



The Epistle

THE NEWSLETTER OF APOSTLES LUTHERAN CHURCH

Gloucester www.apostles-elca.org | www.facebook.com/ApostlesELCA | March 2024

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

In mottled shades of brown and gray
The winter wind whips across the land
Carrying high aloft the reality of it all
Summed up in one fearful word:
Death.
It is where all journeys must end, you see.
For we are of mortal material,
Confined by this flesh and blood existence
Inhaling oxygen from the air around us
Until we breathe no more.
We journey to the tombstone laden knoll
Where father and grandmother
And their parents before
Lay beneath memorials to their journey.
Date of birth.
Date of Death.
Only a dash for the life lived between.
“Remember that you are dust,
And to dust you shall return.”
So we, the people of the dash,
Living in the between time,
Aware of the story's ending,
Listen for a whisper
A call
A sound which will find us
In the silence of the deathwatch
And speak a single word to us:
Life.

Suddenly
In the numbing cold stillness
And the silence of death
A song fills the air.

Like the chirping of the first robin of Spring
It slices through the gray
And fills the air with the only retort,
The only response to this mortal station.
Winter will not last forever.
The sun shall rise
And shine more brightly than before.
A sound slicing through the silence,
A new beginning. A word.
Bringing light into what was dark.
A shoot shall grow from the stump of Jesse,
At least that's how the saying goes,
And from this shoot shall come
Something bold
Something new.
A Word.
But even more.
The Word.
Made flesh.
You know... mortal.
Just like you. Just like me.
A person of the dash
Born to die.
But here is where the story changes.
For this one, too, shall taste of death
And find a place among the tombs
Caught in the cold, unyielding clutches
Of the grave.
But like the song of the spring bird
Or the emergence of the crocus
From the cold, dark soil
This one shall break forth
From the grave
And like the sun

(Or as the Son)
 Shall rise to show forth a new day.
 For death could not hold him.
 In vibrant hues and vivid shades
 All earth is triumphant
 In victorious life
 Given by the one who defeated death.
 Victory for you
 For me

And for all who lived the dashes
 Whom God claims anew
 In the joyful promise of Easter.
 "O death, where is thy sting?"
 When God chooses to
 intercede
 With an empty tomb
 A resurrection
 And a promise of life
 Death cannot win.
 God has made it so.



Pastor Jay

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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 sign up on the sign up sheet in the narthex at the church. The deadline to order is **Sunday, March 24th.**



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Easter At Apostles

+ Flowers for the Easter Cross
 Don't forget to bring fresh flowers on Easter Sunday to adorn our Easter cross.

+ Easter Brunch
 Please join us for an Easter brunch after the worship service—everyone is asked to bring a "brunch" dish to share.



Midweek Lenten Services Continue on Wednesdays

Midweek Lenten services will continue on **Wednesday, March 6th, 13th and 20th**—soup and bread is served at 6:00 PM and a Service of the Word will start at 7:00 PM—our theme this Lenten season is "Perspectives on the Cross" - Ingrid Peterson started the midweek Lenten services with a very thought provoking interactive journey of Jesus' journey to the cross on February 21st. Pastor Jay led the service on February 28th and will lead the service on March 20th—Pete Liljeberg will be leading the service on March 8th and Janet Gomez will be leading the service on March 13th. Come and spend some time with your church community!



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Raised Flower Bed Workday

March 23rd at 12 PM Lunch and Work. Thrivent has awarded Apostles a grant to build 2 raised beds for the purpose of growing flowers for worship and bringing to community members. Another grant was obtained to provide lunch, seeds and other supplies. Please join this effort in whatever capacity you can. It's sure to be lots of fun!



Meet Your Congregation Council



Pastor Jay Serafin
Pastor



David Leunig
President



Chris Hawkins
Vice President



Doug Dalager
Treasurer



Cynthia Lowe
Secretary



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



Irene Albert
Member



Barbara Runk
Member



Ray Scholz
Member



Sue Turner
Member



Nancy Wagner
Member

The next Congregation Council meeting will be **Monday, March 11th, at 7:00 PM**—anyone is welcome to attend.

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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

Happy Anniversary to.

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

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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 Good	March 27
Margaret Grimes	March 28

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Holy Week Schedule

March 24 Palm/Passion Sunday
10:00 AM

March 28 Maundy Thursday
7:00 PM

March 29 Good Friday
7:00 PM

March 30 Holy Saturday
The In-Between Time
Noon

March 31 Easter Sunday
Holy Communion
10:00 AM
Easter Brunch

Christ Is Risen
Christ Is Risen Indeed!

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Indigenous Perspectives



A small group travelled to the Virginia Museum in Richmond on February 17th for an exhibit on Indigenous Perspectives—they enjoyed a delightful lunch afterwards.



**Holy Saturday
The In-Between Time**

On Holy Saturday this year (March 30th), the day between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, we will be opening our worship space to experience a time dedicated to the “in-between time” from cross to empty tomb. We will gather in Apostles’ sanctuary and spend some time in prayer, responsive reading and silence as we contemplate the mystery of the cross and what it means that the Word who became flesh died. It will be a time during which we may form questions, we may grieve, we may feel loss or loneliness or despair. We remember the full measure of the cross and the destruction it brings. In this “in-between time” we gather in the company of others and share support for each other in our own struggles with the cross. We look to God for some type of answer. We hope a hope that is beyond hope. Join us on Holy Saturday for this “In-Between Time” worship. We will gather at noon in the sanctuary and spend perhaps 45 minutes allowing the destruction of the cross and the darkness of the world enter into our Holy Time meditation. With the women who prepared the ointments, we will wait for the morning and all that it will bring.



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Please Keep In Your Prayers

Rich Bitting, Eddie Freeman, Manning Freeman, Don Garfield, the Hawkins Family, Ellen Quirk, Michael Schlemmer, George and Jewel Thomas, and Jerry and Lena Woodlief.

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**Midweek Lenten Offering for
Lutheran World Relief**

The offering from the midweek Lenten services will be for Lutheran World Relief—our gifts will deliver urgently needed support and care to innocent civilians in Israel and Gaza.



7th Day

March 2-3, 2024

“And on the seventh day, God finished the work of creation.” - Genesis 2:2

VIRGINIA SYNOD. 218A

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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Our New Treasurer



Doug Dalager, who is taking over responsibilities as our Treasurer from long-serving Treasurer, Tina Britt, has been spending lots of time with Tina getting up to speed on the duties and responsibilities of the job. We so appreciate all of your service to our community!!!

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New Guatemalan Child Sponsored

We have recently added to our Guatemala Apostles sponsored family. During the holiday season, Ben and Margaret Grimes sponsored Reynit Timotea Choros Cerezo, a six year old, very cute, little girl. We look forward to receiving updates concerning her progress from Partners in Development (PID), the organization that coordinates the sponsorships. We will pass along any news we receive to the congregation. Ben and Margaret Grimes

(Editor’s note: If you are interested in sponsoring a child in Guatemala, you can find all the information to do so at <https://www.pidonline.org/our-work/guatemala>.)





From Your Congregation Council President

As I begin my third year on Council and my second term as the Council president, I wanted to share a few thoughts on where we have been this past year 2023, and where I hope we will go, as a congregation, in the year ahead, 2024. As I have written before, 2023 was a year of recovery and healing, and as a congregation, I think we have made great strides along the path of healing! We have been able to introduce some new worship opportunities in the form of Agape Meal services, allowing us to combine service with fellowship. The Agape Meal service format also lends itself very well to Sundays when we have congregational meetings planned so I would anticipate we will continue to consider those for the upcoming congregational meetings for 2024. We have also made great strides on offering learning opportunities in support of our Reconciling In Christ (RIC) commitment by offering Bias Training to the Council as well as an opportunity for the congregation. As part of that commitment, we have now started including Indigenous persons and have been looking at ways to educate ourselves on how we can recognize the Indigenous people that once occupied the lands where the church now resides. A small group of us visited the Richmond Library for an exhibition on Indigenous Perspectives that was a great learning experience. I expect that we will continue to look for ways that we can educate ourselves in all aspects related to being an RIC congregation. We have also started on a Stewardship campaign to address the financial stewardship within the congregation, as the Seasons of Stewardship performed in 2022 and 2023 were focused on the giving of time and talents. Financial stewardship is also a part of stewardship and a necessity that cannot be avoided. After some very low times in late 2022 we have seen a modest increase in giving

since November of 2023 and I am hopeful that the financial stewardship campaign will allow us to see continued growth in our financial giving, thereby allowing us to continue our ministries that we provide to the congregation and the surrounding communities. I am thankful for such a caring congregation and expect that we will come together to meet our financial obligations and continue the support of our current ministries. Thank you all for your support over the past year and I look forward to serving you again in 2024. If we continue to communicate openly and work together over the coming months, I expect we will have a successful 2024!

In Peace,
David Leunig
Apostles Lutheran Church
Council President

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The Three Days



For something as ancient and as central to the Christian faith as the days of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter are, they generate a surprising amount of questions and misunderstanding. These days are at the very core of Christianity. Through our worship we actually become involved in—a part of—the stories they tell. No longer are they just something that happened thousands of years ago—they are now living, active and urgent events—we are no mere passive bystanders—we are part of the story. Look forward to seeing you as we journey through Holy Week—March 24th—March 31st

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Church Directory Update

Carolyn and Roy Ryman have moved to Williamsburg—their new address is 450 Queens Creek Road, Williamsburg, VA.





Thoughts on Stewardship

“God is Good.”

I remember my mother writing this in a letter to her aunt immediately after her aunt’s husband, my mother’s favorite uncle, had passed. At the time I thought, “How can she write that God is good when someone you love dies?” My mother did not have an easy childhood. Her mother died when she was 5, leaving behind my mother and her younger brother, age 4. I have been told that her father, my grandfather, almost had a nervous break down after the death of his wife. Being a single parent is never easy but during the depression it could not have been an easy plight. Then, when my mother was 20, her beloved brother died very tragically, falling off a mountain in Yosemite while hiking with friends. It did not end there. There were additional tragic events in her adult life that were equally as impactful. We all know that there are many, many people who experience tragedies throughout their lives and do not turn their back on God. Their commitment to God and their church remains strong in spite of countless misfortunes in their life. As my mother passed away when I was an adolescent, I never had a chance to have a conversation about how she was able to sustain her faith through such heartbreaking events. What I have come to understand about her though, is that during the best of times and certainly during the worst of times, she leaned into and leaned onto her faith. How do we strengthen our faith? I know of no formula for a strong faith. We know that reading and understanding Scripture is important. We know that Holy Communion brings us closer to God. We know having a prayer life is important. For me, attending church is important as it helps to ground me and sustain me throughout the week. I also believe that when we share our time, our talents and our treasures (our money), we are investing in the life and mission of the congregation; one way to live out our faith by

servicing Jesus in our community. For many of us, the easier part of this trifold is sharing our time and talents; the more challenging part is often sharing our money. Americans like their money; what it can buy, where it can take us, and what it can access for us. For many, it is difficult to give our money to an entity in which we do not receive something material in return. Yet, that is the pointto commit to something greater than ourselves without asking for anything in return because we already have God’s grace and God’s love. The Gospel of Matthew was spot on when he tells us in Chapter 6, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Linda Hodges

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Stewardship Sunday Sunday, March 17th

On Sundays during Lent this year, we have been watching Pastor Jay’s interviews of several members of our congregation on how the generosity of our members makes possible the different ministries of our faith community. Thank you to those who have made these interviews possible—Sue Turner and Janet Gomez for worship, Jade Hawkins and Doug Dalager for groups who use our building (specifically Girl Scouts and Al-Anon and AA), Chase and Donna Ambrose for the medical mission trip to Guatemala, Jason and Cynthia Lowe for their perspective of being new members and Christina Badger and her daughter, Reagan Jay, on the Virginia Synod events. A special thanks to those who have been helping record the interviews and for setting up the technology to view them in the sanctuary!! On Sunday, March 17th, we will have an opportunity to fill out intention forms and place them in the baptismal font.

Stewardship Intention Form

After prayerful consideration, I intend to share God’s generosity toward me by returning a portion of my blessings to support the ministry we share at Apostles Lutheran Church. My intention, which is known only to me and to God, is to contribute \$ _____ per week to Apostles Lutheran Church and its many ministries. May God bless me abundantly as I work to fulfill this intention.



Jubilee Churches

The Jubilee Churches have been working together to help people who are in danger of becoming homeless. Since the beginning of the year, a total of

\$6,294.45 has been given by five congregations (Apostles being one!!) to help pay back rent, electric bills, and motel stays for six different families. If you are interested in learning more or would like to participate, 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, April 10th, at 9:30 AM at Susanna Wesley United Methodist Church**)

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Strong Connections—ELCA World Hunger Conference

Our very own Betsy Liljeberg is the Virginia Synod's World Hunger Team's Leader. The team's mission is to educate, facilitate and encourage congregations to engage in aspects of hunger and poverty elimination both domestic and international. Betsy just returned from a trip to Houston, Texas, in February to participate in the ELCA's Hunger Leader's Gathering—also attending were Assistant to the Bishop, the Rev. Kelly Bayer Derrick, Diane McLane and Richard Corliss. Betsy shares reflections of her experience on a video that can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKCca4RamvY>. Check it out—it's AWESOME! They also celebrated 50 years of ELCA World Hunger and will lead the celebration for the Virginia Synod later this year.



ELCA World Hunger

UNTIL ALL ARE FED!!

Lay Ministry Academy Encouraging and Training Leaders

The Virginia Synod—in partnership with the North Carolina Synod—held a weekend retreat for the Lay Ministry Academy at Lutheridge Conference Center and Camp in early February. The luxury of a whole weekend afforded participants the chance to engage in intensive study as they journey through their calling to become lay leaders. If you are interested in this wonderful program, please talk to Janet Gomez.



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First Lutheran Church Norfolk to Vote to Become RIC

The congregation of First Lutheran Church in Norfolk will be voting on Sunday, March 17th, to become a Reconciling in Christ Congregation. Apostles RIC team has met with members of First's RIC team a few times. Please keep their congregation in your prayers as they journey toward becoming RIC.



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Save the Date!!

- + Saturday, April 27th—Virginia Synod Assembly—9:00 AM—1:00 PM on Zoom
- + Thursday, June 13th—15th—Summer Power In The Spirit—held at Roanoke College in Salem, Virginia—details will be coming soon
- + Sunday, September 8th—Worship In The Park at the beautiful Beaverdam Park