

GROWING IN

# Grace

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

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**December 2023**

## *CHRIST, Be your LIGHT, Our LIGHT*



The nights of December are long and getting colder and we yearn for the light. When we step into this sacred time, we step into a blurrrring of future; present and past.

We will come to the manger on Christmas Eve with trust and hope that the light of Christ will come and dwell in and with us to overcome the darkness.

This year we will not have a Sunday morning service on December 24<sup>th</sup> but will gather at 5:00pm for a Traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight service as we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child.

Who was, who is, and who is to come. Advent is the very real in-breaking of the future into and past into the present here. **Yes**, right here in Monroe in the year 2023! God coming to us and breaking into our lives to say, "I love you," through the birth of this little one. We are living in a time that is longing for the Hope, Peace, Joy and the Love of Christmas when and where a 'Baby Changes Everything'.

Past is **present!** The hope that fills Advent is not for a maybe-perhaps-not-yet event. Future is **now!** Who was, who is, who is to when we come to the manger on Christmas Eve with trust and hope that the light of Christ will come and dwell in and with us to overcome the darkness.

In your waiting and longing, may God's love and peace break into your hearts with wonder and may you share that peace as Advent people for our world. May you live in the holy present, now, and on Christmas morning awaken at the manger to Jesus breaking in and doing new and wonderful things through you and in you.

**Merry Christmas** to you and all your loved ones and may **Christ** be your **Light** so that the **Light Of Christ** shines in your hearts today and in the coming **New Year!**

*Pastor Malcolm and Charlie Brown*



## *Thank You!*

*Thank you all so very much for blessing me with your generosity of spirit and resources for the Pastors Appreciation Gift. I am humbled by your grace, thoughtful, caring, encouraging, and loving hearts. I love and appreciate all of you so very much.*

*Grace, peace, blessings, and joy,*

*Pastor Malcolm*



# Worship Opportunities



*Come to the manger and meet the Christ Child as we celebrate Jesus' birth with a traditional candlelight service. The service begins at 5:00p.m.*

*~ Come and Celebrate ~*

*The service will also be live streamed.*

\* Please note: we will not be having a morning service on December 24.



Join us in celebrating the joy and the mystery of Advent and Christmas at a traditional Lessons & Carols service on December 31<sup>st</sup> at 10:00am.

You will have lots of opportunity to sing and enjoy your favorite carols.



The 12<sup>th</sup> day of Christmas!

Join us to celebrate the traditional feast of the Epiphany on Sunday, January 7<sup>th</sup>.

The service begins at 10:00am.



Bring 2023 to a close by gathering with community and the beings on this earth.

Due to flooding at the Lewis Street Park, our December Grace in the Wild will be held on the trails at the home of Kathleen Sallee. (see the latest directory for Kathleen's address)

We meet outside, rain (snow), or shine, unless the conditions are severe enough to pose a safety concern. Please dress for the weather, in particular for rain, mud, and slippery ground.



**Jesus and Java Returns!**

Our Adult Sunday School will resume our studies beginning January 7<sup>th</sup> at 8:30am in the Fellowship Hall. No prework required. All ages welcome. Come and bring a friend!

**NOOMA** 007-012  
Luggage | Dust | Bullhorn  
Lump | Rhythm | Matthew



**White Elephant Gift Exchange**

**ALL women are invited to the Books, TV, & Movies Christmas Party on December 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm!**

Bring a yummy snack to share and a wrapped white elephant gift. Do not put your name on it and be sure it's wrapped up tight!

Our host is Missy Maxson. Look for her address in the latest directory or call her at 425-206-437-2535.

Brown Bag Brigade

and



Hazel's Little Free Pantry

The **Second Sunday of every month is dedicated to the Brown Bag Brigade**, and the **Last Sunday is dedicated to Hazel's Little Free Pantry**.

Specially marked envelopes are found in the backs of the pews and on the Greeters desk on Sunday morning. It's because of YOUR support that these ministries are able to continue. Thank You.

**December Birthday & Anniversary\* Celebrations\***

3 Amy Halgren	18 Pr. Malcolm & Charlie *
4 JoLynn Garrison	22 Nancy Franke
4 Pastor Malcolm	24 Marla Wardell
12 Rhonda Morgan	



**2023 OFFERINGS**

Offerings and contributions for the 2023 tax season must reach the church offices by **December 31, 2023**

**NOVEMBER 2023 ATTENDANCE**

**In-Person: 36 Online: 15**

## Our Savior is Born!

I love decorating our house for the holidays. I have multiple bins filled with decorations, candles, ornaments, special towels for a Christmas themed kitchen and bathroom. I can imagine the eye rolls I get especially from my wife, brother and children but I love it. It makes me remember the specialness of Christmas.

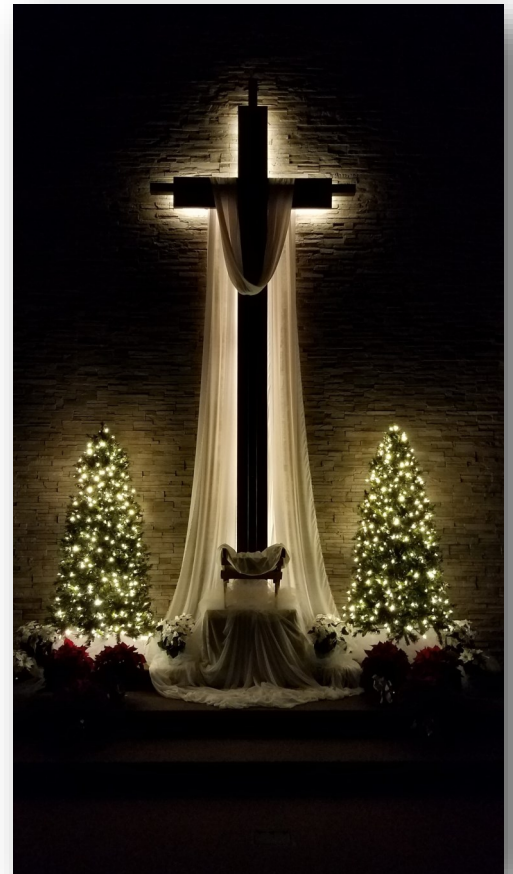
But all those things aren't Christmas. Christmas is the time to remember the most awesome thing ever: Our God coming to earth as a baby. Wow! Isn't that just amazing? Our God loved us so much He sacrificed himself. Our almighty God and creator came to earth as a baby! Our omniscient God knew what was coming. He knew He would be vilified. He knew He would be crucified. He knew but loved us more. He wanted a relationship with His children and proved it by His death and resurrection. He came down to experience the human condition. Not for glory but for us, to guide us back into right relationship with Him. He showed us how to truly love others as He loves us.

As we get distracted by all the busyness and spending let us keep the season of Christmas in perspective. Let us focus not on the stuff but the "reason for the season". Let us show love the way God does: sacrificially. During this Christmas season realize the gift of the Christ Child. Sit and think about it. Take a moment to really let this become real for you. In the midst of your shopping and Christmas music, the holiday parties and homemade cookies and pies, don't forget the most important part: LOVE.

Jasmine Ray-Symms

[www.jasmineraysymms](http://www.jasmineraysymms)

Photo by [Steve Hruza](#) on [Unsplash](#)



<b>DECEMBER SUNDAY MORNING &amp; CHRISTMAS EVE MINISTRY SCHEDULE</b> <i>Thank you for serving. You are an indispensable part of the body of Christ and we thank you.</i>				
	<b>DECEMBER 17</b> <b>4<sup>TH</sup> ADVENT</b>	<b>DECEMBER 24</b> <b>5PM CHRISTMAS EVE</b>	<b>DECEMBER 31</b> <b>LESSONS &amp; CAROLS</b>	<b>JANUARY 7</b> <b>EPIPHANY SUNDAY</b>
<b>Worship Asst.</b>	Christine Coco	~ ~ ~	Nancy Franke	Jasmine Ray-Symms
<b>Greeter</b>	Pete & Missy Maxson	<b>YOU?</b>	Denny & Diana Coates	Valerie & Perry Cole
<b>Ushers</b>	Pete & Missy Maxson	<b>YOU?</b>	Denny & Diana Coates	Valerie & Perry Cole
<b>Acolyte</b>	Pete Maxson	<b>YOU?</b>	<b>YOU?</b>	<b>YOU?</b>
<b>Reader</b>	Kaitlyn Ault	Ric Hart	Many	Kathleen Sallee
<b>Comm. Prep.</b>	Charlie Brown	~ ~ ~	Jasmine Ray-Symms	Kathleen Sallee
<b>Serve Comm.</b>	Joel & JoLynn Garrison	~ ~ ~	Charlie Brown	Joel & JoLynn Garrison
<b>Coffee Hour</b>	Missy Maxson	~ ~ ~	Jill Sumpter	<b>YOU?</b>
<b>Altar Flowers</b>	Altar Team	Altar Team	Altar Team	Altar Team
<b>Soundboard</b>	Charlie Brown	Kathi Cooley	Charlie Brown	Kathi Cooley

**DECEMBER 2023 - MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

Happy Advent season, everyone!

Hope you are getting the most joy that you can out of the season and are looking forward to time with family and friends and making those great memories to save as we close the book on 2023!

As we come to the end of the year and anticipate joining as one church in 2024 (if we can just get through all the paperwork!!!!) I wanted to give you information on our financial situation that will be of interest to **ALL of United In Grace** as we combine our assets into one when we join together.

While it seems each month in the newsletter when I give you the recap of a previous months' income and expenses, that we are running short, it does not tell the entire picture which I think you should all be aware of all the OTHER assets that we have that keep us going strong!

As of a few days ago our bank balance was approx. \$24 K. That is money in our checking account that is there to fill in for any shortfalls that each month might bring and includes several set aside funds for grants, capital improvements on the property, program expense and help in times of shortage. Now, while it would be great to have more coming in, we know in these economic hard times that everyone is supporting the church and its missions as best that it can and that is appreciated. God has seen this church through many hard times and always provided for us when we have needed it – we remain faithful that this will continue as we go forward in that faith to a new day as United In Grace!

Here is the latest treasurers report and it shows more income than expenses for the month, but that is due to the \$4900 back for Payroll Protection Loan that was not forgiven by the Gov that MUMC had to previously pay back, but was finally forgiven and repaid to us. We are still running short overall for the year.

**October 31, 2023 Month YTD**

TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$ 9,764.87	\$ 59,318.95
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	\$ 6,721.14	\$ 77,888.48

Now, to a little more peace of mind for any of those who might doubt that we haven't the financial ability to continue, here's a little something that has been sitting in the church's Christmas stocking that I want you to be aware of – our investments. These are funds that are sitting in our investments accounts (managed by the UM Conference - recommended investments firm), but for our use. This is in addition to our bank account balance.

**Cash reserve loan fund - Current Balance: \$17,578.81 funds we can "loan " to ourselves if needed for general expense**

**Pastoral housing Current Balance: \$13,164.84 should we ever have to provide pastoral housing again**

**Endowment fund - Current Balance: \$53,038.52 previous bequests for specific things – will look at as UIG**

**Handicap access Current Balance: \$33,649.78 to be used specifically for this purpose**

**Capital improvements - Current Balance: \$88,350.37 - to be used for repair and maintenance of the property**


As you can see, we will have a strong financial foundation coming in to this new church, along with what MSLC will bring, as we combine (see how much stronger we are together ??), and as long as we all work together to keep it that way, United in Grace will continue to be a church of people who gather together in strength and joy and hope to bring the love of our God out into a needy world in any way possible.


May the light of this blessed season shine within you all, on Christmas and every day to follow.

See you in church,

Nancy

<u>2023 MUMC LAY LEADERSHIP</u>	
Board of Trustees Chairman	<b>Ric Hart</b> 360-794-7772
Treasurer	<b>Tanya Hubbard</b> 360-793-8959
Financial Secretary	<b>Nancy Franke</b> 360-794-6954
Staff-Parish Relations Committee	<b>Nancy Franke—temporary</b>
Membership Secretary	<b>Kathi Cooley</b> 425-293-8694
Lay Leader to Annual Conference	<b>Jasmine Ray-Symms</b> 425-223-9866
UWF President	<b>Jasmine Ray-Symms</b> 425-223-9866
Recording Secretary	vacant

 Morning Star Lutheran Church

 Monroe United Methodist Church  
412 South Lewis Street  
Monroe, WA 98272-4149



**December 17: FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT** ~ Scripture: *Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38*

**December 31: LESSONS & CAROLS** ~ Scripture: *Genesis 1:1-5, 14-18; Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:26-35, 38; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:8-20; Matthew 2:1-11; John 1:1-14*

## **CONTACT US:**

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**Live streamer/editor:** Bryce Cooley

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**10:00 SUNDAY MORNINGS IN-PERSON  
AND LIVE STREAMED**



**[unitedingrace.org](http://unitedingrace.org)**