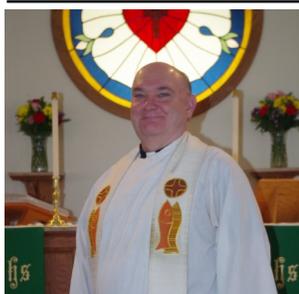


# The Epistle

THE NEWSLETTER OF APOSTLES LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.apostles-elca.org](http://www.apostles-elca.org) | [www.facebook.com/ApostlesELCA](https://www.facebook.com/ApostlesELCA) | February 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*

“Every family needs prayers for one reason or another.” That sentence stood out to me years ago as I was having a

conversation with someone who was having medical issues and who was so very appreciative of being on the congregation’s prayer list and knowing that prayers were being offered each week. The statement has popped into my mind from time to time and has made sense as I’ve thought about our common human plight in this world. As I think about the season we are in (Epiphany) and the season which starts toward the end of February (Lent) the statement seems to fit into the transition we are about to make. Epiphany, of course, is the season during which we celebrate the Messiah (Jesus) appearing to the world and making himself and God’s plan of salvation known. We celebrate Jesus as the light which overcomes the darkness of the world during the season of Epiphany and focus on the mission of Jesus as he travels throughout Galilee connecting with people who need to feel the light of God in their lives. The people Jesus meets along his journey are people whose lives are broken by illness, sin, grief, despair, hunger and any number of other issues which leave them feeling less than whole. In the midst of their darkness Jesus enters as the light who brings the fullness of

God’s life into their lives in ways that help them to feel whole again. In brokenness those whom Jesus encounters live lives of fear and helplessness and hopelessness. Jesus brings to them the very hope and reality of the truth of a loving God who is present in their lives.

The season of Lent, then, turns the action of Jesus and his encounters with our brokenness toward the ultimate fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation. The journey of Jesus turns from walking throughout Galilee to heading toward Jerusalem. On this journey we see a purposeful Jesus as the Scriptures take on a more ominous feel. There can be only one reason, one fate for this journey toward Jerusalem. Jesus is about to take on the powerful. We know already how this will end. Jesus will take the cross and die. Steeped in this knowledge we journey with Jesus as we journey through Lent, understanding that God’s plan of salvation is unfolding and that this plan of salvation is for us.

Even so, our Lenten journey is one deeply connected to our human brokenness. We see in every measure that we are human and that our lives have a beginning and an end. We start the season of Lent on Ash Wednesday hearing the words, “Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.” In hearing those words we are reminded that we are not God, and that we are broken by our sinfulness, our imperfection, our creatureliness. Our

brokenness is revealed in our human bodies which are touched by illness, disease and simple human ageing. Our brokenness is sharpened by our broken relationships, our loss of those precious to us, and all the ways we negatively impact family and community life. Our brokenness is measured in our emotional pain, our grief, our fear, our anger, our loneliness, our despair, our neediness and in our countless other emotions which keep us from leading full and joyous lives.

In truth, for some reason or other, every family is in need of our prayers because every family is touched by brokenness in some way. Lent is a reminder of that. So, as we transition from Epiphany to Lent this year and as we witness Jesus active in the lives of those who are broken, we are reminded of our mission, to be the light of Christ active in the midst of the darkness of this world. We, too, have the mission to share the very presence of a loving God with those who do not feel that presence. Part of that mission is to pray on behalf of those who are hurting, who feel broken. Then, too, during the season of Lent, we consider deeply our need, both individual and corporate, of God's love and life. We see the brokenness in ourselves and this world. Then, understanding better the reality we face, we place our trust in God's grace. In this we are not disappointed, for beyond Lent God has another surprise in store. We call it Easter.

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### ***Annual Congregational Meeting***

The annual congregational meeting has been rescheduled for **Sunday, February 8th**, after the 10:00 AM agape worship service. We will hear reports from the President of the Congregation Council (Chris Hawkins), the Treasurer (Doug Dalager) and each ministry team and affiliated group. We will elect new members of Congregation Council, Mission Outreach Fund Committee, Nominating Committee (6), and voting members and alternates of the Virginia Synod Assembly. Please make plans to attend!!

### ***Agape Worship—February 8th***

We will have the Agape Meal and Worship Service in the fellowship hall on **Sunday, February 8th**—please bring a breakfast or brunch dish to share!!

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### ***Retirement of the Church Mortgage Debt—What a Day!!***

Thank you to everyone who made this celebration on Sunday, January 11th, possible!!!



Visitors included charter members, Paul and Barbara Bauer and former Pastor Paul Schafer and his wife, Sherri

**Happy Birthday to..**

Ray Scholz February 1  
Jade Hawkins February 7  
Billy Moore February 17  
Betsy Liljeberg February 23  
Lynn Scholz February 24

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**Happy Anniversary To...**

Nancy and Dave Wagner February 7  
Ben and Margaret Grimes February 21

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**Happy Baptismal Anniversary To..**

Cynthia Lowe February 2nd

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**Please Keep In Your Prayers**

Rich Bitting, Manning Freeman, Don Garfield, Heidi Henderson, Ellen Kendzierski, Doug Leip, Ellen Quirk, Michael Schlemmer, Ben Slider (IV), Keith & Juanita Sturdy, George Thomas, Jewel Thomas, Lena Woodlief, and Nancy Wagner

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**Congregation Council Meeting in February**

The Congregation Council will be meeting on Monday, February 9th at 7:00 PM for the normal monthly meeting—anyone is welcome to attend.

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**Ministry Team Meetings**

The following Ministry Team will meet in February:

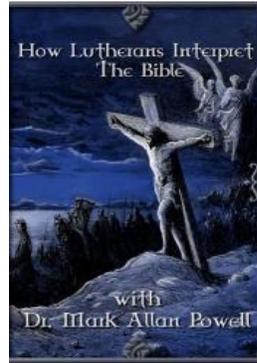
+ **Worship**—TBD —will be scheduled.

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**World Hunger Sunday**



Don't forget your world hunger offering on Sunday, February 15th —UNTIL ALL ARE FED!!



**How Lutherans Interpret the Bible**

The adult study that focuses on how Lutherans interpret scripture will have the last session on Wednesday, February 11th. 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. Our next adult study will be "Understanding the New Testament" with David Borakke. Classes will start after Lent.

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**Apostles Women's Group**

All women of Apostles are invited to attend the Women's Group meeting on Saturday, February 21st at 10:00 AM. We would LOVE to have you join us!!

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**Super Bowl/ Souper Bowl Sunday**

February 8, 2026

Come prepared to show your support for the Seahawks or Patriots and supporting Bread for Life food pantry at the same time! Match whatever you plan to spend on Super Bowl snacks with an equal donation to Bread for Life pantry. Soup pots will be available for your support!! This year more than ever, our neighbors are struggling to make ends meet and pay for ever climbing grocery bills. Share God's blessings with those in need

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**Farewell and Godspeed to Ben and Margaret Grimes**

Their new address is 719 Maiden Choice Lane, Apt BR141, Catonsville, Maryland 21228. We will miss you!!



## Jubilee Churches News

The Jubilee Churches of Gloucester, a coalition of several congregations in Gloucester (including Apostles), will be meeting 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 January, Jubilee Churches assisted 4 households with \$2,230 eviction prevention and in Dominion Power assistance. In January, we assisted a mother with four children in remaining in her rental home and preventing eviction. After a recent separation from her husband, the household experienced a sudden loss of income, and past-due rent accumulated quickly. Through partnership with other local agencies, along with support from friends and family, we were able to help stabilize the situation and prevent the eviction. Because of this collaborative effort, the family was able to remain in their home while the mother secured full-time employment and child support assistance resumed. This is a strong example of how partnership and collaboration can prevent homelessness, especially for households with young children. Thank you for being part of the support that made this outcome possible. 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.**

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## Reconciling In Christ News

The Reconciling Ministry team has scheduled **PRIDE Sunday for Sunday, June 7th.** The team has designated the first Sunday of each month as RIC Sunday and will start having brief educational discussions during fellowship on “Reconciling Scripture for Lutherans: On Sexuality and Gender Identity.” The first discussion will be on **Sunday, March 1st.**



## Apostles To Serve As Host Site for GUEST Winter Shelter

Apostles will again open the church to house the clients of the GUEST homeless shelter during the Winter Shelter season—the week of **February 23rd.** The clients will arrive at 7:00 PM, have dinner and stay overnight and go back to the day shelter at 7:00 AM. There are opportunities for anyone to serve—providing dinner and breakfast for the clients and volunteering to man the shifts during the evening. Signup sheets to help will be in the bulletin. **There is another volunteer training session on Sunday, February 8th, at Susanna Wesley United Methodist Church, at 1:30 PM.** If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact Barbara Runk or Janet Gomez, Host Site Coordinators.

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*From Your Treasurer,  
Doug Dalager*

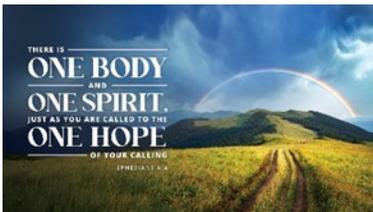
| <u>December 2025</u>  |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Planned Income</i> | <i>\$ 9,610.24</i> |
| <i>Actual Income</i>  | <i>\$10,570.46</i> |
| <i>Delta</i>          | <i>\$ 960.04</i>   |
| <hr/>                 |                    |
| <u>Year to Date</u>   |                    |
| <i>Planned Income</i> | <i>\$ 115,325</i>  |
| <i>Actual Income</i>  | <i>\$ 125,857</i>  |
| <i>Delta</i>          | <i>\$ 10,532</i>   |

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## Holy Communion Record



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!!



## **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**

What a week it was!! The Jubilee Churches planned this wonderful opportunity to join with neighboring churches for a time of prayer and worship the entire week. The theme was 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.



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## **Guatemala Medical Mission Trip**



Members of the Guatemala Medical Mission Trip

kicked off plans for the trip in 2026 with a presentation on the history of Guatemala during fellowship time on Sunday, January 18th. The team is collecting supplies for health kits to take with them when they go to Guatemala the week of March 8th. Check out the display in the narthex.



## **The Season of Lent at Apostles**

Please join us on Wednesday, **February 18th**, at 7:00 PM for the Ash Wednesday worship service.

The following Wednesdays, **February 25th, March 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th**, we will have a mid-week meal of soup and bread at 6:00 PM—you are welcome to bring a sandwich if you want—and then we will have a Service of the Word starting at 7:00 PM. There will be a signup sheet in the narthex for you to sign up to bring soup and bread. We are inviting representatives of the organizations we support; e.g., Bread for Life Food Pantry, Gloucester Mathews Care Clinic, GUEST, etc. to speak during the service. Please join us!!

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## **Mid-Week Lenten Offering**

The offering from our mid-week Lenten services has been designated for the organizations we support—Bread for Life Food Pantry, Gloucester Mathews Care Clinic, GUEST Homeless Shelter, Rural Housing Partnership and Jubilee Churches.

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## **Correspondence**

“Dear Apostles Lutheran Church, Recently, we invited our clients to share their gratitude for the counseling and support they receive at Peninsula Pastoral Counseling Center (PPCC). Their responses were moving, and I’d like to share one message with you: *“I’m deeply grateful for the support I’ve received at PPCC. My counselor has offered me a safe space, understanding, and helped me with healing through our sessions. I found clarity in confusion and hope where I felt it was lost. Thank you.”* Your generosity helps make stories like this possible. The Board of Directors and Staff of Peninsula Pastor Counseling Center sincerely appreciate your contribution of \$300 reflecting your commitment to PPCC’s mission. Your support is creating meaningful, lasting change in the lives of those we serve. Thank you for partnering with us.

With gratitude,  
Ford McFall, Development Director”

## News from Your Virginia Synod



**Mid-Winter Power In The Spirit**, will be held online **February 2-4th**. Registration details can be found at [vasynod.org](http://vasynod.org).



**“7th Day”**, the Virginia Synod retreat for youth in 5th and 6th grade will be held **March 7th-8th** at Eagle Eyrie in Lynchburg. Information and registration details can be found at [vasynod.org](http://vasynod.org).



**“Neighboring Together,”** the newest monthly publication of the Virginia Synod,

will share stories and resources about neighboring in Virginia and beyond. The Tapestry Threads, the World Hunger Team, and the Global Synod Companion Team will all have regular columns featuring updates about their ministries and how you can join in their neighboring. We most often see the word neighbor as a noun used to name a person that lives near to you. But Jesus expands our understanding of who are neighbors to include all people, especially those experiencing a need. Neighbors also include those who are different from us (Luke 10:25-37). To use neighboring as a verb then is the action of being a neighbor, showing mercy, building relationships, and living together. Thank you to all the ministry leaders that are contributors to this newsletter! You can subscribe to the newsletter at [vasynod.org](http://vasynod.org).

**Pastor Sarah Hess** has been called as Communications Assistant for the Virginia Synod. Pastor Hess will be taking the lead on social media and emails for events and monthly publications in this stipendiary role. Her email is [hess@vasynod.org](mailto:hess@vasynod.org).



Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry and ELCA synod bishops from Minnesota have shared a joint pastoral message condemning recent immigration enforcement activity. They acknowledge the uncertainty many are feeling in Minnesota and throughout God’s kingdom, while reminding us that even in lament, we hold fast to Christ’s promises and the assurance that we are not alone. We will not grow weary. You can listen to Bishop Curry’s message at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=GX5LsIgUyl0>.

Let us pray. . . Lord of all, you have declared what is right: to seek justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with you. You who are Holy Trinity, one God, you show us the splendor of diversity and the beauty of unity in your own divine life. Make us, who come from many nations with many languages, a united people that delight in our many different gifts. Defend our liberties and give those whom we have entrusted with authority, the spirit of wisdom. May those who hold power understand that it is a trust from you to be used for the service of the people, that there might be justice and peace in our land. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our sovereign, and our Savior. Amen.

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## News From The Pews



Our friend, **Doug Leip**, is currently living in Tappahannock and working on a new project—he sent some beautiful pictures from the area. He is currently planning to come back to Gloucester in time to help us again with the GUEST winter shelter.



## Italian Night



**Please join us for Dinner and  
a Movie**

**Friday, February 13, 2026**

**5:30 PM**

### Menu:

**Fresh Salad**

**Lasagna**

**Sausage & Peppers**

**Tiramisu**

**Pasta e Ceci**

**Chicken Francese**

**Garlic Knots**

**Rainbow Cookies**

**The Movie:**

**Saving Grace**