

GROWING IN *Grace*

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

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January 2021

HAPPY EPIPHANY! 2021 & HAPPY NEW YEAR!

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined" Isaiah 9:2

Sometimes in our Christian tradition we call Epiphany "Little Christmas", which is why I believe it is important for us to celebrate Epiphany. For many in North America the Christmas season of greens, lights, and tinsel ends on January 1st as the decorations come down and trees go out to the curb or get put back in the box for another year. It is interesting to me that this happens just as the winter is getting genuinely cold and dismal.

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

Maybe this year, especially as we enter another New Year of the COVID pandemic with hope of an end, might venture into new territory as we leave our lights on, some of our decorations up and continue to celebrate the unfolding of God who has come to us as Jesus, the word made flesh, and is present *for* and *with us*. Many of us have had a hard time seeing and finding the hope of a new light as our lives have been filled with many struggles these past 10 plus months. Yet, God is with us, as this light found in a humble manger, which has come into the world whether we recognize it or not, or accept it or not; to love all, to give hope for all and make the world whole again.

Epiphany, which is January 6th, is also a season of light in the dark seasonal days of our world. **We will celebrate Epiphany on Sunday January 3rd**. Throughout this season of light Jesus is revealed to us as repeatedly stepping beyond the accepted tribe, (those like us). The Epiphany season of the church year celebrates the discovery that **Someone** has come, sent by God to the entire world. Come, to bring God's light into our lives, to make a difference in our lives and our community, to heal our brokenness and to reveal the unimaginable depth of God's love for you and I, and **ALL** through this light of Christ.

We are called to be not just a place of healing and grace, but also a beacon of light for our world and our community, and a place of radical hospitality where all are welcome. A Place where **all** are welcome, not how we want them to be or think they should be, but just as they are when they come! Yes even in this year may we offer this radical hospitality in our hearts as are hearts are the stable into which Jesus has been born.

*Where will your light Shine?
Where will our light Shine and upon who will it Shine?*

HAPPY EPIPHANY

In this Epiphany season may the light of the star and the glory of God be revealed to you in new and unexpected ways! May you light candles and pray for the revealing of God's light in your darkness and for the ever widening of God's love and compassion in your lives. May you share that Epiphany light with those far off from God in our world!

Sunday, January 3, 2021

Epiphany

Join Monroe United Methodist and Morning Star Lutheran for a live service this Sunday, January 3rd, Epiphany Sunday.

The service will begin at 10:00 a.m.

To join the Zoom meeting:

<https://greaternw.zoom.us/j/94452893278>

Meeting ID: 944 5289 3278

**Average monthly views for the
Online Worship Services:**

December: 47 November: 49

October: 44



JOIN US FOR

Virtual Fellowship Hour

Sunday morning immediately
following worship.



Have you checked out our new website?



United in Grace



<https://www.unitedingrace.org/>

Our website is a joint venture between our two churches, with some pages featuring information for both congregations, and some that contain information for one specific congregation.

United in Grace is a great way to share information to the public about our churches, our services, and our joint ventures. It's also a wonderful tool for announcing upcoming events to our members.

It may be important to note that Monroe United Methodist Church and Morning Star Lutheran Church will retain their autonomy, and still remain two distinct congregations.

We hope this will be a blessing to both congregations!

If you haven't had a chance to see it, you should go look. We think it's pretty amazing!



From the Spirit, January 2021

Dear Beloveds,

For this new year, the synod staff has adopted a working statement. We are excited to share it with you and we hope that you may use it and adapt it in your context and community:

“Trusting in the Spirit, we are walking together as God’s people so that all may discover and participate in what God is doing among us through Jesus.”

“Trusting in the Spirit...”

Martin Luther writes in the Small Catechism regarding the third article of the Apostles’ Creed,

“I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel ...” As people of God, we know that doubts, concerns, worry, frustration and so many other things get in the way of following Jesus. But even when we do not have the strength or even the faith to carry on, God still calls us through the Spirit. As we hear and live into the good news that God comes to us – daily – hourly – every minute of every day, we are carried through the Spirit.

...we are walking together as God’s people ...

As I have said before, the word “synod” comes from two Greek words: sun- ‘together’ + hodos ‘way’. I love the image of walking together – of helping someone up when they stumble, of holding hands when it is difficult to see the way forward, of cheering on those who are in the front and encouraging those who are in the back – one huge Jesus-following gathering. This, of course, does not mean that we always agree. And it does not mean that we won’t have hard conversations. All of this is part of being in relationship (if you don’t have conversation anymore, you don’t have much of a relationship). But together, we, as the people of God, walk together, knowing that we are on a journey with Christ, knowing that we are Holy Community together.

...so that all may discover and participate in what God is doing among us through Jesus.”

Have you ever seen a baby discover their hands for the first time? Suddenly they are moving them around and laughing, curling their fingers, inspecting their palms, sticking them in their mouths. The gift of hands was something they never even comprehended before and suddenly – there they are. Right in front of their eyes.

Have you ever heard someone who recently heard the good news of Jesus express their wonder and amazement at who God is and who they are in God’s eyes? They suddenly see the world, themselves, each other, and God in a totally new way.

Sometimes those of us who have been around for a while, we forget. We forget the wonder, the beauty, the sheer joy of experiencing and participating in what God through Jesus is doing in this world of ours. As people of God, we are called to open our hearts, open our very beings, to see and hear and feel and experience and participate in what God is doing among us through Jesus. We are called to laugh, to inspect, to taste what God is doing in this amazing world we have been given. And we are called to share the good news of what we see God is up

to among us and the communities that surround us so that all may discover and participate.

Dear Beloveds, all of us on the synod staff are thankful for you as we live and dance in the Spirit, walk with you, and continue to live into the amazing grace of God through Jesus Christ our Savior.

In the Amazement of Epiphany,

Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee

“Seeking to Be God’s Light in the World”

Isaiah 40

A voice cries out:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.

Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”



The Western Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church has a vision of becoming a “home for all God’s children, gathered around a table of reconciliation and transformation.” Some have called us disobedient. Others claim that we are prophets for recognizing LGBTQ+ persons as beloved children of God, blessing their marriages and ordaining them for ministry long before most of the church. LGBTQ+ inclusion is just

one way we in the West have sought to set the table for all God’s children. The Western Jurisdiction embraces immigrants from around the world and has consecrated many “first bishops:” Wilbur Choy, Chinese American; Roy Sano, Japanese American; Elias Galvan, Hispanic American; Leontyne Kelly, Black woman; Minerva Carcaño, Hispanic American woman; and Karen Oliveto, first bishop in a committed, loving same-gender marriage.

United Methodist leaders in the Western Jurisdiction embrace John Wesley’s plea that we “be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion.” We are dedicating a year to noticing, naming and celebrating the variety of ministries “Where Love Lives” – not because we have a corner on the love market, but because love looks different in every place.

Let’s start by seeing where love lives in the extraordinary details of the Christmas story:

Love lives as a homeless couple, weary after a long day of travel, finds rest in an animal shed.

Love lives as this exhausted couple welcomes the untimely birth of their baby and lays him in a manger.

Love lives when a star shines in the night sky or a song spills from heaven – signs that a new and holy thing is happening.

Love lives where shepherd and sojourners show up in the night, after seeing, wondering and following these signs of hope.

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The Christmas story shows us that where love lives, things happen that you never thought possible. Just as God was born in Jesus, God can dwell in us, too, as we grow to love as wondrously as God loves, as extravagantly as Jesus loves our neighbors, strangers, and those we think of as enemies. This is very good news when people live in the shadow of death and under the yoke of oppression. Watch for Where Love Lives.

Love lives where a grandma lays her sweater on the shoulders of a sleeping stranger on a chilly bus.

Love lives where a caregiver holds a smartphone or tablet to connect a dying patient with a loved one.

Love lives when a local church welcomes strangers, widows and orphans seeking safety.

Love lives when people who are sorting out their sexuality and identity have a place at the table of faith.

Love lives where Christians live their baptismal promise to 'resist evil, injustice, & oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.'

Love lives when a passerby tapes a violent, racist atrocity on her phone for the world to witness. Love lives in the anguished cry for justice and love.

Love lives when a church offers space for people evacuated from wildfires to store their belongings, or board their pets.

Love lives when any of us find our hardened hearts open and ready to heal a broken relationship.

May Christ be born this dark Christmas. I pray that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.



Elaine JW Stanovsky
Bishop, Greater Northwest Episcopal Area

**The link below is for Bishop Stanovsky's
Christmas Message video:**

[A Christmas Message from Bishop Stanovsky –
Greater Northwest Area of The United Methodist
Church \(greaternw.org\)](https://www.greaternw.org)

Joy to the world!

Zephaniah 3:17 –

For the Lord your God is living among you. He is a mighty Savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With His love, He will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with JOYful songs.



The Christmas song proclaims, "Joy to the world! The Lord is Come!" But what does this mean in the midst of the chaos of life? Where is the joy as you watch your loved one suffer from COVID? Where is the joy when you have to lay off your workers while your business is shuttered? Where is the joy as the loneliness swallows you? Where is the joy in the midst of pain?

In our advent study we discussed the topic of "joy" versus "happiness". While happiness is based on outward circumstances, JOY is internally based. Happiness is transient, while JOY is rooted in the soul. Happiness is a feeling while JOY is a state of being.

So, during this time of struggle in the world there is joy in our heart. We must turn our eyes away from the world and towards its savior. We must tap into the Holy Spirit that comforts us instead of the nightly news that brings discord. Our savior is here! And, as we move from celebrating His birth to celebrating His ministry and then His resurrection, let us remember the love that brought our God to earth, the love that brought His sacrifice and the love that promises salvation. Let us turn our eyes away from the world that surrounds us and, instead let us look back to the little child lying in a manger, to the future promised us by His sacrifice on the cross. Joy to the world, not happiness to me. Joy, comfort and salvation for all.

1 Peter 1:8-9 – You love Him even though you have never seen Him. Though you do not see Him now, you trust Him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexplicable JOY. The reward for trusting Him will be the salvation of your souls.

Jasmine Ray-Symms
jasisymms@outlook.com
www.jasmineraysymms.com



MUMW Virtual Bazaar

Thanks to all who purchased wreaths and crafts from our annual woman's group bazaar that was on-line through Facebook this year. While we didn't get as much participation from outside the church as we would have liked, our church family from both churches helped us raise money for our annual pledge to woman and Children's mission, both locally and internationally and as of the count to date we raised \$710 (with a few payments still outstanding). Not bad considering it was all on-line with pictures only!

Special thanks go out to Velma Smith, the Queen of the Sewing Machine for all the crafts she made, starting in March, to Judie Esqueda for the fabulous crocheted creations (Santa's Elves could take lessons from you BOTH!), and to Jodi Fowler who made each and every one of the beautiful wreaths that were sold, and to Shannon Burke who headed up the delivery team with over 600 horses pulling that sled! Could not have done it without you! MUMW thanks you all!

Nancy Franke

Bazaar Chairman



Leadership Installations

The 2021 Leadership Council Teams
for both congregations will be installed on
Sunday, January 3rd
during the live worship service.



January 3rd, 10:00 am

<https://greaternw.zoom.us/j/94452893278>

Meeting ID: 944 5289 3278



Please see the letter below from Take the Next Step:

Dear Friends,

We hope you and your loved ones have been safe and well through this time of the pandemic.

If you have lost someone dear to you, please accept our condolences. We can only imagine how difficult this Holiday Season has been and will be.

This year, our appeal for your help and support is very simple...

We're not asking for ourselves or for any help with our programs or ongoing expenses; we're asking you to share with us to provide much needed financial assistance for struggling families in our community.

By year end, Take the Next Step will disburse nearly \$220,000 in financial assistance to help with rent and utilities so that families can stay in their homes and not become homeless, internet so children can keep up their learning while attending school remotely, help to pay overwhelming medical bills, and more life-sustaining basic needs and expenses.

So many families, severely impacted by the Coronavirus, could never have imagined having to ask for help...

A blended family of 10 – both father and mother had good, permanent, living wage jobs they planned to keep for a long time. Jobs they counted on to provide for their family. Both were furloughed in the spring and permanently laid off this summer. With the layoff, they lost their healthcare, too. In a quivering voice, the father told us, "I never thought I'd have to ask for help. We're hard working people. I don't know how to do this..."

A young family whose child was born with multiple serious medical issues and has been in Children's Hospital since her birth in early March. Mother and father split their time between the hospital and helping their other children attend Zoom school. Even if jobs were available, they can't risk going back to work and contracting COVID-19. Later this month, their daughter will have her ninth surgery in as many months.

Our financial assistance for families came through the Community Foundation of Snohomish County, Snohomish County CARES Act funding, FEMA's Emergency Shelter Program, and the City of Monroe CARES Act Rental Assistance Program. We are so very grateful. But, all of that ends on December 31st and so will our ability to help our community's most vulnerable families pay their rent, stay warm and healthy, and in many cases, feed and clothe their children.

Your donation will literally keep our most vulnerable families and individuals alive.

Your generous donation will make a difference in many lives. Gifts of any amount will help our families in need.

[Donate to 2021 Family Assistance Fund](#)

Hazels Little Free Pantry

The pantry has seen tremendous use this past month. The need for food is great right now as the financial impact of the pandemic seems to be worsening.

The pantry is completely out of the following items:

fruit cups, applesauce, tuna, vienna sausage, chili, and small boxes of cereal. We are also completely out of ALL personal items. Shampoo, soap, toothpaste, etc. Small travel sizes, like the type you get from hotels, are perfect if you have any!

Items running very low:

canned meals (Spaghetti's, Ravioli, etc.), top ramen type noodle soup, boxed soup, small boxed milk and granola bars.

Thank you for your loving care of our pantry.

You may have noticed the pantry is now called "Hazels" Little Free Pantry. The original Little Free Library was dedicated to Hazel Cassidy, a long time member of Morning Star.



Questions? Call or text Kathi Cooley at 425-293-8694

For the September Newsletter I introduced the lyrics from the song *"The Prayer"* by Celine Dion and Andre Bocelli.

Our God is good and he has almost seen us through this crisis.

*"I pray you'll be our eyes
And watch us where we go*

*And help us to be wise
In times when we don't know*

*Let this be our prayer
When we lose our way*

*Lead us to a place
Guide us with Your grace*

To a place where we'll be safe"

Thank you, Father, for leading us with grace to this moment in time where we have effective vaccines to end this pandemic. Thank you for guiding us when we have lost our way and keeping us safe.

Rhonda Morgan
Care Coordinator

January Birthdays & Anniversaries *

- 4 Pete Hartzell
- 6 Cody Missel
- 10 Jim Gee
- 20 Jasmine Ray-Symms
- 23 Annette Kyle
- 23 Gary & Margaret Lottermann *
- 24 Jerry & Judie Esqueda *
- 31 Margaret Lottermann

If you have a January celebration and you don't see your name, please call or email Kathi.

Milestones –

Ken Ruskell, long time MUMC member, passed away from complications of Covid 19 on November 26, 2020. Ken was the grounds keeper of MUMC for many years and did a beautiful job of maintaining our landscaping. Please keep his family in your prayers.

JANUARY 2021 - MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Happy New Year to you all! Hope your Christmas was a memorable and special as you could make it and you are all ready and preparing for the new year ahead!

The MUMC financial team is working on the budget for 2021 (a little late, but what isn't this year??) and we will have that and a year-end financial report for you in the next newsletter. Our thanks and blessings to go out to you all as you continue to support your church with your offerings and your prayers and cards of encourages and caring – it is a gift to everyone in our United By Grace team who continue to keep up the worship and the financial responsibilities during our time away from each other.

Also, your *Annual Giving Statements* will be mailed to you in the next few weeks. Feel free to let Nancy know if you have any questions or concerns.

Your financial Team,

Tanya Hubbard – Treasurer

Mike Obright – Finance Chairman

Nancy Franke – Financial Secretary

2020 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



JANUARY 2021 — MORNING STAR LUTHERAN CHURCH

RESULTS FROM THE DECEMBER 4 CONGREGATION MEETING

- 21 Congregation Members present
- **2021 BUDGET PROPOSAL**
 - * Offering Revenues: \$107,000
 - * Expenditures: \$121,964
 - * Net: **-\$ 14,814**
- **POLL RESULTS**
 - * Passed unanimously. The 2021 Proposed Budget is approved.
Contact the office if you would like a copy of the approved budget.
- **2021 COUNCIL ELECTION**
 - * The Nominating Committee was unable to find a candidate for the Treasurer or Facilities positions.
 - * **Treasurer**
 - Jeff will continue temporarily until someone is found to fill the position
 - * **Facilities**
 - There is currently no one in the Facilities position.
 - * **Secretary**
 - Marla Wardell was approved unanimously.



PLEASE NOTE: *It is important that the Treasurer position is filled as soon as possible. Prayerfully consider this opportunity to serve your church. Training will be provided. Please contact Missy Maxson, Jill Sumpter, Pastor Malcolm or Kathi Cooley if you would like more information or would like to serve as the Treasurer or Facilities.*

Thank you.

The Morning Star Council

MSLC NON-DESIGNATED OFFERINGS AND EXPENSES

	2020 Budget	October Actual	November Actual
Offerings	\$ 8,333	\$ 9,108	\$8,461
Expenses	\$10,021	\$10,240	\$8,912
Surplus/deficit		-1,132	-451

*Thank you to the retiring Council Members:
Patty Tompkins and Christopher Missel*

The Morning † Star congregation thanks you for your time served on the church council. As a church body, we have been blessed with your wisdom and dedication to the church, serving faithfully and always reaching above and beyond what is asked of you to help further the Word of God. Thank you.

The *Annual Giving Statements* will be mailed to you in the next few weeks. Contact Delaney Wardell if you have any questions or concerns.

<u>2021 MSLC COUNCIL</u>	
Administrative Director Missy Maxson	206-437-2535
Treasurer TEMPORARY UNTIL PERMANENT IS FOUND Jeff Schroeder	425-290-2879
Community Relations Cindy Gulbranson	425-210-2095
Facilities - VACANT	
Secretary Marla Wardell	360-794-4072
Ministry Director Jill Sumpter	360-348-7231
Worship Kathi Cooley	425-293-8694



Morning Star Lutheran Church



Monroe United Methodist Church

412 South Lewis Street

Monroe, WA 98272-4149

JANUARY 2021!

- January 3:** **EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD ~ LIVE COMMUNION SUNDAY** ~ Scripture: Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14; Matthew 12:1-12
- January 10:** **BAPTISM OF OUR LORD** ~ Scripture: Psalm 29; Mark 1:4-11
- January 17:** **2ND EPIPHANY ~ COMMUNION SUNDAY** ~ Scripture: Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18; John 1:43-51
- January 24:** **3RD EPIPHANY** ~ Scripture: Psalm 62:5-12; Mark 1:14-20
- January 31:** **4th Epiphany ~ COMMUNION SUNDAY** ~ Scripture: Psalm 111; Mark 1:21-28

CONTACT US:

Pastor Malcolm Brown

Email: prmalcolmb@gmail.com **Phone:** 360-794-2111

MONROE UNITED METHODIST

Office Administrator: Jasmine Ray-Symms

Phone: 360-794-8863

Email: office@monroeumonline.org

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

Website: www.monroeumonline.org

MORNING STAR LUTHERAN

Office Administrator: Kathi Cooley

Cell Phone: 425-293-8694

Phone: 360-794-2111

Email: mslc@morningstarlc.org

Music Director: Jill Sumpter: 360-348-7231

Website: www.morningstarlc.org

worship
ONLINE

**Monroe United Methodist Church &
Morning Star Lutheran Church**

**The service is ready for viewing
Sundays after 6:00 a.m. and is
available 24/7.**

YouTube

