

The Epistle

THE NEWSLETTER OF APOSTLES LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

Our Mission is to be a Caring Inclusive Christian Community responding to God's grace through Worship, Service, and Sharing the Gospel

Opportunities for Worship in December



Advent Worship Services with Lighting the Advent Wreath—December 7th, 14th, and 21st at 10:00 AM

Blue Christmas Service—A Service of Comfort, Remembrance and Hope—**Sunday, December 21st at 7:00 PM**



Christmas Eve Candlelight Service with Holy Communion—**Wednesday, December 24th at 7:00 PM**

First Sunday of Christmas—**Sunday, December 28th at 10:00 AM—A Service of Lessons and Carols**



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Decorating The Sanctuary for Christmas

Please make plans to stay after worship on **Sunday, December 21st**, to help put up the Christmas tree and decorate the sanctuary for Christmas!!



3 Session Advent Study Starts December 7th!

This season's Advent study from ELCA World Hunger invites you to prepare room in your home and hearth for yourself and your loved ones before going into the world to act on behalf of your neighbors. In a time of global suffering and anxiety, Richard Wilbur's hymn "A Stable Lamp Is Lighted" calls us to embrace the tension of the moment, the natural desire for a place of our own, and our call to care for the stranger:

A stable lamp is lighted

whose glow shall wake the sky;

the stars shall bend their voices,

and every stone shall cry.

The study consists of video and written materials with the theme of accompaniment and designed to prepare your heart for Christ in our world. Nothing to read ahead of time, just lively discussion and fellowship. Come for one session, or all three! Contact Betsy Liljeberg if you have questions.



A Word From Pastor Jay



We focus on a baby born,
And claim, through him, we gain
God's presence in our broken lives,
A hope amidst our pain,
For Advent has become our lot
In life this whole year long,
As we desire brighter days
To sing our Christmas song.
Yet, longing for the brighter light
Which sweeps darkness away,
We journey forth with hopes to see
That glorious new day
When all our dreams become, for us,
Reality, true joy,
A life returned to normalcy
Which no plague can destroy.
We wait, and watch, and hope and dream
Of future times which bring
Days filled with moments in which we
Can celebrate and sing
The songs of Angels and announce
That all has been fulfilled,
The joyous moment has arrived
Just as our God has willed.
"Tomorrow," though, is Advent's song,
For all our hopes await
That moment when God's hand provides
This liberating fate.
So, what can we, each Advent child,
Who dreams the dream of hope,
Commit to do in shadowed times,
And faithfully still cope
As children of our loving God
Even when days are dark?
We lean on promise, and proceed
To light a tiny spark.
For that light defies darkness when
It's lit with faith and love,
And holds on to the promises
From our dear God above,
Who wasn't satisfied to be
Removed from our dark plight,
But rather chose to enter in
With grace and love and light
Which conquers darkness and despair,
Which strengthens weary hearts,
Which gives us comfort, calms our fears,

And to us, life imparts.
So now, each day, dear Advent child
Please know this much is true,
Our loving God will never let
The darkness defeat you,
And as we light the Advent wreath
Please light a candle, too,
As your defying, faithful act,
Upholding what is true,
That in the darkness we will stand
Together, holding tight,
To promises from our dear God
Which give us hope and light,
And help us know that Advent is
A season which soon ends
In brightest light and joyous song,
Full life, which God intends
To be our future evermore,
Our Christmas song, at last,
Which we will sing with happy hearts
And to the world broadcast
The overwhelming gift of God,
Who chose to take our form
As infant child, caught in time,
In order to transform
The world of darkness into light,
Our death pangs into life,
To rid the world of brokenness,
Of enmity and strife.
Each Christmas is an answer to
Each Advent's time to wait
And hear again God's promises
To lovingly create
Our future which is bound in Christ,
In cross and empty tomb,
In resurrection and new life
Where darkness has no room.
This year of Advent, in which we
Have had to persevere
In darkness and in pain and grief,
Uncertainty and fear,
Is conquered by our forceful hope
In God, who comes to be
An infant child, promise made
For all the world to see.
So, light a candle, spark of hope,
And celebrate with me.

Happy Birthday to . .

Daniel Gomez	December 2nd
Taylor Badger	December 5th
Ellie Crocker	December 13th
Irene Albert	December 16th
Cynthia Lowe	December 23rd
Christina Allen Badger	December 30th

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Happy Anniversary To . .

Ray and Lynn Scholz	December 2nd
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Happy Baptismal Anniversary To..

CK and Chase Ambrose	December 1st
Linda Hodges	December 15th
Irene Albert	December 17th
Sue Turner	December 25th

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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

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Congregation Council Meetings in December

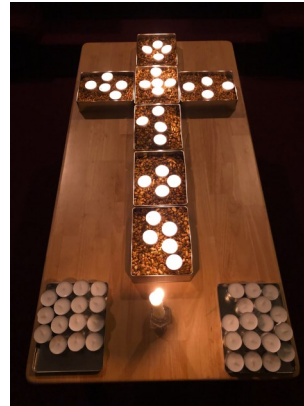
The Congregation Council will be meeting on **Monday, December 8th at 7:00 PM** for the normal monthly meeting—anyone is welcome to attend.

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Ministry Team Meetings

The following Ministry Teams will meet in December:

- + **Service and Sharing**—Monday, December 1st, 7:00 PM (Zoom)
- + **Caring Community and Worship**—Wednesday, December 17th at 11:00 AM
- + **Worship**—Wednesday, December 17th at 12:00 PM



Blue Christmas Service

Apostles will again hold a “Blue Christmas Service” on **Sunday, December 21st, at 7:00 PM**. This is a service of remembrance, comfort and hope. We will be making luminaries to line the entrance into the

church for the service—please take a minute to write names of loved ones on a white bag—the display is on the table in the narthex.

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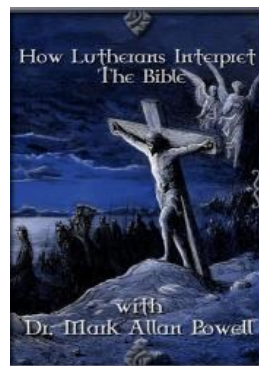
Poinsettias for Christmas

Please take a minute to signup to purchase a poinsettia to adorn our sanctuary during the season of Christmas—the cost is \$15 and the

deadline to order is December 14th. If you have any questions, please contact Janet Gomez.

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How Lutherans Interpret the Bible



The adult study that focuses on how Lutherans interpret scripture will continue on **Wednesday, December 10th** and then take a break until January 14th. We have a **sandwich and fellowship at 6:00 PM** and the study will **start at 6:30 PM**. The

sessions are being led by Pastor Jay. We would LOVE to have you join us!!

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Apostles Women's Group

All women of Apostles are invited to attend the Women's Group meeting on **Saturday, December 13th at 10:00 AM**. We would LOVE to have you join us!!



Jubilee Churches News

The Jubilee Churches of Gloucester, a coalition of several congregations in Gloucester (including Apostles), will be **meeting in**

December on December 10th at 9:30 AM at Ware Episcopal Church. The Rev. Dr. Ed Walker, pastor of Bellamy United Methodist Church, is the covener of the Jubilee Churches of Gloucester. In November, Jubilee Churches assisted 7 households with \$2,541.55 in rent and Dominion Power assistance. In November, Jubilee Churches assisted a family facing a sudden financial hardship. The client, who lives with serious autoimmune disorders and has a history of cancer, has struggled to care for herself physically. Her husband left his full-time job to become her caregiver and now drives for Uber when he can. When their only vehicle broke down, even that limited income stopped temporarily. Although they were able to catch up on October's rent and fees once the car was repaired, they fell behind for November and received a five-day pay-or-quit notice. Thanks to the support of our partnering churches, we were able to step in during this difficult moment. This was the first time the family had ever asked for help, and they expressed deep gratitude for the compassion shown to them. Your generosity helped prevent homelessness, brought relief to a struggling couple, and reminded them that they are not alone. Thank you for continuing to make this work possible. **If you would like to learn more about Jubilee Churches, please contact Pete Liljeberg or Janet Gomez.**

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It Was Unanimous!!

The congregation unanimously passed the ministry spending plan of \$110,337 for 2026 on November 16th at the congregational meeting. Without a mortgage payment next year, we will be able to give Pastor Jay a well-deserved 5% pay raise and give each ministry team some additional discretionary funding for their various ministries. Thanks to our faithful treasurer, Doug Dalager for putting it together!!



GUEST News

+ **Needed supplies** at the GUEST homeless shelter include paper bowls (not Styrofoam, please), plastic forks only (not the cutlery set), paper plates, disinfectant wipes, Lysol spray, 13 gallon trash bags, and deli style food storage containers. + **Apostles** will be hosting the GUEST winter shelter **the week of February 23rd**. All volunteers (with the exception of those providing meals) will need training—training will be held at Apostles on Sunday, January 18th and February 8th. **If you would like additional information, please contact Barbara Runk or Janet Gomez.** + **Thank you to Barbara Runk, Lynn and Ray Scholz and Janet Gomez** for providing lunch for the GUEST clients the week of November 17th.

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We Did It!!!!



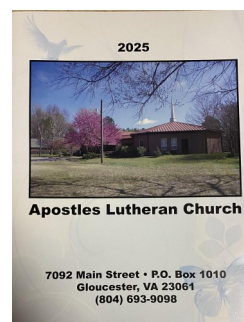
The congregation really stepped up and **WE HAVE PAID OFF THE CHURCH MORTGAGE!!** A big **THANK YOU** to everyone who helped with this!! The Caring Community and Worship Ministry Teams are planning a celebration that will be held on

Sunday, January 11th. Details will be in the January edition of The Epistle. Thank you again!!!

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Congregational Picture Directories Are Here!

The Congregational Picture Directories are here—please see Irene Albert or Karen Johnston to get your copy!!



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Our Deepest Sympathy To . . .

David Muse upon the death of his mother, Jean Reed—Jean was 103 years old and visited our church often.

*From Your Treasurer,
Doug Dalager*

October 2025

<i>Planned Income</i>	<i>\$ 9,610.24</i>
<i>Actual Income</i>	<i>\$13,312.47</i>
<i>Delta</i>	<i>\$ 3,702.05</i>

Year to Date

<i>Planned Income</i>	<i>\$ 96,104</i>
<i>Actual Income</i>	<i>\$ 106,360</i>
<i>Delta</i>	<i>\$ 10,256</i>

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Opportunities for the Season

There are several opportunities in December to enjoy the sounds and activities of the season. . .

+ **Cantori**, a 13-voice ensemble, will present a concert on **Sunday, December 7th, at 5:00 PM** at Abingdon Episcopal Church. The concert will feature some of their favorite music from past seasons- some sung a cappella, and others accompanied by a professional string quintet and organ.

+ **The Williamsburg Choral Guild** will present a concert on **Saturday, December 13th at 7:30 PM** in the Concert Hall of the new Music Arts Building on the campus of the College of William and Mary. The concert will incorporate a brass quintet with the chorus for a most festive celebration of Christmas.

+ **Shrek, The Musical, Jr.** will be performed at the Moose Lodge on **December 13th and 14th**—Tegan Goetz has a part in the play (Tegan attends church with her mom, Angie.)

+ **The Virginia Choral Society** will be holding their Christmas concerts on **December 13th and 14th**.

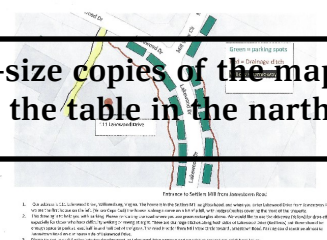
+ **Handel's Messiah** will be performed by The Virginia Symphony at Ferguson Center for the Performing Arts on **Saturday, December 20th**.

Open House Invitation

To : Our friends at Apostles Lutheran
From: Pastor Jay and Jamie Serafin

Hi everyone. Jamie and I would like to extend an invitation to you to come to Williamsburg for an open house at our home. Where: 111 Lakewood Drive, Williamsburg, VA 23185 When: Saturday, December 13 from 3 PM-6 PM. With this invitation we have included a parking map and instructions for the event. You may park on the side of the road, but please note that there are drainage ditches on both sides of the road, about 6-7 feet off the edge of the road. We will try to help with some lighting for the event, but please be careful. You may drop folks off in our driveway and then proceed to park along Lakewood Drive. We have two front entrances to the house, facing toward the bushes and road. You are welcome to use either entrance. Both entrances include about 3 steps. We will have plenty of food and different kinds of drinks, so please do not bring any food or desserts for the event. You are welcome to stay at the event as long as you'd like between 3-6, whether for five minutes or all three hours. We simply would be happy to see you there. We only ask that you let us know you are coming either by signing up on the sheet in the narthex at the church or by emailing me with your information. We would like you to share name and number of people coming with you. This is to get an approximate count so we have enough to eat and drink. If you sign up and can't come, that is fine. If you don't sign up, but find your evening free, you are happily welcome to join the party. If you have any questions, please let me know. My contact information is as follows: Phone: 570-205-7506 Email: j80j84@msn.com Jamie and I hope you can join us.
Pastor Jay

**Full-size copies of the map are
on the table in the narthex.**



News from Your Virginia Synod

+ “Winter Celebration”, the Virginia Synod retreat for youth in 9th-12th grade will be held **January 23-25th** at Eagle Eyrie in Lynchburg.
+ **Mid-Winter Power In The Spirit**, will be held online **February 2-4th**.
+ “7th Day”, the Virginia Synod retreat for youth in 5th and 6th grade will be held **March 7th-8th** at Eagle Eyrie in Lynchburg.
More Information and registration details can be found at vasynod.org.

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Christmas Cookie Exchange



The Caring Community Ministry Team is hosting a “**Christmas Cookie Exchange**” on **Sunday, December 21st**, after the worship service. Please bring 4 dozen of your favorite Christmas cookies to share—there is a sign-up sheet and additional information in the narthex. Yum!!!

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Save the Dates!!!

+ **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Monday-Saturday, January 18th-24th**—in addition to the Unity Service which will be held on **Thursday, January 22nd at Newington Baptist Church at 7:00 PM**, there will be opportunities each day during the week for noontime prayer and reflection. Details will be in the January edition of The Epistle.
+ **Day for All People 2026, January 21st**—plan to join with people from all over Virginia for this annual day of advocacy and justice put on by the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP). Details will be in the January edition of The Epistle. **There will be a “virtual” training session on the General Assembly on Tuesday, December 2nd, at 6:00 PM to learn about the VICPP’s priority bills for the upcoming session.**



ELCA Good Gifts

As members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), we believe that God is calling us

into the world — together. And with generous, loving hands, we can make a difference. ELCA Good Gifts is your opportunity to provide critical support to the ministries and programs that mean the most to you and the people you love. There is a diverse number of gifts to choose from, from \$10 chicks or some honey bees, to a \$50 goat, to safe water access or even an abundant community farm! This is a great way to give to communities in need all over the world. Projects are allocated by partners all over the world to help identify what is needed where most. That means that each community receives exactly the kind of support it needs and none of what it doesn’t. *This makes an awesome alternative Christmas Gift for that person who already has everything! Make a gift in their honor!* It’s so simple! Pick your gift, get a card, and see the impact! To see what you can do or learn more, go to <https://goodgifts.elca.org/page/72439/shop/1>.

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World Hunger Sunday

Don’t forget your world hunger offering on **Sunday, December 21st— \$1,741** has been given this year by Apostles—**UNTIL ALL ARE FED!!**

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An Update on Our KIVA Loans

There are over a billion unbanked people around the world. That’s a billion people who don’t have a credit card for emergencies, a debit card for easy access to their money, or a credit history to help them get a loan. Kiva is an international nonprofit that tackles this inequality. Apostles has supported 36 loans in 12 different countries thus far this year.

kiva



A Message From Our New ELCA Presiding Bishop “A Pastoral Message for These Troubled Times”

When I was installed as your presiding bishop, the preacher proclaimed that in times of division, disruption and fear, God calls us, through love, to lift up one another just as Christ lifts us up. I have taken that to heart and been alert to all the ways in which we, made into God’s own beloved through word and sacrament, testify to that love in daily service and ministry. Across the ELCA, I have seen and am deeply grateful for:

- Ministries mobilizing to serve meals and distribute food amid the harm, chaos and confusion of a government shutdown and the ongoing blocking of food assistance for 42 million people in our nation.
- Congregations offering accompaniment and hope as they come alongside neighbors made vulnerable by aggressive and indiscriminate immigration enforcement.
- Leaders from Lutheran Disaster Response urging members of Congress to commit to programs that lift up those made vulnerable in disasters.
- Congregations reaching out to federal workers by supplying meals, meeting daily needs, providing gift cards and helping them find work.
- Preachers faithfully proclaiming the theology of the cross that illuminates the brokenness of sin but also the mystery of a grace that claims us, frees us and sends us to be messengers of hope in a hurting world.

As a church, we do not hold back in lifting up those whom God calls us to serve, even and especially when government abdicates its responsibilities for the common good. My installation as your presiding bishop coincided with the start of the longest government shutdown in our nation’s history. In this moment, I draw strength from the writings of Martin Luther, who used the example of Mary and the words of the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55)

to urge the rulers of his time to exercise power in ways that serve all people. Jesus gave us an image of a vine and its branches (John 15:1) to illustrate our connectedness to him and, through him, to one another. Our rootedness in Christ sustains us with his love. His love connects us to one another. We must stay connected to face the challenges of this moment. An end to the government shutdown will not immediately resolve food insecurity, so we will keep feeding and supporting our neighbors. The racial profiling and harm to our immigrant neighbors show no signs of diminishing, so we will heed God’s call to show up alongside these neighbors in solidarity. Our broken politics and partisan divisions will not heal by themselves, so we will show up through participation, bridge-building and advocacy. No matter what happens next, we must continue to care for all neighbors, especially those who are marginalized. Our 1994 social message “Community Violence” tells us that “we have the responsibility to join with others to hold government accountable for protecting society and ensuring justice for all, and to seek changes in policies and practices toward these ends” (p. 4). As we do, I am confident that Christ’s grace will be sufficient, freeing us to lift up others and seek justice for everyone. I invite you to pray for and participate in ELCA ministries that support the well-being of all including by taking advocacy action, applying for ELCA World Hunger Daily Bread Matching Grants to support your hunger ministry, and watching the recent ELCA Advocacy webinar “Faith Communities and the Realities of Food Assistance.” Gracious God, we pray for our public servants, that they do their work in a spirit of wisdom, charity, and justice. Inspire them to use their authority to serve faithfully and to promote our common life. Guide our leaders to govern in such a way that all people enjoy a peaceful and just society. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

In Christ,
The Rev. Yehiel Curry
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America