

GROWING IN *Grace*

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

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February 2022

Stay Well & Worship with Us

WORSHIP SERVICE UPDATES

COVID 19 PRECAUTIONS

As an act of love, the worship teams of both Morning Star Lutheran and Monroe United Methodist Churches have decided to postpone in-person worship services for the foreseeable future. We are committed to work out of perfect love and not fear, taking into consideration the health and well-being of you, our worship team and our neighbors as we move forward, and we want to help slow the spread of the Omicron variant which we hope will soon peak. We will let you know when we will be back worshipping in person.

Thank you for your continued understanding, grace, patience and support.



JANUARY WORSHIP ATTENDANCE



YouTube views: 45

This is an average of five weeks and represent both congregations.

SEND US YOUR
**PRAYER
REQUESTS**

[Unitedingrace.org](https://unitedingrace.org)

Pastor Malcolm's thoughts for February 2022

During the month of February, as we continue in the season of Epiphany on a journey to Ash Wednesday on March 2nd when we begin the 40 days of Lent, let us continue to be the people of God together; seeking, listening and paying attention to God. Seeking the living presence of God in our daily lives and called to be God's presence in and for God's beloved creation and world.

We are 2 congregations of Christ followers, gathering as one on a mission, God's mission, to bless and heal a broken world. This sole mission of God then becomes *our* sole mission as well. We are people of Grace united by the Holy Trinity, on a journey to discover God's amazing grace and love, and seeking to encounter the living presence of God and risen Christ in our daily lives through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

We are called to be courageous and to be the interruption in the lives of others we encounter as we are the living presence and the bearers of God's love, grace, hope and the peace of Christ for them.

I heard the following spoken at the Western States Youth Gathering on July 5th 1996 by Lorraine Monroe, as if they were spoken directly and personally to me. These words touched the eyes of my heart then and was the beginning work of my sense of call by the Holy Spirit to be a witness of God's love, grace, mercy and forgiveness for the sake of those who are far off from God and need God's grace and hope.

May you also hear these words spoken to you and may your hearts also be open in this new time to a new adventure in mission.

If you can say: "I was sent to do this work", or even if you can say: "I wonder if I was sent to do this work",

PURSUE IT!

You do what ever comes into your hands and live if it furthers the work of God! It's about being sent. Being sent to do this work! So the charge that I leave you is to find the work, it is there, and pursue that work with passion and courage!

Pursue it when others tell you: #1- You're crazy!

#2 -There is no prestige in it!

#3- There is no money in it!

#4- Other's have tried and failed!

#5- The people you want to help don't want to be helped, they will never change!

#6- They are not like us, why do you want to help them!

YOU PURSUE IT!

- Nobody in our family ever...

- What will the family say if they find out you are doing that!

- And that's why you're going to college, to do that Kind of work!

- What can one person do?

I SAY PURSUE

I SAY BE COURAGOUS

I say that there is a dream in every part of this room, in this whole building that is God's! And you don't have to tell anyone what it is because sometimes it is so corny you don't even believe it!

But you pursue that!

Because the world is better for the dreamers,

Is better for the believers, better for the doers,

Better for you young people here.

For the older people here and their wisdom

For those here who can not only wiggle and dance around,

For those who can think around, and can work around,

And can gather others around to do the work.

The mission of your life is to be that interruption in the lives of others who suffer poverty & degradation, to be that interruption in the lives of others who are hurting and broken.

May God be with us, bless us and pour upon us abundant courage and grace,

Pastor Malcolm



From the Spirit, February 2022

From the Bishop:

I don't usually write about personal things for this monthly column, but I have a birthday this month (it is not a significant birthday – it doesn't end in a zero or a five) but a birthday is a birthday. And a birthday is always a blessing – it is a marker that we are still given time on earth to be with loved ones, work to make this world more livable and loveable for others, learn and grow, listen and speak, play and dance in God's Spirit of love.

I remember a significant birthday ten years ago that I celebrated. It was very low-key birthday. My parents and my family were there. We had some sort of food that I don't remember and a cake that was probably chocolate. That was it. But I was so thankful to be celebrating it. You see, in the summer of 2011 I was diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer. I underwent chemotherapy, a bilateral mastectomy, and radiation. In February of 2012 I had finished chemo and surgery and was just beginning radiation. (I am perfectly healthy now.)

This is what I wrote on my blog on www.mylifeline.org exactly ten years ago:

The other day I was complaining to some friends that it is hard for me to get motivated. I said, "I am not a depressed person but it is so hard to do things right now." My friend Laura said to me, "Maybe it's because you are battling cancer and have had months of toxic drugs, major surgery, forced work leave, a little too much mortality staring you in the face and no hair or eyelashes. Personally I think that's enough reason to feel what you are feeling." ...

Today I re-read what my friend Laura said and her words hold true for me and for so many of us right now. For many it is hard to be motivated and do things right now. We have had months – years! – of a pandemic, political divide, anxiety, forced separation, and, for some, physical and emotional difficulties as well. It makes sense that we are weary. And we can give ourselves and others compassion during this time.

And ... at the same time ... we also know that this is not the end.

We place our trust in God that this is only a season in our lives and in our world. A season that eventually we will look back on, be amazed how we survived and thrived, and be thankful for the place we are called to next.

Here is how I ended my reflection from ten years ago:

As I close this blog post, I am reminded of the passing of seasons and the amazing presence of God. When I began treatment, summer was in full bloom. We have gone through the falling of leaves, the dormancy of winter, and are now on the cusp of spring. This is where I feel my body is, too. I am ready to live a new life of health and wholeness, hope and gratitude. Psalm 30:11-12 says it so well: You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you for ever.

May we rest and may we breathe.

May we live and move and dance in the Spirit.

May we trust that through all things God is present with us – above us, beneath us, before us, and behind us.

May this year bring us resiliency and hope.

May we – *together* – be filled with Christ's love and compassion for one another and for ourselves.

Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee

bishop@lutheransnw.org



Thursday, January 20, 2022

A call to prayer and action for Tonga Beloved in Christ,

Last evening cabinet members and I gathered on Zoom with Tongan pastors in the Greater Northwest Area (GNW) to pray for the safety and recovery of the people in Tonga following the volcanic eruption and tsunamis. They

shared the latest information they have heard through media and the few reports received from family and friends in Tonga. As a community, Tongans are dispersed around the world.

"Tonga is home to 106,000 people, but more than double that number live overseas, mainly in the US, New Zealand, and Australia. Remittances from the overseas population have been declining since the onset of the 2008 global economic crisis. The tourism industry is improving but remains modest at under 90,000 tourists per year." – via Wikipedia

The Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga is the largest religious group on the islands, representing 36% of the population. Christianity was introduced to Tonga in 1822 by Methodist missionaries, pre-dating the arrival of Methodism in the Northwest in 1834, when Methodist missionary Jason Lee arrived at Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River. Tongans are our spiritual elders, embracing the Methodist movement ten years earlier than Northwesterners.

When Tongans immigrated to the GNW, they turned to The United Methodist Church to establish faith communities. Today Tongans gather for worship in six local churches or fellowships that identify as Tongan and are active members of many more congregations.

I am asking you to do two things before the end of January:

Pray and Act.

1. PRAY for the people of Tonga and their leaders as they work to respond to the immediate crisis. Pray for encouragement in the long, silent waiting; pray for rain to clean the air and settle the ash that has fallen everywhere.

Rev. Sia Puloka reminded us that "What Tonga needs is your love. We haven't heard. We cannot be there. But Jesus is there. Your prayer to Jesus is what Tonga needs." Pray for hospitality and shelter for those who have lost their homes. Pray for no more eruptions and for quick repair of the communication cable that is their lifeline to the world.

Pray also for our GNW siblings in Christ and their faith communities as they wait for word of their relatives and friends in Tonga. They reminded us last night that, while we cannot be present, our prayers can still encircle them.

And, as you pray, please go to the Facebook pages of these faith communities or their pastors and post your prayers and words of encouragement. We must open our hearts to share this tragedy with those most affected.

Mausia Folau, [Seattle: First Tongan UMC](#)

Sia Puloka, [Seattle: Seaview and Tongan Fellowship](#)

Sione Malua, [Vancouver: Vancouver Heights First Tongan Fellowship](#)

Kalina Malua Katoa, [Salem: Open Door Churches](#)

Fungalei Taufouu, [Portland: Lents Tongan Fellowship](#)

LatuTu'uholoaki, member of Tongan Fellowship at [Anchorage: Anchor Park UMC](#)

2. ACT to share resources in Tonga's time of need. We are preparing to help the recovery effort in Tonga, where many homes are destroyed and ash blankets the land, killing crops, polluting air, water, and fish, the primary source of protein.

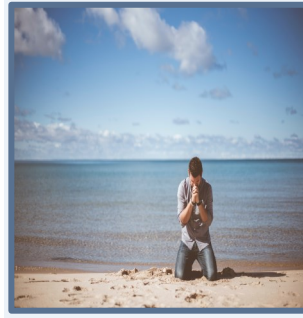
Rev. Taufouu mentioned that disasters like in Tonga, and Tongans in other countries are used to sending supplies to help their families recover. But, he said, "this will be a long journey. There may be another eruption; now ashes cover the kingdom. We must send relief for more than our families, for the whole Kingdom."

I encourage you to designate donations to your local church for "*Tongan Relief*" now. At the same time, we are working to determine the best channel for these funds, perhaps through partners in New Zealand, which can deliver goods to Tonga much quicker than from the United States. Your gifts can be sent to your Annual Conference with this designation and will be channeled for this purpose.

Joining with you in offering prayer and hope,



Bishop Elaine JW Stanovsky



Choose Faith

When people are struggling, some people will tell them to "choose to be happy." When I hear that phrase, I feel like it's a denial of the pain I'm dealing with. I know the people who say that are trying to

sound "positive". They're trying to cheer me up but, unfortunately, it doesn't work. Some pain can't be cheered up, some kinds of pain drive us to our knees. The thing is, that's where we need to be. I don't need to be happy; I need to be focused on God, not my feelings.

We recently lost a close family member. No one told me to "choose to be happy". No one told me to hide my grief. On the contrary, they let me talk about the loss. I told stories and memories and worked through it. It was understood that this was painful and would take time to heal. They also understood that the way I grieved, the time it took to heal, and the severity varies person to person, circumstance to circumstance. Losing an uncle was painful. Losing my mother would have been devastating.

There is an alternative to choosing happiness: choosing faith. We can trust God through our pain. We can count on him to be by us, wrapping His arms around us. We can let Him guide us through the pain. We can ask Him to heal us and bring our pain to an end. And He can love us, opening our eyes to the joy that's still there despite our pain.

Even in our pain there is so much good in the world! My loss isn't more than my joy and my pain is not more than my faith. **Psalm 146:8 says, "The Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous."** My faith in God lets me see the work he's doing in my life and all around me. He opens my eyes to see the people he's placed in my life to help me heal. He lets me see the strength he's giving me to get through the darkest times. I'm not choosing happiness; I'm choosing faith.

Jasmine Ray-Symmms

www.jasmineraysymmms.com

Sisters in Christ,

All women are invited to our UMW meeting on February 5, 2022, at 10:30am on Zoom. We will be resuming in-person meetings as soon as possible.

What is UMW?

United Methodist Women is a global organization and is the largest denominational faith organization for women with approximately 800,000 members whose mission is fostering spiritual growth, developing leaders, and advocating for justice.

What does UMW do?

United Methodist Women promote the empowerment of women, children, and youth; anti-racism and multiculturalism; inclusion and equity; fair labor practices; and economic and environmental stewardship and sustainability.

What are UMW meetings like?

Meetings provide opportunities and resources to fellowship with other women, grow spiritually, become more deeply rooted in Christ, and put faith into action.

Upcoming Meeting Topics:

February: *Health and Wholeness*

March: *Freedom in Christ*

April: *One with Each Other, One with the World*

We provide educational experiences that lead to personal change in order to transform the world.

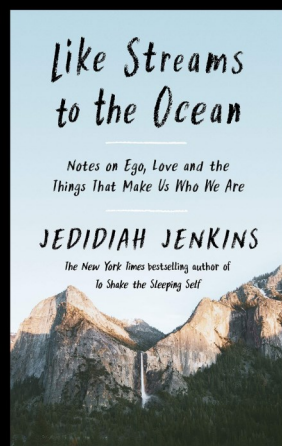
What's in it for me?

In this time of fear and isolation, coming together unites us, teaches us, and gives us hope. As United in Grace, we will be supporting ministries that support Lutheran as well as Methodist goals. Currently, our local UMW support ministries from young mothers in Nome, Alaska, to Take the Next Step and Matthew House in Monroe WA.

Source: <https://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/about>

Jasmine Ray-Symms

425-223-9866



February

Women's Book Club

Join us for snacks and drinks as we discuss "*Like Streams to the Ocean*" on Tuesday, February 15th, at 6:30pm.

Location hasn't been determined yet but the information will be posted as soon as we know.

Get your book or audio book and start reading. But remember...you don't need to have read the book to come to Book Club!

I hope that you are enjoying this Winter season. I moved here almost 30 years ago, from Southern California. My son and I arrived late in the month of August. We were awestruck by the deep green of the Trees. We kept finding ourselves looking up, amazed at the beautiful scenery everywhere you looked. Some of the Trees started to turn colors I had never seen before. I had never lived where the Seasons changed so visibly. I know a lot of people have a favorite season; mine is the Fall. However, the Winter is a close second. Winter forces us to slow down, bundle up and wait. Waiting is not one of my favorites, but I have found that unexpected changes and growth can come from waiting.

It seems as if in the last couple of years we've been hibernating. We are ready for Spring, to fling open the literal doors and see what we've been missing. To feel the sunshine and optimism that Spring brings. It is comforting to know that no matter what Season we're in, we are not alone. God promises to be with us, he is faithful. My prayer is that you feel his presence, know that everything is temporary, just like the seasons. We will worship together again; I look forward to seeing your faces and sharing our winter stories together in person.

Blessings

Marla Wardell

February Birthdays & Anniversaries *

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 4 Jim Olson | 19 Jay Morgan |
| 7 Martin Paietta | 23 Ric Hart |
| 9 Lori Johnson | 24 Chris Hoerner |
| 13 Dennis Nagy | 27 Don & Chris Hoerner * |
| 13 Denny Coates | 24 Patrick Cook (Jr.) |
| 19 Cindy Gulbranson | 28 Patrick Cook |

Hazel's Little Free Pantry

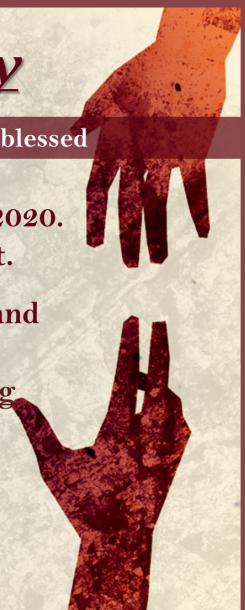
give what you can ~ take what you need ~ above all, be blessed



Serving Monroe, WA since June 2020.
 Located at 338 S. Lewis Street.

Donations are always welcome and appreciated!

Email mslc@morningstarlc.org
 or unitedingrace.org
 for more information.



FEBRUARY 2022 MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Hi everyone and happy February (already),

Another month where Covid has kept us out of the church, but the worship goes on and so does the work for both MUMC and MSLC, and I thank you all for your time, effort, support and prayers.

The MUMC Council (Judie Esqueda – SPR, Tanya Hubbard and myself – Finance, Rhonda Dean – Membership, Ric Hart – Trustees, Jasmine Ray-Symms – UMW, Peggy Ray – Council Secretary and Pr Malcolm) met on January 25th and finalized the church budget for 2022. If you would like a copy, please let me know and I will be happy to send. We closed the 2021 year in the black thanks to you all and your faithful giving and prayers.

See the figures below:

December	YTD Receipts
\$ 11,854.36	\$ 87,512.11

December	YTD Disbursements
\$ 6,540.61	\$ 78,636.05

A few things came out of the council meeting that I would like to make everyone aware of:

We are in need of a volunteer to head up the finance committee with the departure of our friend and former chairman, Mike Obright. Must be a MUMC member. Anyone interested?

MUMC is preparing to hire a part-time Office Administrator for approx. 6 hrs. /week. If you or someone you know is interested in a position like this, please let me or Judie Esqueda know and we will give you more details, or send inquiries to office@monroeuonline.org.

Our Little Pantry mission is looking for a waterproof container of some kind that can be secured to the annex porch to distribute clothing and personal supplies as the one we now have leaks and get everything wet! If you might have something that you think might work, please let me or Kathi know.

Stay well, and safe and look for the little gifts from God everywhere, everyday!

Hope to see you back in church soon!

Nancy Franke

2022 MUMC LAY LEADERSHIP

Board of Trustees Chairman	Ric Hart	360-794-7772
Finance Chair		
Treasurer	Tanya Hubbard	425-210-2095
Financial Secretary	Nancy Franke	360-794-6954
Staff-Parish Relations Committee	Judie Esqueda	951-201-0061
Membership Secretary	Rhonda Dean	425-359-2851
Lay Leader to Annual Conference	Nancy Franke	360-794-6954
UMW President	Jasmine Ray-Symms	425-223-9866
Recording Secretary	Margaret Ray	509-432-3029

FEBRUARY 2022 MORNING STAR LUTHERAN CHURCH

Welcome to the Church Council!


Kathleen Sallee has volunteered to serve on the Morning Star council as the Ministry Director, and will be officially voted on at the next Congregation Meeting. She and the rest of the council will be formally installed when we resume in person worship.

NON-DESIGNATED OFFERINGS AND EXPENSES

	2021 Budget	November Actual	December Actual
Offerings	\$ 8,930	\$ 7,838	\$22,078
Expenses	\$10,163	\$11,088	\$10,959
Surplus/deficit		-\$ 3,250	\$11,119

2022 MSLC COUNCIL

Administrative Director	Missy Maxson	206-437-2535
Treasurer	Brian Johnson	452-503-8352
Community Relations	Jill Sumpter	360-348-7231
Facilities	Jay Morgan	425-903-1678
Secretary	Marla Wardell	360-794-4072
Ministry Director	Kathleen Sallee	425-387-2638
Worship	Kathi Cooley	425-293-8694

 Morning Star Lutheran Church

 Monroe United Methodist Church

412 South Lewis Street
Monroe, WA 98272-4149

February 2022

February 6: Fifth Epiphany - Holy Communion - Scripture: Psalm 138; Luke 5:1-11

February 13: Sixth Epiphany - Scripture: Psalm 1; Luke 6:17-26

February 20: Seventh Epiphany - Holy Communion - Scripture: Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40; Luke 6:27-38

February 27: Transfiguration of Our Lord - Scripture: Psalm 99; Luke 9:28-36

March 7: Ash Wednesday - Scripture: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20b--6:10 Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

CONTACT US:

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MONROE UNITED METHODIST

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Phone: 360-794-8863

Email: office@monroeumconline.org

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

Website: www.unitedingrace.org

MORNING STAR LUTHERAN

Office Administrator: Kathi Cooley

Cell Phone: 425-293-8694

Phone: 360-794-2111

Email: mslc@morningstarlc.org

Music Director: Jill Sumpter: 360-348-7231

Website: www.unitedingrace.org



STAY WELL
WORSHIP ONLINE
WITH US

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

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

YouTube