



THE CROWN NEWS

Vol. 50 No. 1



*"The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness did not
overcome it." - John 1:5*

Pastor's Corner

Inside this Issue

- ▶ Asking the Hard Questions, Pg. 3
- ▶ Mission to the Homeless, Pg. 6
- ▶ January Inclusive Church, Pg. 9
- ▶ A Dream Realized, Pg. 11

Let's Be Friends



@ApostlesUCC

As we move into the next season of the church year, known as "The Season after Epiphany," we enter a time of discovering more fully who Jesus the Christ is, the Lamb of God, as John the Baptist names him. Throughout these weeks, we are invited to look for and **share the "Light of Christ,"** the light that enters our world to bring hope, peace, joy, and love into the shadowed places of our lives.

It is fitting that this season comes during the darker winter months, when the quiet and stillness can make our inner struggles feel more present. With fewer distractions, we often become more aware of the parts of ourselves we prefer to overlook. Yet winter carries its own beauty. It offers a kind of rest, what we might call a spiritual sabbath, an opportunity to slow down, breathe deeply, and lean into the unconditional love and grace God offers us through Christ.

During this season, we will seek to "Witness to the Light," just as John the Baptist did, opening our eyes to the ways God is **still moving, still speaking, still working for good in our lives and in the world.** The question before us is whether we will notice that divine movement, and whether we will trust God enough to revisit the places of regret or pain in our lives so that healing and wholeness may take root.

This month, I will be away from the church while I focus on rehabilitating my left leg and new knee, helping them learn to work together. It will certainly be a time of stretching and discomfort, yet it is also a path toward greater strength and renewal. My prayer is that this new year brings you your own measures of healing, wholeness, and gentle light.

In hope, peace, joy, and love,

Pastor Kathryn Kuhu

UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

19
JAN

38th Annual MLK Breakfast

📍 Millersville University at 8 AM

Featuring keynote speaker, Frederick Joseph, and much more.

19
JAN

MLK Children's Celebration

📍 YWCA Lancaster at 10 AM

Bring the whole family and discover the power of community.



*"For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord...to give you a future with hope."
- Jeremiah 29:11*

BOARD NEWS

As we begin a new year, we give thanks for the leadership of our 2025 Board President, Johanna Baker, and celebrate as she passes the baton to **Michele Wherley**, who will serve as our **2026 Board President**.

In addition to this leadership transition, our Board has moved to a streamlined structure of seven members. The 2026 officers are: **Michele Wherley, President; Jim Stoltzfus, Vice President; Cathy Kenlin, Treasurer; and Johanna Baker, Secretary**. Other Board members include **George Alspach, Karen Culp, and Allison Carr**. Rev. Kathryn Kuhn and Office Administrator, Melissa Kosman, serve as ex-officio Board members. To contact any Board member, please use your **Realm directory** or call the church office for assistance. Here's to 2026 and our Board officers as we continue serving together in faith.

Nurture Your Spirit in the New Year

The start of a new year is a perfect time to connect with yourself, meet new people, and set meaningful goals. Our **Compassion Team Spiritual Support Group** meets every second Thursday at 10:00 AM in the Compassion Corner (Room 107). This welcoming space offers encouragement, listening, and the opportunity to share your story in a safe, uplifting environment. **Everyone is welcome!**

JOIN OUR BOOK CLUB!

Book Club meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 2 PM in the Narthex, and we'd love for you to join us! Whether you've read the book or not, you're welcome to come for engaging discussions and fellowship.



For questions, contact Clara Kosmela at (717) 569-9960. Happy reading!

★ January 13th, 2026: The Hello Girls by Eliz Cobbs

★ February 10th, 2026: Autism Out Loud by Swenson, Carriello, & Wood.

★ March 10th, 2026: All The President's Money by Megan Gorman

January Mocktails & Meaning™

Changes in the Academic World

Join us on Thursday, January 15th at 6:30 PM in the Main Lobby for our first 2026 Mocktails & Meaning™ session. Recently retired Millersville Professor, **Dr. Jill Craven**, will share her insights on how academia has evolved during her tenure, including shifts in social norms, policies, student life, and the impact of technologies like ChatGPT.

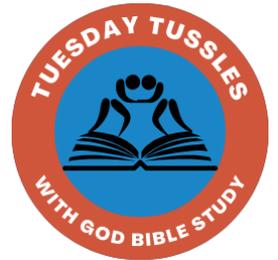


Enjoy meaningful conversation alongside our featured mocktail: **Cherry Shirley Temple**. Register by scanning the QR code.

Tuesday Tussles w/ God

Re-reading Jesus' Parables Together

How might we hear Jesus' parables as his original listeners did? Tuesday Tussles With God invites you to explore these challenging stories with help from Professor Amy-Jill Levine of Vanderbilt Divinity School. Through a DVD-based study, this renowned scholar offers fresh insight into parables that still surprise, provoke, and inspire today.



Join us Tuesdays, January 6 through February 10, 10:30–11:30 am in the Burkholder Chapel. Bring a Bible or just your curiosity. All are welcome, regardless of faith background, and lively, thoughtful conversation is always part of the experience.

Asking the Hard Questions

New Monthly Series with Deklan Lewis

At Church of the Apostles, we know many are carrying deep and honest questions about faith, especially in light of what is happening in our country and throughout the world. Questions like "Where is God in all of this?" are not signs of weak faith, but part of a faithful journey we are called to walk together.

To create space for these conversations, we invite you to a new monthly series, **Asking the Hard Questions**, hosted by our seminary intern, **Deklan Lewis**, in the Parlor. Together, we will explore doubt, struggle, and belief as meaningful parts of discipleship. Our first two gatherings will include viewing and discussing the film *God on Trial* as we wrestle, much like Jacob, with faith and what it means to follow Jesus today.

To accommodate different schedules, two sessions will be offered each month: **Monday morning, January 26 at 10 AM**, and **Thursday evening, January 29 at 6 PM**. All are welcome to join this thoughtful, open, and supportive conversation.

YOUTH

PRIMARY FAITH FORMATION (AGES 3 - 3RD GRADE)

January Schedule

Our Primary Faith Formation class invites children ages 3 through 3rd grade to continue exploring God's love after Children's Time each Sunday in Room 304. Through stories, conversation, and hands-on activities, our youngest disciples learn that faith is something we live and grow into together. In January, our themes will guide children through meaningful lessons rooted in Scripture:

- **January 4:** We can bring our cares to Jesus (focusing on the Magi)
- **January 11:** We can follow in the way of Jesus
- **January 18:** We can build strength on a strong foundation
- **January 25:** God's kingdom grows



ROOTED IN FAITH (4TH - 8TH GRADE)

Exploring Our Spiritual Roots

This fall, our ROOTED youth took a different approach to learning, looking beyond familiar stories to explore how our Christian faith is connected to other end-of-year holidays. On **All Saints' Sunday**, they examined both the pagan and Christian origins of Halloween, also known as All Hallows' Eve, uncovering how faith traditions have been shaped over time.

In December, the group watched Ric Burns's documentary *The Pilgrims* (2015), gaining a deeper understanding of the historical roots of Thanksgiving. Along the way, they explored the connections between the Separatist Pilgrims, the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and our own **Reformed Protestant and UCC heritage**. These conversations helped ROOTED youth see faith as a living story, shaped by history and community. Stay tuned as they look ahead to their next video creation project in 2026.

YOUTH GROUP (4TH - 12TH GRADE)

Winter Fun & Faith in Action

In December, Apostles Youth Group gathered for an evening of festive **fun and meaningful service**. Youth enjoyed Christmas cookie decorating and holiday-themed games, while also sharing in the spirit of generosity by bringing toys to donate to **Toys for Tots**.

Looking ahead, Youth Group will meet on **January 4th** for a game night and **January 18th** for a regular meeting. All Apostles youth, from ROOTED through high school, are welcome to join us from **6-8 PM in Room 306**. Friends are always welcome as we continue building community, faith, and joy together.





December was a cheerful and faith-filled month at Apostles Community Preschool! The children explored the true meaning of Christmas and **celebrated the birth of Jesus** through hands-on activities, stories, and opportunities to share their blessings with others.

All month long, the school was filled with joyful music as the children practiced "Silent Night," "Go Tell It on the Mountain," and "We Wish You a Merry Christmas." At our annual Christmas Performance, they sang "Joy to the World" for families and guests, and we were happy to welcome residents from Homestead Village who joined us for the celebration. We also enjoyed a special visit from Silver Spring Dance. Their ballerinas performed *Nutcracker: Land of the Sweets*, bringing a touch of holiday magic to our school. The children were captivated by the performance and loved seeing the dancers up close.

Looking ahead, **registration for the 2026-2027** school year is now open for church members and former ACP families, who may register by contacting Jeannie Clausen at jclausen.acp@gmail.com. Registration opens to the general public on January 5, 2026. We also invite prospective families to attend our Open House on **January 12, 2025, from 6-7 PM** to visit the school and meet our teachers. Please share the news with family and friends.

Apostles Community Preschool proudly offers scholarships to families in need, ensuring that no child is ever turned away due to financial circumstances. Thanks to the generous support of the Janet Rader Memorial Fund, made possible by contributions from COA members, preschool families, and our wider community, we are able to continue providing this assistance. If you feel moved to support this meaningful mission, we gratefully **accept donations of any amount to help sustain our scholarship program**. For more information, please contact Maggie Biggs, Director, or call the preschool office at (717) 392-5598.

We wish everyone a warm, joyful, and blessed New Year!

Maggie Biggs

Preschool Director

mbiggs.acp@gmail.com



@Apostles_Community_Preschool



OUTREACH

MISSION TO THE HOMELESS

This January, Church of the Apostles invites you to support our **Mission to the Homeless** special offering. This year, all funds raised will go to **Milagro House** in Lancaster, a nonprofit dedicated to helping mothers and their children experiencing poverty. Milagro House provides **education, housing, and support services**, addressing the root causes of poverty and offering long-term solutions for families. Their two-generational approach equips mothers with the resources and skills needed for educational success and financial independence, creating brighter futures for both themselves and their children.



By supporting organizations like Milagro House, we grow in love, understanding, and inclusion, extending care to experiences we may not personally encounter. Contributions can be made through **giving envelopes, Vanco, or Realm**. Your generosity helps transform lives and brings hope to families in need within our community.

OUR IMPACT

\$822

UCC Christmas Fund

\$300

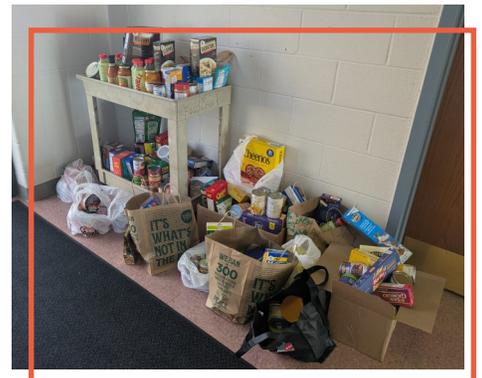
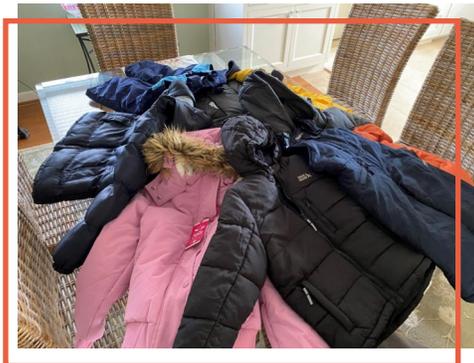
Bethany Homes

Donations as of Publishing



OUR HEARTS & HANDS AT WORK

In December, the Church of the Apostles community put faith into action in meaningful ways across our neighborhood. We donated **27 warm winter coats** to children at Wheatland and Martin Elementary Schools, provided **40 Christmas gifts** to children in need at Martin Elementary, and our preschool collected **non-perishable food** for the Hempfield Area Community Food Bank. Each of these acts demonstrated Christ's love, grace, and inclusive welcome, showing that even simple gestures can bring warmth, dignity, and hope during the winter and holiday season.





A MUSICAL NOTE

With Music Director, Lars Potteiger

One of my favorite hymns of the Epiphany season is "O Morning Star, How Fair & Bright." This hymn is not as widely sung as some others, but its beautiful melody and poetic text are well worth experiencing if you are unfamiliar with it. The hymn was written in 1599 during a time of great turmoil in Unna, Westphalia, by Pastor Philipp Nicolai, as he witnessed his town ravaged by the bubonic plague.

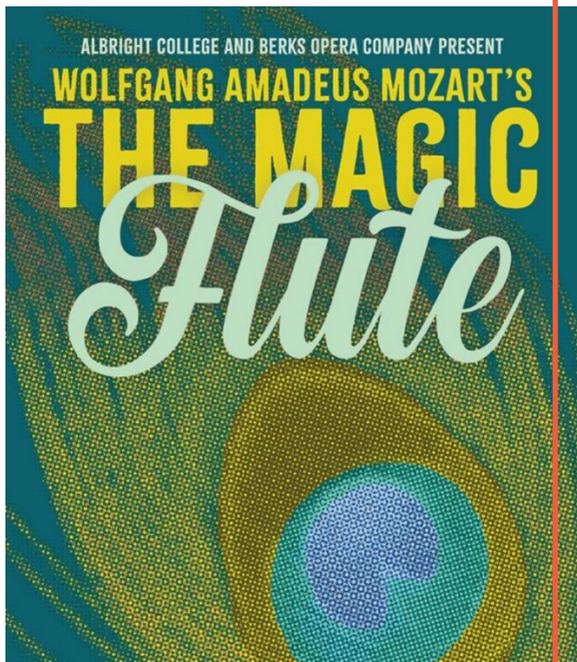
Living under the constant threat of infection, Nicolai conducted funerals daily. Rather than despair, he penned the hymn that is defiant in hope and intentionally joyful:

"Come heavenly Brightness, Light divine,
and deep within my heart no shine,
there make yourself an altar!
Fill me with joy and strength to be
your member, joined eternally
in love that cannot falter;
Longing for you
does possess me; turn and bless me;
Here in sadness
eye and heart long for your gladness."

What a powerful testimony to faith and hope for what the future can hold! The text invites us to welcome Christ into our hearts, to dwell there as an altar, and to give us strength in love for all of life's challenges. May your Epiphany be filled with Christ's light and love.

Peace and Blessings,

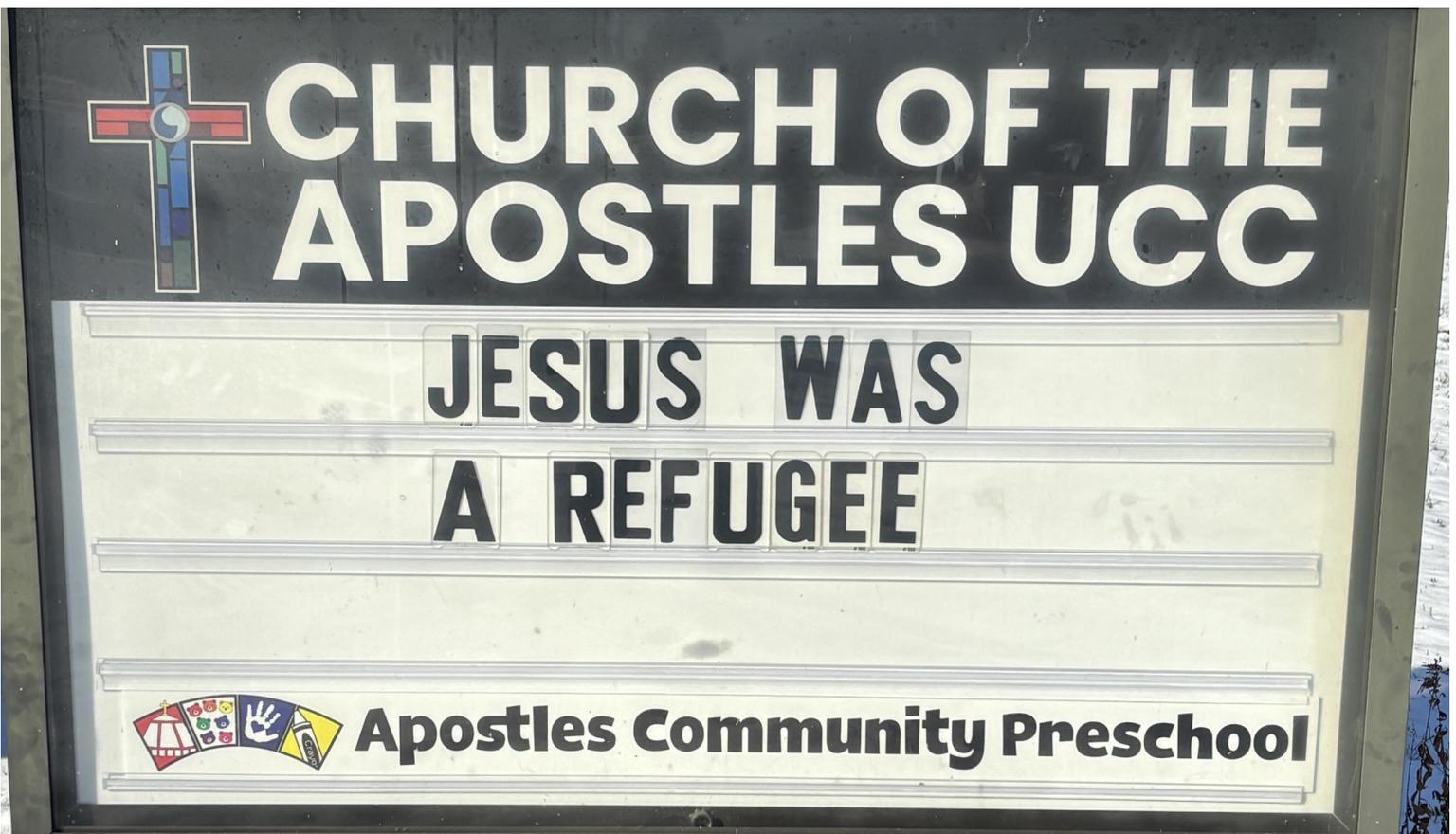
Lars



UPCOMING APOSTLES ACADEMY CONCERT

You're invited to a special afternoon of opera as Berks Opera, in partnership with Albright College, presents Mozart's *The Magic Flute* on Sunday, January 25, 2026 at 3 PM in the Sanctuary.

This enchanting production combines powerful music, imaginative storytelling, and professional vocal talent in a performance that will move and entertain audiences of all ages. This event is **free to attend**, with a **freewill offering** taken in lieu of tickets.



"An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt...'"
- Matthew 2:13a

If you travel along Marietta Avenue as you enter our campus, you may notice a change to our sign. It now carries a simple but powerful message: **"Jesus Was a Refugee."**

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, we are reminded that early in his life, Mary and Joseph were forced to leave their home, livelihoods, and community to protect their child. Their journey was shaped not by convenience, but by love, courage, and the need for safety. Today, countless families around the world face similar choices each day, leaving behind what is familiar in search of refuge and hope.

As we give thanks during the holidays and look toward a new year, this message invites us to reflect on a difficult but faithful question: *What would we do to keep our families safe?* At Church of the Apostles, we believe in being a place of inclusive refuge for all, rooted in the life and love of Christ.

INCLUSIVE CHURCH UPDATE & JANUARY TOPIC

Revisiting Neurodiversity and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Do you enjoy the quiet satisfaction of checking something off a list? As a congregation, we recently experienced that feeling together when we approved our Inclusive Church Covenant at the November Annual Meeting. While it is meaningful to mark that step as complete, our work of becoming ever more inclusive and welcoming is ongoing.

This month, our focus returns to **neurodiversity**, with particular attention to **Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**. One way we live out our covenant is by growing in understanding of how different people experience worship, learning, and community life. ADHD can look different across ages and genders, and not all of its characteristics are immediately visible. For some individuals, staying engaged may involve movement or “fidgeting” such as using a small object, knitting, or holding a textured item during a service or conversation. Recognizing and welcoming these differences helps create a space where more people can fully participate and feel at ease.

As we move through 2026, we will continue exploring how our church can be a place of safety, dignity, and belonging for all. Planned areas of reflection include:

- What it feels like to be a person of color in our community
- How women are integrated into the life of our church and how we might better reach women in the wider community
- What the church experience is like for non-Christians in our midst
- How we can be more mindful of those who live with physical pain or chronic conditions that are not always visible

This journey is not about having all the “right” words or perfect answers. It is about listening, learning, and taking faithful steps forward together. We invite you to share your thoughts and perspectives as we continue shaping our life together into 2026 and beyond.

To learn more about our Inclusive Church Initiative, visit the display in the Narthex or explore resources online at apostlesucc.org/inclusive-refuge.

Little Things Make A BIG Difference

Our Inclusive Church conversations in November reminded us that welcome often shows up in practical, thoughtful ways:

- Large-print bulletins help ensure those with vision challenges can fully participate.
- Sharing agendas ahead of time gives everyone space to prepare and engage thoughtfully.
- Offering activities for young children in the Sanctuary helps them feel at home in worship.
- Ministries like **Mocktails and Meaning™** are already weaving Inclusive Church values into the life and culture of our community.

These small, intentional choices continue to shape Apostles as a place where welcome truly grows.

January Birthdays

- 1.2 ~ Dick Cunningham
- 1.3 ~ Cathie Oliphant
- 1.4 ~ John Wylie
- 1.7 ~ Chris Braun
- 1.10 ~ Arlene Gaudioso
- 1.11 ~ Wende Stenman
- 1.12 ~ Dorothea Greenawalt*
- 1.14 ~ Liam Dubbs
- 1.16 ~ Donald Koontz*
- 1.17 ~ Delayne Breslin
- 1.17 ~ Vincent Kuhn
- 1.19 ~ Karen Helmeczi
- 1.21 ~ Carol Burkholder
- 1.22 ~ Jennifer Eyrich
- 1.24 ~ Andree Goldman*
- 1.24 ~ Weston Koehler
- 1.30 ~ Caela McCooley
- 1.30 ~ Jack Stoltzfus
- 1.31 ~ Gabe Bravo
- 1.31 ~ Chuck Erisman
- 1.31 ~ Andy Smith

*90+ Birthday's

January Anniversary's

- 1.31 ~ Mike & Beth Buckwalter

*50+ Anniversary

WORSHIP FLOWER SPONSORSHIP

Enhance our worship with the beauty of flowers by sponsoring them in honor or memory of a loved one.

To sponsor, email office@apostlesucc.org

or complete a form in the Church office. The suggested donation is \$60, but any amount is appreciated.



SPONSOR THROUGH VANCO

Contributions can be made via check, cash, **Vanco**, or **Realm**.

IN LOVING MEMORY



MARIANNE DEANER

February 1942 - November 2025

MEMORIAL FUND

DONATIONS MADE BY:

Michael & Elaine Savukas,

Bonnie Johnson & Bartley Eckhardt,

Sandra Myers, Robert Wildasin.

	November 2025	November 2024
YTD Revenue	\$342,513.78	\$351,296.47
YTD Investment Transfers	\$221,043.90	\$291,940.00
YTD Operating Expenses	\$583,122.78	\$643,274.46
Net YTD Operating Income	-\$19,565.10	-\$37.99

A DREAM REALIZED - FIFTY YEARS OF CHURCH OF THE APOSTLES

By George Alspach

Fifty years later few remember the challenges that were successfully met by COA on its way to a fully developed non-profit campus and a debt free church with over \$2 million in endowments.

After a January of 1972 self-study, an aging city church knew it needed a vision for the future and successfully sought a partner church for it. The path would be difficult and risky. It would call upon all the faith, time and talent available in our church members to meet all the challenges. It would call for decisive, quick actions. It would call for strong pastoral leadership.

The dream called Church of the Apostles was a multi-million dollar phased development which could have failed at many different times. Finances were difficult and the timing of cash flow vital. New legal entities had to be created and organized. Both churches had to sell their church buildings, parsonages and other real estate assets. Endowment funds were completely spent. COA had to sell land to campus partners at the right time and price to make the finances work. Details such as quickly getting real estate tax exempt status for the campus became important. COA had to borrow as much money as it could. Zoning and other land development issues almost killed the project. Construction difficulties with the roof and cost cutting measures complicated original church construction. A new nursing home organization and building complex had to be planned, financed and established. All these things were successfully led by COA.

After initial construction, COA had the vision to expand and improve its facilities. Fixing the roof at least twice, building an education wing, paving parking lots, air conditioning the entire church and fixing other initial construction issues were done and paid for. The mortgage was refinanced and then paid off early. Endowment was re-established beyond all previous levels.

I fondly remember many of the people who made COA happen and am grateful for all the faith and fellowship established then and in the last 25 years.

George Alspach

STAFF

Senior Pastor

Rev. Kathryn Kuhn

Church Administrator

Melissa Kosman

Communications Coordinator

Paityn Nissly

Music Director

Lars Potteiger

Adult Choir Director

Nathan Sheffer

Children's Choir Director

Elizabeth Stoltzfus

Technology Specialist

Jaben Jury

Property Manager

Eric MacLaren

Sexton 2

Tasha MacLaren

To contact our staff directly visit apostlesucc.org/staff

Share Your Story

Be Featured in the next Crown Newsletter!

We want to hear from you! Share how you're living out our Vision & Mission, making an impact in our community, or contributing to our ministries. To submit your story, email the Communications Coordinator, Paityn Nissly, at office@apostlesucc.org by the 15th of the month for consideration in the next issue. Space is limited, but we'll do our best to feature as many articles as possible.



Prayer Requests

Let us Pray with You!

We are honored to pray for you through life's ups and downs. You can share your prayer requests on your connection card during Sunday services or email them to office@apostlesucc.org. Please let us know if your request can be shared or should remain private for our prayer chain. Together, we lift our hearts in prayer to support and encourage one another.

Supporting Our Community

Ways the Compassion Team is Here for You!

Our Compassion Team is dedicated to providing support, understanding, and care to everyone in our community, no matter where you are in your walk of life. We offer several confidential resources designed to help nurture your mental and spiritual well-being.

- **Confidential Listening Sessions** - Set up a private time of listening, understanding, and compassion with one of our trained Compassion Team members.
- **The Compassion Corner** - A collection of materials focused on mental health, grief, and other challenging life topics located in Rm 107.
- **Monthly Spiritual Support Group** - Launching on January 8th, this gathering will provide a space for shared encouragement and community.

**WORSHIP WITH US EVERY SUNDAY AT 10 AM
IN-PERSON OR ONLINE**