

GROWING IN *Grace*

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

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December 2020



CHRIST, Be Your LIGHT, Our LIGHT

Happy New Year! It may seem that I am a bit early, however the last Sunday of the church year was November 21st, Christ the King Sunday. The first Sunday of the church year is the first Sunday of Advent, November 28th. The time of Advent is a threshold, a gateway, a bridge.

On this second pandemic season of Advent, I am finding it very difficult to wait. Are you as well? For me, this time it's an opportunity to *relearn* how to wait, to remember, and appreciate the future in an unhurried way of being. As Advent has begun, I find myself seeking to stay in the present of each and every moment, of each and every day, and to find meaning in the waiting.

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 blurring of future; present and past. We await the coming of God through the Son, Jesus the Christ. 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.

Who was, who is, and who is to come. Advent is a time for 'break-ins': breaking into the future, through the past, and into the present here and now. **Yes**, right here in Monroe in the year 2021! This in-breaking of God is about God coming to us and breaking into our lives to say "I love you", through the birth of this little one. **Advent does not mean wishing; Advent means coming, the coming presence of God!** Past is **present!** The hope that fills Advent is not for a maybe—perhaps—not—yet event. The future is **now!** Who was, who is, who is to come on Christmas morning.

This Advent, even as the world begins to open up in new ways, we continue to seek out God's vision and future **for us**, and for our broken world, and to live into this powerful and present reality. This Advent, like last years, is also different than any other Advent we have ever experienced and comes with many new opportunities to create new traditions as we wait! We may be wishing for the old ways of being church, that is, the people of God in and for our world. We may be wishing to all be together again during Advent and on Christmas Eve. We may be wishing and longing for Advents and Christmas's of the past. We are living in a time that is longing for the love and hope of Christmas when and where a 'Baby Changes Everything'.

In your waiting, 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

IN - PERSON WORSHIP INFORMATION

MSLC and MUMC began in-person worship on November 7th. It has been wonderful to actually see each other in person. Even though we can't hug or touch each other, we can see the huge smiles at just being in each other's presence. Attendance has been about equal between Lutherans and Methodists. Thus far we have not been completely full, so we have been able to seat the one or two households who have come without reservations. It's become clear that several of you are having difficulty navigating the reservation system. If that is true for you, just call or email my daughter, Jasmine Ray-Symms (425-223-9866, jasisymms@outlook.com). She will be glad to sign you up.

This past week, the United Methodist Bishop sent updated instructions on Covid. We will still have to wear masks and seat six feet apart. There will still be no congregational singing unless we have proof that EVERYONE is vaccinated. However, we can have a small ensemble of singers (if all are vaccinated) as well as the wonderful trumpet music Jay Morgan provided November 21st.

I still greet everyone from just inside the side portico door and take their temperature. Because of the cold weather, temperatures have been running a little low, and no one has been above normal temperature. We'll be saving a lot of paper in the coming weeks because we've decided to stop asking attendees to sign the attestation form and simply give a verbal affirmation. I send each household up to wait at the top of the stairs until one of the two ushers comes to seat them according to the seating chart. You still will not be able to select your own seat.

We greet each other by waving. We can hear everyone speaking the prayers and prayer and communion responses. I was surprised by how much it meant to hear everyone instead of just saying them myself at home. We end each service with a lively song that we can use the shakers to accent the rhythm which sends us out on a high note.

During Advent, we will have communion every other Sunday and will be lighting the Advent wreath candles, using the United Methodist candle lighting liturgy. Our hope is that the services will integrate Lutheran and Methodist elements in a way that makes everyone feel comfortably at home.

Margaret Peggy Ray

***We now have several options for worship with MUMC and MSLC***

You can join us **In-Person** at 10:00am on Sunday's. Pre-register online at: unitedingrace.com

You can watch the **Livestreamed** service at 10:00 on Sunday's on YouTube: [YouTube](#)

You can watch the **Edited** service after 5:00 pm on Sunday's, also on YouTube.

You can also find a link to both versions on both churches **Facebook** pages.



From the Spirit, December 2021

From the Bishop:

Miriam sings, “*Sing to the Lord, for God has triumphed gloriously!*”
Exodus 15:21

Hannah sings, “*My heart exults in the LORD; my strength is exalted in my God!*” 1 Samuel 2:1

Mary sings, “*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!*” Luke 1:46

I am so grateful for the stories of Miriam, Hannah, and Mary. I love their spirit. I love their faith. I love their songs. I love that even with the great adversity, sorrow, and difficulty each of them endured, Miriam, Hannah, and Mary defiantly sang.

Each of these women’s stories unfolded in a world that seemed bleak. A world of systemic injustice and no safety nets. A world where people upheld their own power to the detriment of others. A world where people refused to see another person made in God’s image before them. A world where people threw away people because they were perceived as “less than.” A world where people threw away people because they could not bear children. A world where people threw away people because they became pregnant without being married.

And while their experiences are not our experiences, for many still today, the world feels desperate.

Today, so many people are living in dire conditions. So many who are hungry, houseless, voiceless. We have injustice and violence, racism and hatred. We have anger and acrimony. We have the spreading of lies and misinformation. As I write this, our world is grieving the deaths of over 5 million people who have died of COVID. Over 100,000 people died of drug overdoses in the United States this past year. And so many other deaths and losses. There are still people that society throws away. There are still people that other people don’t even look at as human.

And yet ... And yet ...

We have Miriam, Hannah, and Mary. We have their defiant voices lifted up singing not only to their world in their time – but beyond their time – to us – and to future generations beyond us.

In this Advent time, let us turn to the stories and the songs of Miriam, Hannah, and Mary. Let us remember their prophetic voices. Let us remember their perseverance, their faith, and their grit. For even as the reality around them was difficult, they continued to sing of a new day, a new promise, a new reality.

May these amazing prophet women bring hope to us in this time. May we remember that new life is coming.

May we trust that the world now is not how the world will be. May we hold before us that, through Christ, a new day is being born.

In this Advent time, we live in anticipation and in faith. And we sing. We sing.

*People of Israel, you heard the prophet tell:
“A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel”;
She conceived him, “God with us,” our brother,
whose birth
Restores hope and courage to children of this earth.
ELW #266, All Earth is Hopeful vs. 3*

In Advent Hope,

Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee
bishop@lutheransnw.org

There is no message from Bishop Stanovsky this month.

From Resource UMC:

**Neighboring Community Celebrated in
National Advent Advertising Campaign**



A national advertising campaign that will be seen in Times Square in New York and markets including Atlanta, Dallas and Indianapolis is designed to offer a voice of positivity and hope to people battling the holiday blues. The Advent-Neighbors campaign will drive people to two websites, UMC.org/Joy and UMC.org/JoyEnFamilia, to find resources to connect with the United Methodist community.

*CHRIST, is your LIGHT of Hope and Peace.
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 thoughtful, caring, encouraging, and loving hearts. I love and appreciate all of you so very much.

Grace, peace, blessings, and joy,

Pastor Malcolm

It's Christmastime!!!

I love the holidays. I love the decorations, the cooking, and the excuses to go shopping, but sometimes, in all the busyness, I forget "the reason for the season". I get so wrapped up in getting gifts for my friends and family I forget that the whole season is about the gift for ME! The first – and best – Christmas Present was that little baby born in the manger, GOD, incarnate. The miracle of Jesus' birth was God's gift to us. Not "stuff" under the tree but the Messiah come to earth. It's easy to focus on the climax of Jesus' death on the Cross but we can't neglect the beginning, Jesus, God's only son, came to earth.



As we get wrapped up in parties and Ugly Sweaters, let's all say, "Thank you" for all the bountiful gifts we've received, and not just those with a price tag attached. Let our gifts for others be seen in the light of humility, knowing it doesn't matter how much we spent on the toy so deeply longed for, and so quickly put aside, the real gift is Jesus. It is this gift we should be sharing. The real story is God's love for humanity, the real purpose is a grand celebration of what is to come: eternal life in the presence of God. Merry Christmas to all!

Luke 2:11 "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."

Jasmine Ray-Symms
www.jasmineraysymms.com

**** VACCINATIONS ****

Although we are asking if you have been vaccinated when you make your reservations for in person worship, at this time, there is no requirement to be vaccinated.

We have discovered that, so far, everyone who has attended was fully vaccinated. The idea of requiring vaccinations is something we are discussing and we would like your input. If you have any thoughts, concerns, or questions, please speak to any member of church leadership.



**NOVEMBER WORSHIP
ATTENDANCE**



In Person Services: 22

YouTube Live and Edited views: 27

These numbers are an average of four weeks and represent both congregations.

DECEMBER GUEST PREACHER

The sermon on December 5 will be offered by Pastor Herb Shao. Pr. Herb comes to us from the NWWA ELCA Synod as a means of support for congregations in the Pacific Northwest. Pastor Malcolm will remain the presiding minister for the service.



**The Monroe United Methodist Women's Group
is taking orders for Christmas Wreaths!**



While we will not be having a holiday bazaar this season and will hold a rummage sale / craft sale in the spring, we ARE taking orders for Christmas wreaths that Jodi and Velma will be making.

Prices are as follows :

- 8" - \$15 10" - \$17.50 12" - \$20 14" - \$22.50
- 16" - \$25 Candy cane shape - \$25

Your choice of bow and decoration color. You can email your order to Nancy at: nfranke@comcast.net or text her at 425-345-6954.

Please get your order in ASAP so that we can get them to you for the holiday season. All proceeds go to support Women and Children's missions both locally and internationally. Thanks for your support!

PRAYER WALL

Share what's on your heart:

- Prayer Concerns
- Celebrations
- Encouragements



If you've been in the building recently you've probably noticed a table top chicken wire board with white papers next to it. This is our Prayer Wall.

Please take a paper from the basket to write down your prayers. Unless a note is written to keep it private, we will include these prayers during the service and share them with our prayer chain.

HAZEL'S LITTLE FREE PANTRY

Thank you for the many pairs of socks you gave during TOEveember. Your generosity is a blessing to many.

The Little Free Pantry is in need of individual, shelf stable milk and protein drinks. Warm clothing (hats, gloves, etc.) are appreciated as well.



**Join the Women of
Monroe United Methodist
Church**

on Saturday, December 18th, 10:30 am for the regular monthly meeting.

The Zoom login and more information are found on our website: UnitedinGrace.org

Prayer Request for Smolensk

MSLC church partner in Smolensk, Russia has had their request for the return of their church building to the congregation denied AGAIN!

Please pray for the congregation to not give up hope and to continue in their requests and prayers.

December Birthdays and Anniversaries *

- 4 JoLynn Garrison
- 4 Pastor Malcolm
- 12 Rhonda Morgan
- 16 Bill & Monique Coburn *
- 18 Pastor Malcolm & Charlie Brown *
- 22 Nancy Franke
- 24 Marla Wardell
- 30 Abby Coburn

DECEMBER 2021 MORNING STAR LUTHERAN CHURCH

ADMINISTRATIVE CONGREGATION MEETING

DECEMBER 12, 2021 @ 11:00 AM

We are electing our 2022 Council, the Nominating Committee, and the 2022 Synod Representatives, as well as voting on the proposed 2022 Budget.

The meeting will be held **IN PERSON** immediately after worship **AND** on **ZOOM**. The Zoom log-in is: <https://greaternw.zoom.us/j/98343470086>. You must be present at either forum to be eligible to vote.

Please see the note below from the MSLC Administrative Director:

Ministry Director Needed

At our Congregation Meeting on December 12, we will be voting on two open council positions: **Ministry Director** and **Communications**. Jill Sumpter has agreed to stay on council, but will move into the Communications position which will require a congregational vote.

Unfortunately, at this time we have not found a Ministry Director. This is an important position that should not remain vacant. This person serves as the Vice President of the congregation and manages all ministry activities. This does not mean they organize, plan, and implement all ministry activities. It means they are the *council liaison* for these important activities.

I ask each of you to prayerfully consider whether God is calling you to this position. If you have any questions, please contact Missy Maxson or Jill Sumpter (current Ministry Director)

A Word from our Treasurer

After becoming treasurer in January, I have learned a lot of what it takes to run a non-profit organization. Morning Star is not only struggling with the loss of membership found in all religious organizations, we are dealing with the worldwide pandemic that has hit especially hard. In 2020, we were able to get a grant from the U.S. Government of about \$15K, but in 2021 that is not available to us. We are running a deficit budget, which means that when we approved the 2021 budget, we knew that our spending was going to be more than our income. We are hoping that December will help us get close to our budget amount but our checking account balance has gone down. We have trimmed our budget in many places.

For 2022, the council agreed to another deficit budget. Spending in 2021 was down for things associated with worship, but we spent more on technology. We found that we couldn't continue to use council members to create our online service so we hired Bryce Cooley to do that for us. The Methodists agreed to cover half his costs and half of Jill's cost, so the net effect is that we are spending about the same amount.

In the upcoming Congregational meeting we will be approving our budget for 2022.

As we move into 2022 and re-start in person services, please consider what you would like the role of Morning Star to be for you. We are all in this together.

Yours in Christ,
 Brian Johnson
 MSLC Treasurer

<u>NON-DESIGNATED OFFERINGS AND EXPENSES</u>			
	2021 Budget	September Actual	October Actual
Offerings	\$ 8,930	\$ 9,648	\$ 8,906
Expenses	\$10,163	\$ 9,683	\$10,528
Surplus/deficit		-\$ 40	-\$ 1,622

<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

DECEMBER 2021 MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Church Business

Happy Advent everyone!

Hard to believe this year is coming to a close, but grateful in so many ways that it is. Its been a year of reminding challenges with Covid and the economy, but we do still see some improvements on many fronts. Thanks be to God!

We started off the month with our Annual Church Conference with our DS , Pr. Mark Galang via Zoom meeting again this year. We were in compliance with most all things asked – we paid 100% of our apportionments again this year, have an audit of our books for 2020 being completed and our fire insurance is paid up to date and we will be in compliance with required annual background checks soon. Most of our current committee chair people are staying on for another year (thank you all), with the exception of Chris and Don Hoerner who are stepping down as Trustee Co-Chairs, and Mile Obright who is stepping down as Financial Chairman. We thank them all for their many years of dedicated service to these committees. Our board elected Ric Hart to serve as the new Trustee Chairman, (thanks for stepping up, Ric) and the financial Chairman position remains open. If you are interested in serving as the Financial Chairman, please let me know. We really DO need someone to fill that spot and join Tanya Hubbard and I, as Treasurer and Financial Secretary, to oversee the church finances and make decisions for its use. Your church needs YOU !

We also got the continued “blessing “ of Pr. Mark and our conference to continue to explore the combining of our two churches formally into one as United In Grace. There are several in our area that have done the same thing and can provide helpful information and be a model for us going forward if we wish to contact them. Since this plan has been on the back burner for a while, I hope the same people who agreed to join and look into this when we first talked about will still participate and new people will join as well. We need a combined committee from both churches to help us go forward. Please send me an email or send one to the church with your comments or to be on the committee so we can get continue on this important step forward for both of our congregations!

Another new mission is in the works as well – the parsonage garage is being cleaned out and made ready as a possible location for a clothing bank! We were approached by a community organizer who is all set to go with this mission and just need a location, so new Trustee Chair, Ric, has been working with Jay Morgan, our trustee board members from MSLC to clean out the space and make it useable. It’s an exciting opportunity for us to use the resources that God has provided (especially ones that are just sitting there unused and full of junk that nobody knew where to put over the years), and to help others in need. We can always use the clean out help as well, so if you are contacted to help with the clean out, or have knowledge of any of the items stored and a possible use, I hope you will help. Much of that stuff in the garage has been around a LONG time!

An update in another project – all of the bark has been spread in the prayer garden and it is looking pretty good! Hopefully by next spring, this will have once again been turned into a place of peace and meditation for those who come to sit. More work to be done, but our thanks and blessings to all who helped get it to this point, especially Peggy Ray, Ric Hart, Jay Morgan and especially Jerry Esqueda, who is always ready to help !

WHEW! Lots to say this month! I don't have the financial figures for October just yet, but the doors are still open and the lights are still on, so thanks to all who have been supporting MUMC with your gifts of time, money and prayers – its working and we could not do it without you, so thank you, thank you!

Just an FYI as well, your giving statements for 2021 will be out in the mail to you I mid -January. If you need it sooner or don’t receive it, please let me know.

Now, on to Advent and we prepare our hearts and minds to celebrate this birth of Jesus by remembering the words of John Wesley:


Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.

Blessing to you all!

Nancy

2021 MUMC LAY LEADERSHIP

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

December



December 5: SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT with Holy Communion - Scripture: [Philippians 1:3-11](#); [Luke 3:1-6](#)

December 12: Third Sunday of Advent - Scripture: [Isaiah 12:2-6](#); [Philippians 4:4-7](#); [Luke 3:7-18](#)

December 19: FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT WITH HOLY COMMUNION - Scripture: [Hebrews 10:5-10](#); [Luke 1:39-55](#)

December 26: THE FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS - Scripture: [Luke 2:41-52](#)

CONTACT US:

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MONROE UNITED METHODIST

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

Website: www.monroeumconline.org

MORNING STAR LUTHERAN

Office Administrator: Kathi Cooley

Cell Phone: 425-293-8694

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Email: mssc@morningstarlc.org

Music Director: Jill Sumpter: 360-348-7231

Website: www.morningstarlc.org

**10AM SUNDAY'S IN-PERSON
AND LIVE STREAMED
YouTube**

WORSHIP
IN PERSON OR ONLINE



**PRE-RECORDED AFTER 5PM
ON SUNDAY**