

# The Epistle

THE NEWSLETTER OF APOSTLES LUTHERAN CHURCH

Gloucester, Virginia

[www.apostles-elca.org](http://www.apostles-elca.org)

May 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*

**“God writes the Gospel, not in the Bible alone, but also on trees, and in the flowers and clouds and stars.” (Luther)**

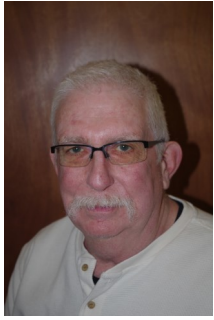
The previous quote comes to us from Martin Luther, and points us to a theologian who rejoiced in God's wonderful creation. As we move deeper into Spring and witness the rebirth of nature through the song of the birds, the leafing of the trees and the blooming of flowers, we are drawn to the fresh, new display before us. Filled with such a wide variety of colors and sounds, we enter into this time of growth and new life just as we proclaim the new life that is ours in the risen Christ, who defeated death for us and for all creation. Luther saw nature as a prime reminder of a God who is at work constantly creating and sustaining all of life.

**“God wants to be praised for nourishing and cherishing, for God cherishes all creatures. God is not only the Creator, but is also the Sustainer and Nourisher.” (Luther)**

God, then, for Luther, was never removed from creation, but constantly at work caring for all that God has created. Even so, God gives over to us the mission of being stewards of this

creation, so that we care and uphold and respect and nurture nature for the precious gift that it is. This is a high responsibility for the people of God. This world and all that is in it is the handiwork of a loving God who blesses us with all manner of trees and flowers and animals through which we are enriched and our living is made more beautiful. We cannot survive without this amazing creation God has given us. Scientists call nature an ecosystem, an interrelated collection of organisms which begin in single-celled form and lead to us, with all, plants and animals, interconnected in a way that gives us the ability to sustain life. Our very survival depends upon our honoring and caring for this world and all of its creatures, its flora and fauna, so that from the bottom to the top God's created order can continue to thrive.

It is in this wonderfully ordered system of nature where Luther sees the hand of God at work for our blessing and life, and as a witness to God. For Luther, what we can know about God is best revealed to us in Jesus, God incarnate. Through the Gospel message of salvation, through word and sacrament, we come to understand the most important things we can know about God. Easter is God's great gift of salvation, and as that message becomes truth to us we carry it wherever we go. Easter also is the gift of life- full life, abundant life. Yet, Luther also saw the hand of God at work in nature, revealing even more of God's loving handiwork for us and for all creation.



## *From Your Congregation Council President*

May marks the 4<sup>th</sup> month of my term as Council president and 4 months that this Council has been working to achieve some form of normalcy after our year of challenges! As a result, I felt it was time to advise the congregation of things your Council has been doing and working on and things that will be coming over the coming months. First and foremost, as most of you are aware, in January 2023, we entered a six-month contract with Pastor Jay to serve as our worship and spiritual leader and to help in guiding us through our time of recovery and healing. May marks the 5<sup>th</sup> month of that six-month contract. In accordance with our constitution, C13.05, the Council is not prohibited from serving as the call committee, so for efficiency, the Council will be serving as the Call Committee. I have sent an e-mail to the Synod and have received back confirmation that the Bishop and the Synod are on-board with us moving forward to bringing Pastor Jay on, in a more permanent relationship. Pastor Jay was also contacted and agrees as well. On 8 May, at our next Council meeting the Synod representative will be visiting and providing the details of the process of completing the call. There will be future updates as the Council proceeds through the call process. Additionally, as part of the agreement we have with Pastor Jay, the Bishop had provided tasking for Pastor Jay to assist and work with us through the healing process and to help us identify the church we are and the church we want to be. To that end on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April the Council held a council retreat where we took a hard look at the responsibilities laid out in the constitution for both the Council and the congregation. The examination of those responsibilities led to identifying areas that we do well and some areas that we need to improve upon for the good of the congregation.

Over the next few months, the congregation will be working on improving the areas identified as needing a little attention.

Other items of note:

Our finances have made a slight recovery, and we have had a few months where things are improving, and our income has been more than our expenses.

Our Council Ministry Teams have all gotten back into a regular meeting schedule and are gradually getting back to planning and preparing events for the congregation and conducting the ministry team business.

We continue to enjoy first Sunday of the month fellowships with themes allowing ministries of the congregation to keep us informed of changes and upcoming events.

Please check the Epistle regularly as I will be providing updates throughout the year.

Probably not monthly but on a regular basis.

Peace,

David Leunig, Apostles Council President

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## *Joining Our Congregation*

Now that the season of Lent is over, we are able to accept new members into our congregation. If you have any interest in joining our fellowship here at Apostles, please let Pastor Jay know. We can begin the process leading to membership in the near future. 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](mailto:j80j84@msn.com) to plan this special service of asking God's blessings and grace to remain in the place which you call "home."

## *Easter At Apostles*



Easter Vigil at Grace Episcopal in Yorktown and our beautiful Easter cross

## *Seeing The Risen Christ*

Where has the risen Christ touched your life? The risen Christ touched the lives of the disciples and followers of Jesus in various ways, some of them simple and some extraordinary. We believe the risen Christ touches our lives as well. **Throughout the Easter season we invite you to share how the risen Christ has revealed God's presence and love to you. In our narthex we have a poster board and sticky note pads. We hope you will take the time to write down on the pad an instance where you felt the presence and the joy of life with which the risen Christ has touched you. As we look for the risen Christ active in our lives, perhaps we can become better at naming how God's love and life become real for us. We look forward to reading your experiences of the risen Christ touching you with the love and joy of life God's Easter gift brings.**

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### *Red Geraniums for Pentecost*

We will again adorn our sanctuary with red geraniums on Pentecost Sunday, May 28th—if you would like to purchase one,

the cost is \$7 and there is a sign up sheet in the narthex.

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### *Meals for GUEST*



We are providing meals for the people who are staying with GUEST (Gloucester United Emergency Shelter Team)

- they are serving lunch every Tuesday at 11:30 AM at the house on Moose Drive. A big THANK YOU to Nancy Wagner for coordinating this and to Ray Scholz, Irene Albert and Linda Hodges for providing the meal on Tuesday, April 18th. We will be providing another meal on Tuesday, May 23rd—please see Nancy Wagner if you would like to help.

## First Communion



Reagan Jay (daughter of Christina and Brian Badger) was welcomed to the Lord's table on Maundy Thursday. We had a special celebration for Reagan on Easter during the Easter Brunch—a special thank you to Irene Albert for the beautiful cake and to Jamie Serafin for helping Reagan make her First Communion banner.

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### Looking Ahead

- + Saturday, June 3rd—Symphony Under the Stars
- + Sunday, June 4th—Pride Sunday
- + Sunday, June 18th—Dedication of new RIC Banner

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### Happy Birthday to . . .

Erin Riordan	May 1
Bob Ely	May 3
Gerald Britt	May 6
Dave Wagner	May 8
Jewel Thomas	May 12
Robert McMahan	May 12
Juanita Sturdy	May 13
Nicholas Allen	May 16
Pete Liljeberg	May 19
Shawn Jaeger	May 28
Carolyn Ryman	May 30

## Prayer Shawl Ministry



+ We sent a prayer shawl to Nancy Wagner's friend, Jim Bible—Jim's family said "God bless you and all of your church family—we got your box, love the handmade prayer shawl. Everything was so thoughtful and kind—most thankful for your prayers."  
+ We sent a prayer shawl to Karen Stark's mother—Karen

said "Thank you all so very much for the prayers and prayer shawl you sent to my Mom. She definitely feels surrounded by the love of our Lord through you. May you all be blessed."

+ We now have a pattern for miniature prayer shawls that we will be making—if you are interested in helping with this wonderful ministry, please contact either Pam Moore or Janet Gomez.



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### 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](http://vasynod.org).

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### Happy Baptismal Anniversary to . . .

Tina Britt	May 1
Gerald Britt	May 9
Mary Leunig	May 19

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### Happy Anniversary To . . .

Gerald and Tina Britt	May 6
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## ***World Hunger Emphasis for May: World Bee Day, May 20th***



Why a bee day? By observing World Bee Day each year, we can raise awareness on the essential role bees and other pollinators play in keeping people and the planet healthy and fed. World

Bee Day has been celebrated since 2018, thanks to the efforts of the Government of Slovenia, that led the UN General Assembly to declare 20 May as World Bee Day. The date for this observance was chosen because it was the birthday of Anton Janša, a pioneer of modern apiculture. Janša's family were beekeepers in Slovenia, where it is an important, long-standing agricultural activity. Today bees, pollinators, and many other insects are in decline. World Bee Day provides an opportunity for all of us to promote actions that will protect and enhance pollinators and their habitats, improve their abundance and diversity, and support the sustainable development of beekeeping.

### **Bee Facts:**

- **Honeybees** can help a family escape hunger and poverty.
- **As pollinators**, honeybees double fruit and vegetable yields which give a family additional income, which they can use to expand their farming.
- **For centuries bees**, among the hardest working creatures on the planet, have benefited people, plants, and the environment. By carrying pollen from one flower to another, bees and other pollinators enable not only the production of an abundance of fruits, nuts, and seeds, but also more variety and better quality, contributing to food security and nutrition.
- **Pollinators** such as bees, birds, and bats, affect 35 percent of the world's crop production, increasing outputs and producing plant-derived medicines.
- **Three out of four** crops across the globe producing fruits or seeds for human use as

food depend, at least in part, on pollinators.

### **Prayer**

Holy Creator, Thank you for the life-giving work of bees. You granted the Israelites a land flowing with milk and honey, and nourished John the Baptist in the wilderness with wild honey. Bees pollenate plants that produce food so we may not go hungry. Bees provide us with honey and wax which nurture and provide aid in sickness. Bless the bees with abundant healthy food and nesting sites. Keep them and their offspring strong and healthy so that their populations can be expanded. We thank you for the bounty that bees provide and ask your protection on them so that they may continue to bless us as part of your creation. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen

### **Resources and Activities:**

Short YouTube Videos on the Importance of Bees

<https://www.fao.org/resources/digital-reports/bees>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9zUsEIn8lg>

Interactive Bee Quiz with additional Facts (Food and Agricultural Organization, United Nations)

<https://www.fao.org/resources/digital-reports/bees>

Busy Bee Activity Pack (Heifer International)

[https://media.heifer.org/What\\_You\\_Can\\_Do/Busy-Bee-Activity-Pack.pdf](https://media.heifer.org/What_You_Can_Do/Busy-Bee-Activity-Pack.pdf)

How to Make a Bee Friendly Garden

<https://www.heifer.org/blog/windowsill-bee-garden.html>

Purchase a beehive from ELCA Good Gifts

<https://goodgifts.elca.org/honeybees>

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## ***Your Congregation Council on Retreat—Saturday, April 29th***



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

The Worship Ministry Team is responsible for encouraging and supporting the growth of members' worship of our Triune God and focus on the Word. Members of the team are Pastor Jay, Sue Turner (chair), David Leunig, Irene Albert, Janet Gomez, and Jennie Hawkins. There are four major aspects of the Worship Ministry Team:



- + **Worship Assistants**
- + **Music**
- + **Altar**
- + **Worship Team Ministry**

**Worship assistants** include the **acolyte** (lights the candles at the beginning and at the end of worship and assists with Holy Communion), the **assisting minister** (helps Pastor Jay lead the worship service), the **crucifer** (carries the cross at the beginning and at the end of worship), the **lector** (reads the readings for the day) and the **usher/greeter** (greet people as they come to worship, hands out bulletins, collects the offering and guides people for Holy Communion), **technology** (oversees the live broadcasting of the service)

**Music** includes **playing the piano and organ** (for the weekly and special worship services), **providing special music** (with different instruments like guitar and flute), **choir director** and **being a member of the choir and/or cantor and soloist**, **choir librarian** (takes care of filing choir music).

**Altar** includes **changing the paraments** (for the different seasons of the church year), **setting up and cleaning up Holy Communion** (set up the bread and wine for communion and then cleaning up after the worship service), **baking bread** (baking the bread for the weekly worship service), **providing flowers** (to adorn the altar and sanctuary for the weekly worship services

and special services during the year; e.g., lilies for Easter, palms for Palm Sunday, etc.), **making banners** (designing and making banners for the different seasons of the church year), **keeping the altar and Paschal candles full of oil**, **polishing the brass** and **cleaning the altar linens**.

**Worship Team Ministry** includes **chairing the team** (responsible for preparing the agenda for meeting and conducting the meeting), **planning the weekly and special worship services** (the team meets monthly), **preparing the weekly bulletin**, **Xeroxing the weekly and special services bulletins**, and **sponsoring the bulletin** (sign up to sponsor the weekly bulletin for a small fee).

This month, you are invited to join the work of the team and in June, we will celebrate the work of this wonderful ministry team with an "agape" meal/worship service. Please remember that training is provided for ALL positions on this team.

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***Please Keep In Your Prayers***

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

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***New Treasurer Needed***

After 20+ years, Tina Britt will be stepping down from serving as our Treasurer at the end of 2023. What an amazing job Tina has done—we are so very thankful! We are looking for someone to take her place—if you are interested in serving, please contact David Leunig, Congregation Council President—training will be provided.

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***Ministry Team Meetings***

The following ministry teams will meet in May:  
 + **Caring Community**—Thursday, May 11th, at 7:00 PM  
 + **Worship**—Monday, May 18th, at 7:00 PM  
 + **Reconciling in Christ**—Monday, May 22nd at 7:00 PM

**Looking to Love:  
LGBTQIA+ Conversation  
With Our Church**

The LGBTQIA+ Inclusions Tapestry Thread (a ministry of the Virginia Synod) is hosting a three-part discussion series in May and June. Participants will collectively watch a YouTube TED Talk and join Pastor Alex Sheppard-Witt (Our Saviour, Norge, VA) and Pastor Joel Neubauer (St. Mark, Yorktown, VA) in an exploration of the weekly topic and its application in daily life.

**May 1 - 7-8:30 PM**

Civility: Faithful Civil Engagement (on Zoom)

**May 15 - 7-8:30 PM**

Acceptance: Faith and Family (on Zoom)

**June 5 - 7-8:30 PM**

Love: Extending Love to All (on Zoom)

The sessions will not be recorded. You do not have to attend all three sessions. You can register to attend at [vasynod.org](http://vasynod.org).

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**Courthouse Community  
Orchestra To Perform**

Vanessa Fry, the wonderful flautist who has played for several of our worship services and for our choir anthems, is a member of the Courthouse Community Orchestra—they will be giving a concert on Wednesday, May 24th, at 7:00 PM at the new Cobbs Creek Arts Center in Mathews—61 Cobbs Creek Lane. We would love to have you join us.

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**Presentation on the Mission Trip  
to Guatemala**

Members of the team who went to Guatemala in March will be making a presentation during the worship service on **Sunday, May 21st**. We hope you can join us to hear all about their trip and what they experienced!!



**May “First Sunday” Potluck  
and Presentation from The  
Reconciling in Christ Team on  
Land Acknowledgement**



Please join us on **Sunday, May 7th**, for our “First Sunday” potluck following the 10:00 AM worship service. Members of the Reconciling in Christ Team will be making a special presentation on land acknowledgement—the traditional custom that dates back centuries in many Native nations and communities. Today, land acknowledgments are used by Native Peoples and non-Natives to recognize Indigenous Peoples who are the original stewards of the lands on which we now live. They will be showing a short video of Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton’s 2022 Indigenous People’s Day address and handing out information about this important topic. Bishop Eaton is the Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The Gospel reading for the worship service on May 7th will be taken from the “First Nations Version – An Indigenous Translation of the New Testament.” We hope you can join us—please bring a potluck dish to share. *(Editor’s note: In April, the ELCA launched the “Truth and Healing Movement,” an initiative to increase the church’s understanding of the impacts of colonization on Indigenous people in past generations and in the present. You can find more information at <https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Congregations-and-Synods/Ethnic-Specific-and-Multicultural-Ministries/Indigenous-Ministries-and-Tribal-Relations/Truth-and-Healing-Movement>.)*