

GROWING IN

Grace

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**March 2024**

Dear beloved Siblings in Christ,

***Let us continue together on our Lenten Journey to Easter Sunday***

Our Lenten journey began on Ash Wednesday, February 14<sup>th</sup>, and on March 3<sup>rd</sup> we will be three Sundays into our 40 day journey with Jesus to his death hanging on a cross, on Good Friday, March 29<sup>th</sup>. We will arrive on the third day of his death, Easter Sunday, to find that Jesus has risen, and in his resurrection, death has been conquered for all eternity and Love has not just come but won over hatred with love, grace and mercy, and kindness.

Rev Mark Galang, Puget Sound District Superintendent wrote the following words in his newsletter article this month;

*I would like to believe that Lent is not just a season but is a process. It is a process that prepares us to celebrate the gift of Life and Resurrection in God, which is at the center of our faith tradition. It is a season and a process of spiritual preparation that leads to living life more fully and more abundantly!*

*I know that preparation is never quite as much fun as the celebration, but let us not forget that it takes a lot of good preparation to make the best celebration possible!*

*So again, I urge you, let us find times and ways to do this important work of spiritual preparation so that in the process we can truly be ready to celebrate life.*

*Yes, celebrate life in all its fullness as God intended it to be!*

Alan Roxburgh and Mark Lou Branson write in their new book: "Leadership, God's Agency & Disruptions"

*We need to discern what it means to be God's people at this moment when our social worlds unravel and the church seems increasingly irrelevant to the crisis. The discernment we need is not in some 'future' or 'tomorrow' church but in the grounded reality of our present.*

*This is about a journey.*

I invite you into a journey of reflection and a deeper relationship with God. Let us walk with Jesus to the cross, His death and the Resurrection of Life, Love, Grace, and Freedom on Easter morning.

If you are yet to begin this journey in the season of Lent, you might begin by finding a place where you can sit quietly and comfortably with minimal to no interruptions and perhaps light a candle and have some quiet music playing. Take a moment or two, don't rush it, to breathe deeply in and out, being aware of your breathe and then taking a moment to settle into prayer and begin the process of becoming aware of the presence of God in your midst.

Below are some ways that you might find helpful as you settle in on your journey by prayerfully asking and deeply listening to and for God's presence in this time:

- ◇ **How has this week been for you? As you cast your mind over it, notice what comes to the surface naturally.**
- ◇ **Where did you feel consoled? At peace? Hopeful?**
- ◇ **Where did you feel tensions arising? Where did you struggle to feel at peace?**
- ◇ **Looking at the week ahead, what would you like to ask God for to help you through it?**
- ◇ **Take a moment to talk to God now, as one friend speaks to another, and listen for the thin and gentle whisper for God's voice speaking to you, God's beloved with whom God is well pleased.**

Blessings on your journey of reflection, listening, and deepening your relationship with God during these 40 Days of Lent.

*Pr Malcolm*



### PALM SUNDAY

*The Passion of Our Lord according to Mark*

**MARCH 24 - 10:00 AM**

Potluck Brunch after the service

### GOOD FRIDAY

*A Service of Tenebrae*

**MARCH 29 - 7:00 PM**

### EASTER SUNDAY CELEBRATION

*He Is Risen Indeed!*

**MARCH 31 - 10:00 AM**



Help us decorate the cross for Easter Sunday and enjoy your Easter flowers all spring long! Velma Smith and Jodi Fowler are once again decorating the cross for the Easter Sunday service and are asking for our help — bring **potted flowers IN BLOOM** to sit around the foot of the cross.

You can purchase the flowers or plant your own in any appropriate waterproof container and then take it with you at the end of the Easter Service to enjoy in your own yard to remind you of the beauty and meaning of the Resurrection for months to come!

Please bring your flower pots to the office porch anytime before noon on Saturday, March 30<sup>th</sup> when the decorating will be done. Let's fill the altar area around the cross with the beauty of God's gifts of spring!



Dear Beloved United in Grace family and friends,

Thank You from the depth of my heart for your well wishes, prayers, cards and for stepping in to take care of my worship and other duties needed in my absence as I continue to heal from surgery to re-attach the retina in my right eye. I look forward to being back with you in church sooner than later and miss you all.

With love, grace, and blessings,

Pr Malcolm



**Books, TV & Movies!**

**March 19 - 6:30pm**

Host - Allene Zanger

Come for great discussion, food, and drinks at this month's BTM. You'll find Allene's address in the directory or you can call her at 703-298-6825.

**The 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.

**MARCH SUNDAY MORNING MINISTRY SCHEDULE**

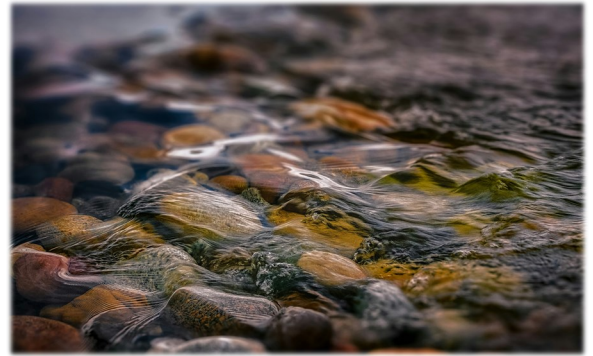
*Thank you for serving. You are an indispensable part of the body of Christ and we thank you.*

	<b>MARCH 3 3<sup>RD</sup> LENT</b>	<b>MARCH 10 4<sup>TH</sup> LENT</b>	<b>MARCH 17 5<sup>TH</sup> LENT</b>	<b>MARCH 24 PALM SUNDAY</b>	<b>MARCH 31 EASTER</b>
<b>Worship Asst.</b>	Missy Maxson				Nancy Franke
<b>Greeters</b>	Pat Holtz	Perry & Valerie Cole	Denny & Diana Coates	Alān Masta	Pat Holtz
<b>Ushers</b>	Joel & JoLynn Garrison	Perry & Valerie Cole	Denny & Diana Coates		
<b>Acolyte</b>	Ric Hart	Val Cole		Ben Ault	Ric Hart
<b>Reader</b>	Alān Masta	Missy Maxson	Alān Masta	Kaitlyn Ault	Missy Maxson
<b>Comm. Prep.</b>	JoLynn Garrison		JoLynn Garrison	Harriet Barr	
<b>Serve Comm.</b>	Velma Smith	Joel & JoLynn Garrison	Joel & JoLynn Garrison	John & Tanya Hubbard	
<b>Coffee Hour</b>	Kathleen Sallee	Missy Maxson			No Coffee Hour
<b>Altar Flowers</b>	Jill Sumpter				
<b>Soundboard</b>	Kathi Cooley	Charlie Brown	Kathi Cooley	Charlie Brown	Kathi Cooley



**The Five Senses**

I attended the recent Grace in the Wild. If you're not familiar with it, Grace in the Wild is an opportunity to move outside the sanctuary to experience God in nature. The theme for the February session was "Listening". As I walked along the river and through the woods, I discovered that not only did I become more in tune with the sounds of nature, my other senses became more active as well. I found I loved this opportunity to tune into the world around me and use all five of my senses.



**Hearing** As I opened my ears to listen to the sounds of nature, the first sounds I heard was the sound of traffic on the road. As I listened to the traffic driving across the bridge over the river, I noticed the sound of a car passing by was different than the big trucks. As they moved from the rattle of the bridge to the smooth street or passing in and out of puddles, I realized, a single type of sound held a myriad of differences. I began to focus my hearing on other sounds: the birds chirping and trilling, sometimes almost a conversation, the river flowing by, the sound of the rapids in the stream contrasted with the stronger rush of the river.

**Touch** The sensation of my footsteps on the ground varied depending on if I was sinking into the sand or clattering over the rocks. At times the trail was hardpacked, so my step was sure, but I had to walk carefully over the rocks. I reached down to feel the sensation of the soft sand and the river worn rocks. I could feel a few raindrops starting to fall and pulled my hood up over my ears.

**Sight** I saw the beauty of God's creation. The trees, some covered in moss, some still with leaves, others bare. I watched the stream that led to the river where a dog off leash splashed in the water, pausing occasionally to shake off the water on his back. I saw the sand mixed with pebbles mixed with rocks. Driftwood washed ashore on the beach. I could see seaweed and new sprouts of grass and buds on bushes. The busyness of life. Signs of new growth.

**Taste** I found even my taste was heightened as I drank my juice. The sensory awareness increased my enjoyment from a single sip.

**Smell** As with my other senses I strove to put words to my sense of smell. The sweet smell of moss with the more pungent smell of seaweed. The damp earth with its own scent.

When I started my walk, I asked God to speak to me. I could almost hear Him laughing as I realized He was speaking to me using the five senses He provided. It was such a blessing to spend time with God in His wondrous creation.

Jasmine Ray-Symms

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

Photo by [Robert Zunikoff](#) on [Unsplash](#)

**March Birthdays**

3	William Gray	16	Lori Bulis
5	Emily Brown	22	Michele Cooper
13	Harriet Barr	26	Tristan Brown
15	Madelyn Cook	27	Markus Gray
15	Powell Phillips	29	Kari Gray

**MENTAL  
ILLNESS  
AND THE  
CHURCH**

MARCH 19, 2024  
6:00PM ON ZOOM

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO  
REGISTER CONTACT JASMINE



In this course we will discuss the prevalence and experience of those diagnosed with mental illness, the stigma attached, and ways to minister to this misunderstood population.

**WORSHIP ATTENDANCE FEBRUARY 2024**

 In Person: 39   Online Views: 19   

<http://tinyurl.com/ye26jkxn>



From **The Spirit** is a publication of the Northwest Washington Synod of the ELCA.

During the cold snap in January, I realized that the hummingbird food had frozen again. I went outside to replace it and noticed a hummingbird just sitting, seemingly frozen, perched on one of the little prongs or the feeder. Now, usually the hummingbirds I feed are fierce. They swirl around my head demanding new syrup and for me to move out of their way. They exert a force that, if bigger, would be scary. But this one did nothing as I moved closer.

I stood there. Not sure what to do. Do I shoot it away? Do I simply hope it moves when I reach out? Do I come back later hoping this bird is still alive?

As in most things we do these days, I decided to research online. According to the website *Science*, hummingbirds may appear “frozen” on a feeder, but they're using torpor to conserve energy. This article urges one to not disturb them as this is a natural behavior and allows them to save their energy.

With this, I decided to wait until the hummingbird flew off before replacing the feeder with fresh syrup (which happened about a half hour later).

So why tell you this small story of hummingbirds and me? I think there is some overlap between energy and torpor and what this all might mean for us as church together.

While not a perfect analogy, sometimes we can act like hummingbirds swirling and swooping, using lots of energy to do things. Sometimes we think that if we aren't doing activities, or if other people aren't doing activities, then we are failing as a church. It reminds me of a pastor saying to me at an event for Rostered Ministers, “Bishop, I feel that I have to attend everything that is planned. But, may I ask, is everything planned necessary?”

Perhaps we use energy up when it is not necessary.

Perhaps, like the hummingbird, we also need a time of torpor. Perhaps we need a “time out” time or a reflection time or a meditative time or just a time to inhale and exhale without worrying about the next event or program or activity. As theologian Richard Rohr puts it when describing centering prayer, “Prayer is simply sitting in silence, open to God's love and your love for God. This prayer is beyond thoughts, emotions, or sensations.”

Dear Beloveds in Christ, Lent is here. As we plan and attend the meaningful worship and fellowship that we all love during the season of Lent, I pray that in worship and in other ways you can find the space and openness to embrace the wonder of the Spirit.

For we can learn from hummingbirds – not that we are to eat one and a half to three times our body weight every day like a hummingbird – but instead, we are called to have a flow between busyness and stillness, action and reflection, hustling and torpor, acts and prayer.

I pray that as we follow Jesus, as we live in Jesus' love, as we contemplate his words and actions, we may do the same.

*In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.*  
Mark 1:35

• *Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee*  
[bishop@lutheransnw.org](mailto:bishop@lutheransnw.org)



From the **Spirit of the Puget Sound Newsletter**  
**Welcome to Lent!**

I have to say that it feels a little weird for me to say these words. Being born and raised in the Philippines, I never thought of Lent as a welcoming experience. Growing up, I was taught that the focus of this season was all on self-denial and sacrifice or on always “giving something up”.

The self-denial and sacrifice that I witnessed when I was young would range from abstaining from eating pork every Friday to actual self-flagellations and crucifixions on Maundy Thursdays and Good Fridays. I did not fully understand why they needed to hurt themselves, but I guess I justified it in my head at the time that they were doing these because of their devotion to God.

But now I would like to think that there is more to Lent than this. I would like to believe that Lent is not just a season but is a process. It is a process that prepares us to celebrate the gift of Life and Resurrection in God, which is at the center of our faith tradition. It is a season and a process of spiritual preparation that leads to living life more fully and more abundantly!

I know that preparation is never quite as much fun as the celebration, but let us not forget that it takes a lot of good preparation to make the best celebration possible!

So again, I urge you, let us find times and ways to do this important work of spiritual preparation so that in the process we can truly be ready to celebrate life.

Yes, celebrate life in all its fullness as God intended it to be!

Again, WELCOME TO LENT!

Your fellow disciple,

Mark

Rev. J. Mark Galang  
Puget Sound District Superintendent; [psds@pnwumc.org](mailto:psds@pnwumc.org); 206-802-5871

**MARCH - MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

Hi all and Happy March!

As our Blending Committee continues its work in developing the constitution for United in Grace, and a new financial plan was voted on and approved by the combined congregation, I wanted to let you all know about another annual cost will impact that MUMC treasury and that is our Annual Apportionments Notice from the conference for 2024.

Most Methodist congregations are aware of what apportionments are and what they used for. As the Financial Secretary of MUMC apportionments are paid every month to our Methodist conference and have been an accepted and anticipated annual church budget expense. Since we are going to be combining into United and Grace, apportionments will be something that we will have to discuss as a combined church, and determine how to handle fairly and equitably, when we are half of a church with the denomination like the ELCA, who supports the Lutheran Synod in a different manner other than by apportionments, I thought it important to make this annual request better understood for everyone in advance.

So what are apportionments? Here are the basics:

All Local Methodist congregations are requested to pay a specific dollar amount in apportionments, determined by their annual conference, each year. Not all methodist church do, for various reasons. The amount is influenced by both the annual conference’s budget and the congregation’s budget or membership size.

Since Wesley’s time, giving has been both local and connectional (beyond each local church), and was understood as a corporate or community responsibility that allowed every member of whatever means to participate. This joint stewardship has always been a priority in the Methodist church. Apportionments are a way for local congregations to pool a portion of the money they collect into a fund used to accomplish tasks that are either beyond the capacity of individual congregations or can be done more effectively together. These funds support joint ministries, such as running seminaries or developing resources on preventing harassment and abuse. Apportionments are sometimes referred to as “church taxes,” drawing an analogy to how governments collect money from individuals to produce goods and services for the benefit of all.

What do our church apportionments support?

- Ministerial Support and Administration including Pension and Benefits - Training, credentialing, appointing, and supervising clergy in education through the conference board of ordained ministry, the district superintendency, assisting with moving expenses for pastors changing appointments and retiring local pastors and elders. Providing pension and benefits to all eligible clergy and the needed administrative support on legal and other matters.
- The Episcopal Fund, which pays for episcopal salaries, housing, and travel costs for all bishops throughout the world. About 1/6 of general church apportionments go to the Episcopal Fund.
- General Administration Fund. This fund underwrites and finances general church activities that are administrative in nature, rather than program-related—like General Conference, the legislative branch of the church. General Council on Finance and Administration.
- Ministerial Education Fund, which supports the work of the 13 official United Methodist seminaries in the US. About 1/8 of general church apportionments go to the Ministerial Education Fund.
- The Black College Fund, which supports the work of the 11 historically black colleges and universities in the US affiliated with the UMC. About 7 percent of general church apportionments go to the Black College Fund.
- The District Administration Fund, which supports the work of the General Council on Finance and Administration and the General Commission on Archives and History, covers the costs associated with planning and holding General Conference, and covers the costs of the work of the Judicial Council. Coordinates and administers the finances of the church, receives, disburses and accounts for the church's general funds, safeguards the denomination's legal interests and rights, compiles and publishes denominational statistics and maintains the church's records. About 6 percent of general church apportionments go to the General Administration Fund.
- World Service Fund - The World Service Fund is the essential core of our global outreach ministry, underwriting Christian mission around the world. By giving to World Service we empower United Methodist evangelistic efforts, stimulate Bible study and spiritual commitment, and encourage church growth and discipleship.

What does our local church get for our apportionments payments?

Training, credentialing, appointing, and supervising clergy in education through the conference board of ordained

**2024 MUMC LAY LEADERSHIP**

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

**MARCH - MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

the district superintendency, and Ministerial Education Funds. Grants for projects that help churches reach neighbors and increase spiritual vitality. Infrastructure that ensures 100 percent of gifts to aid missions like United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), Imagine No Malaria, Love Offerings, Special Sundays and many others benefits the desired mission or ministry. Assisting seminary students during their schooling and active clergy with continuing education. Support for the PNW Conference youth, Camping and Retreat Ministries. Legal, accounting and investing help for all local churches administration, both paid and volunteer, financial support of backgrounds checks for church volunteers and employees, administration of Safe Church Policies, procuring church insurance, maintaining the church non-profit status with the IRS, providing the on-site visits of the District Superintendent as a liaison between the Bishop and the local churches, annual at all church conference and whenever needed by the local church. Print, internet, and social media that provide a contact point PNW United Methodists and anyone seeking a nearby United Methodist Church or information about the United Methodist Church in our conference, the nation, and the world.

All of services are available just for the asking, along with help and support from our local conference.

While the apportionments are a **request** of the conference, the practice is a long time tradition and some members feel a duty of the church to support the work of the district and global Methodist denomination though these apportionments. For the Monroe United Methodist has a long history and tradition of paying 100% of its apportionments back to the conference each year that it has been requested to do. The first accountability question that the DS will ask at the annual church conference is “have all of your apportionments been paid?” It is possible to request a reduction in the amount of annual apportionments requested to be paid by applying to the district conference and treasurer and stating the reasons why this is necessary. This request for reduction has been done twice to my knowledge from Monroe United Methodist in the last 20 years the second time being this year, when I have requested a reduction due to the smaller size of Methodist members that are still active in the church and to pave the way for a new policy and budget amount when we become as United in Grace.

Here are the details:

The request for Apportionments for 2024 from the conference was \$ \$940.77 per month. I requested a 50% reduction, but the conference denied the full reduction amount, granting instead a 25% reduction to \$705.61 per month. Pr. Malcolm has the final say over the amount of apportionments paid annually and supports the new amount to be paid in full monthly, until such time that United in Grace operating budget is instituted. Both Tanya and I are in full support of his decision and rational.

Some of you may wonder why the Methodist denomination uses a apportionments system and the ELCA does not, and that is because of the administrative structure: the Methodist church has a “Top Down” management structure and the ELCA has a “Bottom Up” management structure. Sound like that might need more explaining? I’ll do just that in next months newsletter when your head stops spinning from this months lesson.

Happy Lent everyone. May you find many new wonders this season!

See you in church!



*Nancy Franke*  
Financial Secretary – MUMC

**MARCH 2024 - MORNING STAR LUTHERAN CHURCH**

<b><u>2024 NON-DESIGNATED OFFERINGS AND EXPENSES</u></b>			
	<b>2024 Budget</b>	<b>December Actual</b>	<b>January Actual</b>
<b>Offerings</b>	\$ 8,917	\$25,430	\$ 6,475
<b>Expenses</b>	\$10,384	\$10,669	\$10,073
<b>Surplus/deficit</b>		\$14,761	<b>-\$ 3,598</b>

<b><u>2024 MSLC COUNCIL</u></b>	
Treasurer:	<b>Brian Johnson</b> 425-503-8352
Community Relations:	<b>Jill Sumpter</b> 360-348-7231
Worship:	<b>Kathi Cooley</b> 425-293-8694



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



**LOOKING AHEAD THIS MONTH:**

- \* **United Women in Grace Retreat**  
Saturday the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9am—2:00pm
- \* **Books, TV, & Movies**  
Tuesday the 19<sup>th</sup>, 6:30pm
- \* **Lenten Soup Suppers**  
March 6<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup>, 6:30pm
- \* **Lenten Taizé Worship**  
March 6<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup>, 7pm
- \* **Sound and Stillness**  
March 20<sup>th</sup>, 7:30pm
- \* **Good Friday Service of Tenebrae**  
March 29<sup>th</sup>, 7:00pm
- \* **Palm Sunday Worship & Potluck Brunch**  
March 30<sup>th</sup>, 10:am brunch following worship
- \* **Grace in the Wild**  
Saturday the 30<sup>th</sup>, 10:am
- \* **Easter Celebration**  
March 31, 10:am

**March 3: THIRD LENT** ~ Scripture: Exodus 20:1-17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22

**March 10: FOURTH LENT** ~ Scripture: Numbers 21:4-9; Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21

**March 17: FIFTH LENT:** Scripture: Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 5:5-10; John 12:20-33

**March 24: PALM SUNDAY** ~ Scripture: Mark 14:1--15:47

**March 31: EASTER** ~ Scripture: Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Mark 16:1-8

**CONTACT US:**

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**Office Administrator:** Kathi Cooley

**Music Director:** Jill Sumpter

**Live stream/editor:** Bryce Cooley

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

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



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