

The Epistle

THE NEWSLETTER OF APOSTLES LUTHERAN CHURCH

Gloucester, Virginia

www.apostles-elca.org

June 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

What did Jesus intend for the church to be? Over the years I have asked myself this question over and over again (a hazard of the job, I guess), and have come to focus my best answer to that question around “authentic community.” From experiences as a parish pastor and from grappling with the Scriptures and from living in swirling joy of congregational life over these many (almost 34) years, my best guess for what Jesus intended the church to be is a true community of people, in all their similarities and differences, gathered together to create and maintain authentic community with each other. I understand the Augsburg Confession’s definition that the church is the gathering of people in which the Word of God is preached in its purity and the Sacraments are administered according to that Word and find it helpful and important. I hear Jesus tell Peter that he is the rock, and upon this rock Jesus will build the church, and that whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven, and I appreciate the significance of that passage. However, I am swayed more in my understanding of the identity and mission of the church by the interactions of Jesus with the disciples, especially on that last evening he spends with them. He gives them a meal by

which to remember and feel the joy of his presence (Synoptic Gospels). He washes their feet to impress upon them the expectation that they remain above all committed to serving one another (John’s Gospel). Then, in the Gospel of John, Jesus gives the disciples a “new commandment,” that they love one another as Jesus has loved them. It is in this commandment, and the similar commandments in the Synoptic Gospels that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and love our neighbor as ourselves, that I see this desire that Jesus has for his followers to form community which is authentically tied to the good news God brings into the world through Jesus.

Living in *authentic* community is difficult. No individual person or congregation will fulfill this call perfectly all the time. Yet, I believe, this is the aspiration Jesus has for those who would follow him. Within this community we learn of God’s unending love for us as community and as individuals, we hear the Scriptures read and the Word of God proclaimed, we worship the one who created and who redeems us, we learn what it means to be a child of God, we live in fellowship with one another, we actively seek to serve the needs of our siblings in Christ and the needs of the world God has created. Authentic community does not diminish all the other ways the church has been described and defined over the years, including in the Scriptures, but rather, I believe, enables the church to best live

its mission to be the body of Christ in the world. Authentic community does not mean we have to be best friends with those who are part of our congregation, nor does it mean we must agree on everything and support every decision made within the congregation. It doesn't even mean that you must agree with everything the pastor says in the sermon. What it does mean, at least in my mind, is that we return again and again to God's graceful gift of life given through Jesus, in which we are able to live life in its fullest expression, which leads to our working to build authentic community in our congregation in this part of the world where God has placed us. The foundation for this is our understanding that we are called to love one another (each and every one another) as Christ has loved us. Personalities might get in the way, feelings might get hurt from time to time, we will make mistakes and miss this mark as individuals and as a congregation, but blessed by God's promises, we get up the next day, dust ourselves off, forgive and receive forgiveness, and go back to loving as Christ loved us for the sake of our congregation, the people who gather here for worship and fellowship, the community in which we live and the world with which God has blessed us.

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Seeing The Risen Christ



During the season of Easter, we invited people to share how the risen Christ had revealed God's presence and love to them—how they were touched with the love and joy of life God's Easter gift brings.

Here is what people said. . .

"I saw the Risen Christ in a breakfast meeting with a friend."

"I saw God at the hospital when my wife was almost dead. His power healed her of a life long illness."

"Watching our 3 grandchildren flourish and

their innocence remaining intact! We see God's presence."

"When you are having morning coffee and thinking of all the ways what makes you thankful—you will feel 'peace' and you will have a 'smile.'"

"A husband lovingly caring for his terminally ill wife."

"Every morning as I read my devotions I feel God's presence."

"Talked about God and me reshingling my roof to a co-worker."

"In a rainbow."

"I saw God in my son—a higher power led him to follow a better path."

"In the volunteers at the food pantry."

"In our Pastor caring for a very dear friend."

"God's love shining through all people from Apostles!!"

"I see God's presence every day in my family and nature and also in my boyfriend and his family."

"I have seen God presence ever morning in my cat—he is so adorable—he reminds me of God by his love and devotion to me! My little guardian angel!"

"In our small group discussion."

"I saw the presence of God in the light of a dear friend over breakfast."

"The Risen Christ is ever present with the PID mission in Guatemala."

"Being greeted in this welcoming church."

"I saw the Risen Christ in Betty Hauch during her visit when I was in the hospital!!"

"I saw the Risen Christ in a young mother caring for her autistic son."

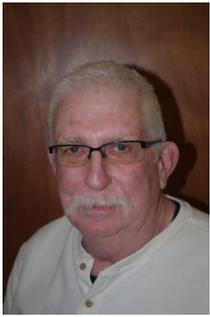
"God inspired me to pray for a friend that I did not even know was ill!!"

"I saw the Lord as he helped me help a stranded motorist and make a new friend."

"In our move to Virginia!"

"I felt so alone when I had to move because my husband was ill. Doing this along was undoing my heart. A simple prayer, a quiet hope, help came and I knew God was with me."

Thank you to everyone who shared their experiences!!



From Your Congregation Council President

As we enter into June, the mid-way point of the calendar year, I wanted to update you all with our progress for calling Pastor Jay as our permanent pastor. The Council, acting as the Call Committee, has voted unanimously to move forward with the call of Pastor Jay, as the only candidate being considered. Pastor Jay has guided us down a path of recovery, and we feel it is necessary to continue down that path with his assistance. The Council has also met with a synod representative and has developed a schedule to call pastor into service by the end of June! In order to accomplish this, we will need your help and participation in a congregational meeting planned for the **25th of June**, immediately following Sunday worship! The meeting will have the sole purpose of voting on the calling of Pastor Jay and voting on his compensation package. In accordance with the constitution and by-laws you will be receiving an official letter, by the 11th of June, announcing the meeting. Please come out and join us on the 25th of June for service and the congregational meeting and be a part of the vital meeting in the life of Apostles. Let's do our part to continue the recovery of Apostles and to allow Apostles to continue its ministries in the community and beyond! The meeting will also have a Zoom connection provided in case you are traveling and still want to support this important meeting!

Peace,
David Leunig
Apostles Council President

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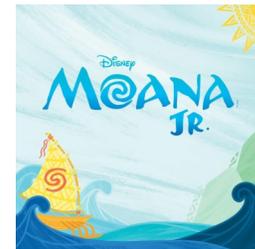
Pentecost at Apostles!



Thank you to everyone who purchased red geraniums to adorn our sanctuary on Pentecost—they will look lovely in our church yard over the summer!

June Opportunities for Fellowship!

Symphony Under the Stars—please join us for this annual concert on **Saturday, June 3rd**—we will be enjoying the concert with members of First United Baptist Church. We will start gathering around 6:00 PM at the corner of Main Street and Walter Reed Way – the Liberty Dolls will be performing at 6:00 PM and the Virginia Symphony concert will start at 8:00 PM. Please bring a snack or two to share and a lawn chair.



**Courthouse Players
Production of Moana, Jr.**— please join us for this wonderful play on **Sunday, June 4th at 3:00 PM** at Mathews High School—tickets are \$12 for adults and \$7 for

students and children—you can purchase tickets at the door. We plan to go out for dinner after the play which lasts about 60 minutes.

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Meal for GUEST



A big THANK YOU to Nancy Wagner for coordinating the meal we provided for the guests on Tuesday, May 23rd and to

Ray Scholz, Betsy Liljeberg, Janet Gomez and Nancy Wagner for providing the meal. Nancy said GUEST hopes to start housing people in churches next year.

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Congratulations to Ingrid Peterson!



Ingrid graduated from William and Mary on Saturday, May 20th, with her Master's Degree in Education Clinical Mental Health Counseling. Ingrid is pictured here with husband Nate, her Mom and Dad, Theresa and Marv, and her uncle Barry.

Joining Our Congregation

We are able accepting 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 to plan this special service of asking God's blessings and grace to remain in the place which you call "home."

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Happy Birthday to . . .

Ellen Kendzierski	June 3
Preston Higgins	June 6
Tenley Biggs	June 26
Janet Gomez	June 29

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Happy Baptismal Anniversary to . . .

Krystle McMahan	June 15
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Happy Anniversary to . . .

Gene and Janet Gomez	June 17
Phil Dunn and Joan Podd	June 19

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Prayer Shawl Ministry

We now have miniature prayer shawls that are available in the narthex—please help yourself. If you are interested in helping with this wonderful ministry, please contact either Pam Moore or Janet Gomez.



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.

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June Is Pride Month!



As a Reconciling in Christ congregation June is an important month for us to recall

our decision to create an intentional welcome for people of the LGBTQ+ community. We want all people to know that they are welcome to fully participate in the life of Apostles and the Virginia Synod of the ELCA. In addition to the LGBTQ+ community, we are working toward welcoming people of the BIPOC (black, indigenous, people of color) community into our worshiping family. God has created a great diversity of people for us to get to know and appreciate. Watch for information on upcoming educational events. We will celebrate **Pride Sunday on June 18th**. Wear a rainbow!

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Remembering Carol Wolf

Carol died on Saturday, May 20th, after a long battle with cancer—she was 82. Carol and her husband Jim were long-time members of Apostles—they helped build the original church building and Carol played the piano for our worship services for many years. We pray for Jim and their children Tammy and Troy.



**World Hunger
Emphasis for June:
World Refugee Day,
June 20th**

World Refugee Day is organized every year by the United Nations. It is designed to celebrate and honor refugees from around the world. The day was first established in 2001 to recognize the 50th anniversary of the 1951 Status of Refugees Convention. This day recognizes the strength of the refugees who have fled conflict and persecution in their countries in hope of finding sanctuary and living a better life. Refugees often flee countries which suffer from famine and hunger. They seek food, shelter, and opportunity for their families. World Refugee Day tries to educate others in understanding their plight. Leaving everything behind in search of sanctuary and food security illustrates their resilience and courage to rebuild their future. On this day we should experience, understand, and celebrate the diversity of the refugee communities.

Refugee Facts:

- + A refugee is an individual who leaves their country due to hunger, war, persecution, or violence in order to find safety in a different country.
- + Most refugees come from backgrounds where they have been employed and are eager to work.
- + Refugees create a more diverse culture in the host community providing an opportunity to learn from each other.

Prayer:

Heavenly Protector, as you protected your son when his family fled to Egypt, protect, and bless all who seek refuge. May their needs for safety and for home be met. Move our hearts to welcome them. We pray for the cessation of war and to bring justice to nations that no one will need to flee again.

Hear our prayer

Particularly watch over and bless all vulnerable children who are journeying alone in this world.

Comfort those whose parents have been taken from them by violence. Provide for refugee children who are far from home and do not know where their families may be. Guide migrant children who take dangerous journeys to find family or opportunity.

Hear our prayer

Adapted from Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Resources:

For more information on how Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) is helping refugees visit: <https://www.lirs.org/>

Activities:

Check out LIRS' Virtual Book Series: Insightful Interviews with Immigration Authors. <https://www.lirs.org/virtual-book-series>

Free resources to celebrate World Refugee Day <https://www.globetrottinkids.com/world-refugee-day-resources-activities-for-kids/>

These resources require payment but provide a variety of activities for learning about refugees <https://tinyurl.com/2f7wade8>

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Looking to Love:

**LGBTQIA+ Conversation
With Our Church**

The LGBTQIA+ Inclusions Tapestry Thread (a ministry of the Virginia Synod) is hosting a discussion series with Pastor Alex Sheppard-Witt (Our Saviour, Norge, VA) and Pastor Joel Neubauer (St. Mark, Yorktown, VA) - the last discussion will be on Zoom on **June 5th from 7 -8:30 PM**—Love: Extending Love to All. The session will not be recorded. You can register to attend at vasynod.org.

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Ministry Team Meetings

- The following ministry teams will meet in June:
- + **Caring Community**—Thursday, June 14th, at 7:00 PM
 - + **Worship**—Monday, June 19th, at 7:00 PM

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Save the Date

November 7-9, 2024 —All Lutheran Women's Retreat—stay tuned for details!

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). Please remember that training is provided for ALL positions on this team.

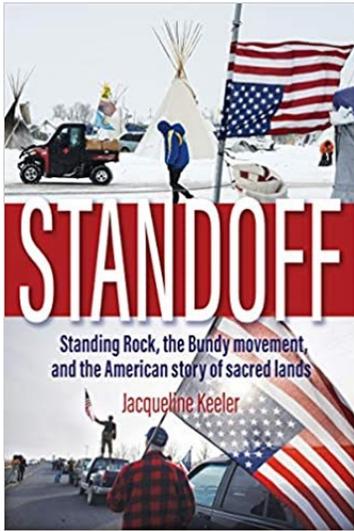
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Agape Meal Worship



On Sunday, June 25th, our Worship Ministry Team here at Apostles invites you to join us in celebrating the conclusion of our Seasons of

Stewardship effort as we gather for an Agape Meal worship service. The earliest church, after Pentecost, gathered to worship and share in a meal together each week, and on June 25 we will try to create a similar type of atmosphere as we meet in the Fellowship Hall, gather around tables and share a meal and worship. **You are encouraged to bring a dish to share (brunch theme) and join us for this communion worship service and meal.** It will be different, and a new experience for all of us. All are welcome and we hope that you will be a part of this experience as we connect with our ancient roots, celebrate our worship ministry here at Apostles, worship God who blesses us abundantly and commune in fellowship with each other. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Pastor Jay or any member of the Worship Team.



New Book Study To Start

The Caring Community Ministry Team is starting a new book study on **Wednesday, June 21st**. Bring a sandwich to eat at 6:00 PM and the study still start at 6:30 PM. Nate Peterson will be leading the study. We will be reading "Standoff" by Jacqueline Keeler— it

looks at the Standing Rock Oil Pipeline Protest from a current and historical lens. This was the probably THE defining moment of a generation for Native peoples. The book goes through "how did we get here" part of native history and it also compares it to the Bundy standoff in Oregon, and how that situation was handled differently. We hope you can join the discussion! The book is available on Amazon for \$14.

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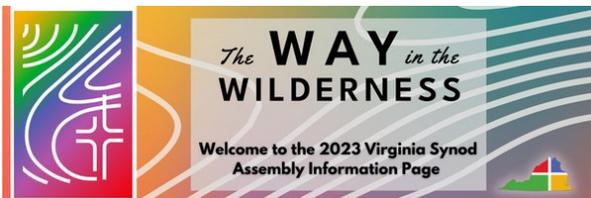
Please Keep In Your Prayers

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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"The Way In The Wilderness" Virginia Synod Assembly 2023

The 2023 Virginia Synod Assembly will take place on the campus of Roanoke College in Salem, Virginia on **June 9th-11th**. Pastor Jay along with delegates Chris and Jennie Hawkins will be attending. A highlight of the Assembly will be the election of a new Bishop of the Synod—Bishop Robert Humphrey will be retiring after serving one term. Look for a report on the Assembly in the July edition of The Epistle.



ELCA's Truth and Healing Movement

Here are opportunities in June to learn more about the ELCA's Truth and Healing Movement—to learn the true history and current realities of Indigenous people. It is these truths, truths that have been ignored by most for hundreds of years, that will bring healing for both Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people.

- + **"Indian 101"** - Thursday, June 1st—11:00 AM—1:00 PM EST
- + **Film Screening of Native Nations** - Wednesday, June 7th—8:00 PM—9:00 PM
- + **Panel Presentation—National Indian Lutheran Board** - Wednesday, June 21st—8:00 PM—9:00 PM
- + **"Introduction to the Truth and Healing Movement"** - Friday, June 23rd—11:00 AM—1:00 PM

Links to all of these opportunities can be found by searching for ELCA Truth and Healing Movement.

(Editor's Note: I have participated in both the "Indian 101" and the "Introduction to the Truth and Healing Movement" - I learned a lot!!)

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Faith Based Breakfast

The next Breakfast for Faith Leaders will be Tuesday, June 6th at 9:00 AM at Transforming Life Church on Main Street. Gloucester's Deputy County Administrator, Steve Wright, will be speaking briefly on the Opioid Abatement Funds and there will information provided on Hurricane Preparedness and the local churches' partnership during the hurricane season. Anyone is welcome to attend!

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Cookie Donation

At the conclusion of Girl Scout cookie season, Jade Hawkins donated several boxes of cookies to the Bread for Life

Food Pantry. Ray Scholz received the donation for the Pantry. Thank you, Jade!!!