilee Churches work together to prevent homelessness crises for our neighbors in Gloucester County. Jubilee Churches also are a resource for Gloucester County organizations by encouraging collaboration and partnership. They model the importance of building bridges to support the work of assisting those in need and trusting the expertise of those trained to meet those needs. Jubilee Churches believe that everyone has a role to play, and that we are at our best when we work collaboratively. Jubilee Churches are currently working with the Gloucester United Emergency Sheltering Team (GUEST) whose mission is to respect the divine humanity of all people by providing for the need of basic housing. In June, Jubilee Churches assisted a woman who had moved back to Gloucester in the Spring to help her mother. She suffered an injury and wasn't able to work and got behind on her Dominion bill. Jubilee was able to get the bill paid and she has now been able to return to work. If you would like more information about the work of Jubilee Churches, please contact Pete Liljeberg.

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From Your Treasurer Doug Dalager

May 2026	
Planned Income	\$ 9,194.75
Actual Income	\$ 8,704.59
Delta	\$ (490.16)
Year to Date	
Planned Income	\$ 45,973.75
Actual Income	\$ 45,342.91
Delta	\$ (630.84)



News From GUEST

- + There is a **BIG** need for volunteers at the day shelter—if you are interested in helping, please contact Barbara Runk or Janet Gomez.
- + **Needed items** at the day shelter include office supplies—push pins, paper clips, staples and white out, ground coffee, creamer (powder or liquid), and small jars of crunchy peanut butter. Supplies can be dropped off at the day shelter (6536 Moose Drive) on Tuesday, Thursday or Friday from 9-5.
- + **Thank you** to Linda Hodges, Keith and Juanita Sturdy and Janet Gomez for providing lunch for the clients of GUEST the week of June 8th!!
- + **SAVE THE DATE**—Apostles will be hosting the GUEST winter shelter the week of February 15th, 2027. Stay tuned for opportunities to help!!

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Power In The Spirit 2026

The deadline to register for Power in the Spirit 2026 is **Wednesday, July 1st**—this year we'll gather at Roanoke College, July 16–18, for worship, learning, community, and a special celebration of **40 years of ministry together!** We'll also honor the retirement of the Rev. Dr. Dave Delaney and recognize our new commissioned lay ministers as we celebrate all that God continues to do through this ministry. Special guest will be newly elected ELCA Bishop Yehiel Curry. Registration information can be found at vasynod.org.

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Ministry Team Meetings

- The following ministry teams will meet in July:
- + **Service and Sharing**—Monday, July 27th, 7:00 PM
 - + **Worship**—Wednesday, July 29th, 12:00 PM

Happy 4th of July!!

250 Years !!

*Please plan to join us in celebration
of our country's 250th Birthday!*

Served for your enjoyment

Hot dogs

German Potato Salad

Hamburgers

Baked Beans

Ribs

Cole Slaw

Bratwurst

Mac & Cheese

Pulled Pork

Meatball Sliders

All the trimmings and Desserts





A Prayer for Independence Day

As we approach Independence Day and the Semiquincentennial Celebration, we celebrate the history and independence of the United States as well as the long history of Native Americans in

North America before the birth of our nation. Pray for the wisdom and resolve we need to ensure freedom, justice and equity for all people, in our nation and around the world. Amen.

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Symphony Under the Stars 2026

Several people enjoyed the Symphony Under the Stars on Saturday, June 6th!!



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Agape Worship Service— Sunday, August 9th

Please join us on Sunday, August 9th, for an “agape” worship service—it will be held in the fellowship hall starting at 10:00 AM. Everyone is asked to bring a brunch dish to share.



Cricket On A Hill

Several members of Apostles are involved in the Mathews VA250 Committee and The Court House Players exciting new production of Judy Ward’s beloved musical to celebrate the 250th

anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Performances will be at the Harry M. Ward Auditorium of Mathews High School (9889 Buckley Hall Road in Mathews). Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students. Performances will be held on Thursday, July 2, at 7 p.m., Friday July 3, at 7 p.m., Sunday, July 5, at 3 p.m., Friday, July 17, at 7 p.m., Saturday, July 18, at 7 p.m. and Sunday, July 19, at 3 p.m.

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Offering of Letters— Delivered!!



On April 19th, Apostles conducted an offering of letters—writing letters to our representatives to speak out for those whose voices are unheard. Pictured is Alex Parker delivering our letters to representative, Rob Wittman.

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Congratulations to . . .



Pastor Jay on the anniversary of his ordination on July 9th—36 years!! “We give you thanks, almighty and gracious God, that you have fed us with heavenly food, the body and blood of your son, uniting us through him in the fellowship of your Spirit. We thank you for raising up among us faithful servants for the ministry of Word and Sacrament, especially for Pastor Jay and we pray that he may continue to exemplify in word and deed the Gospel of your son. Grant that we, with Pastor Jay, may serve you now in the church on earth and rejoice before you forever; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

