

GROWING IN

Grace

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

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March 2023

Dear beloved Siblings in Christ,

An invitation for you to take a 40-day journey, together, with Jesus to Easter!

"Keep a Christian from entering the church sanctuary and you have not in the least bit hindered his or her or their worship. We carry our sanctuary with us. We never leave it" A.W. Tozer

Alan Roxburgh and Mark Lou Branson write in their 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 and Freedom on Easter morning. 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 quite music playing.

- * Take a moment to settle into prayer and become aware of the presence of God...
- * 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...

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

Pr Malcolm

DON'T BE LATE TO CHURCH!

Daylight Saving Time begins March 12



"... For nothing will be impossible with God."
Luke 1:37



FEBRUARY 2023

In Person: 36

Online Views: 16

FYI and *Do You Know??*


Does anyone know where the plastic table cover for the Fellowship Hall serving table is?
It's been missing for several weeks.

and...

The gas valves to the stoves/ovens in the Fellowship Hall have been shut off. At this time the oven and burners can be used but pilot lights need to be relit each time they are used due to the griddle not being functional just yet. We will be posting lighting instructions soon. Please let Kathi know if you plan to be using the stoves/ovens anytime soon.

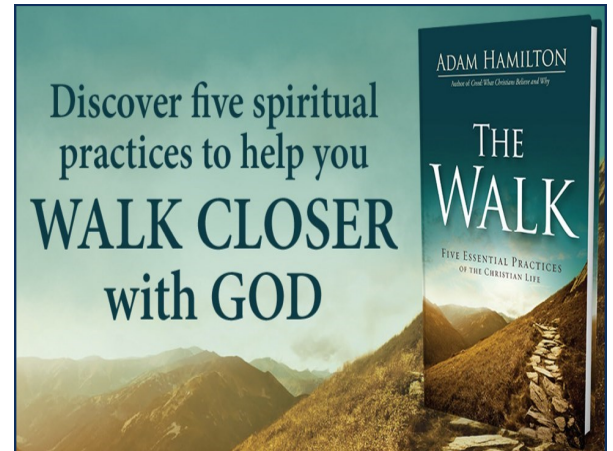
THE SUNDAY VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE IS POSTED IN THE NARTHEX!

It's now easier than ever to sign-up for a Sunday morning ministry. Simply stop by the table in the narthex where you see the Volunteer Schedule and write your name where and when you'd like to serve. Easy Peasy!

	MARCH 5 2ND SUNDAY IN LENT	MARCH 12 3RD SUNDAY IN LENT	MARCH 19 4TH SUNDAY IN LENT	MARCH 26 5TH SUNDAY IN LENT
Worship Assistant	Peter Maxson	Nancy Franke	Nancy Franke	Missy Maxson
Greeter	Denny & Diana Coates	Velma Smith	Denny & Diana Coates	Perry & Valerie Cole
Ushers need 2	OPEN	Kathi Cooley	OPEN	OPEN
Acolyte	Brian Johnson	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN
Reader	Brian Johnson	Peter Maxson	Kathleen Sallee	Jill Sumpter
Serve Communion need 2	Brian & Lori Johnson	Peter & Missy Maxson	Ben & Kaitlyn Ault	Joel & JoLynn Garrison
Communion Prep.	Harriet Barr	Kathi Cooley	Harriet Barr	JoLynn Garrison
Coffee Hour	Missy Maxson Margaret Ray Jasmine Ray-Symms	Peter & Missy Maxson	Kathleen Sallee	OPEN
Soundboard	Kathi Cooley	Charlie Brown	Kathi Cooley	Charlie Brown
Other: What would you like to do??		Susanne Olson: Altar Flowers	Jill Sumpter: Coffee Hour Treats	



All are welcome and encouraged to join the Lenten & Easter Choir. Rehearsals begin after church on March 5th. No special skills needed!



Every Sunday morning at 8:45 in the Fellowship Hall. Feel free to start any time!



Books, TV & Movies!

March 21 - 6:30pm

Host - Kathi Cooley

Come for great discussion, snacks, and drinks at this month's BTM. You'll find Kathi's address in the directory or you can call her at 425-293-8694.

Hazel's Little Free Pantry Donation Bucket

You are invited to bring your pantry donations on Sunday mornings and drop them in the bin in the narthex.

Current Urgent Needs:
 peanut butter; soft granola/
 breakfast bars; individual
 packets of instant oatmeal;
 chili, soup; cup-o-noodles;
 Vienna sausage



Thank you for your support of this *United in Grace* ministry.

March Birthdays & Anniversaries *

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

God's Majesty

For our Lenten Study we're using Adam Hamilton's "The Walk" as our study guide. He talks about the five essential spiritual practices all Christians should participate in to strengthen our walk with God: worship and prayer, study, service, giving, and sharing the good news with others. I think we all know these are important and we strive to incorporate them into our lives in one way or another but I know I have been convicted to really look at these practices and transform them from rote habit to a deepening relationship with God.



As I prepared for the first week's study: worship and prayer, I was struck by the simplicity of it all. Adam Hamilton describes it as saying, "thank you" and "I love you". It's easy for me to go to church and want the hymns I like sung and the sermon to be moving. I go to God in prayer with my list of requests. I explain what I'd like Him to do. I'm not glib or anything. I just think sometimes I miss the point of it all. I miss the majesty.

Remembering the majesty of God is easy; we just need to look around. Look up at the night sky and see the stars and realize how small we are and how big God is. Look at a newborn with their precious fingers and toes and realize the complexity of human life. Go for a walk and open your eyes to the diversity of nature. Notice the numerous plants and animals that are here for us to enjoy. Take in the beauty of the earth that is so easy to take for granted but, when we stop for a moment and just look, we can be blown away by a delicate flower or the weight of a rock.

Too often I squeeze God in between appointments instead of really thanking Him for all He has done for the world, for my family and for me. Too often I fail to take the time to just say, "God, I love you" without expecting something in return. So, this season, I'm going to try and just say, "thank you, I love you" and really mean it. Oh, I know I'll still have my list in hand but I'm going to try to at least start with, "thank you, I love you" and let God take it from there.

Jasmine Ray-Symms

www.jasmineraysymms.com

It's Fun and Easy
Set up, clean up
& bring a few treats
to share. Host with a friend!

My cup overflows with your blessings.
 PSALM 23:5

Sign-Up at Church
Look for the NEW volunteer
schedule in the narthex and
sign-up!

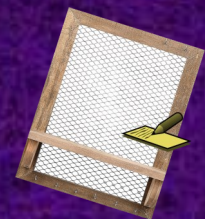
UNITED IN GRACE PRAYER WALL

"Lord of our salvation, receive 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.



Bridgeforth brings experience, collaborative mindset into new role as bishop of the Greater NW Area

Kristen Caldwell

Growing up in rural Alabama, it was Bishop Cedrick Bridgeforth's grandparents who made sure he got to church – even on the days he didn't want to be there.

But it was in the church, Lakeview United Methodist and Oakville Baptist churches that he found purpose – even on the hard days. After serving in the U.S. Air Force and earning a bachelor's degree in religion from Samford University and a master of divinity degree from Claremont School of Theology, he has found the joy, purpose and calling that led him to become a newly-elected bishop in The United Methodist Church.

"Hopefully, people can see that the degrees, the titles, and the experiences are not where I began. That's just where I'm on the journey right now," Bridgeforth said. "I do that in a way to connect with people. My leadership style is about connecting with people."

On Jan. 1, 2023, Bridgeforth will begin serving as bishop of the Greater Northwest Episcopal Area of The UMC. The GNW Area comprises the Alaska Conference, Oregon-Idaho Conference and Pacific Northwest Conference. He currently serves as the director of communication and innovation for the California-Pacific Conference.

When he was elected on the 18th ballot at the Western Jurisdictional Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Nov. 4, he became the first openly gay African American male to hold the title of bishop within The UMC. His husband, Christopher Hucks-Ortiz, stood by his side as he was welcomed. It's history he's proud to make, but it is only part of his story and ministry.

Raised on a farm in rural Alabama, Bridgeforth has served churches in the California-Pacific Conference since 1999. He became an ordained elder in full connection with the church in 2006. He has served at Bowen Memorial United Methodist Church and Crenshaw United Methodist Church, before supervising many churches as a district superintendent in Cal-Pac Conference. He also has been a clergy coach and nonprofit consultant, has served on the board of the Black Methodists for Church Renewal, worked as the director of academic programs and outreach at the University of LaVerne and is a published author, to name a few things.

"I want my story to be open and available to people. There are parts of it people will connect with immediately. There are parts that people will hear and say, 'I don't get it.' And that's fine. All of us have that in our lives," he said. "My leadership style is very personal. I try to be accessible to people. I like to hear people's story because it helps me connect with them."

On Sept. 11, 2001, he met his good friend – who later became his colleague – Dr. Larry Hygh, Jr., when Hygh and others attending the Strengthening the Black Church conference were stranded in Los Angeles due to the terrorist attacks on this country. Hygh said then-District Superintendent (now Bishop) Grant Hagiya sent church leaders out to check on those who were grounded in Los Angeles. Bridgeforth was one of those pastors.

Hygh recalls a caring presence in that moment. The two became better acquainted when, less than a year later, Hygh became the communications director for the Cal-Pac Conference and got to see what Bridgeforth's ministry was like up close.

"I think he brings a gift of strategic leadership. I also believe he's a person who can work with folks from various theological perspectives," Hygh said. "Even when he might not agree, he can find commonality for the sake of the gospel. Folks like him are what we need."

Hygh said he's always appreciated his friend's ability to meet people – all people – wherever they're at in life. Hygh watched Bridgeforth work, as a district superintendent in the Los Angeles area, with some of the most diverse churches, communities and neighborhoods in the country.

"He makes connections that sometimes other folks do not see," Hygh said.

This past summer, Bridgeforth, an avid cyclist and supporter of HIV/AIDS research, encouraged Hygh to train for and participate in a 545-mile AIDS/LifeCycle bike ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles to raise money for the San Francisco Aids Foundation and the Los Angeles LGBT Center.

"He is a much faster cyclist than I am," Hygh said. "I'm the caboose in the back."

Nevertheless, Hygh said his friend rode with him in the back one day on the seven-day course and saw a different perspective.

"He's a servant leader who walks the talk," Hygh said.

Bridgeforth calls himself collaborative by nature and hopes to bring that work to his role as bishop. He describes it as "a necessity" at this time in the church's life.

"For us to innovate at the rate we need to, we have to collaborate," Bridgeforth said.



Bishop Cedrick Bridgeforth addresses the crowd at the WJC 2022 after being elected with spouse Christopher Hucks-Ortiz by his side.

As he steps into the episcopal role in the Greater Northwest Area, he knows the church is at a critical point. Membership is in decline, and the church may be splintering as some churches seek to disaffiliate before the 2024 General Conference. He knows it's something that the church will grapple with, and to do that, people must first maintain their hope in Jesus Christ.

"I'm not a person who believes divorce is a bad thing," Bridgeforth said. "Sometimes divorce is necessary, and it is the only thing that will bring about healing."

He said it's a good thing for people to be clear about their values and to bless each other as they depart. But the faithful disciples who remain within the denomination need to be clear about why they have decided to stay – not just because some people they disagree with left.

"Did we remain United Methodists because we believe in the strength of Wesleyan grace? Do we believe in the strength of being connected? Do we believe that serving together is better than just serving on our own? Do we believe that there is truly hope in Jesus Christ? Do we believe we have a message of salvation and resurrection that can resonate in this season and in coming seasons? I'll preach that; I'll teach that," Bridgeforth said. "I want to organize us so that we are delivering that message in every way possible. So that we examine our structures, we examine our policies, and our behaviors so that they align with this understanding of resurrection – of hope on the other side of division."



From the Spirit, March 2023

The 10-year-old girl at the school we were visiting was asked, "When was the last time you went to the beach?" She paused, thought, and finally said rather quietly, "I think when I was three."

This might not seem like a huge deal. Many people choose to not visit bodies of water. But you see, this little girl is a Lutheran Palestinian attending one of our Lutheran School in the West Bank. She is fluent in English. She is warm and engaging. She has dreams and aspirations. Her family is dedicated to her education, and they are faithful Christians. And she cannot get to the water that historically was her people's land because of checkpoints and government policies. She is literally a few miles from the water that she cannot swim in.

In January, seventeen ELCA Bishops traveled to the Holy Land on a "Living Stones" listening tour. Bishop Azur of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) invited us to come and see the Lutheran Church in the Holy Land and for us to witness firsthand how the Lutheran Church is positively impacting thousands of people.

On this tour we didn't have time to visit many "holy sites." Instead, this was a working trip that was designed to meet with those who are living in the Holy Land today – or as Palestinians say – to meet with the Living Stones of the Holy Land. During our time with our siblings in Christ, we learned and listened; prayed and contemplated; laughed and wept. These beautiful and courageous people welcomed us into their lives with grace and dignity. We were given an abundance of food, gifts, laughter, worship, and dancing.

And the stories. The stories were rich and beautiful ... and devastating. Like so many people throughout history whose lives have been ripped apart by oppressive powers, the Palestinian Christians have had their land, their identity, and their freedoms radically diminished. In some cases, completely erased.

Excerpts of stories I heard:

- The men whose family homes have been demolished because they cannot produce paperwork from the Ottoman Empire that their family has owned their land for over a century.
- The fourteen-year-old boy who was killed in a refugee camp. In his pocket was a piece of paper where he had written his last will and testament. Many young people are now carrying wills in their pockets as they fear they will be killed.
- Concern that the Holy Land will become a museum rather than a living expression of the rich diversity of people who call this land their home.
- A principal at one of the Lutheran schools stating proudly: "We are educating the next creative leaders in Palestine and in the Middle East."

Truly a highlight of this trip was the ordination of Pastor Sally Azur. Pastor Sally is the first Palestinian woman pastor in the Holy Land. She is called to serve two Lutheran Churches in the Holy Land and we are excited to see her flourish.

We were able to visit with a Jewish human rights organization, the United States Ambassador for Palestinian Affairs, the Palestinian Authority Prime Minister, the General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, and many others who listened to our concerns and who also stated their deep dedication to working for peace and justice in this land.

I confess that what I have written here barely touches on the complexity of the situation in the Holy Land. Hundreds if not thousands of books have been written. I am no expert. But as I continue to reflect on this trip – and as I hope to plan a trip for this synod in the next year or so – I hold this verse in my heart from Isaiah, "Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow." Isaiah 1:17

May we all learn, seek, rescue, defend and plead for all of God's beloved children. For the little girl who longs to see water. For the little boy whose life was cut short. For the men who want their family homes. For those who daily work for justice. For those who daily pray for peace. Oh God, we pray, Kyrie eleison.

Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee

Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee

MARCH 2023 - MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Greetings All and Happy blessed Season of Lent –

Hopefully by the time you read this, the new digital sign will be installed and the first electronic message will be up for all of Monroe to see! It has been a long time in coming and I hope you are all as excited as I am to see this symbol of our new beginning as MSLC and MUMC **United in Grace** telling all the world of our new beginning together!!

It will be great to get weekly messages out to the passers-by on Lewis St., so if you come across in your reading, any short inspirational /funny /thought provoking bits that you think might be good on the sign, please send them on to me at the church address office@monroeuonline.org for consideration for posting. It's going to be great to go "live" with our new church sign and show everyone that WE are still LIVE as a church! Look for dedication of this new sign at the start of our Sunday service, coming SOON!

<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	
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

Here are the receipts and disbursements for the month of January:

Treasurers Report for January, 2023

TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$ 5,250.49
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	\$ 7,104.72
Shortage	-\$ 1,854.23

Wishing you all a blessed Lenten season!

See you in Church!

Nancy Franke
MUMC Financial Secretary


MARCH 2023 - MORNING STAR LUTHERAN CHURCH

2022 NON-DESIGNATED OFFERINGS AND EXPENSES

	2023 Budget	December Actual	January Actual
Offerings	\$ 8,917	\$24,457	Information unavailable at time of print
Expenses	\$10,384	\$11,568	\$12,567
Surplus/deficit		\$12,889	

2023 MSLC COUNCIL

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 vacant	
Worship Kathi Cooley	425-293-8694

 Morning Star Lutheran Church

 Monroe United Methodist Church

412 South Lewis Street
Monroe, WA 98272-4149



LOOKING AHEAD:

- Palm Sunday Worship and Brunch: April 2
- Good Friday Service: April 7
- Easter Sunday Celebration Service: April 7

March 5: SECOND LENT ~ COMMUNION ~ Scripture: Psalm 121; Gospel John 3:1-17

March 12: THIRD LENT ~ COMMUNION ~ Scripture: Psalm 95; Gospel John 4:5-42

March 19: FOURTH LENT ~ COMMUNION ~ Scripture: Psalm 23; Gospel-John 9:1-41

March 26: FIFTH LENT ~ COMMUNION Scripture: Psalm 130; Gospel John 11:1-45

CONTACT US:

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Music Director: Jill Sumpter

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MORNING STAR LUTHERAN

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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)