

# GROWING IN *Grace*

The Monthly Newsletter of Morning Star Lutheran and Monroe United Methodist Churches

**LOOK INSIDE FOR:**

Worship News	pg 2
Church Reopening news	pg 3
Bishops' Messages	pg 4
Care and Outreach	pg 6
Church Business	pg 7

*April 2021*

*Greetings Easter people in the name of the Risen Christ -*

*“Alleluia, He is Risen”*

In 2018 I wrote these words:

“God is up to something here at Morning Star Lutheran Church”

In the year of our Lord 2021 –might I dare in say:

*“God is up to something here at Grace United Church, a ministry of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) and the UMC (The United Methodist Church)”*

As we live in God’s Amazing grace,

**Expect Surprises!**

The Season of Easter begins on Easter Sunday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, and is about the celebration of the resurrected Jesus poured upon us, to sustain us the church, to rejoice, proclaim, love and serve the world.

God is on a mission to love, heal and bless the whole world. God has gifted us in this time and place and called us to show and tell of this mission of God. This mission of God is our mission, *our only* mission. We have something the world needs! We have no other mission than this one!! God has given all the gifts needed by the Holy Spirit for that mission, to accomplish that mission in our own unique way, today in 2021, in Monroe Washington. It will mean living differently every day out there in the world. It will mean thinking differently as a church that looks outward and not inward.

Our real and hard work as a faith community will be to discern what our gifts are and how to use them in mission, God’s mission to love with grace, heal and bless our broken world. This will require prayer, lots of prayer. This will require that we spend a lot of time in God’s word, the Bible, every time we gather. This will dare us to take action. You see, love is a verb in this sense.

This will be about daring to expect surprises, to take risks, big risks, with us going into places and doing things we have not done before and maybe do not want to do as we follow the Holy Spirit into places we’d rather not be. There will be messes and experiences that may not seem like successes. Some may call them failures; yet they will great learning and growing experiments as we join God already at work in our world. We may and will fall and stumble, and sometimes we may even look like fools. So what? We stand on grace! We will worry about our resources; we will be afraid to mess up. We might even forget that God is a God of abundance who promises us everything we need and that we are enough.

Will it be possible for us to feel at home in a congregation united in grace that *expects surprises*; that knows that the Holy Spirit is going to show up and mess with everything; that embraces failure and celebrates messes as we learn from the mistakes we will make floundering around trying to be the church in this world! We stand on grace, united by grace, the work is hard, and it will take courage; to dare to take risks, and to dare to make messes as we follow God into all kinds of new places. We will encounter all kinds of grace in new people and their stories; into the company of strangers on paths we would have never picked ourselves. We will do this because as people united by grace, we stand on grace.

We will do this because we are Easter people, people of hope and certainty of the future, because the risen Jesus Christ stands in the gaps of our lives, the gap that is God’s grace and love, the gap that our world so desperately needs filled, as they encounter God through God’s Easter people, *us*, yes, you and I in their lives!

We are indeed Easter People United in Grace! And God is indeed up to something here! Let us dare to live in God’s amazing grace! Let us dare to expect God to show up in surprising and new ways!

*“He is risen indeed!”*

*Pastor Malcolm*

## Holy Week Worship Opportunities



### Maundy Thursday ~ April 1

A guide to *Celebrating Maundy Thursday at Home* is found on page 3. (apologies for the small print) If you have any questions about how to do follow the service or need more information, please contact the Morning Star office: [mslc@morningstarlc.org](mailto:mslc@morningstarlc.org).

### Good Friday Service ~ April 2

The Region One Bishops have provided a Good Friday Service for us. Follow the link to access the service:

**YouTube:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BddpDIaLzkY>

You're invited to an

## Easter Celebration Worship

Sunday, April 4,  
10:00 a.m.



Live  
via Zoom

Follow the link:

<https://greaternw.zoom.us/j/95356180384>

Meeting ID: 953 5618 0384

*Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!*



Average monthly views for our Online  
Worship Services:

March: 51

February: 49

January: 51

## REOPENING Church



### REOPENING COMMITTEE BEING FORMED

In the past year, the pandemic has dramatically changed our lives and turned our world upside down. The pain and anxieties it has caused around us are real. Additionally, as Christians we grieve the inability to meet in person with our church communities. We've gone online, moved our small groups to video chats, and found new ways to love our neighbors. We are still the people of God; we—not our buildings—are the real church. Yet we deeply desire to gather again.

Now, as restrictions loosen and businesses begin to reopen, we are beginning the process to open our doors and would like your help.

A committee is now being formed to plan and facilitate the reopening process. The committee will begin meeting **asap**, under the initial direction from Nancy Franke and Missy Maxson.

We are all excited to be worshipping together again, sharing the peace and Holy Communion, as quickly as possible. **Please consider being part of this essential team.**

Contact Nancy Franke at 425-345-6954 / [nfranke@comcast.net](mailto:nfranke@comcast.net) or Missy Maxson at 206-437-2535 / [missymaxson@gmail.com](mailto:missymaxson@gmail.com)

### *Celebrating Maundy Thursday at Home*

Adapted from a Service by Pastor Nancy Kraft

*This celebration of Maundy Thursday can take place whether you live alone or with others. The optional foot washing is the only element where others would need to be present. If you do live alone, you may consider calling someone else who lives alone and readtogether, over the phone, portions of the service. Or, if you have the capacity, do a video chat through Zoom, FaceTime, or another platform, so you can even eat the meal "together"! Prepare a favorite meal and serve it using any special dishes, tableware, or tablecloths you may have available. Before you begin your meal, light a candle as a reminder that this isn't just any meal. Something special and holy is about to happen.*

**Read (aloud or to yourself):** Did you know Jesus' last night with his friends was spent in a place called the Upper Room? That's where they gathered around a table for their meal. They thought it was going to be a meal just like so many other meals they had shared with Jesus, but this one turned out to be unlike any meal they had ever known. You may have seen pictures of the Last Supper where Jesus and the disciples are sitting in chairs, the way we do it. But, actually, they reclined on cushions at a table on the floor. It was a "laid back" occasion. There were two important things that happened at this meal. It was the first time Jesus took the bread and wine, blessed them, and said, "This is my body," and, "This is my blood." Every time we celebrate communion, we're remembering this night when Jesus shared himself with his disciples around the table. He's promised that he continues to come to us, even today, in the bread and wine. But before Jesus even got to the part where he gave his disciples Holy Communion for the first time, he did something to show them how much he loved them. He knelt before them and washed their feet. This was his way of showing them that, like him, they need to love and serve one another in humility. He gave them a new commandment, that they love one another as he loved them. In fact, the word "Maundy" means commandment.

**Bible Reading:** Read John 13:3-17, and 13:34-35.

**Foot Washing (optional):** If you have someone else living with you, pour some warm water in a basin, get out some towels and wash one another's feet. Even though this can be an embarrassing and ticklish experience for some, it is also a powerful act of servanthood, particularly when children wash their parents' feet. Remember to wash your hands afterward!

**Table Grace:** Before you eat, say this prayer: Lord, Jesus, on this holy night you washed the feet of your friends, and you shared your last meal with them. Bless this meal that we share tonight. Help us to remember that whenever we eat, you are here at the table with us, teaching us to love one another the way you have loved us. Amen.

**Enjoy Your Meal!** As you eat, think about some of the special meals that you have shared with the people you love. If you are with others or are on the phone or a video chat, share your answers to the following questions:

What made these special meals memorable?

How is this like or different than Holy Communion?

What do you miss about taking Holy Communion at Gloria Dei?

**Read After Your Meal:** When we come together to worship in our church building on Maundy Thursday, we end our time together with the stripping of the altar. As we hear a Psalm being read, all the objects on and around the altar are removed: candles, banners, altar book, communion ware, and table linens. When it is finished, the altar is completely bare. The stripping of the altar symbolizes the abandonment of Jesus by his disciples and the stripping of Jesus by the soldiers before his crucifixion. It reminds us of the barrenness of life without the hope of Christ that we have through his resurrection.

To remember this tradition, read Psalm 22 from your Bible (vv. 1-5 is sufficient but for the whole experience, read the entire Psalm!)

You can do a "stripping of the altar" in your own home, using one or more of these activities:

Gather any faith related items you may have in your house – crosses, statues, religious art and symbols that can be easily removed.

Pack them away somewhere, in a storage bin or a bag. Cover any large items with a cloth.

Remove all items from your dining table so it's completely empty and thoroughly wash it so it is both cleared and cleaned.

Leave your table bare until Easter morning. Parents: on Saturday night when everyone has gone to bed, unpack and uncover the religious items and decorate your dining room table with Easter joy so your family can awaken to a day of celebration!



*From the Spirit, April 2021*

There is a cave in Kentucky called Mammoth Cave. When you first enter, it appears quite empty of life. Dark, quiet, dank, barren.

And yet ... and yet ...

Like many caves, first impressions can be deceiving. You see, over 200 animals live in

Mammoth Cave. Animals that range from raccoons and other small creatures who accidentally venture into the cave and cannot figure out how to return to the outside, to animals who deliberately live both inside and outside of the cave, to forty-two species of troglobites - animals adapted exclusively to life in the darkness. ***Amid seeming emptiness, life is abundant.***

If one were to drive by most of our church buildings, parking lots would be empty and the doors would be locked. A casual observer might say, "That church is empty. Nothing is happening there."

And yet ... and yet ...

First impressions can be deceiving. There is a lot of life happening in congregations and ministry sites. There are people who have joined communities of faith in our synod that, for various reasons, would never have entered the doors of a church building. They have become part of the community through online worship – even if they live thousands of miles away. There are people who were a part of the church community for years – but because of work schedules or health issues or mobility concerns – they had faded away. Now they are coming each week as they re-connect. And there are people who have never left. They continue to foster relationships, enjoy serving in the community of the church, and who are faithful to the tasks that are required to keep churches functioning.

We have groups in many churches that are working with other organizations to help feed, clothe, teach, and be with people in the neighborhoods. We have those who are having sometimes uncomfortable (but always fruitful) conversations about what it means to be faithful in this time and place. We have many who are visiting and calling the sick and the dispirited.

Fundamentally, together we are living into the good news of Jesus and journeying together in the Spirit as we are Church in the world. ***Amid seeming emptiness, life is abundant.***

Listen to these words from the first Easter, "Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him!'" (John 20:1-2)

Mary looked into that tomb and saw only lifelessness and she despaired. She peered into the shadows and felt, deep in her bones, the darkness of sorrow, abandonment, disappointment, grief, heartache, and pain. She had gone searching for something, someone, and she came away with nothing.

And yet ... and yet ...

Jesus had risen. Jesus, scars and all, was going to meet her in the garden. In a few hours Jesus would call Mary's name and assure her of his love. Jesus would come to the disciples and breathe on them – giving them peace and asking them to, "Feed

his sheep." And they would. ***Amid seeming emptiness, life is abundant.***

Dear Beloveds, this last year has felt somewhat like we were living in a cave. We have been confined, somewhat lost, weary, and wondering where the new life is. We have stumbled on rocks and fallen in despair.

And yet ... and yet ...

We trust that soon we will be gathering in-person together. Soon we will be beyond this pandemic. Soon life will not "return to normal" but instead will move forward as we live God's calling of loving God and loving neighbor.

We know this because we are a resurrection people. Out of death comes life. We place our trust in our risen Savior who died and is raised again. ***Amid seeming emptiness, life is abundant in Christ Jesus our risen Savior.***

And we all proclaim: Alleluia! Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!

*Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee*



*From the Greater Northwest Area of the United Methodist Church*

**Standing in solidarity against anti-Asian hate**

Where does love live, if not in our hearts and in our relationships with God and our neighbors?

My heart is heavy with this week's news of a young white man's racial hatred targeting Asian and Asian American women for murder in Atlanta. Is there no limit to the depths of hatred and inhumanity?

What insanity blames innocent fellow citizens for a virus that spreads silently, putting people of every nation and race at risk? No-one is safe. No-one is to blame. If one suffers, we all suffer together.

My heart overflows with love for the women who lost their lives, for elders attacked on sidewalks, for passers-by spit at. Love lives where people lay their lives down for their neighbors, not where people violate the dignity, safety and very lives of their neighbors out of irrational fear and hatred.

*Listen with me to the reflections of my friend and colleague, Bishop Bob Hoshibata of the Desert Southwest Conference, who said this week: "We must confront the ways that harm presents itself: whether it be 'innocent' re-telling of jokes, to perpetuating racist rhetoric related to COVID-19, or violent actions to innocent people, we must acknowledge that these are things that fuel bias and prejudice against those of Asian heritage."*

**I affirm the words from** Asian and Asian American Bishops of the United Methodist Church, the New Federation of Asian American United Methodists, the Asian American Language Ministry Plan, along with other Asian American leaders and academics of the United Methodist Church, including some from the Greater NW Area: "We ask that all United Methodists read again and live out our own Charter for Racial Justice which states that all persons are of equal value in the sight of

*continued*

God and that racism is a rejection of the teachings of Jesus Christ.”

*May the LOVE of God continue to light our path in these dark days,*



**Elaine JW Stanovsky**  
Bishop, Greater Northwest Episcopal Area

### Serving Jesus

I think most of us live busy lives. Torn in different directions, struggling to balance work, family and some semblance of a personal life. On top of this, those of us called to be Christians try to find time to be obedient to God and give to those around us. It can be challenging at its best. It can be easy to dismiss our calling. It can be easy to turn our backs on others. We can justify our apathy by giving our time to our families and nothing more.



But God calls us to do more. He calls us to serve “the least of these”. I’ve read Matthew 25:34-40 many times and often feel convicted but I don’t think these verses are just a laundry list of service opportunities. This time, as I read them, I focused less about WHAT I should do and instead looked at WHY I should do it. **Matthew 25:40 “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”**

Serving Christ by serving others. Serving because we aren’t just serving our neighbors who are hungry, we are serving God. If we really saw God in our service, would it change our perspective? If Jesus was standing on a street corner, hungry, would we walk on by? If Jesus was locked in a prison cell, would we pretend He didn’t exist? If Jesus was sick with COVID or even just at risk, would we complain about our “rights”? Our brothers and sisters suffering in unimaginable ways. Living in fear in the midst of war and crime. Children locked in cages at the border because their parents wanted, needed, a better life for them. Our elderly dying alone, separated from their loved ones. If we saw them as JESUS, would that change our heart?

Finding time to serve is challenging but God tells us how to do it. Open our eyes around us and see JESUS standing in front of us, needing our help. If we focus on “the least of these”, our time will be well spent.

**34 “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’**

**37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’**

**40 “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ Matthew 25:34-40**

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### April Birthdays and Anniversaries \*

- 04 David Garrison
- 04 Rocky & Annette Kyle \*
- 05 Susanne Olson
- 11 Chris & Michelle Cooper \*
- 13 Ken Tompkins
- 15 Mikayla Nagy
- 16 Jacob Maxson
- 17 Rocky Kyle
- 18 Allison Tompkins
- 19 Russ Sumpter
- 20 Bill Coburn
- 21 Russ Dean
- 29 Peter Maxson

Easter is coming! Soon our Messiah will emerge from the darkness of the tomb into the light!

*Dear Lord, Help us to reflect Your light in our broken world. Help us to live in that light with gladness and grace. Help us to spread the good news!*

*Jesus has risen! He has risen indeed!*

Dear friends, we are emerging from a dark year and walking toward the light. Soon Covid-19 will be conquered and we will be able to worship together again. I look forward to that day.

Happy Easter!

Rhonda Morgan  
Care Coordinator

### ***Hazel's Little Free Pantry Thanks You!***

Thank you **Christopher** for installing the motion sensor light! It makes stocking the pantry at night so much easier.

Thank you **Velma and Shannon** for keeping us stocked in hot chocolate, and many other things.

Thank you **Priscilla** for the tuna, soup, and cases of Vienna sausage .

Thank you **Susanne, Kathleen, Joel & JoLynn, Dorothy** and the **many others** that have donated to Hazel's Pantry.

If you would like to support the pantry but can't get food to the church, **monetary donations are wonderful**. I can purchase exactly what is needed at the time. You can mail a check to the church, designate extra funds through Vanco, or drop cash in an envelope in the locked mail box at the office. Mark any donations "Little Free Pantry". Money that has been donated bought all of the food pictured.

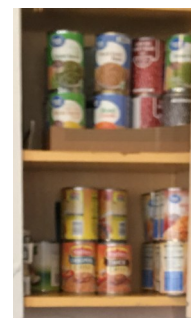
Right now the pantry is currently **completely out of**:

**boxed mac-n-cheese, small boxes of cereal, small boxes of shelf stable milk, and personal items. (soap, shampoo, feminine hygiene, etc.)**

We are also in need of just about everything else as our Pantry gets a lot of traffic and feeds a lot of hungry people.

***Thank you for your loving care of our pantry.***

Questions? Call or text Kathi Cooley: 425-293-8694



Talks about a possible trip to Russia have begun. Itinerary possibilities are Kazan, St. Petersburg, Moscow and Yaroslavl, Smolensk and Togliatti. Once Visas are available again, they can progress to setting dates and itinerary.

If you're interested and would like more information, contact Kathleen Sallee: [sesallee01@comcast.net](mailto:sesallee01@comcast.net) or Susanne Olson: [sagnerlk@premier1.net](mailto:sagnerlk@premier1.net)

**APRIL 2021 - MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

Hi Friends –

April is here and lent is almost over, and your generosity and faithfulness to the church and it needs continues keep us going! We continue to meet our financial needs, even though there are fluctuations each month – it all seems to even out!

The MUMC finance committee has met (Mike O, Tanya and myself ) and hammered out a budget for the 2021 year (better late than never, right?) that will be presented to the council for approval this month. Once approved, those figures will be available to anyone who would like to see them, so let me know if you would like to see it.

We got notice from the Conference that our apportionments have gone down from \$13,193 for 2020 to \$10,734 for 2021- a savings just over \$200/ mo.!! Every little bit helps. We are also doing an analysis of the utilities over the past year and Tanya has done a great job of changing a few things to save us money each month (like getting smaller dumpsters and going off the budget plan for utilities.) We watch these amounts and look for spikes that could mean broken water pipes or meter problems, since no one is in the church and seldom in the annex, and the amount should be fairly consistent .

If you have any questions or comments on any of the finances, feel free to let me know.

May you all stay healthy and save and enjoy the spring that has sprung, with Gods help and guidance.

Blessings to you all!

Nancy  
Financial Secretary

**MUMC financial report**

<b>January 2021–</b>		<b>February 2021–</b>	
Total Giving	+ \$6929.46	Total Giving	+ \$6,417.04
Total Expenses	- \$ 5534.08	Total Expenses -	\$7,377.53
<hr/>		<hr/>	
Total for the month	+ \$1395.37	Total for the Month	- \$ 960.49

**2021 MUMC LAY LEADERSHIP**

Board of Trustees Co-Chairs	<b>Chris &amp; Don Hoerner</b>	360-563-9309
Finance Chair	<b>Mike Obright</b>	206-369-5028
Treasurer	<b>Tanya Hubbard</b>	425-210-2095
Financial Secretary	<b>Nancy Franke</b>	360-794-6954
Staff-Parish Relations Committee	<b>Judie Esqueda</b>	951-201-0061
Membership Secretary	<b>Rhonda Dean</b>	425-359-2851
Lay Leader to Annual Conference	<b>Nancy Franke</b>	360-794-6954
UMW President	<b>Jasmine Ray-Symms</b>	425-223-9866
Recording Secretary	<b>Margaret Ray</b>	509-432-3029

**APRIL 2021 MORNING STAR LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**Council News:**

The MSLC Council approved Jill Sumpter and Emily Hughes to serve as the Synod Assembly Representatives in May. Emily and Jill were approved by acclamation.

**NON-DESIGNATED OFFERINGS AND EXPENSES**

	<b>2021 Budget</b>	<b>January Actual</b>	<b>February Actual</b>
<b>Offerings</b>	\$ 8,930	\$ 6,018	\$ 8,111
<b>Expenses</b>	\$10,163	\$11,548	\$ 9,294
<b>Surplus/deficit</b>		<b>-\$ 5,530</b>	<b>- \$ 1,183</b>

**2021 MSLC COUNCIL**

Administrative Director	<b>Missy Maxson</b>	206-437-2535
Treasurer	<b>Brian Johnson</b>	452-503-8352
Community Relations	<b>Cindy Gulbranson</b>	425-210-2095
Facilities - <i>Vacant. If interested contact Missy</i>		
Secretary	<b>Marla Wardell</b>	360-794-4072
Ministry Director	<b>Jill Sumpter</b>	360-348-7231
Worship	<b>Kathi Cooley</b>	425-293-8694

<https://smile.amazon.com/>

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**AmazonSmile's impact:**

- **\$281.92** to Morning Star Lutheran Church
- **\$241,928,506.19** to all charities in the US
- **\$266,896,659.48** to all charities worldwide





Morning Star Lutheran Church



Monroe United Methodist Church

412 South Lewis Street

Monroe, WA 98272-4149



**April 4: EASTER SUNDAY LIVE WORSHIP WITH HOLY COMMUNION** ~ Scripture: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Mark 16:1-8  
**April 11: 2<sup>nd</sup> Easter** ~ **ONLINE WORSHIP provided by the NWWA ELCA** ~ Scripture: Acts 4:32-35; Ps 133; John 20:19-31  
**April 18: 3<sup>rd</sup> Easter** ~ **ONLINE WORSHIP WITH HOLY COMMUNION** ~ Scripture: Acts 3:12-19; Psalm 4; Luke 24:36b-48  
**April 25: 4<sup>th</sup> EASTER** ~ **ONLINE WORSHIP** ~ Scripture: Acts 4:5-12; Psalm 23; John 10:11-18

**CONTACT US:**

**Pastor Malcolm Brown**

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**MONROE UNITED METHODIST**

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**Music Director:** Lee Ann Obright: 206-369-1621

**Website:** [www.monroeuonline.org](http://www.monroeuonline.org)

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**Music Director:** Jill Sumpter: 360-348-7231

**Website:** [www.morningstarlc.org](http://www.morningstarlc.org)

worship  
ONLINE

**Morning Star Lutheran Church &  
Monroe United Methodist  
Church**

**The service is ready for viewing  
Sundays after 6:00 a.m. and is  
available 24/7.**

**YouTube**

