

The Epistle

THE NEWSLETTER OF APOSTLES LUTHERAN CHURCH

Gloucester www.apostles-elca.org | www.facebook.com/ApostlesELCA | August 2025

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

Our ministry and mission here at Apostles Lutheran Church only happens

because of the generosity of our members and friends. This generosity takes the form of financial giving and the giving of time and effort as well as our remaining committed to Christ's New Commandment, "to love one another" as Christ has loved us. Our investment in the ministry of Apostles plants seeds of love that the Spirit can cause to grow and prosper as we actively pursue doing those things God has called us to do. We appreciate greatly the generosity of our members and friends, and realize that our congregation cannot live into its mission statement without your generosity. Your willingness to support what we do here touches real lives and impacts many people in wonderfully positive ways.

Sometimes, our generosity is needed in order to shape how we can share God's love in the future. Right now, we are looking to ways we can help our ministry grow into the future. Church Council recently had a retreat in which we began to look at some longer range planning, and we've come to realize that we

have a wonderful opportunity in the near future to create a foundation for potential congregational impact. Currently, we find ourselves owing a balance of about \$17,575 on our mortgage, with payments each month of almost \$1700. After conversation, Church Council has put in place a plan to try to pay down our mortgage more quickly. Based upon our calculations, if we can raise an extra \$5,000 before March of next year, we will be able to retire our mortgage prior to Palm Sunday of 2026. Since Palm Sunday has been an important date for many congregational milestones in the past, we have set a target to pay off the mortgage before then, and celebrate the occasion on Palm Sunday. However, if we can raise about \$10,000 by the end of the year, we can pay the mortgage off and begin 2026 with a clean slate. If we can manage to accomplish this, it means we can create our spending plan for 2026 free from those monthly mortgage payments and have, with the continued regular generosity of our members, the ability to direct funds to congregational and community needs, opening up new possibilities for ministry and congregational life. It also will help us to continue community commitments important to our overall ministry goals even as designated money begins to run out in the near future.

Here is how you can help. Please prayerfully

consider contributing to our mortgage payoff fund. If you are able to do so, there are several options for contributions:

- + Place your contribution in an envelope and mark the envelope with the words “Mortgage Payoff.”
- + Use one of the envelopes found in our narthex entrance already noted as “Mortgage Payoff Campaign” when you come to church.
- + If you contribute electronically, make a note on the annotation line directing the contribution to the “Mortgage Payoff Fund.”

Please note that any contribution that does not convey that it is for the Mortgage Payoff Fund will not go into the fund to pay down the mortgage. Undirected funds normally go toward current expenses. Also, building fund contributions will not be used for paying down the mortgage. They are designated for building repairs and property maintenance. While we do look forward to paying down our mortgage, these contributions can only be in addition to regular giving so our ongoing ministry is not affected.

We are excited for the opportunities which lie before us. We are grateful for your generosity which has been crucial for our ministry in the past and for our ministry going forward. We give thanks to God for all you do to help create and support our ministry here at Apostles and we look forward to the many ways we can continue to share God’s love through Christ as we move forward.

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God’s Work, Our Hands



Thanks to Ray Scholz, Pete Liljeberg, Gene Gomez and Jason Lowe for helping remove a large tree from one of our neighbor’s yard.

Palm Sunday at Apostles

Pastor Jay mentioned in his column this month that Palm Sunday has been an important milestone in the life of Apostles Church—here’s a little history. . .

+ **On Palm Sunday, April 12, 1987**, almost three years after breaking ground for the first building, the congregation worshipped for the first time in the church. The church was dedicated on September 13, 1987.



+ **On Palm Sunday, April 13, 2003**, the congregation worshipped for the first time in the new sanctuary. The new sanctuary and furnishings were dedicated on September 14, 2003.



+ **On Palm Sunday, March 28, 2021**, the congregation voted unanimously to accept the proposed welcome statement and become a Reconciling in Christ congregation. *(The vote to become a RIC congregation was held on Zoom—we celebrated in person on Reformation Sunday, October 31, 2021.)*



Answers to Last Month's Trivia in Pastor Jay's Column

1. How many wives did Solomon have? **700 (plus 300 concubines)**
2. How many of each type of animal did Noah take with him on the ark? **Two of each kind (Genesis 6) or 7 pairs of each clean animal and of birds, and one pair of unclean animals (Genesis 7)**
3. What is the shortest book of the Bible and how many verses does it have? **2 John (13 verses)**
4. What book of the Bible has the most chapters, and how many chapters does it have? **Psalms (150 chapters)**
5. Which chapter of the Bible, written by St. Paul, traditionally is known as the "love" chapter? **1 Corinthians 13**
6. What were the names of the brothers of Jesus listed in the Bible? **James, Joses (Joseph), Simon, Judas (Jude)**
7. Who was Martin Luther's right hand man who helped him organize and promote the reformation? **Philip Melanchthon**
8. Where is the main Synod office for the Virginia Synod located? **Roanoke College, Salem, VA**
9. How many Synods are there in the ELCA? **65**
10. In what two languages was the Augsburg Confession, one of the foundational documents of the Lutheran Church, written? **Latin and German**

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Happy Anniversary to. . .

Nate and Ingrid Peterson August 5

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Happy Baptismal Anniversary to.

Shawn Jaeger August 1

Reagan Jay August 26

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Please Keep In Your Prayers

Rich Bitting, Manning Freeman, Don Garfield, Ellen Kendzierski, Ellen Quirk, Doug Leip, Michael Schlemmer, Keith and Juanita Sturdy, George Thomas, Jewel Thomas, Lena Woodlief, and Nancy Wagner

Happy Birthday to. . .

| | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Keith Sturdy | August 2 |
| Bern Runk | August 3 |
| Betty Hauch | August 3 |
| Ingrid Peterson | August 5 |
| David Muse | August 6 |
| Emmaleigh Hautz | August 6 |
| Samantha Good | August 11 |
| Donald Jaeger | August 12 |
| George Thomas | August 15 |
| Savannah Anby | August 19 |
| Lena Woodlief | August 24 |
| Chase Ambrose | August 28 |
| Sean Riordan | August 29 |

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ELCA
World Hunger

Synod Hunger Team Update

Recent voting in the House of Representatives and Senate resulted in an increase in requirements and a decrease in funding for SNAP recipients. SNAP is the supplemental nutrition assistance program of the federal government which helps low income families purchase food. The ELCA Witness in Society Office is working on a policy memo for the Presiding Bishop's office, detailing the full range impact to programs after the passage of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (HR 1). In totality, over 3 million families are expected to lose SNAP assistance due to paperwork and work requirements, and we are concerned that less wealthy states may be forced to drop out of SNAP entirely if they can not make new required cost expectations in late 2027. It is now more important than ever to support our local food pantry, homeless shelter, and Lutheran World Hunger. Please keep those experiencing hunger and food insecurity, including the people in Gaza, in your prayers.



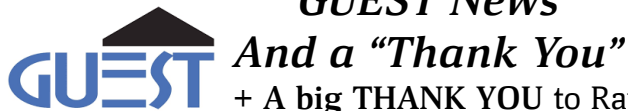
Jubilee Churches News

The Jubilee Churches of Gloucester, a coalition of 18 congregations in Gloucester (including Apostles), will be meeting again in August

on August 6th at 9:30 AM at Susanna Wesley United Methodist Church. The Rev. Dr. Ed Walker, pastor of Bellamy United Methodist Church, is the covener of the Jubilee Churches of Gloucester. In July, Jubilee Churches provided rent assistance to help prevent eviction for a family of four – a husband, wife, and their two young children, one of whom has special needs. In May, the husband was unexpectedly let go from his job. He acted quickly to secure new full-time employment, and the family worked diligently to catch up on their bills on their own. Despite their best efforts, the financial strain from the sudden loss of income in May and June made it difficult to fully recover. Our support of \$558 toward their rent helped stabilize their housing and gave them a fresh start heading into August. In July Jubilee Churches provided support to 3 households \$971 - assistance was provided for rent and Dominion power assistance. If you would like to learn more about Jubilee Churches, please contact Pete Liljeberg or Janet Gomez.

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GUEST News



And a "Thank You"

+ A big THANK YOU to Ray and Lynn Scholz, Pete and Betsy Liljeberg and Janet Gomez for providing lunch for the clients of GUEST the last week in July.

+ **Needed supplies** at the GUEST day shelter include bug spray, sunscreen, hats, cooling towels, hand held fans and coffee. There is a bin in the fellowship hall to place your donations—thanks!

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World Hunger Sunday

Don't forget your offering for World Hunger Sunday—we collect a special offering for world hunger on the 3rd Sunday of the month. **UNTIL ALL ARE FED!!**



ELCA World Hunger

Power In The Spirit 2025

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. Over 120 people gathered on the campus of Roanoke college from Thursday, July 17 through Saturday, July 19 for this year's event. Over the course of the three days, the group explored the theme: Wings of Hope. The keynote speaker, Maryn Olson who serves as Director of Lutheran Disaster Response, shared stories of the ministry LDR undertakes around the country and around the world. The Rev. Bobby Morris, Pastor of St. Matthew's in Pomaria, South Carolina led the Bible study and Michael Benshish led music and worship. The Rev. Kelly Bayer Derrick was recognized for her service to the Virginia Synod for the past several years with a beautiful stained glass piece that was put together by the people at the event. This year's attendees from Apostles were Sue Turner and Janet Gomez—save the date of **February 2-4, 2026** for Midwinter Power in the Spirit (on Zoom) and **July 16-18, 2026** for the summer Power in the Spirit.



*From Your Treasurer,
Doug Dalager*

June 2025

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Planned Income</i> | <i>\$ 9,610.24</i> |
| <i>Actual Income</i> | <i>\$10,538.36</i> |
| <i>Delta</i> | <i>\$ 927.94</i> |

Year to Date

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Planned Income</i> | <i>\$57,663</i> |
| <i>Actual Income</i> | <i>\$50,365</i> |
| <i>Delta</i> | <i>\$ (7,297)</i> |

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Congregation Council Update

Congregation Council will NOT be meeting in August—the next meeting will be **Monday, September 8th, at 7:00 PM.**

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Caring Community Ministry Team

Your Caring Community Ministry Team has been busy planning for the summer and fall—here is what they have been working on. . .

- + **Worship In The Park** will be held at Beaverdam Park on **Sunday, September 7th**—please make plans now to attend this wonderful worship service and fellowship in the beautiful Beaverdam Park!!
- + **Quarterly Theme Event** will kick off in October with a viewing of the movie “Luther” and a mini-Octoberfest—tentatively scheduled for **Friday, October 24th.**
- + **Adult Theological Discussions** will launch in the Fall and focus on how Lutherans interpret scripture. The sessions will be led by Pete Liljeberg and Pastor Jay.

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New Members To Be Received

We will be taking in new members in the near future—if you are interested in becoming a member of Apostles, please see Pastor Jay.

Summer Fun Picnic Sunday, August 17th!!



Please join us on **Sunday, August 17th**, after the worship service for our Summer Fun Picnic - there will be games, food, fun and fellowship. We will have both outdoor (weather permitting) and indoor activities. **Your help is needed!!**

* A food sign up sheet will be in the bulletin for the next couple of weeks.

* Bring games - yard games; e.g. croquet, corn hole, etc. and indoor games for kids attending.

* Helping hands are needed the day of the picnic.

* Tents/umbrellas are needed for to provide shaded areas.

* Please share any ideas you have for a successful event—you can talk to Karen Johnston, Jennie Hawkins or Irene Albert.

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Virginia Synod Receives \$50,000 Grant

The Virginia Synod recently was awarded a \$50,000 grant through the CaSTLE Project: The Country and Small Town Lived Ecclesiology Project, a five-year initiative led by Wartburg Theological Seminary to support renewal in small town and rural congregations. With this grant, the Virginia Synod will receive funding to strengthen the work of the Lay Ministry Academy and to support lay leaders in the synod serving as synod authorized ministers and lay preachers. If you are interested in the Lay Ministry Academy, please talk to Janet Gomez.



New Staffing Structure of the Virginia Synod Announced

On August 1, 2025, the Virginia Synod Office of the Bishop will begin a time of transition. Staff leadership responsibilities will change, but each staff member has been blessed by God with gifts that will be used in new and exciting ways to bring glory to God and vitality and vibrancy to the Virginia Synod.

+ On August 1, **the Rev. Colleen Hetrick** will begin serving as **Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership Development and Digital Ministry**. She will provide leadership and support for the candidacy process and the Lay Ministry Academy. Additionally, she will serve as staff support for the Tapestry Team, and will continue her direction of the digital ministries of the synod. Pastor Hetrick joined the Virginia Synod Office of the Bishop Staff in 2021 and served as the Director of Digital Ministries.



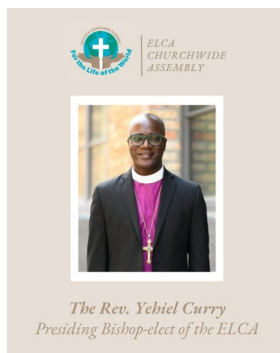
+ On August 1, **the Rev. Liz Radtke** will begin serving as the **Director for Faith Formation, Retired Rostered Relations, and Conflict Mediation**. She will provide staff support for the ministries of Power in the Spirit, Lutheran World Hunger, Retired Rostered Ministers Ministry, Augsburg and Adult Faith Formation and will continue her ministries of conflict management and mediation, EPIC Leadership Days, First Call Theological Education, and Deans Liaison.



Pastor Hetrick and Pastor Radtke were installed on Thursday, July 17 during Power in the Spirit. We ask for your prayers and your grace as we begin this new season in the life of the Virginia Synod.



Meet the New Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America!!



The Rev. Yehiel Curry was elected July 30 to serve a six-year term as presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The election took place during the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly being held July 28–Aug. 2 at the Phoenix (Ariz.) Convention

Center. Curry was elected on the fifth ballot. There were 799 votes cast, with 400 votes needed for an election. Curry received 562 votes, and the Rev. Kevin Strickland, bishop of the ELCA Southeastern Synod, received 237 votes. Curry is the first Black presiding bishop of the ELCA. Speaking to the assembly after his election, Curry reflected on his membership at Shekinah Chapel in Riverdale, Ill., where he eventually became a lay mission developer while he participated in the Theological Education for Emerging Ministries program, which prepares individuals for ordained ministry in the ELCA, with a focus on emerging ministry contexts like ethnic-specific, multicultural, rural and inner-city settings. He spoke to the assembly about his initial hesitation in accepting that first ministry role. "Perhaps I'm out there in one of you," Curry said. "I never saw myself as good enough, so for two years, I said no. I finally said yes. When I said yes, your support, this church's support, of that ministry meant everything. So if you want to know what your benevolence dollars look like, it looks like me, and I want to say thank you. Thank you for your investment." Curry has served as bishop of the ELCA Metropolitan Chicago Synod since 2019. He previously served as mission developer (2009-2012) and pastor (2012-2019) of Shekinah. He received a Bachelor of Arts from Lewis University in Romeoville, Ill., in 1995 and a Master of Divinity from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) in 2013. LSTC is one of seven ELCA seminaries.

More News from the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly

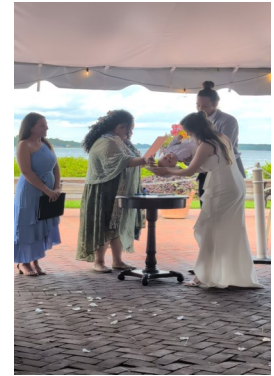
What an exciting week at the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly at the Phoenix Convention Center in Phoenix, AZ. Thanks to wonderful technology, you can watch the entire Assembly live on YouTube or view the recordings later. The theme of the Assembly was “For the Life of the World.” The Assembly participated in plenary discussions to make decisions about the work of our church and they spent time in worship and engaged in various ways of theological reflection. This is a triennial gathering and the highest legislative body of the ELCA – it is composed of an allocated 845 voting members, serving on behalf of the 2.7 million members. The ELCA’s 65 synods elect voting members to serve at churchwide assemblies. In addition to electing a new Presiding Bishop, a new Secretary of the ELCA was also elected. The Rev. Lucille “CeCee” Mills was elected on a 5th ballot. The other candidate was the Rev. Matthew Riegel, Bishop of the West Virginia Synod, who just so happened to worship with us on June 22nd—how about that!! Pastor Mills may be familiar to some of you—she served as a Mission Developer for Rejoice Lutheran Church in Chesapeake and also served on the Virginia Synod Church Council. She was also the keynote speaker at Power in the Spirit last July. Highlights of what voting members also considered included:

- The proposed social statement Faith and Civic Life: Seeking the Well-being of All
- Proposed editorial changes to the social statement Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust
- Proposals (known as memorials) from the ELCA’s 65 synods that addressed missing and murdered Indigenous women, Indian boarding school remembrance, discourse on Israel-Palestine and an end to the occupation of Palestine, recommendation from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC), addressing immediate action on dismantling racism; and restoration of USAID funding.



News From The Pews

+ **Congratulations to Lilly Frost and John Mayer** who renewed their wedding vows on Sunday, July 20th in Yorktown—their son, Miles was baptized during the service.



+ **Chase Ambrose** has had a very busy summer at Camp Caroline Furnace—“This week made a great impact on me, and I learned a lot. Every day we would learn new skills that I was able to implement into other situations later on in the week. For example, on Thursday I was able to help Rebecca with her group’s bible study. There were many ways that I was able to hear God this week but there were a few that really stuck out to me, like seeing the kids wanting to learn about the bible stories, during Thursday night chapel in St. Johns and in all the new friendships I made. I would 100% recommend this program to others that are interested in being a leader here at camp in the future. One piece of advice I will take outside of this experience is to always know your own self-worth.”



+ **Gene Gomez** designed and made a “tree of life” stained glass piece for Pastor Kelly Bayer Derrick as a going away gift.

