

GROWING IN *Grace*

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

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May 2021

Greetings Easter Siblings in the name of the Risen Christ,

***“Alleluia! Christ is Risen!
Christ is Risen indeed! Alleluia!
Come, Holy Spirit!
Kindle in us the fire of your love!”***

This we will proclaim on Pentecost Sunday, May 23rd. The Season of Easter culminates on the fiftieth day, Pentecost (“the fifty”) with the continued celebration of the Spirit of the resurrected Jesus poured upon us to sustain us the church to rejoice, proclaim, love and serve the world. On Pentecost Sunday many worshipers wear red recalling the red flames of the Holy Spirit.

On this second Pentecost Sunday celebrated during the pandemic, we continue to listen to God’s calling and to be open to that calling and the abundant gifts given by The Holy Spirit. It will indeed mean and require lots of risk taking and even more prayer as we listen to God’s dream for us.

The wind of the Holy Spirit both forms the church as we gather, then sends us outside the walls of the church with urgency to carry out the mission and ministry of Christ in the world. God is on a mission to love and bless the whole world and God has gifted us and called us here at Morning Star Lutheran and Monroe United Methodist Church, united by grace, to be God bearers of a loving and grace filled God for our world. We have no other mission than this one!!

Today it is far too easy to look backwards with a romantic eye and call them the ‘good old days’ or suggest that soon we will be back to ‘normal.’ In this time, we are called to be creative and entrepreneurial as we look to a new reality in our daily lives and life as Gods beloved people, the church, and our mission. The God who has been faithful through the years is faithful today and will be faithful tomorrow. Perhaps our challenge and work in this time and place will be to listen to the calling of God through the Holy Spirit and have the trust and the faith of a mustard seed.

God is a God of abundance, and so as Pentecost people we live and serve others out of this abundance, because we are Easter people first. We are people of hope and a certainty of the future because Jesus the Christ stands in the gaps of our lives. This gap is the gap of God’s grace and love, the gap that our world so desperately needs filled as they encounter God’s Easter people, *us*, in their lives. We have something the world needs!

We are indeed Easter People! And God is indeed up to something here! Will we dare to live in God’s amazing grace? Will we dare to expect God to show up in surprising and new ways?

Remember to wear Red on Pentecost Sunday- May 23rd

“He is risen indeed”

Pastor Malcolm

Thank you for your love and support!

Thank you for sending cards, emails, and text messages of well wishes after my right knee replacement surgery at the end of March. I also wish to thank each one of you for your patience, grace, understanding, support, love, encouragement and prayers during my healing and rehab process! Each day I am getting a bit more mobile and flexible and am sleeping a little longer each night with less pain.

With love and gratitude,
Pastor Malcolm



Thank you to Lutheran Campus Ministry for providing a full service on Sunday, May 2nd. The service will be ready for viewing on our [YouTube](#) channel this Sunday. Pastor Malcolm will offer a welcome and prayer before the service.



May 23, 2021

Live Worship beginning at 10:00 a.m.

Join Zoom Worship:

<https://greaternw.zoom.us/j/94839499525>

Meeting ID: 948 3949 9525

REMEMBER TO WEAR RED!

Virtual Fellowship Hour!

Stay plugged in after the service and keep connected to your church friends and family.



The Sacrament of Holy Baptism Sunday, May 9, 2021

Join us for worship and the celebration of the baptism of Mackenzie Monica Marie Gray.

The service will be pre-recorded and available to view on [YouTube](#) on May 9.



INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AND BIBLE STUDY - TUESDAYS 6:00 — 7:30 PM -

All are invited join the discussion and study on the Book of Micah. Ahmadiyya Muslim Community will be joining us as we study the Christian verses of Micah and applicable verses from the Quran.

Join Zoom Study:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86078740509>

Meeting ID: 860 7874 0509

May 4th, 11th, and 18th



Sunday Worship attendance

Average monthly views for our YouTube and Zoom services:

April: 42 March: 55
February: 49



REOPENING COMMITTEE REPORT

The reopening committee met Thursday April 22nd and subsequently Chair Margaret Peggy Ray, reported to the Methodist Church Council on Monday April 26th and to the Lutheran Church Council on Tuesday April 27th.

The desire to return to the church building is very strong. The committee has been asked to prepare a plan for a COVID safe parking lot service which could occur during Stage 2 and a plan for a COVID safe service in the church building once we are back in Stage 3. These plans will be submitted to the United Methodist District Superintendent Mark Galang. Once they have been approved, we can move forward.

The committee’s charge is very narrow. We will only determine how we can hold these worship services safely in accordance with all church and state COVID requirements. There will be a separate committee to deal with the equipment needed to carry out the services and the Worship Committee will determine how to conduct these worship services while continuing to offer on-line worship services. The reopening committee will meet next on Thursday May 6th.

***Hazel’s Little Free Pantry
Thank You!***

The Drive-Thru Food Donation was a huge success.

The pantry storage area (office kitchen) went from completely bare cupboards and empty shelves, to food and drinks overflowing into baskets and boxes on the floor and under the desk.

So many of you participated! Several people that couldn’t come on Sunday brought their donations to the office beforehand. About eight congregation members stopped by during the drive. Some brought food, others brought a monetary donation.



And thanks to the power of Facebook, we had at least 8 community members come by with food donations. A few people in particular were very generous. At one point, it took three of us 10 minutes to unload the back of a truck! Another donation consisted of twelve, 32 oz. boxes of shelf stable almond milk.

Several people stayed to talk. We heard many times how “wonderful” the pantry was, and how grateful they were that the pantry was here. One man in particular (the man that brought the milk), expressed concern that there was no other place in town where a hungry person could get food at any time, with no strings attached. There are no forms to fill out, no address needed, and most important to him and most likely those that use the pantry, no judgement.

So thank you United in Grace — Monroe United Methodist and Morning Star Lutheran. With your support, both in donations and in prayer, Hazel’s Little Free Pantry is making a difference in Monroe.

(Strange but true fact: with all the food that was donated, we did not get any individual, shelf stable milk, small boxes of cereal or cans of chili, etc. If you’d like to donate, those items would be very appreciated!)

Thank you for your loving care of Hazel’s Little Free Pantry

Thank You Jenny Schroeder for helping at the Drive Thru and for providing the idea!

Questions?
Want to help keep the pantry stocked?
Call or text Kathi Cooley: 425-293-8694





From the Spirit, May 2021

In the book *Anxious People*, the author, Fredrik Backman, crafts a humorous, poignant, and wise story of a group of people thrown together because of a bank robbery. But the bank robbery is the least interesting part of the book. The characters, who seem flighty and weird and strange or just unlikeable at the beginning of the book, change into complex humans with such rich inner lives

that you love each of them by the end of the story. This was one book that I was sad to see end because I wanted to continue with each character in their journey.

I finished this book during Holy Week. And I couldn't help but reflect on the flighty, weird, strange and unlikeable people that surrounded Jesus that we get to know in the Gospels. These men and women who leave everything to follow Jesus – and who end up leaving Jesus after his arrest – only to once again connect with Jesus after his death and resurrection – are (we must admit) flighty, weird, strange and unlikeable.

- Thomas who is skeptical throughout the Jesus story and who won't recognize Jesus until seeing his wounds.
- Mary Magdalene who can't recognize Jesus until he calls her by her name.
- The disciples locked in a room, afraid to go out, and finally just going back to fishing until Jesus shows up once again.

I mean, ask yourself:

- Would we really have wanted John the Baptist over for a barbecue?
- Would we really have accepted a woman who washed Jesus' feet as being justified when she extravagantly wasted an expensive bottle of perfume?
- Would we have embraced the woman who bled for over a decade and invited her to our book club even after she assured us that she was cured and clean?

I finished this book during Holy Week. And I couldn't help but reflect on the flighty, weird, strange and unlikeable people around me – on the news, on social media, in my neighborhood – and how I have judged them based on a very superficial understanding of who they are and what makes up their story. I call them ignorant or lazy, bigoted or uncaring, dirty or smelly or unclean in some way.

But as I continue to reflect on Backman's compelling story of seven "idiots" (as he calls them), and, as I continue to reflect on Holy Week, (even though it is now way past Holy Week), I see Jesus kneeling down and washing feet. I hear Jesus saying, "Peace be with you." I experience Jesus embracing disciples on a beach, offering them fish, and saying, "Feed my sheep." Loving and caring and forgiving – even though these humans are flighty, weird, strange and, at times, unlikeable.

None of us are Jesus. None of us can embrace the other as Jesus did. And yet, we are called, as sinners and as beloved children of God, to hear another's story. To listen. To reflect. To forgive. To ask for forgiveness. To engage. To be silent when needed and speak when necessary.

For my part, I repent. I repent for my judgment, for my verdict that I render without knowing the complexity of another's story, for my blindness to my complicity, for my withholding forgiveness in the name of self-righteousness, for my refusing to acknowledge my need for forgiveness, and for my judgment on who God loves and who God does not love (because, as I have been taught, if God only loves those I love, than I have remade God in my image).

So I ask you, dear Beloveds of NWWA Synod, with all of your stories, how may your stories be joined into the One Story? How may your hearts be open to the flighty, weird, strange, sometimes unlikeable (but always God's beloved) people that we are called to love?

What are your thoughts, feelings, explorations, attempts, experiments? I'd love to hear how you are living into God's Holy Community of love, grace, compassion, justice and peace.

As for you, you are called. By name. Embraced, loved, and cherished – in all your flighty, weird, strange, sometimes unlikeable ways. And always, always, God's beloved.

Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee



From the Greater NW Area of the United Methodist Church

Dear Siblings in Christ,

We are making progress, but we are not quite there yet. It has been over a year since the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted life as we knew it. We continue to persevere, exhausted at times, yet anticipating the day when we can gather, greet

each other, share communion and other precious rhythms of life and spiritual practice in person without risking harm to one another. Hopeful also that we now carry with us new learnings and practices, hard lessons of necessity that will continue to connect us in new ways in life and ministry.

The rapid vaccine rollout gives us hope that we can enjoy more freedom to gather as families and faith communities soon. Vaccinations coupled with continuous strict adherence to safety protocols are expected to lower infection rates, hospitalizations and COVID-19 related deaths. Overall, we have seen the number of cases decline since the winter peak in many places, but progress has been stalled by premature re-openings, the easing of restrictions in some places, resistance by some to being vaccinated and observing simple safety practices: washing hands, social distancing, wearing a mask. I hope that each of us is continuing to follow these practices, as well as being vaccinated, consistent with medical advice, as soon as we are eligible.

I was surprised by the deep joy that welled up in me when those shots went in my arm, protecting not only me but also everyone I encounter from the dangers of this virus. I'm grateful to every person who is able and willing to join this movement toward health and safety.

As Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), reminded us in a briefing earlier this year, *"We may be done with the virus, but clearly the virus is not done with us. We cannot get comfortable or give in to a false sense of security that the worst of the pandemic is behind us – not now; not when mass vaccination is so very close."*

Permissible not Necessarily Beneficial

In an article for *The Atlantic*, Dr. James Hamblin of the Yale School of Public Health points out,

"Our social lives can resume, but only when the whole community is ready. The turning point does not arrive for individuals, one by one, as soon as they've been vaccinated; it comes for all of us at once, when a population becomes immune."

With this understanding, we are advised that the number of coronavirus cases needs to decrease further before we resume regular activities, especially in light of the arrival of new fast-spreading variants of the virus. A premature reopening, even if allowed by the state, may run the risk of not just stalling but even reversing the recent progress we have already achieved.

I am reminded of Saint Paul's admonition that things that are "permissible" are not necessarily things that are "beneficial" to the common good. (I Corinthians 10:23).

While we should celebrate the good news of vaccines providing a layer of protection already for a significant number of members in

continued

some of our congregations, the church does not belong solely to those who are vaccinated. Especially as we have just now reached a time when all adults are eligible to receive a vaccine, we must continue to be patient to allow them the privilege of receiving this gift of security before we consider letting our guard down. At the same time, we will need to find ways to protect and include children in church life while continuing to wait for vaccination eligibility to be extended to them.

As the church, God calls us always to do things that are beneficial because we bear responsibility towards the well-being of others, especially the most vulnerable among us.

A Posture of Hopeful Caution

The progress we see in vaccinations, tempered by the potential threat of variants we race, leads me toward a posture of hopeful caution we are almost there but not quite there yet. Even as our hope is renewed with the increasing percentage of those vaccinated, our decisions and actions must continue to manifest the utmost concern for one another as an act of love in response to Jesus' command for us to love one another as he had loved us (John 13:34).

Accordingly, I am asking churches to remain vigilant in their planning and decision-making processes. The COVID-19 Response Team, made up of lay and clergy members from across the area, is continuing to review and amend its guidance to local churches. By May 5th, we will release updated guidelines for Phase 3, shifting more responsibility to local leaders to guide their congregation's, camp's or other ministry setting's COVID-19 response.

I am grateful for each of you and your faithfulness and commitment, especially during this long time of physical separation due to this pandemic. May the hard lessons learned as we have persevered, and new skills developed as you have adapted, empower our work together and witness to God's love which never fails us.

"Those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength." (Isaiah 40:31)

With love and grace,



Elaine JW Stanovsky
Bishop, Greater Northwest Episcopal Area



GOD'S TRUTH - GOD'S LOVE

This has been an interesting month. When I prepare to write for this newsletter or for my blog, I pray and ask God for the words to write - that they may speak to someone in need. I don't say that to sound pious or self-righteous but to grant credit where credit is due. My writing is more than just me. So, this month, like the months before it, I prayed and waited for the words to come. And I waited. And I waited. And I waited. I struggled to find the message until Sunday morning's service spoke to me. I realized I was waiting to receive words that had already been given to me. I just wasn't listening.

I struggle with mental illness. Sometimes I get so angry about it. I feel like my attempts to lead a righteous life are sabotaged. I get caught up in the struggles of life and forget about God's love. I doubt His presence in my life. I doubt the love and acceptance He offers me. I read Psalm 23 and feel jealous. Why don't I feel the way David feels? What's wrong with me?

What's wrong? I'm forgetful. I forget all that God has done for me and all He will do in my future. I forget it's not about ME and MY feelings. It's about TRUTH. The truth that God LOVES me. The truth that God DIED for me. And the truth that God ACCEPTS me as I am. Despite the world frequently telling me I'm not enough, GOD says I am. Even when I don't feel content or at peace, God's arms are around me waiting for me to relax long enough to feel his presence. It's not about me. It's never been about me. It's never been about my feelings. When we go through hard times - and we all will - I need to remember the truth of Psalm 23: 1-4:

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,
- 3 he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.
- 4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, [a] I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

God's truth. Amen.

Jasmine Ray-Symms
425-223-9866
jasisymms@outlook.com

May Birthdays and Anniversaries *

Happy Birthday and Congratulations!

1 Powel & Bobbie Phillips *	22 Doug Brender
1 Bethany Johnson	23 Chris & Kari Gray *
1 Bobbie Phillips	23 Dan Wegenast
4 Anna Wegenast	24 Rene Cook
8 Ken & Cindy Gross/ Gulbranson *	24 Wendy Fantoni
8 Joel Garrison	27 Mackenzie Gray
11 Gary Lottermann	28 Charlie Brown
15 Timothy Gray	
15 Bev Rice	
18 Teresa Jarnot	
18 Lilliya Wardell	

MAY 2021 MORNING STAR LUTHERAN CHURCH



FACILITIES POSITION

At the April 27 MSLC Council meeting, the council unanimously approved the appointment of Jay Morgan to the position of Facilities Leader.

Jay's term began immediately and in typical Jay fashion, and he hit the ground running! He's brought up ideas for improving the pantry and applying for a grant through the ELCA.

Welcome to the Council, Jay.

<u>2021 MSLC COUNCIL</u>		
Administrative Director	Missy Maxson	206-437-2535
Treasurer	Brian Johnson	452-503-8352
Community Relations	Cindy Gulbranson	425-210-2095
Facilities	Jay Morgan	425-903-1678
Secretary	Marla Wardell	360-794-4072
Ministry Director	Jill Sumpter	360-348-7231
Worship	Kathi Cooley	425-293-8694

NON-DESIGNATED OFFERINGS AND EXPENSES

	2021 Budget	February Actual	March Actual
Offerings	\$ 8,930	\$ 8,111	\$ 7,661
Expenses	\$10,163	\$ 9,294	\$ 8,927
Surplus/deficit		- \$ 1,183	- \$ 1,266

Cody and Nannette bring a little humor and lots love your way to say "HI"! These two rascals may not be "Church Business", but we could all use a smile to brighten our day.



MAY 2021 - MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The Lord has always provided for us at MUMC, but I have to thank his hands and feet in keeping our work continuing, though the doors of our actual church building are not yet open, and that is all of you who have continued your faithful giving for over a year since we had to shut our doors due to Covid.

I know that our church and our faith is important to us all, but I also know how difficult this last year has been and how resources may have dwindled for many because of Covid.

Yet you find a way to give and support and send notes of cheer and comfort and keep your worship staff still going and knowing that you are still out there and thinking of us all with your thoughts and your prayers and you giving in so many ways!

My heart is so grateful for all of you - for how you have not forgotten your church and its work and this assurance has allowed us to pass the 2021 budget at a zoom Council Meeting on April 26th with the faith that we will have the resources to cover it. If anyone would like to review this budget, feel free to email me at the church at office@monroeumconline.org and I will be happy to send you a copy.

Here are the figures from the March Treasurers Report:

\$ 6,883.94 pledges and donations
 - \$ 5,566.13 expenses

\$ 1317.80 to the good :)

One thing I wanted to pass along is that **Ken Ruskell**, long time MUMC member who died of Covid last November, left a \$1000 bequest from his estate to MUMC in his will. It was a real blessing to receive that and know that his time as a part of our congregation was as important to him as he was to us. As there was no specific request for the use of the donation, it went into the general operating account.

Another matter of interest on our church property is the planning for the repainting of the annex this summer when a week of good weather can be more assured. **Chris and Don Hoerner**, our Trustee Chairs, have secured a bid from Amsberry Painting in Monroe to do the job. It was found that one of the multiple layers of the annex paint contains lead, so this will have to be completely stripped and removed and properly disposed of, and will also give a guarantee on the quality and durability of the finished product. So the approximate \$12K price was determined to be well worth the cost by the council and the funds to pay for it will come out of the Capitol Improvements account from the Countryman Estate bequest.

Spring has sprung and things are blooming all over the church! Thanks to the efforts of our faithful caretaker, **Jerry Esqueda**, the lawns and flowerbeds are staying cut and trimmed. Thanks to **Ric Hart** who has been coming over to trim shrubs and branches as needed. Your generosity of your time and talent is so very much appreciated.

Chris mentioned at our meeting that the Prayer Garden is in need of some attention to keep from being overgrown. With Don still laid up in rehab recovering from his hip and shoulder surgeries, it will be some time before they will be able to get over to do any maintenance in the Prayer Garden. So if there are any volunteers from either MUMC or MSLC who would like to spend some time in quiet contemplation and solitude while you do a bit of weeding or pruning, please feel free!

Bring a snack and Eat – Pray – WEED!! :)

Thanks to you all and everyone continue to be safe and healthy!

Nancy Franke

Financial Secretary

<u>2021 MUMC LAY LEADERSHIP</u>		
Board of Trustees Co-Chairs	Chris & Don Hoerner	360-563-9309
Finance Chair	Mike Obright	206-369-5028
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



Morning Star Lutheran Church



Monroe United Methodist Church

412 South Lewis Street

Monroe, WA 98272-4149

May 2021



May 2: 5th EASTER ~ Online worship provided by Lutheran Campus Ministry ~ Scripture: 1 John 4:13-21; John 15:1-8
May 9: 6th EASTER ~ Online worship with Holy Communion ~ Scripture: Acts 10:44-48; 1 John 5:1-6; John 15:9-17
Service will include the Baptism of Mackenzie Monica Marie Gray
May 16: The Ascension of Our Lord ~ Online worship ~ Scripture: Psalm 1; 1 John 5:9-13; John 17:6-19
May 23: PENTECOST SUNDAY ~ Live Worship with Holy Communion ~ Scripture: Acts 2:1-21; Romans 8:22-27; John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15
May 30: THE HOLY TRINITY ~ Online worship ~ Scripture: Romans 8:12-17; John 3:1-17

CONTACT US:

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

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MORNING STAR LUTHERAN

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Music Director: Jill Sumpter: 360-348-7231

Website: 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

