

GROWING IN

Grace



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

LOOK INSIDE FOR:

Worship Opportunities & Volunteer Sch.	p 2
Fellowship & Outreach	p 3
Bishop's Articles	p 5
Church Business	p 6
Women's Retreat Registration	p 7

January 2024

HAPPY EPIPHANY!

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” Isaiah 9:2

We will celebrate Epiphany on Sunday is January 7th, although Epiphany is actually on January 6th (the 12th day of Christmas or also called the 12th Night). On Epiphany we celebrate and rediscover each year that **Someone** has come! Has come to us and to all people sent by God, to bring God’s love and presence into our lives and the lives off all people, to heal our brokenness and to reveal to us the unimaginable depths of God’s love for you and I and the entire of creation, which God loves so very much.

Epiphany is a Greek word meaning “appearing” or a “revealing”, that is, the revealing of God through God’s Son sent down to be with us and to all the tribes of the world. Throughout this season of light Jesus is revealed to us as repeatedly stepping beyond the accepted tribe (those like us), to and for the entire world.

“The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.” John 1:5

In the readings of the season of Epiphany, before Lent begins on Ash Wednesday (Feb.14th), Jesus is consistently breaking down the walls between tribes, denominations, neighborhoods, class, all religions, even beyond Jews and Gentiles, between the powerful and the marginalized, who is in and who is out, family and stranger, clean and unclean, social, cultural and political affiliations; and all the other ways we use to separate and divide those who are not like us. Today in this time and place our tribalism needs to be challenged with Jesus; fierce and radical inclusiveness and love for all just as you are.

I leave you with this poem by the Rev. Howard Thurman, 1899-1981

The Work of Christmas

*When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:*

*To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.*

Happy Epiphany and A Happy New Year!

*In this Epiphany season and New Year may the light of the star and the glory of God
be revealed to you and in new and unexpected ways!*

Pastor Malcolm



December 31, 10:00 am



DECEMBER 2023 ATTENDANCE

In-Person: 43 Online: 15

JANUARY SUNDAY MORNING MINISTRY SCHEDULE <i>Thank you for serving. You are an indispensable part of the body of Christ and we thank you.</i>				
	JANUARY 7 EPIPHANY SUNDAY	JANUARY 14 2ND EPIPHANY	JANUARY 21 3RD EPIPHANY	JANUARY 28 4TH EPIPHANY
Worship Asst.	Jasmine Ray-Symms		Missy Maxson	Nancy Franke
Greeter	Val & Perry Cole	Val & Perry Cole	Joel & JoLynn Garrison	Bev Rice
Ushers	Val & Perry Cole	Val & Perry Cole	Joel & JoLynn Garrison	
Acolyte				
Reader	Kathleen Sallee	Jill Sumpter	Joel Garrison	Missy Maxson
Comm. Prep.	Kathleen Sallee	Jasmine Ray-Symms		JoLynn Garrison
Serve Comm.	Joel & JoLynn Garrison	Jasmine Ray-Symms		
Coffee Hour			Kathleen Sallee	Jill Sumpter
Altar Flowers				Jill Sumpter
Soundboard	Kathi Cooley	Charlie Brown	Kathi Cooley	Charlie Brown

GET CONNECTED – FELLOWSHIP AND STUDY OPPORTUNITIES

Books, Movies & TV



We're getting together at 6:30 on Tuesday the 16th to share our most recent literary, theatrical or televised find, and of course share a few snacks! We haven't figured out who the host is yet, but we'll be sure to let you know!

All women are welcome and encouraged to attend!


~ UPDATED! ~




United Women in Grace Returns!

Monthly Meetings Resume
January 13, 2024, 10:30am
in the Fellowship Hall

United Women in Grace is our church women's group that usually meets monthly on the first Saturday of the month but January's meeting will be held on the second Saturday. Our December meeting is our Annual Christmas Bazaar where we earned \$2332.95! Our January meeting will be **January 13th at 10:30am** in the Fellowship Hall. We will be voting on which ministries to support with the funds raised at the bazaar.





Jesus and Java Returns!

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

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

\$138 was given to our ministries,
The Brown Bag Brigade and
Hazel's Little Free Pantry
at our Christmas Eve Service.
Thanks be to God. ❤️

The **Second Sunday of every month is dedicated to the Brown Bag Brigade**, and the **Last Sunday is dedicated to Hazel's Little Free Pantry**. Specially marked envelopes are found in the backs of the pews and on the Greeters desk on Sunday morning. It's because of YOUR support that these ministries are able to continue. Thank You.



Listening Hearts

UNITED WOMEN IN GRACE
2024 WOMEN'S RETREAT
SATURDAY MARCH 2ND
9:30-2:00
Registrations are due February 25th

Our March meeting is our annual **Women's Retreat**.
This year's retreat will be held in the Fellowship Hall on **March 2nd from 9:30am-2:00pm** with Breakfast and Check-in at 9:00am. Our theme this year is "Listening Hearts". We will have prayer, study, activities and crafts. Please join us as we draw closer to God and each other. Registrations are due February 25. Cost is \$20. Scholarships are available. You'll find the registration form included in the newsletter.

Grateful Heart

The “Books, TV, Movies, Oh My!” group met this past week for the annual white elephant gift exchange. It was a wonderful evening spent with good friends and great food! When I went to bed that night, I felt this sense of gratitude just wash over me. I started my nightly prayers with what I was thankful for, and I found my list growing longer and longer as I thought with excitement about what God is doing in my life and the wonderful people in my life.



There was a time in my life when I was very bitter. Life was hard and I felt alone. But God brought me through it. He didn’t take away my mental illness but He did bring friends into my life, so I didn’t feel so alone. He didn’t take away my struggles, but He brought people into my life to move me towards health.

As 2023 comes to a close, and the excitement of the New Year brings resolutions and hope, it’s the perfect time to take stock in our lives. I lost my mother this past year. Not a day goes by without me thinking of her and missing her. I also started new ministries such as the Mental Health Task Force and the Abundant Health Team for the United Methodist Church. I moved closer to my goal of being a Certified Lay Minister. The grief was tempered with feelings of appreciation.

In this coming year, I urge you to focus on the positives in your life and give your struggles to God. It took me a long time to get where I am mentally and spiritually, but I see God at work in my life and I just get excited. I want you to have that excitement, too and I KNOW God can bring us through the dark times in our lives. He may not fix everything we want Him to fix, but we can trust His promise to be there with us while we wait.

Jasmine Ray-Symms

www.jasmineraysymms

Photo by [Gabrielle Henderson](#) on [Unsplash](#)

January Birthdays & Anniversaries *

- 6 Cody Missel
- 15 Brent Smith
- 20 Jasmine Ray-Symms
- 23 Annette Kyle
- 24 Jerry & Judie Esqueda *
- 29 Jodi Fowler
- 29 Brittany Symms
- 31 Margaret Lottermann





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

I was listening to the news a few days ago when I heard that Israel had bombed Gaza using artificial intelligence called “The Gospel.” I thought at first that I had misheard. Surely an AI program designed to bomb people is not named “gospel.”

But, horrifically, I had heard correctly. As Steve Inskeep from NPR’s Morning Edition reports on December 14, “The system is called The Gospel. And basically, it takes an enormous quantity of surveillance data, crunches it all together and makes recommendations about where the military should strike.”

Pause right here and read the above paragraph again. I mean it. Read it again.

A weapon of war is named The Gospel. Dear Beloveds of Christ, I cannot emphasize enough how bone-chilling and nauseous it makes me feel that a word designed to bring hope and love and peace and joy to this world – Gospel – is being used to kill.

I don’t know who first named this system “gospel.” I don’t know what marketing expert or even what acronym “gospel” might mean in the AI world. I could not find the origin. But what I do know is that this system is now being used for something horrendous. This is so contrary to the first words from the gospel of Mark, “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

As you might be aware, the word gospel is translated into English as “good news.” When Martin Luther was struggling about the laws of God and feeling that he was a sinner beyond redemption, he recounts in many of his writings how his understanding of God changed as he read Paul’s letter to the Romans. He suddenly realized that it was not up to him, but up to God. God was the one who redeemed. God was the one who forgave. Luther suddenly experienced what God through Jesus does for all of us: Through Jesus Christ, God provides comfort for the terrified, forgiveness for the sinner, and faith for the doubting. Martin Luther was overwhelmed with God’s grace and was immersed in the Gospel.

Following this earth-shattering understanding of the Good News of Jesus, Luther taught, preached and wrote about this insight every chance he got. In 1521, Philip Melancthon condensed Luther’s insight to this provocative sentence:

“The gospel is a promise.” To this day, Lutherans continue to bear witness to the whole church and world that the gospel is a promise, truly good news of God’s mercy and love in Christ, received by faith alone.

In these days when words are manipulated by those in power, when evil seems to be gaining ground, when neighbor turns against neighbor, may we remember and experience God’s grace. May we be enveloped in God’s love. And, in response, may we, in our words and actions, move against the forces that are contrary to all that Jesus stands for.

For we are called, my dear Beloveds, through God’s grace towards God’s promise of wholeness and true peace. *This is the Gospel.*

As the prophet Isaiah proclaims of God in chapter 42, “I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

May it be so. May it be so.

We look towards 2024 in faith, holding God’s promise of Gospel.

+ Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee

bishop@lutheransnw.org



Immanuel, God is with us!

Dear friends and fellow saints,

May the peace and grace of Jesus Christ be with you all!

These past couple of weeks have been super busy times for me as I am trying to finish some work before I take a couple of weeks off to heal from a medical procedure that I will be undergoing sometime this week. Thus, as you can imagine, writing a piece for the district newsletter was not at the top of my priority list. I kept missing my deadlines, but Erin T. has been patiently reminding me that our newsletter is scheduled to come out this week.

I realized later that I have been putting off writing a Christmas message because I am not feeling that festive and hopeful Christmas spirit this year. I must admit that I am weary and tired like probably many people you know. We live in a weary and restless world where pain, struggles and suffering don’t take a holiday, not even on Christmas.

So, I believe that more than ever the church needs to proclaim the message of the gospels with much more courage and boldness. We need to continually share to the tired and weary world the message this holy season brings, “Immanuel”, God is with us!

When we proclaim this message, we are not denying nor ignoring our own troubles or trying to make them sound light instead we are proclaiming a message about a God who knows our troubles yet chooses to break into our lives to give hope and joy and peace in the midst of all of these.

Knowing this and believing it makes Christmas a holy and blessed time indeed!

A blessed and hope-filled Christmas to you all!

Your sibling,

Mark

Rev. J. Mark Galang
Puget Sound District Superintendent;
psds@pnwumc.org; 206-802-5871

JANUARY 2024 - MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Happy New Year everyone!

As we start 2024, and think ahead to all the changes that will come this year as we finally become United in Grace, I hope that you are as excited as I am for this long-awaited goal, and are ready for the work that this will take and what we will do to get there. The financial future of United in Grace will depend on all of us working together as a new entity with new priorities, to make sure that the church and its services are available to all our congregation members when needed, now and in the future. I hope you all feel proud of the support that you have given to our church and its ministries this past year and remember all of the people that have been helped by them, both inside the church and outside in our community. My hope is that this work will continue and our community will come to know more and more just who we are and what we stand for.

I'm sure that this new year, as every year, will bring changes to your own life journey as well, and that you go into 2024 with hope, courage, grace and love and the knowledge that God walks with you – beside you to hold you up, behind you to catch you if you fall, in front of you to show you the way and above you to watch over you every step of that journey. We are so blessed by our faith!

As a new year begins, I want to offer my favorite prayer that has been the prayer of so many as we navigate this journey of challenges and blessings -

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardship as a pathway to peace; taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; trusting that You will make all things right if I surrender to Your will; so that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with You forever in the next. Amen." — Reinhold Niebuhr

- Here's to another great year at MUMC / MSLC, soon to be United in Grace! Together, with Gods help, we can make it all happen

See you in church!

Nancy Franke – MUMC Financial Secretary

<u>2024 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	Nancy Franke—temporary
Membership Secretary	Kathi Cooley 425-293-8694
Lay Leader to Annual Conference	Jasmine Ray-Symms 425-223-9866
UWF President	Jasmine Ray-Symms 425-223-9866
Recording Secretary	vacant

JANUARY 2024 - MORNING STAR LUTHERAN CHURCH

<u>2024 NON-DESIGNATED OFFERINGS AND EXPENSES</u>			
	2024 Budget	October Actual	November Actual
Offerings	\$ 8,917	\$ 8,418	\$ 5,541
Expenses	\$10,384	\$10,801	\$10,645
Surplus/deficit		- \$ 283	- \$ 5,104

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



United Women in Grace Retreat Registration Form
"Listening Hearts"
March 2, 2024

9:30am-2:00pm (Breakfast/Check-in begins at 9:00am)

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Lunch Provided


Dietary Restrictions _____


Cost: \$20 (Scholarships available)

Make checks payable to "United Methodist Women"

Please respond by February 25, 2023

*But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.
~ Matthew 13:16*

 Morning Star Lutheran Church

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

JANUARY
2024!

January 7: EPIPHANY SUNDAY ~ Scripture: **Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12**

January 14: 2nd Epiphany ~ Scripture: **Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; John 1:43-51**

Message: Jasmine Ray-Symms

January 21: 3rd Epiphany ~ Scripture: **Psalm 62:5-12; 1 Corinthians 7:29-31; Mark 1:14-20**

Message: Jasmine Ray-Symms

January 28: 4th EPIPHANY ~ Scripture: **Psalm 111; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Mark 1:21-28**

Message: Jasmine Ray-Symms

CONTACT US:

Pastor Malcolm Brown

Phone: 360-794-2111

Email: prmalcolmb@gmail.com

Office Administrator: Kathi Cooley

Music Director: Jill Sumpter

Live stream/editor: Bryce Cooley

MONROE UNITED METHODIST

Phone: 360-794-8863

Email: office@monroeamonline.org

Website: www.unitedingrace.org

MORNING STAR LUTHERAN

Phone: 360-794-2111

Email: office@unitedingrace.org

Website: www.unitedingrace.org

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



unitedingrace.org