

GROWING IN

# Grace

December 2024

**LOOK INSIDE FOR:**

Worship and Volunteer Sch.  
United in Grace Council  
A Precious Gift  
Fellowship & Outreach  
ELCA Bishop  
Church Business  
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## *CHRIST, Be your LIGHT, Be Our LIGHT*

**Happy New Year!!** It may seem that I am a bit early however the first Sunday of the church year is the first Sunday of Advent, December 1<sup>st</sup>. The time of Advent is a threshold, a gateway, a bridge.

This Advent, as we have now crossed a new threshold as one, 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. This Advent invites us with many new opportunities to create new traditions as the people of God in and for our world as *United in Grace*.

This year is no different in some ways and yet wonderfully different in this new and liminal time as we are now in the birth pangs as we mid-wife “*United in Grace*”, a new multi denominational “Union” congregation of the United Methodist Church (UMC) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). While we approved the joint constitution on October 6<sup>th</sup>, we will now move ahead to elect a council awaiting the final approval from both denominations.

*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, and 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.

This Advent as we sing *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*, **we** are reminded that Emmanuel means God with us.

God coming to us and breaking 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’.

In your waiting and longing, 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*



# December Worship



We invite you to join us for our annual Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 5:00PM. Experience the joy of Christmas as we come together to celebrate the birth of our Savior with music, reflection, and the warmth of candlelight.

Our December Grace in the Wild will focus on the Sacred found in our domestic nature-scapes. Meet at Gretchen & Rob Wilson’s barn for a unique Grace in the Wild gathering.



## DECEMBER SUNDAY MORNING MINISTRY SCHEDULE

Thank you for serving. You are an indispensable part of the body of Christ and we Thank You.

	DECEMBER 1	DECEMBER 8	DECEMBER 15	DECEMBER 22	DECEMBER 29
<b>Worship Asst.</b>	Nancy Franke	Missy Maxson	Jasmine Ray-Symms	Nancy Franke	Christine Coco
<b>Greeters</b>	Lori & Brian Johnson	Denny & Diana Coates	Perry & Valarie Cole	Joel & JoLynn Garrison	Bev Rice
<b>Ushers</b>	Lori & Brian Johnson	Denny & Diana Coates	Perry & Valarie Cole	Joel & JoLynn Garrison	
<b>Acolyte</b>	Ric Hart		Ric Hart		
<b>Reader</b>	Jill Sumpter	Ric Hart	Missy Maxson	Christine Coco	Michael Gore
<b>Comm. Prep.</b>	Harriet Barr	Kathleen Sallee	JoLynn Garrison	Charlie Brown	Kathleen Sallee
<b>Serve Comm.</b>	Lori & Brian Johnson	Nancy Franke	Joel & JoLynn Garrison	Jasmine Ray-Symms Kathi Cooley	
<b>Coffee Hour</b>	Missy Maxson	Jill Sumpter	Pamela Gore	Priscilla High	
<b>Altar Flowers</b>	Jill Sumpter		Valarie & Perry Cole		Jill Sumpter
<b>Soundboard</b>	Kathi Cooley	Charlie Brown	Kathi Cooley	Charlie Brown	Kathi Cooley

**New Council for United in Grace**

Hi Everyone –

As our calendar year draws to a close and we look forward to a new year, we can also look forward to the official status of United in Grace Church.

Article of Incorporation with the state of Washington have been filed and approved and United in Grace Church is now recognized as a legal non-profit corporation in the state of Washington.

By the end of this month we should have our tax identification from the IRS, our tax-exempt status, and our business license in both Washington and the City of Monroe. While it might have been easier back in the time of Jesus’s physical life on this earth to just build a building and declare a place of worship, the federal government and the state certainly don’t make it easy these days! But we did it!! So many of you helped to take multiple bites of that Elephant that we had to eat to get to this place despite the massive dung heap of regulations, requirements, research and edits that we had to wade through to get here. (feel free to ignore the visual on that one)

Your newly appointed Nomination Committee has done its work and our first United in Grace Church Council roster will be submitted for approval in the All Church Vote that will happen right after the service on Sunday, December 29<sup>th</sup>, so please plan to attend and cast your vote!

Here is the roster of officers and committee chairpersons that will be submitted for the all church confirmation vote:

Position	Candidate
Council Chair	Michael Gore
Council Co-Chair	Ben Ault
Treasurer	Valerie Cole
Secretary	Christine Coco
Finance Committee Chair	Gwen Paietta
Worship Committee Chair	Nancy Franke
Facilities & Grounds Committee Chair	Perry Cole
Congregation Life Committee Chair	POSSIBLY FILLED
Mission & Outreach Chair	POSSIBLY FILLED
Staff & Parish Relations Chair	OPEN

As you can see there are a few open / possibly open positions that still need to be filled. Here’s a bit about each one:

**Congregation Life Committee**

Composition: Committee Chair; Leaders of Women’s and Men’s Ministries; Sunday School and Bible Study leaders; other congregation members who express interest in serving on the committee; the Pastor as an ex-officio member with voice but without vote.

Main Duties: Plan and oversee care of Congregation members; plan, organize, and oversee ministries for specific needs within the church, for ministries to serve the Congregation.

**Mission & Outreach Committee**

Composition: Committee Chair; other Congregation members who express interest in serving on the committee; the Pastor as an ex-officio member with voice but without vote.

Main Duties: Plan and oversee or coordinate with church ministries and activities that respond to human need; work for justice and peace; care for the sick and the suffering; participate responsibly in society; manage all external coordination involving joint ministry with other churches and community organizations.

**Staff/Parish Relations Committee**

Composition: Committee Chair; other congregation members appointed by the Church Council; the Pastor as an ex-officio member with voice but without vote.

Main Duties: To supervise staff and any deacons or lay ministers; to work collaboratively with the Pastor to evaluate the effectiveness of the ministry; to conduct performance evaluations at least annually. Performance evaluations of the Pastor are to be coordinated as applicable with the denominational leadership of the ELCA or the Bishop or District Superintendent of the UMC.

If this sounds like something you might like to take on to help United in Grace leadership team, or if you might like to nominate someone for the open positions, please let Missy Maxson, Kathleen Sallee or Brian Johnson of the Nomination Committee know as soon as possible.

Remember, once the chairpersons of these committees are voted on and approved, they will be looking for volunteers to join the various committees to help, so I hope that everyone will consider your time and talents and how you might help one any of these committees to do its best work for all by volunteering.

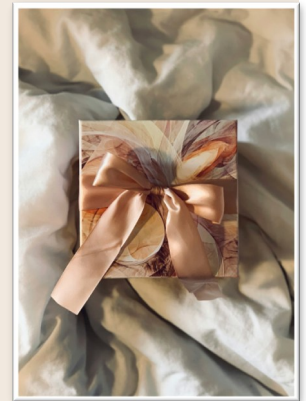
May you all have a blessed and joyous Advent season and on to the New Year and the new United in Grace Church!!

Nancy Franke

***A Precious Gift***

It's that time of year again. A time for overextended credit cards, family drama and disappointment as what we long for the holidays doesn't materialize. In the whirlwind of shopping and parties it's easy to get distracted from the reason for the season. We forget that we've already received the most important gift of all: the gift of our Savior.

It's easy to sound religious at this time of year. We debate saying, "Merry Christmas" or "Happy Holidays". We focus on Christmas lists instead of the gift we all need – the gift of salvation – that has already been offered to us. We are God's beloved children and Jesus Christ brings us back into right relationship with God. Unfortunately, too often we create systems where it's more important to get the latest Xbox instead of giving to those who have no hope of receiving such a gift.



**For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.**

**And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

**Of the greatness of his government and peace  
there will be no end.**

~ Isaiah 9:6-7a

At a time when stress and loneliness rob people of joy, come into the presence of the Wonderful Counselor. Receive the sacrifice that has been made by our Mighty God. Trust in our Everlasting Father who loves us as a perfect parent who won't bring strife but unity. In the midst of the hustle and bustle stop for a moment and seek the Prince of Peace.

I struggle to remember this as well, but I think it's important to take a moment to appreciate all we have without continuously desiring more. To remember to give from the heart instead of the pocketbook. To say "Thank you" to our God who loves us so much He came to earth as a baby to die as a man. His gift doesn't need batteries. It doesn't break. It doesn't need to be replaced with the next edition. His gift is eternal life offered to all. That is the gift we should receive with joy. That's the gift we should be sharing.

Jasmine Ray-Symms

[www.jasmineraysymms.com](http://www.jasmineraysymms.com)

Photo by [Mia Golic](#) on [Unsplash](#)

**December Birthday & Anniversary\* Celebrations\***

- |   |                 |    |                |    |                         |
|---|-----------------|----|----------------|----|-------------------------|
| 3 | Amy Halgren     | 4  | Pastor Malcolm | 18 | Pr. Malcolm & Charlie * |
| 4 | JoLynn Garrison | 12 | Rhonda Morgan  | 22 | Nancy Franke            |

**GET CONNECTED – FELLOWSHIP, STUDY, AND OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES**



**THE CHRISTMAS BAZAAR IS SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7<sup>TH</sup> FROM 9AM-3PM.**

**To make this event a success, we need you!**

We'll be getting ready for the bazaar at 3:00pm on Friday, December 6<sup>th</sup>. Please bring your bakery items and crafts to be priced and sorted.

If the Cold Weather Shelter **is not open** we will complete set up on Friday. If the Cold Weather Shelter **is open** Friday night, we'll need

to come at 8am Saturday morning to finish setting up for the 9am start. We need everyone to pitch in so if you can help, let Jasmine know and she will call to let you know when to come set up.

This is our main fundraiser for the year. All proceeds will go to support local ministries: Take the Next Step, Hazel's Little Free Pantry, Brown Bag Brigade and the Sky Valley and Sultan Food Banks. Come, shop and get some great gifts for teachers, loved ones, and a goodie for you!

**EVERYONE is invited to the Books, TV, & Movie Christmas Party on Tues., Dec. 17<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm in the Fellowship Hall!**

**Bring an appetizer or dessert to share and a wrapped white elephant gift. Do not put your name on it and be sure it's wrapped up tight!**

**You do not have to be a member of BTM to come. This party is for EVERYONE!**



**Advent Sound Bath – December 4**

If you're longing for a time to rest and reflect, please join us on Wednesday, December 4<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM in the sanctuary. Adam Riehl is returning to UIG to lead us in a sound bath for Advent.

For the most restful experience, bring a yoga mat, a blanket, and any bolster or pillow you prefer. You may also choose to experience it sitting in the pews, and you're welcome to bring a cushion or pillow to make you more comfortable.

*The sound bath is free and open to the community. There is no need to register. Free-will donations are gladly accepted to help cover the cost.*



**SPECIAL SUNDAYS FOR OUR MINISTRIES**

**BROWN BAG SUNDAY — DECEMBER 8**  
**HAZEL'S LITTLE FREE PANTRY SUNDAY — DECEMBER 29**

Special emphasis is given and financial offerings are accepted for these important ministries on these days. Specially marked envelopes are found in the backs of the pews and on the Greeters desk on Sunday morning.



## Pantry Donation From Bob's Corn and Pumpkin Farm in Snohomish



The Little Free Pantry was blessed in abundance with a large donation of end of season products from Bob's Corn in Snohomish. Over 11 boxes showed up on the porch full of packages of granola, nuts and snacks, beef jerky, jars of pickled eggs (which our friends who use the pantry have really liked!), a case of raspberry jam to make our daily PBJ's, pickled asparagus, individual bags of dried fruit, nuts and snack mixes, caramel corn puffs, and, of course, popped corn – 2 cases of it popped and bagged and ready to eat! Thanks to Bob and Sarah Ricci and staff of Bobs Corn and Pumpkin Farm. This has been a real gift to the pantry and those who are fed from it, and such a great example of neighbor helping neighbor.



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

Dear Beloveds,

*This is but the beginning of the birth pangs ...* Mark 13:8

There are a lot of stories about women and pregnancy and motherhood in the Bible. To list some of these women off

the top of my head, and in no particular order: Hannah, Sarah, Elizabeth, Mary, Eve, Hagar, Rebekah, Jochebed, Rachel, Tamar, Bathsheba, Ruth, and all those unnamed women - Manoah's wife, the Shunammite woman, the widow of Zarephath, and more, I'm sure.

I think that there is a tendency to over-spiritualize these women's stories – or, honestly, to just pass over them because we know the outcome of their pregnancies (and so often we memorize their sons' stories instead of theirs). We know Hannah had Samuel the prophet ... but we might forget she fiercely prayed and wrestled with God for a child. We know that Jochebed had Moses ... but we might forget how she gave him away (actually placed him in a basket and sailed him down a river) to save him and then pretended to be someone else in order to raise him. We know that Bathsheba had Solomon ... but we might forget the messiness and horror that came before his birth – how she became pregnant with her first son and how he died early in life and later how she maneuvered to get Solomon on the throne.

And then there are the two pregnancies in Advent:

- Elizabeth. Old menopausal wrinkled-up Elizabeth who is surprisingly with child. Elizabeth who gets both startled and assured when her baby kicks for the first time as she greets expectant Mary on her doorstep.
- Mary. Young Mary who is so often depicted in art and literature and even theology as being passive and demure. As being above such things as having spinach between her teeth or toilet paper stuck to her shoe or anything that goes along with being human. We don't hear of her having cravings or swollen ankles or heartburn or a growing belly. But, surely, she did. How could she not as she carried our Savior within her?

Advent is sometimes depicted as a waiting time. As a time when we are anticipating something coming towards us. We often say that "Christmas is coming" or "Christ will come again."

But isn't Advent also a movement time. A time that changes and expands, stretches and swells. A time when there is kicking and motion. A time that is exciting but also terrifying. A time that is anticipatory but also unknown. A time when something is growing inside but cannot be seen ... yet.

As I write this, the 2024 election happened a week ago. For half of the country, the outcome was devastating. For the other half, it was welcomed. Personally, I am trying to understand what this means for so many. Truly, I am concerned and broken-hearted when I think of the campaign promises that were made and the potential actions to so many vulnerable communities. The possible scenarios can make you stop and weep and fall on your knees exhausted.

But here's the thing: Regardless of the outcome of the election, we are an Advent people. Like Hannah, we pray to God. Like Jochebed, we act to save those whose very lives are at risk. Like Bathsheba, we name and work for the well-being of those we love. Like Elizabeth, we clasp our bellies and feel the Spirit moving within us. Like Mary, we lift our heads high and we cry out against injustice and tyranny and we lift up those who are marginalized, hated, and oppressed.

In this Advent / Pregnant / Gestation time, as we wait and act, grow and stretch, move and expect, as we deeply yearn for this new life that is coming, may these women's stories fill us with fortitude and courage, and may Jesus – the Word made flesh, Emmanuel, God With Us – bring the promises of hope, peace, joy, and love to completion in this beautiful and broken world. May these birth pangs bring a new world into being.

+Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee

[bishop@lutheransnw.org](mailto:bishop@lutheransnw.org)

Church Business

**DECEMBER 2024 - MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

**MONROE UNITED METHODIST TREASURER'S  
REPORT FOR THE OCTOBER, 2024**

TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$11,647.15 *
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	- \$ 7,481.36
	+ \$ 4,165.79

\*this includes a \$5K donation for the new refrigerator purchase

**2024 MUMC LAY LEADERSHIP**

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

UWG President  
**Jasmine Ray-Symms** 425-223-9866

Recording Secretary  
vacant

Church Business

**DECEMBER 2024 - MORNING STAR LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**2024 NON-DESIGNATED OFFERINGS AND EXPENSES**

	2024 Budget	August Actual	September Actual	October Actual
Offerings	\$ 8,917	\$ 5,832	\$ 6,244	\$ 6,843
Expenses	\$10,384	\$ 8,008	\$ 7,862	\$10,155
Surplus/ deficit		- \$ 2,176	- \$ 1,618	- \$ 3,312

**2024 MSLC COUNCIL**

Treasurer:  
**Brian Johnson** 425-503-8352

Community Relations:  
**Kathleen Sallee** 425-387-2638

Worship:  
**Kathi Cooley** 425-293-8694

**ADMINISTRATIVE**

**CONGREGATION MEETING  
DECEMBER 29**

**IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE SERVICE**



\* To elect the 2025 United in Grace Council members.



**2024 OFFERINGS**

Offerings and contributions for the 2024 tax season must reach the church offices by **December 31, 2024**

  
**CHURCH ATTENDANCE**

**NOVEMBER 2024**

In Person: 38      Online: 10

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

# December



## LOOKING AHEAD THIS MONTH:

- \* **Sound Bath**  
Wednesday the 4<sup>th</sup> at 7pm
- \* **UWG Bazaar**  
Saturday the 7<sup>th</sup>, 9am—3pm
- \* **Books, TV, & Movies White Elephant Party**  
Tues. the 17<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm Fellowship Hall
- \* **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** 5pm
- \* **Grace in the Wild**  
Saturday the 28<sup>th</sup> at 10am
- \* **Congregation Meeting**  
Sunday, December the 29<sup>th</sup>, immediately following the service

## DECEMBER'S SCRIPTURE:

**December 1: 1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT ~ Scripture: Psalm 25:1-19; Luke 21:25-36**

**December 8: 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT ~ Scripture: Luke 1:68-79; Luke 3:1-6**

**December 15: 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT ~ Scripture: Isaiah 12:2-6; Luke 3:7-18**

**December 22: 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT ~ Scripture: Luke 1:46b-55; Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)**

**December 29: FIRST CHRISTMAS ~ Scripture: Psalm 148; Luke 2: 41-52**

## CONTACT US:

### Pastor Malcolm Brown

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**Email:** [prmalcolmb@gmail.com](mailto: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@unitedingrace.org](mailto:office@unitedingrace.org)

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

### MORNING STAR LUTHERAN

**Phone:** 360-794-2111

**Email:** [office@unitedingrace.org](mailto:office@unitedingrace.org)

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

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



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

# December 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p><b>1</b> <i>First Sunday of Advent</i></p> <p>9:15 Choir <b>10 Worship</b></p>	<p><b>2</b></p>	<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p>12:30pm Refit Class Fellowship Hall</p>	<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p>3:00pm Bazaar Set-Up</p>	<p><b>7</b></p> <p><b>9am-3pm Christmas Bazaar Fellowship Hall</b></p>
<p><b>8</b> <i>Second Sunday of Advent</i> <i>Brown Bag Sunday</i></p> <p>9:15 Choir <b>10 Worship</b></p>	<p><b>9</b></p>	<p><b>10</b></p>	<p><b>11</b></p> <p>12:30pm Refit Class Fellowship Hall</p>	<p><b>12</b></p>	<p><b>13</b></p>	<p><b>14</b></p>
<p><b>15</b> <i>Third Sunday of Advent</i></p> <p>9:15 Choir <b>10 Worship</b></p>	<p><b>16</b></p>	<p><b>17</b> <b>6:30 pm BTM White Elephant Christmas Party Fellowship Hall</b></p>	<p><b>18</b></p> <p>12:30pm Refit Class Fellowship Hall</p>	<p><b>19</b></p>	<p><b>20</b></p>	<p><b>21</b></p>
<p><b>22</b> <i>Fourth Sunday of Advent</i> <i>Hazel's Little Free Pantry Sunday</i></p> <p>9:15 Choir <b>10 Worship</b></p>	<p><b>23</b></p>	<p><b>24</b></p> <p><b>5:00pm Christmas Eve Candle- light Service</b></p>	<p><b>25</b></p> 	<p><b>26</b></p>	<p><b>27</b></p>	<p><b>28</b></p> <p><b>10:00am Grace in the Wild</b> 5007 139th Ave SE, Snohomish</p>
<p><b>29</b> <i>First Sunday of Christmas</i></p> <p>9:15 Choir <b>10 Worship</b> <b><u>Congregation Meeting</u></b></p>	<p><b>30</b></p>	<p><b>31</b></p>				
<p>If you would like to add or remove something from the church calendar, or have questions about room availability, please contact Kathi in the church office 360-794-2111 or <a href="mailto:office@unitedingrace.org">office@unitedingrace.org</a></p>						