

GROWING IN

Grace

December 2022

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CHRIST, Be Your LIGHT, Our LIGHT

Happy New Year!! It may seem that I am a bit early however the first Sunday of the church year was the first Sunday of Advent, November 27th. The time of Advent is a threshold, a gateway, and a bridge into this new and liminal time as both congregations have now voted to begin the formal process to join, as 2 congregations and denominations, under the name of “United in Grace”.

This Advent, as we have now crossed a new threshold as one congregation, guided by the Holy Spirit, we continue to seek out God’s vision and future *for us*, for the sake of God’s beloved world, and to live into this powerful and present reality in this time and place.

This Advent invites us with many new opportunities to create new traditions together as we wait! We may be wishing for the old ways of being church, as the people of God in and for our world. We may be wishing and longing for Advents and Christmases of the past and unlike last year we can all be together again during Advent and on Christmas Eve.

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. Future is ***now!***
Who was, who is, who is to come.

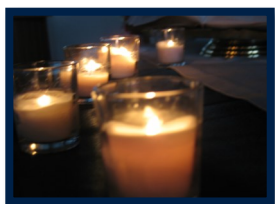
When we come to the manger on Christmas Eve with trust and hope that the light of Christ will come and dwell in and with us to overcome the darkness, God comes to us and breaks into our lives to say, *“I love you,”* through the birth of this little one. We are living in a time that is longing for the love and hope of Christmas when and where a ‘Baby Changes Everything’.

This is an opportunity to relearn how to wait, to remember, and appreciate the future in an unhurried way of being. Advent has begun, and I find myself seeking to stay in the present of each and every moment of each and every day and to seek to find new and more meaning in the waiting. It’s also about being, alert, open, and awakened, which is Advent hope. This Advent hope is the fulfillment of Christmas because at any moment anything could happen, probably happen, most certainly will happen.

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



CHRIST, is your LIGHT of Hope and Peace



ADVENT
A Season of Expectation

HOPE ~ PEACE ~ JOY ~ LOVE
10:00 SUNDAY MORNINGS



Welcome to Our
CHRISTMAS EVE
Service

CAROLS ~ CANDLELIGHT ~
SCRIPTURE ~ STORY
7:00 PM

There will not be a service offered on Christmas Day. We encourage you to watch the Christmas Eve service which will be rebroadcast all day Christmas.
www.unitedingrace.org

DECEMBER VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE				
	DECEMBER 4 SECOND ADVENT	DECEMBER 11 THIRD ADVENT	DECEMBER 18 FOURTH ADVENT	DECEMBER 24 CHRISTMAS EVE
Worship Leader	Nancy Franke	Missy Maxson	Nancy Franke	Pastor Malcolm
Greeter	Pete Maxson	Pete Maxson	Amy Halgren	~
Ushers	Jerry Esqueda and ????	Greg & Amy Halgren	Ric Hart and ????	N/A
Acolyte	Jerry Esqueda	Brian Johnson	????	Ric Hart
Light the Advent Candles	Ben, Kaitlyn & Diana Ault	Pr. Malcolm and Charlie Brown	Nancy Franke Velma Smith	To be determined
Read the Scripture	Ric Hart	Missy Maxson	Pete Maxson	Joel Garrison
Communion Prep.	Harriet Barr	Charlie Brown	Harriet Barr	N/A
Serve Communion	Pete & Missy Maxson	Jasmine Ray-Symms Lori Johnson	Pete & Missy Maxson	N/A
Sound-board	Charlie Brown	Kathi Cooley	Charlie Brown	Kathi Cooley

Would you like to serve where you see a RED ????
Please call Kathi at the office and let her know. Thank you.



**United Women in Faith
Christmas Bazaar
Saturday, December 3
9am-3pm**

- * Wreaths and See's Candy available for presale
- * Crafts
- * Baked Goods
- * Gently Used Treasures

Christmas Bazaar

The United Women in Faith's Christmas Bazaar is this Saturday! We have some wonderful crafts for sale:

Velma's towels and fire starters, Jodi's fresh wreath's, Judie's crocheted designs, Kaitlyn's jewelry, Amy's soup kits and more!! There will be yummy baked goods and gently used treasures for sale.

You don't want to miss this! Come check us out from 9-3!!!

Proceeds will be divided between UWF global mission work and local ministries.



The Monroe Cold Weather Shelter needs volunteers.

The shelter has been open every night this past week and it looks like it may be open all of next week as well.

The shelter provides a warm meal and warm bed to our neighbors that do not have housing. Several members of our congregation volunteer at the shelter and have talked about meeting people as young as 18 and others have sat and talked with people in their 60's. The Monroe Cold Weather shelter truly is for everyone.

There are many different time slots to choose from and they're willing to work with your schedule. They're looking for people to help with set-up, check-in, kitchen, overnight, and morning check-out.

The volunteer schedule is being managed by Volunteers of America, Western WA, making it very easy to sign up. You'll find their link and more information on our website, www.unitedingrace.org. You can also reach out to Delaney Wardell with any questions you may have. The shelter is located at New Hope Fellowship church on Main Street.

HAZEL'S LITTLE FREE PANTRY

The Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 23rd, is *Hazel's Little Free Pantry Sunday.*

It's a day to bring attention to our shared ministry that helps our neighbors in need with food, drink, and personal items. Specially marked envelopes are found in the pews and in the narthex. If you can't make it to church, you can mail your gift to:

United in Grace, 412 S. Lewis St., Monroe WA 98272

Thank You

Thank you for participating in our **3rd Annual TOEvens!**

It was a huge success that brought in **hundreds of socks** in all sizes and colors.

We have enough to help our friends keep their feet warm all winter!

Thank you!

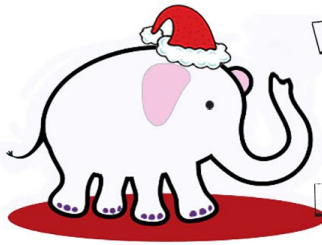


Reverse **ADVENT CALENDAR**

We invite you to prepare for Christ's Advent with this Reverse Advent Calendar. We start December with an empty box and by Christmas we've created a feast.

On Christmas Eve (or before) we invite you to bring your box to the Fellowship Hall! We will donate the food to the Sky Valley Food Bank.

- December 1 - box of cereal
- December 2 - peanut butter
- December 3 - stuffing mix
- December 4 - boxed potatoes
- December 5 - macaroni and cheese
- December 6 - canned fruit
- December 7 - canned tomatoes
- December 8 - canned tuna
- December 9 - dessert mix
- December 10 - jar of applesauce
- December 11 - canned sweet potatoes
- December 12 - cranberry sauce
- December 13 - canned beans
- December 14 - box of crackers
- December 15 - package of rice
- December 16 - package of oatmeal
- December 17 - package pasta
- December 18 - spaghetti sauce
- December 19 - chicken noodle soup
- December 20 - tomato soup
- December 21 - can corn
- December 22 - can mixed vegetables
- December 23 - can carrots
- December 24 - can green beans



**White
Elephant
Gift
Exchange**

All women are invited to the Books, TV, & Movie Christmas Party on December 13th 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!
Jasmine Ray-Symms is hosting. Look for her address in the latest directory or call her at 425-223-9866.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 In the name of Allah, the Gracious the Merciful

**PEACE
SYMPOSIUM**

Women Paving The Pathway to Success

Join us to celebrate women of the past who worked tirelessly to maintain communities of faith. Come and enjoy as we share stories and experiences of these remarkable women who planted the seeds of belief and love for God not only within their communities but within generations that came after them.

Women only

DECEMBER 10TH 2022 AT 11:00AM
 BAIT-UL-EHSAAN MOSQUE
 23515 OLD OWEN RD, MONROE, WA 98272

**December Birthday & Anniversary*
Celebrations***

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|----|---------------|
| 3 | Amy Halgren | 22 | Nancy Franke |
| 4 | JoLynn Garrison | 24 | Marla Wardell |
| 4 | Pastor Malcolm | 27 | George Mooney |
| 12 | Rhonda Morgan | | |
| 18 | Pastor Malcolm
& Charlie Brown * | | |

2022 OFFERINGS

Offerings and contributions for the 2022 tax season must reach the church offices by
December 31, 2022

WORSHIP ATTENDANCE NOVEMBER 2022



In Person: 33

Online Views: 15



*Memorial Service for
Joanne Hultgren*

December 10, 1:00 pm
 Morning Star Lutheran Church

Please join us for a memorial service honoring the life of Joanne Hultgren, sister of Susanne Olson.

Lunch will be served after the service.

How Can We

Pray
For You?

Send your
Prayer Requests to:
office@unitedingrace.org



From the Spirit, December 2022

From the ELCA Bishop:

I took the quilt to the cleaners to get washed. They looked at it and handed it back. If we touch this, they said, it will fall apart.

To most eyes, the quilt is nothing to look at. The bright yellow ducklings have long faded to muted colors. The binding is frayed. Happy, my dog from childhood, chewed holes in the fabric where stuffing came out and repair was never finished. (Happy did this to many sheets and blankets in my growing up years. My sisters and I called them “Happy holes.” My mom did not.)

From the time I was a toddler, this quilt has held my laughter, tears, secrets, sleep, insomnia, sickness, health, anger. In darkness, this quilt surrounded me in warmth. Years later, my children were wrapped in this same quilt.

Long before my grandma quilted my “duckie” blanket and gave it to me, there was a young family without permanent shelter and a baby soon to be born. The village midwives came into the night to help birth a baby for a family unknown. They came to an unhusband couple, a foreign couple, a poor couple with no prospects or power. And yet, these midwives left their warm houses and their own families, bringing their own handmade blankets and strips of cloth as they participated in this baby’s birth. And, when he was born, they wrapped this child and his mom in warmth.

We know this because we hear the angels’ words to the shepherds, “This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” Surely if the baby was wrapped in bands of cloth, the child was also wrapped in blankets.

What a difference it would have been without these blankets, without these swaddling cloths, without these midwives. Without the skills and the gifts God gave to them. The vocation of midwife brought Jesus into the world. The hands and wisdom of these women wrapped him in swaddling cloths.

It is such an amazing story ... through God’s invitation, and from Mary saying yes and Joseph saying yes and the innkeeper saying yes and the midwives saying yes – Jesus came.

Two thousand years ago, in a way no one could have imagined, God was with us in human form. Wrapped in blankets. Held in love.

What love, what grace, what beauty. Amazingly and almost inconceivably, in this little baby, God’s love came and God’s love continues to be among us through Jesus – Immanuel, Incarnate, God-in-the-flesh love. Embodied love ... for you and for me. Always.

I know that life is messy. Life is sometimes hard. Sometimes the world seems out of control and we are so small against so much of what is out there. And yet ... through something as small and vulnerable as a newborn baby, we are promised that God is here. Amongst us. And God’s love is for everyone. Absolutely everyone. Regardless of your job or your political party, your anxiety or your income. Your ethnicity, your language, your gender, your situation in life. God’s love is for you who celebrate this holy day and God’s love is for those who don’t. God’s love is for those you are estranged from and those you embrace.

This Christmas and this year, may you feel surrounded by God’s love and presence. In your laughter, tears, secrets, sleep, insomnia, sickness, health, anger - in darkness and in light may you feel God wrapping you into God’s embrace ... like a worn, faded blanket that is covered in ducks and Happy holes.

Have a Blessed Christmas,

Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee

Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee



Beyond Weapons of War

Let all that you do be done in love.

I Corinthians 16:14

November 22, 2022

Friends in Christ, Thanksgiving is Thursday and Advent starts next Sunday.

My heart is anguished after the murders at Club Q in Colorado Springs last weekend. In “barely a minute,” five people died, 17 others were shot, and two others were injured. The 22-year-old shooter, carrying an AR-15-style semi-automatic rifle, stalked his prey in a place people came for sanctuary from anti-LGBTQIA+ hatred. They were unarmed in an enclosed space, like sitting ducks or fish in a barrel.

No one has the right to hunt and kill innocent people. No civilian should have the right to carry an assault weapon designed for war.

If you are a person who identifies as LGBTQIA+, I see you, I love you, I need you to survive. You should not be targeted for ridicule, bullying, or bodily harm by people who don’t understand you or hate you. I believe that Jesus calls every Christian to be a trustworthy ally as you seek to live the fullness of life God sets before you, but many are slow to respond to this call.

If you are a person who hates or fears LGBTQIA+ people, I’m sorry for you; you don’t have to remain where you are today. Each of us is held to account for our fear, our hatred, and our inaction. In the gospels, we have a front-row seat as Jesus meets all kinds of misunderstood and marginalized people – leper, blind, possessed, lame, tax collectors, women caught in adultery or with a flow of blood, robbers. He seeks them out, speaks with them, and invites them into his circle of friends. He saved his disdain for high priests and pious people he thought should know better – like us.

If you follow Jesus, he will introduce you to LGBTQIA+ people, and you will be given the opportunity to grow in your knowledge and love of Jesus by seeing what Jesus sees in them. We must love our way out of hate, or we will find ourselves on the side of Herod, slaughtering innocents in the pursuit of his rival, Jesus, instead of on the side of humble shepherds, tending their flocks and welcoming his arrival.

Regardless of political party, it is time for Christian people, striving to walk in the way of Jesus, to join with others of generous spirit, to rise up to stop the sale of assault weapons. Courageous citizens have the power to protect innocent victims from people who lack the intellectual, moral, emotional, or spiritual ability to resist an impulse to wholesale slaughter. It is blasphemous to pray for God to do what we have the power but not yet the will to do. We are our brother’s/sister’s/sibling’s keeper. We can act, and so we must, to save countless lives.

This Thanksgiving, I hope you will enjoy good food in the company of people you love, whether family, friends, or strangers. I hope you will pray for those on both ends of gun violence. And as we prepare for the birth of Jesus, learn more and work to ban private ownership of weapons designed for war. I urge you to see how our General Board of Church and Society is helping us get involved in resisting gun violence. I hope you will also consider writing a letter to your elected representatives, as Olympia First UMC encouraged us at our annual conference session in June. We can make it safer for innocent, vulnerable people to gather without fear for work, a concert, a drag show, a movie, a nightclub, school, church, for love.

Love is born at Christmas!

Elaine JW Stanovsky

Bishop Elaine JW Stanovsky

The Best Gift of Christmas

I love the holidays! I love decorating my house. I love hearing the Christmas music on the radio. I love the friends and family that come together to celebrate. I love the excuse to go shopping! It can be easy though to forget the “why” behind the holiday. It can be easy to forget why the holidays are really important: the decorations help set the mood, but it would still be Christmas without them. Those Christmas tunes can be festive, but the message is what’s important. And friends and family gathering? Well, that is completely in line with the “reason for the season” except when I care more about what I’m serving for dinner and the way the house looks instead of enjoying the time together, relishing in the love we share. And finally, the shopping: am I shopping to give to others or am I merely accumulating wealth in someone else’s name?




When I take the time to stop and reflect on the meaning of Christmas, when I appreciate this incredible gift of salvation that God has given me, and when I grasp the miracle of GOD coming to earth, I am humbled. I spend way too much time being irritated at the lines at the store and not enough on seeing those people that God came to save. He didn’t just come to be with me, He came to be with all of us. Even the snippy lady in front of me at the grocery store taking out her frustrations on the hapless grocery clerk. So, join with me during this time of celebration to recognize the gift and share it with others. For God is with us and He has come to save us!
“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” —Matthew 1:23

Jasmine Ray-Symms
www.jasmineraysymms.com

UNITED IN GRACE PRAYER WALL
“God in your mercy, hear our prayer”

**Share what’s on your heart:
 troubles, concerns, celebrations, encouragements**

The Prayer Wall, located in the narthex, is a way for you share your prayer concerns with the congregation during the **Prayers of the People**, anonymously if you choose. If you’d like to have a prayer added to the Prayers of the People, write your petition on a slip of paper from the basket in front of the prayer wall, then tuck it into the wall. You may include your name and/or names of people you wish to be prayed for, or you may keep it completely private. Your prayer will be included during the service.



Church Business

DECEMBER 2022 - MORNING STAR LUTHERAN CHURCH

<u>NON-DESIGNATED OFFERINGS AND EXPENSES</u>			
	2022 Budget	September Actual	October Actual
Offerings	\$ 8,917	\$ 7,2362	\$ 7,262
Expenses	\$10,384	\$11,374	\$10,310
Surplus/deficit		- \$ 4,140	- \$ 3,048

<u>2022 MSLC COUNCIL</u>		
Administrative Dir.	Missy Maxson	206-437-2535
Ministry Director	Kathleen Sallee	425-387-2638
Treasurer	Brian Johnson	425-503-8352
Community Relations	Jill Sumpter	360-348-7231
Facilities	Jay Morgan	425-903-1678
Secretary	Marla Wardell	360-794-4072
Worship	Kathi Cooley	425-293-8694

DECEMBER 2022 - MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

December MUMC Overview

Monroe United Methodist Church held its All Church Conference on November 21st. District Superintendent Mark Galang oversaw the meeting. I was struck by his statement: “I hope we’re ready for the change God is proposing!” He shared the election of the most diverse slate of Bishops ever elected. Thirteen new Bishops were elected, three in the Western Jurisdiction:

- 8 were BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color)
- 7 were women
- The first Native American Bishop in the US was elected.
- The first Filipino American Bishop in the US and the first Bishop to be ordained outside of the US was elected.
- The first Hispanic in the North East Jurisdiction was elected.
- The first Black woman in the South Central Jurisdiction was elected.

And our Greater Northwest Episcopal Area elected Bishop Cedric Bridgeforth, the first Black and openly gay Bishop. He is joined by his husband, Christopher.

Retiring Bishop Elaine JW Stanovsky also made a wonderful video message in which she shared her desire for us to unite in love rather than continue the divisions that permeate our society and the church. She gave a reminder that it is a New Day we are all entering into with the church and with each other.

MUMC unanimously voted to merge with Morning Star Lutheran Church!

DS Mark Galang closed with a recitation of the poem “Continue” by Maya Angelou:
“Continue To dare to love deeply And risk everything For the good thing”

While we are still waiting for permits for the new sign, we move forward to serve our community as United in Grace.

Jasmine Ray-Symms

<u>2022 MUMC LAY LEADERSHIP</u>		
Board of Trustees Chairman	Ric Hart	360-794-7772
Treasurer	Tanya Hubbard	360-793-8959
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	Margaret Ray	509-432-3029
UMW President	Jasmine Ray-Symms	425-223-9866
Recording Secretary	Margaret Ray	509-432-3029

Hi all – as you can see, we are still running a little short every month and we are working off of the previous year’s surplus funds, which is a help.

We thank you all for your contributions of your time, talents and tithes in support of your church.

Blessings to you all –


Nancy Franke
 Financial Secretary

MUMC Financial information Oct 31, 2022 Treasurers report

TOTAL RECEIPTS \$4,580.47
 TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS \$6,557.05

-\$1,976.58

	Income	Disbursements	Shortage as of 10/31/22
GENERAL FUND YEAR-TO-DATE	\$62,652.61	\$74,859.45	\$12,206.84

 Morning Star Lutheran Church

 Monroe United Methodist Church

412 South Lewis Street
Monroe, WA 98272-4149



December 2022

December 4:	SECOND ADVENT ~ COMMUNION SUNDAY ~ Scripture: Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12
December 11:	THIRD ADVENT ~ COMMUNION SUNDAY ~ Scripture: Psalm: Luke 1:46b-55
December 18:	FOURTH ADVENT ~ COMMUNION SUNDAY ~ Scripture: Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25
December 24:	<u>7:00 pm CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE</u> Scripture: Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-20; John 1-14
January 1:	NAME OF JESUS - LESSONS & CAROLS ~ Communion Sunday ~ Scripture: Numbers 6:22-27; Psalm 8; Galatians 4:4-7; Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 2:15-21

CONTACT US:

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Music Director: Jill Sumpter

MONROE UNITED METHODIST

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Website: www.unitedingrace.org

MORNING STAR LUTHERAN

Phone: 360-794-2111

Email: mvlc@morningstarlc.org

Website: www.unitedingrace.org

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



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