



THE CROWN NEWS

Vol. 50 No. 2



"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."
- John 13:34-35

Love, One Year Later

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Let's Be Friends

   @ApostlesUCC

Last February, I wrote about love, what it is, why it matters, and how Jesus calls us to live it out. A year later, it feels important to return to that reflection. **The past year has reminded us just how much love is still needed.**

The world hasn't grown quieter or kinder on its own. Divisions, fear, and fatigue continue to test us. In moments like these, love can feel fragile, even impractical. And yet, this is precisely when love matters most.

Love has always been countercultural. In 1415, Charles, Duke of Orleans, wrote the first Valentine's Day to his wife from a prison cell, showing that love persists despite isolation and uncertainty. Today, **love still shows up in unexpected places:** a

patient conversation, a willingness to listen, a choice to stay present rather than turn away. Love survives in imperfect conditions.

Here in our community, we are living love in meaningful ways. Just a few months ago, our church voted to become Open and Affirming, officially welcoming all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, into the full life of our congregation. This is a powerful step forward; **a visible, intentional act of love that reflects Jesus' call to embrace and honor all of God's children.**

Jesus' command to love one another is not sentimental. It is demanding. Agape love; the self-giving, sacrificial love of God asks us to care even when it costs us something. It calls us to extend grace when it would be easier to retreat, to seek understanding instead of judgment, and to remember the humanity of those who see the world differently than we do.

As we move through another February, and into another year, may we resist limiting love to a season. Let us choose love as a daily practice: showing kindness when it feels rare, listening when it would be easier to speak, and reflecting Christ's love in ways both quiet and bold.

With love, *Melissa Kosman* (Church Administrator)

UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

14
FEB

Community Game Night

📍 Main Lobby at 6 PM

Bring a game, snack, and friend for a fun night of fellowship at COA.

14
FEB

Free Slow Flow Yoga

📍 Saturdays in the Parlor at 9:30 AM

Limited space available, register by emailing valeriesherts@gmail.com.



BOARD NEWS

Astrologers call 2026 the "Year of the Fire Horse," a rare and dynamic combination of the Horse sign and the Fire element. This extraordinary combination occurs every 60 years. The last time the Fire Horse appeared, in 1966, the world experienced bold innovation—from space exploration to cultural breakthroughs. The Fire Horse is **action oriented and is associated with purpose, momentum, passion, and alignment.**

2026 will definitely be a year of action for our church. Mocktails and Meaning has resumed and has more interesting and important topics to explore, the sanctuary renovation will begin in late May, the Inclusive Church team is meeting and planning for the upcoming year, the Board will continue to explore ways to more effectively utilize Rader Park, and the Environmental Team will continue to work in support of our Church's mission.

The energy of the Fire Horse calls us into **clarity, direction, and courageous action.** It also holds symbolism that encourages us to ask powerful questions. Where do we need to show more courage in 2026? How can we, as a church, harness this dynamic energy to invite greater participation and create more momentum?

We are living through a time of great complexity and disruption. However, history reminds us that periods of rapid change often reward organizations who move forward with **confidence and purpose.** As we move into the year ahead, may we do so with courage, clarity, and in alignment with our mission and vision.

Blessings,

Michele Wherley (2026 Board President)

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!

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

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

★ April 14th, 2026: The Measure by Nikki Erlick

February Mocktails & Meaning™

Why Black History Matters with Tracey Weis

Join us for our February Mocktails & Meaning™ gathering in honor of Black History Month on Thursday, February 19th at 6:30 PM in the Main Lobby, featuring retired Millersville University professor Tracey Weis. Tracey will guide a thoughtful and engaging conversation on the importance of African American history and its lasting impact on our world today, with space for shared reflection and discussion. We will also be sipping a Starbucks copycat Pink Drink. Scan the QR code to register and join us for an evening of meaningful conversation and connection.



February Inclusive Church Topic

Black History Month

February invites us into Black History Month, a time to reflect, listen, and grow together as a community committed to inclusion. This month, our Inclusive Church focus turns toward **understanding the experiences of people of color**, both within our congregation and in the wider community, and asking how awareness can help us become better bystanders, neighbors, and friends. What might it feel like to be a person of color in our community? What is seen, what is unseen, and what is carried quietly? These questions invite curiosity and humility rather than assumptions, reminding us that each person's experience is shaped by their history and the spaces they move through each day.

As part of this focus, we invite you to join our **Mocktails & Meaning™** gathering on Thursday, February 19, for a conversation on "Why Black History Matters," offering space for thoughtful dialogue, shared learning, and reflection. Black History Month is not only about looking back, but about how we live out inclusion today, continuing to build a church where everyone feels seen, valued, and fully welcomed. To learn more, explore the Q&A cards in the Narthex or visit apostlesucc.org/inclusive-refuge.

Save the Date: Annual Garage Sale

Clear the Clutter and Share Your Treasures

Mark your calendars. Our Annual Garage Sale will be held on April 10 and 11, and it will be here before we know it. Now is a great time to start setting aside donations that are in **good, sellable condition**. Please note that **large furniture donations will not be accepted this year**.

More details are coming soon. Watch next month's *Crown* and other church communications for additional information about this year's garage sale.

YOUTH

PRIMARY FAITH FORMATION (AGES 3 - 3RD GRADE)

February Schedule

Our Primary Faith Formation class continues to invite children ages 3 through 3rd grade to grow in faith and compassion each Sunday **after Children's Time in Room 304**. In February, our lessons will focus on generosity, care for others, and discovering God's kingdom:

- **Feb 1:** God's Kingdom is like a treasure
- **Feb 8:** Treasure in Heaven – Souper Bowl Collection to benefit the Saturday Breakfast Ministry
- **Feb 5:** We can give to all
- **Feb 22:** When we care for others, we care for Jesus



To learn more about the **Souper Bowl Collection**, please see Pg. 6. All children in this age group are welcome to join us as we learn, grow, and serve together.

ROOTED IN FAITH (4TH - 8TH GRADE)

Celebrating Kings Day

Did you notice the message on the Church of the Apostles sign along Marietta Avenue reading "Jesus Was a Refugee"? Our **ROOTED in Faith** youth (Christian Formation for grades 4 and up) explored the biblical story behind those words by taking a closer look at **Matthew 2**. While the class has studied Epiphany and the arrival of the wise men before, this year the reality of Jesus' family fleeing to Egypt for safety carried new weight in light of current events. To mark the season, our January 4th gathering included a French **galette de rois (King's Cake)**, with one lucky youth discovering the hidden charm said to bring good fortune in the year ahead.



YOUTH GROUP (4TH - 12TH GRADE)

Winter Schedule Changes

After a successful **Game Night** to kick off January, winter weather had other plans. Snow and ice over the MLK weekend led to the cancellation of our second January Youth Group meeting, originally scheduled for the third Sunday.

Please note that **Youth Group will not meet on Sunday, February 1**, due to the UCC MusicFest being held at COA that day. We will return to our regular schedule on **Sunday, February 15**, meeting from **6-8 PM in Room 306**. We look forward to being back together soon!



CELEBRATING 60 YEARS! APOSTLES COMMUNITY PRESCHOOL UPDATES

As we pass the halfway point of the school year, we are excited to share some of the wonderful learning and experiences our students have been part of at Apostles Community Preschool. Over the past weeks, our classrooms took a journey into the world of fairy tales. Using beloved stories like *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, and *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, children practiced re-telling stories and explored key story elements such as characters and setting. These tales also inspired hands-on STEM investigations, with students asking creative questions like how to help the billy goats cross the river or whether they could design a chair strong enough to hold a teddy bear. Alongside our literacy and STEM work, we embraced the winter season by incorporating ice and snow into art and science projects, bringing curiosity and imagination to even the coldest days.

Apostles Community Preschool is proud to welcome children with a **wide range of learning and developmental needs**. We serve children with IEPs, autism spectrum disorders, speech and language delays, and those who benefit from extra support with behavior or early academic skills. Our dedicated staff works closely with families, IU-13, and Early Intervention to create consistent routines and provide individualized support within the classroom. Our focus is always on **helping each child fully participate in the preschool day** and grow at their own pace in a nurturing and inclusive environment.

We are also beginning to think ahead to the 2026–2027 school year and currently have openings in our tot program. Children in this program must be 2 years old by September 1. If you or someone you know is seeking a warm, supportive first school experience for a toddler, we would love to connect with them.

Thank you for being such an important part of our ACP community. We look forward to a fantastic and enriching second half of the school year together.

Maggie Biggs

Preschool Director

mbiggs.acp@gmail.com



@Apostles_Community_Preschool



OUTREACH

In February, our outreach efforts continue the spirit of generosity and compassion that shaped our **Mission to the Homeless** giving in January. Together, Church of the Apostles remains committed to supporting neighbors experiencing homelessness and food insecurity right here in Lancaster through both financial gifts and hands-on ministry.

OUR IMPACT

\$65

Mission to the Homeless

Our February Special Offering will support the **Apostles Assistance Fund**, which in 2025 was directed to **Anchor Lancaster**, a local nonprofit providing meals, temporary shelter, showers, case management, and ongoing support for those in need. By partnering with Anchor Lancaster, our giving extends beyond one-time assistance and helps connect individuals with a broader network of care as they work toward stability and renewal. In 2025, COA donated **nearly \$2,000** through the Apostles Assistance Fund, a meaningful sign of our commitment to our neighbors.

Donations as of Publishing



ANCHOR

Lancaster

EST. 1985

We will also continue this work on **Sunday, February 8**, with our **Souper Bowl Sunday Collection**, led by the Primary Faith Formation class. All funds collected will support our **First Saturday Breakfast Ministry**, which serves a hot meal to more than 150 guests each month at **First Reformed UCC** on Orange Street. Volunteers are always welcome. If you would like to help, please contact Julie Berkow at jberkow6@comcast.net.

These efforts reflect our ongoing call to offer **inclusive refuge and compassionate care**, building on January's support of Milagro House and carrying forward Christ's love through tangible acts of service and generosity in our community.



COA EASTER CANDY COLLECTION

Church of the Apostles is partnering with the **American Cancer Society** for this year's Easter celebration, and we need your help. From **February 15 to March 15**, we will be collecting **small wrapped candy donations** to fill Easter eggs for our annual egg hunt. Please place donations in the marked bin in the narthex by the outreach bulletin board.

More details about our Easter events, including the Bunny Breakfast, can be found on our website and in next month's Crown newsletter. We're egg-cited to share this sweet season together.



A MUSICAL NOTE

With Music Director, Lars Potteiger

As we prepare for Lent, we are invited into a time of personal reflection that begins with Ash Wednesday. One of my favorite hymns often sung at the start of Lent is "Just As I Am, Without One Plea." Written in 1835 by Charlotte Elliott, an English poet who lived with chronic illness and physical limitations, this hymn grew out of her struggle with feelings of spiritual inadequacy and her conviction that she could come to Christ only as she truly was, relying entirely on grace. Elliott wrote the text to support fundraising efforts for a school her family helped establish. The hymn reminds us that, even amid trials and doubts, we are invited to come to God just as we are.

*Just as I am, though tossed about
with many a conflict, many a doubt,
fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

I pray that your Lenten journey helps you grow in faith and that you experience God's grace and presence in your life.

Peace and Blessings,

Lars

Lancaster Association Presents

MUSICFEST

February 1st, 2026 at 3 PM

Church of the Apostles UCC

1850 Marietta Ave



WELCOME OUR NEW FINANCE COORDINATOR

Church of the Apostles is pleased to welcome **Jennifer Isenberg** as our new **Finance Coordinator**. Originally from St. Louis, Missouri, Jennifer brings both professional expertise and a warm, approachable presence to this role. She holds degrees in **Accounting, Finance, and Business Administration**, and is passionate about helping others understand and feel confident about financial matters.

Jennifer is also a parent to three young children, which keeps her busy outside the office and grounds her work in patience, care, and attention to detail. At COA, she will assist members with **giving questions**, including **Vanco and Realm support**, and help guide the congregation through upcoming financial process improvements. She works closely with the Treasurer, Finance Team, Church Administrator, staff, and ministry leaders to keep our finances running smoothly, always with respect for confidentiality.



Jennifer is a **part-time staff member** and is typically in the office on **Mondays and Tuesdays**. Please email or call ahead to schedule an appointment, as her hours may vary. We are grateful to welcome Jennifer to our team and look forward to the ways her work will support the life and mission of Church of the Apostles.

Email: finance@apostlesucc.org

Phone: (717) 392-5718 Ext. 8207

HELPING KIDS UNDERSTAND SCARY NEWS

A FAITH BASED GUIDE FOR CAREGIVERS

Children are often exposed to frightening news, strong emotions, and adult disagreements before they are ready to understand them. This information offers calm, faithful guidance to help parents speak with truth, compassion, and hope.

Why Kids Are Asking Questions

Children sense when something is wrong, even without details. They notice: Tension in adults during conversations. They see upsetting images or videos. They hear changes in tone or see changes in their routine. What children need most is reassurance, honesty, and connection.

Start by Listening

Before explaining, begin with curiosity. Helpful questions include: - *"What have you heard?"* - *"What do you think is happening?"* Listening first helps you: Understand your child's perspective. Correct misunderstandings as soon as possible. Avoid oversharing facts and stick to the basics. *"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak."* — James 1:19

Talking About Immigration and ICE

If your child asks *"What is ICE?"* you might say: *"ICE" stands for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and is a federal agency. Their job is to enforce immigration laws and look for people who may not have the legal documents to stay in the country.* Pause and let your child guide the conversation. Remind your child: Every person is made in God's image - God's love is for all people *"So God created mankind in His own image."* — Genesis 1:27

Words Matter

Children may hear terms that sound frightening or confusing. You can explain: *"Some words are legal terms, but they are not words we usually use. They describe paperwork, not a person. Every person is loved by God."* Help children learn to see people first, not labels. *Love your neighbor as yourself.* — Mark 12:31

When Kids See Disturbing Videos

If your child sees upsetting content online, remind them: You can pause and step away. Repeated viewing can increase fear. Social media shows more of what we watch. Encourage them to: Take a breath. Put the phone down. Talk with a trusted adult. *"Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you."* — 1 Peter 5:7

A Final Word & Prayer

Children learn from our tone, our reactions, and our trust in God. You don't need perfect answers, just presence, patience, and prayer.

God of peace, Be near to our children when the world feels confusing. Give us wisdom, gentleness, and courage to speak truth with love. Help our homes be places of safety and grace. Amen.

Faith-based guidance adapted from insights by Dr. Cheryl Ziegler, parenting expert.

February Birthdays

- 2.1 ~ Nils Stenman
- 2.3 ~ Brody Moore
- 2.4 ~ Kelley Brown
- 2.4 ~ Jill Craven
- 2.5 ~ Larry Frable
- 2.6 ~ Susan Stirling
- 2.6 ~ Mason Koehler
- 2.8 ~ Judy Klunk
- 2.9 ~ Joy Angevine*
- 2.9 ~ Lisa Ann Sweigart
- 2.10 ~ Kathy Johnston
- 2.13 ~ Cole Kendig
- 2.14 ~ Mary Ellen Bachman*
- 2.14 ~ Miles Clausen
- 2.15 ~ Emerson Brown
- 2.16 ~ Joe Bahling
- 2.16 ~ Nora Bravo
- 2.18 ~ Michele Wherley
- 2.23 ~ Deb Aukamp
- 2.25 ~ Cecily Hull
- 2.27 ~ Rasma Pakalnins*

*90+ Birthday's

February Anniversary's

No February Anniversaries

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



DOROTHEA GREENAWALT

January 1933 - January 2026

	December 2025	December 2024
YTD Revenue	\$378,781.12	\$386,813.74
YTD Investment Transfers	\$221,043.90	\$291,940.00
YTD Operating Expenses	\$633,294.63	\$699,176.12
Net YTD Operating Income	-\$33,469.61	-\$20,422.38

OUTREACH THROUGH THE YEARS

For the past fifty years, Outreach has been a vital part of the mission of the Church of the Apostles, serving both our **local community and neighbors across the globe**. Thanks to the dedication of the Outreach Commission and countless volunteers, these ministries have shared compassion, care, and the love of Christ in practical, meaningful ways.

Under the Outreach "umbrella," many ongoing efforts have touched lives near and far. Over the years, regular collections of food, clothing, personal care items, and pet supplies support local food banks, shelters, and families in need. The Apostles Assistance Fund provides emergency help through donated funds.

For many years each fall, our famous soup chefs prepared and sold delicious soups at the church bazaar, raising funds for outreach causes. Volunteers continue to cook and serve breakfast to the homeless downtown on the **first Saturday of every month**, and every Wednesday food is distributed through the Power Packs program to local families. Our Market Basket Ministry turns grocery store gift cards into financial support for breakfast and food ministries.

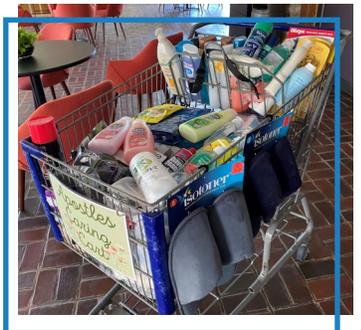


The **Seeds of Hope Garden**, lovingly tended on our church grounds, produces fresh vegetables for local food banks and summer Power Packs. Outreach also oversees nine Special Offerings each year, ensuring all donations reach their intended missions.



The **Apostles Caring Carts**, originally the "Wishing Well", collect items for short-term outreach projects. Past drives have included supplies for refugees, treats for hospital staff during the pandemic, pajamas for children in cancer wards, school supplies for students in Kenya, Honduras, and Lancaster, care kits for people re-entering society, and items for local homeless shelters.

At Christmastime, the **Holiday Gifting Ministry** brightens the season for children through partnerships with local schools. For the past decade, COA has gifted 60 students annually at Elizabeth Martin School. We've also supported the "Adopt a Classroom" program in the School District of Lancaster, providing funds for teachers to purchase books and classroom materials.



None of this would be possible without the **generosity and compassion of our congregation**. Church of the Apostles has long been known as a caring and giving community, living out Christ's call to love and serve others. Together, we continue to make a difference!

STAFF

Senior Pastor

Rev. Kathryn Kuhn

Church Administrator

Melissa Kosman

Communications Coordinator

Paityn Nissly

Finance Coordinator

Jennifer Isenberg

Music Director

Lars Potteiger

Praise Band 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** - Meeting every 2nd Thursday at 10 AM, this gathering will provide a space for shared encouragement and community.

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