

The Epistle

THE NEWSLETTER OF APOSTLES LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.apostles-elca.org | www.facebook.com/ApostlesELCA | January 2026

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

Happy New Year! As we move into the year 2026 (could that really be true?) we go through a time of transition. One year folds

into another, and while many things move forward as before, some things cause us pause as we recognize that there is a newness to it all. Even something as simple as writing the correct year on our checks takes a bit of concentrated forethought to get things correct. Some of us try to live our lives in a new way through New Year's resolutions or greater resolve to reform or retool how we live. Some of us put behind us the disappointments or trials of the previous year with an outlook that hits a reset button moving forward. Moving from one year to another often brings with it an understanding that we are moving through a time of transition. At least some things become new again.

As I think about this transition and the approach of 2026, my mind moves toward making things new again. On January 11, we will celebrate the Baptism of our Lord, a festival day in the church during which we celebrate the baptism of Jesus and focus on the wonder of baptism as a gift in our lives. The Apostle Paul had some very uplifting things to say about baptism, things which can shape our understanding of our faith and of our

relationship with God. Paul shares his thinking that "Therefore we were buried with him (Jesus) by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4) Paul's idea is that in the waters of baptism we are made new by the love and grace of God and refreshed so that we can move forward free from the constraints of sin and death and live fully as God's children unleashed upon the earth. Martin Luther loved this idea so much that it became a central point of his theology of the Christian life, that in baptism we are set free. Luther wanted everyone to know that, while we are baptized once in water and the Word, baptism itself is a daily event. When we remember that we have been baptized, and trust in the promises of freedom and life that God gives us in the sacrament, we are refreshed and renewed and energized to enter into the world, prepared to serve and to share God's love wherever we go. We no longer need to fear for ourselves, because God has claimed us and set us free from our bondage to sin and death and has raised us to this new life in which we can focus on service to others. So, for Luther, baptism is a daily event in which we remember and take on its promises as we take on the new day.

January 11 also stands out as a celebration of the new in a different way for us at Apostles. On that day we will celebrate the retirement of our debt. It is set to happen on this day when

we celebrate baptism because our debt retirement also serves as a freeing event in a way. As we celebrate our release from the bondage of a financial debt, we are freed to use our resources to serve, to act in the world in ways that share God's love with our neighbors, our community and our world. Thank you to all who were able to help us to meet this goal through your contributions, your care and your prayers. To be set free is a wonderful thing. As we enter this new year, we doubly are unleashed and sent into the world as bearers of God's good news.

Each day provides us with opportunities. The first opportunity is the opportunity to remember that we are baptized and that we are loved by God no matter what. Each day also provides us with the opportunity to shape how we will live actively as a child of God in the world understanding the freedom God has given us. As a congregation, we are blessed with many opportunities to carry God's love into the world. How we shape our ministries this year, using the freedom we have to serve, using the resources God has given us and using our talents and the possibilities that present themselves becomes our thoughtful response to God's blessings in our lives. May God guide us in our journey as we move forward, freed to love, freed to serve and freed to live fully in the name of our Lord, Jesus.

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Annual Congregational Meeting

The annual congregational meeting will be held on **Sunday, January 25th** after the 10:00 AM worship service. At the meeting the President of the Congregation Council (Chris Hawkins) and the Treasurer (Doug Dalager) will submit their reports; each ministry team and affiliated group will submit their reports and we will elect new Congregation Council members (3), Mission Outreach Fund Committee members (3), members for the Nominating Committee (6), and voting members and alternates of the Virginia Synod Assembly. Please make plans to attend!! **We will have the Agape Meal and Worship Service that Sunday—please bring a breakfast dish to share.**

Congregation Council President and Vice President Elected

Congratulations to **Chris Hawkins** and **Barbara Runk** who were unanimously re-elected by Congregation Council in December to serve again as President and Vice President, respectively, for 2026.



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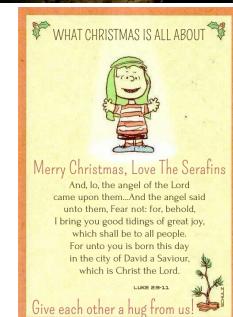
Thank You To. . .

A group of people are gathered in a community room with wooden floors and walls. They are seated around a large, oval-shaped table covered with a white cloth. The table is set with several sets of dominos. The people are dressed casually, and the atmosphere appears to be one of a friendly game night or social gathering.

Betsy Liljeberg for leading the Advent study "A Stable Lamp is Lighted" during fellowship after the Advent worship services!!

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Open House at the Serafin's



Happy Birthday to . .

Anders Peterson	January 6
Heinz Albert	January 12
Michelle Slider	January 15
Gene Gomez	January 16
Chris Hawkins	January 22
Don Garfield	January 24
Amanda Kendzierski	January 24
Kayla Hautz	January 25
Pastor Jay	January 26
Rich Bitting	January 28

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Happy Anniversary To . .

Pete and Betsy Liljeberg	January 15
Pam and Billie Moore	January 25

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Happy Baptismal Anniversary To..

Ellie Crocker	January 5th
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Please Keep In Your Prayers

Rich Bitting, Manning Freeman, Don Garfield, Heidi Henderson, 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 Meeting in January

The Congregation Council will be meeting on **Monday, January 12th 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:

- + Worship—Wednesday, January 21st, 11:00 AM
- + RIC—Monday, January 26th, at 7:00 PM (Zoom)

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World Hunger Sunday

Don't forget your world hunger offering on **Sunday, January 18th—UNTIL ALL ARE FED!!**



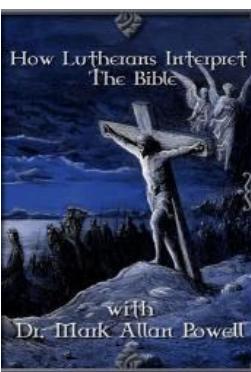
Poinsettias for Christmas

Poinsettias for Christmas this year were given by Pam Moore, Betsy and Pete Liljeberg, Linda Hodges, Ben Grimes, Ray and Lynn Scholz, Sue Turner, Barbara Runk, Don Garfield and Nan Duff.

Thank you!!

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How Lutherans Interpret the Bible



The adult study that focuses on how Lutherans interpret scripture will continue on **Wednesday, January 14th and 28th**. 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, January 10th at 10:00 AM**. We would LOVE to have you join us!! Congratulations to Lynn Scholz for winning the stained glass ornament at the December meeting!!

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Caring Community "Cookie Exchange"



Thanks to the Caring Community Ministry Team and everyone who brought those yummy cookies!!



Jubilee Churches News

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

again in February on February 11th at 9:30 AM at the Church of St. Therese Roman Catholic Church. The Rev. Dr. Ed Walker, pastor of Bellamy United Methodist Church, is the covener of the Jubilee Churches of Gloucester. In December, Jubilee Churches assisted 4 households with \$557.23 in Dominion Power assistance. In December, Jubilee Churches were able to assist a 70-year-old woman in our community who was at risk of losing power in her home. After an unexpected hospital stay and ongoing medication costs, she fell behind on her electric bill. Living with COPD, uninterrupted electricity is essential to her health and safety. Jubilee Churches support helped prevent a power shutoff, allowing her to remain safely in her home and focus on her health instead of crisis. This assistance provided not only financial relief, but peace of mind and hope during a vulnerable season. Your giving keeps neighbors safe, housed, and cared for—thank you for being part of that impact.

If you would like to learn more about Jubilee Churches, please contact Pete Liljeberg or Janet Gomez.

ReconcilingWorks

LUTHERANS FOR FULL PARTICIPATION



Reconciling In Christ News

The Reconciling

Ministry team will meet by Zoom on **Monday, January 26, 2026 at 7 PM**. Join the team to find out how to find Jesus in our LGBTQ+ siblings and in welcoming them into our worshipping body! Please contact Betsy Liljeberg or Janet Gomez if you would like a Zoom link for Monday's meeting. Spread grace and peace this year.

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Save the Date!!

Friday, February 13th, for the next Caring Community's dinner and movie night!!



We Need Your Help!!

There several opportunities to help with the GUEST homeless shelter:

- + **Apostles will be providing lunch for the clients of GUEST the week of January 18** –we will provide lunch on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday of that week—if you would like to help, please contact Janet Gomez.
- + **Apostles will be hosting the winter shelter the week of February 23rd**—we will need people to volunteer for the various shifts and provide breakfast and dinner. **Training is required for anyone** who volunteers for night shelter—**training will be held on Sunday, January 18th and February 8th from 12:00 PM –2:00 PM** at Apostles.
- + **Needed supplies at the shelter include:** Ear plugs (for those sensitive to snoring or other nighttime noises), Febreze, Lysol wipes, Disinfectant spray, men's undershirts (sizes Large–2XL), men's long-sleeve shirts (sizes Large–2XL), men's lounge pants (sizes Large–2XL) and men's underwear (sizes Large & XL).

*From Your Treasurer,
Doug Dalager*

November 2025

<i>Planned Income</i>	\$ 9,610.24
<i>Actual Income</i>	\$ 8,259.69
<i>Delta</i>	\$ (684.73)

Year to Date

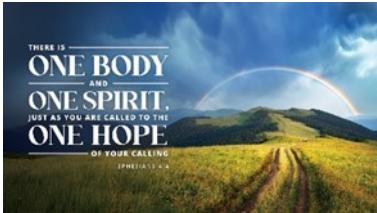
<i>Planned Income</i>	\$ 105,715
<i>Actual Income</i>	\$ 115,286
<i>Delta</i>	\$ 9,572

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Have you Picked Up Your Copy?

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





Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Please make plans to join us for a Week of Prayer for Christian Unity the week of **January 19th – January 24th**. This year, there will be opportunities each day during the week to gather at different churches for worship, scripture reading and prayer in addition to the Christian unity worship service itself. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Worship service will be held on **Thursday, January 22nd, at 7:00 PM at Newington Baptist Church**. A reception in the fellowship hall will follow the service. An offering will be received during the service for the Jubilee Fund.

Monday, January 19th, 2:00 PM - First United Baptist Church

Tuesday, January 20th, 12:15-12:45 PM – Brown bag lunch at Ware Episcopal Church

Wednesday, January 21st, 12:15 PM-12:45 PM, Brown bag lunch at The Church of St. Therese Roman Catholic Church

Thursday, January 22nd, 12:15 PM-12:45 PM, Brown bag lunch at Newington Baptist Church

Thursday, January 22nd – unity service at Newington Baptist Church at 7:00 PM

Friday, January 23rd, 12:15 PM-12:45 PM, brown bag lunch at Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church

Saturday, January 24th, 12:15 PM-12:45 PM, brown bag lunch at Susanna Wesley United Methodist Church.

The Jubilee Churches are planning this wonderful opportunity to join with neighboring churches for a time of prayer and worship. The theme is taken from Ephesians 4:4, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling." There is a powerful witness to the transformative power of the Holy Spirit when Christians of varied backgrounds come together with a shared goal and vision with authenticity and sincerity. The rainbow sign of covenant with God becomes realized in the unity of the Church.

A Message from Ben and Margaret Grimes

Dear Apostles, Hope your Holiday Season was filled with comfort and joy! It is difficult for us to make this announcement but as of the 21st of January 2026 we will be returning to our hometown, Baltimore, Maryland. Our strategic plan upon moving from Baltimore to Gloucester, which occurred in 2016, was to spoil our first grandson and to find a place of worship that was welcoming and met our spiritual needs. We were extremely successful completing both! Thank you for accepting us and thank you for all that Apostles' does for the Gloucester community and beyond. It has been a refreshing and gratifying experience and I hope we have made a small contribution to the Apostles' Mission Statement. Our new address is 719 Maiden Choice Lane, Apt BR141, Catonsville, Maryland 21228. Love & Peace Ben & Margaret

(Editor's Note: We will have a "Farewell and Godspeed" for Ben and Margaret during the worship service on Sunday, January 18th – we hope you can join us!)

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An Update on Heidi Henderson

As many of you are aware, Heidi Henderson recently suffered a house fire that has caused extensive damage to her home. As part of our family here at Apostles, we want to walk with her during these difficult days. In order to help, Council has set up a fund to help Heidi navigate the uncertain days ahead. While there is a GoFundMe page for the community this fund at Apostles would not extract a fee, and Heidi would have access for necessary purchases over the future weeks and months. If you would like to donate to this fund please send or give your contribution in an envelope marked "Heidi Support Fund" and we will make it available for future use. Because of the arrangements with her insurance company, Heidi does have a place to stay (fully furnished) until April, so at this time does not need furniture. We anticipate that she will be in need of furniture and other items when she moves into a more permanent place after that.

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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A Day For All People

Now more than ever, it is important for Christians to speak up for those who have no voice or

whose voice is not heard. Jesus calls us to feed the hungry and clothe the poor, and visit those in jail. You can advocate for people who do not have the time, energy, or know-how to advocate for themselves. On January 21st, a group from Apostles will join the faithful from all over Virginia in Richmond to learn how to advocate for others. After a variety of seminars, participants will have the opportunity to speak to their representatives about important matters coming before our state assembly. It is a fun day and a contingent from the Virginia Synod will gather together during the breaks.

Please take a look at the link below and register if you are interested. Speak to Betsy Liljeberg or Linda Hodges if you have any questions.

<https://virginiainterfaithcenter.org/event/day-for-all-people-2026/>

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Mission Trip to Guatemala 2026!!

We will be kicking off plans for the mission trip to Guatemala on **Sunday, January 18th!!** Please join us for some special food, dessert and presentation on the history of Guatemala. We will begin collecting supplies for health kits. Stay tuned for details.

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News From The Pews

- + **Ray Scholz** drove the Bread for Life Food Pantry float in this year's Gloucester Christmas parade.
- + **Doug Dalager** helped serve a community Thanksgiving dinner at Abingdon Episcopal on Thanksgiving day—378 meals were served!!
- + **Pete Liljeberg** made a presentation about Jubilee Churches at the Gloucester Resource Council meeting in December.
- + **Sue Turner** welcomed her first great-grandbaby. Congratulations!

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Holy Communion Record

HOLY COMMUNION RECORD	
Envelope no.	Date
Name	
Address	
Desire pastor to call <input type="checkbox"/>	I am a visitor <input type="checkbox"/>
Home congregation	
Address	

Please return this card as a record of your Communion
ISBN 0-8066-0785-8, Code 5-92 Copyright © Augsburg Fortress

Please take a minute and fill out one of these cards and put it in the offering plate – they are in the pew rack. You only need to fill one out a year – this will help with the statistics needed for the parochial report that has to be completed once a year – thank you from the Worship Ministry Team!!

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Blankets for GUEST



A big THANK YOU to Linda Hodges, Thrivent and everyone who helped put together fleece blankets for the clients at GUEST!!

Thanksgiving At The Retirement of a Debt

Please join us for a celebration in thanksgiving for the retirement of our church mortgage debt at Apostles Lutheran Church on

**Sunday, January 11th at
10:00 AM**

There will be a special catered reception following the service.

Thank you to all who were able to help us to meet this goal through your contributions, your care and your prayers.