

GROWING IN

# Grace

**LOOK INSIDE FOR:**

United in Grace Council  
Fellowship and Outreach  
Sunday Morning Volunteer Sch.  
Treasurer Report  
ELCA Bishop Shelly  
Calendar

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**March 2025**

## ***Pastor Malcolm's thoughts for March 2025***

In Epiphany we walked with Christ while he was among us on the earth, joining with Him in establishing God's kingdom. Much was revealed to us and we too were called in Epiphany to also reveal God breaking into our world with love, grace and mercy. Let us continue to be the people of God together seeking, listening and paying attention to God. seeking the living presence of God in our daily lives and called to be God's presence in and for God's beloved creation and world. Now we will retreat with Jesus into the wilderness to reflect. During Lent.



## **Lent** Anglo-Saxon: "spring"

As early as the mid-fourth century, Christians have observed a time of preparation before the Easter Sunday celebration on April 20th. Lent is a 40-day journey that begins on Ash Wednesday (March 5<sup>th</sup>) and ends on Good Friday (April 18<sup>th</sup>). The Lenten season recall the 40 day fast of Jesus in the wilderness after his baptism (Matthew 4:2, Luke 4:1-2) and Moses' 40 day fast on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:28).

***Lent is a time of simplicity and preparation. The color of the season is Purple suggesting somberness and solemnity.***

Some of us may remember when Lent was primarily a season of penitence and sorrow, of giving up something so as to focus more deeply on our relationship with God. Certainly, self-reflection and self-examination are important and meaningful parts of our journey. I invite us this Lenten Season into a journey of growth discovering and re-discovering the mysteries of ***Rest and Renewal***, of breathing deep and going deeper into our relationship with our loving God.



## ***Ash Wednesday Worship – March 5<sup>th</sup> - 7pm***

**Ash Wednesday** marks the beginning of the season of Lent, the 40-day, reflective journey leading up to and through Holy Week, and finally to the joy of Easter morning. We, like many churches, use ashes during the ***Ash Wednesday*** worship in a ritual called the ***Imposition of Ashes***. In this custom, ashes are mixed with a small amount of oil and applied to the forehead of each worshipper. In the Ash Wednesday bulletin these words are written: ***Earth to Earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.***

We recall these words as ashes are placed on our heads and we are vividly reminded that: ***'we are dust and to dust we shall return'***. The ash is a chilling reminder of our mortality, but because our death is now in Christ, our endings are beginnings. The Lenten disciplines of acts of kindness, prayer, and fasting are tools of ***discipleship*** that can lead us to renewal as we bury all that is holding us back from truly being alive. Lent is an invitation to a journey that will lead to the new life and resurrection of Easter.

*continued on next page*

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

I invite you literally into a time of getting more rest, of saying **NO** to adding more stuff to your calendars, and of which you would consider removing from our calendars that which does not give you life and a renewed heart. In his Lenten Journal theologian, Henri Nourwen, wrote these words in 1992; “. . . hone in on the voice of Jesus that says, ‘I am your God, I have molded you with my own hands, and I love what I have made. I love you with a love that has no limits. Don’t run from me. Come back to me—not once, not twice, but always again. ...I so much want you to be close to me”

I invite you away for a stance of scarcity, not enoughness and Eeyorness into a journey of abundance and gratefulness, of enoughness, in which you can say; “It is enough, it is more than enough!”- Journey by living in the grace and mercy of God’s heart, the God who is near and active in our lives, the God who calls us to be close, and the God who invites us into the radical and passionate nature of abundance, of enoughness and of eternal love, grace, mercy and forgiveness.

Come retreat with Jesus and each other. I invite you to “Be Still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). I invite you to “Listen to him” (Luke 9:35). I invite you into enoughness! Come as we journey together in the wilderness with Jesus.

God be with us and bless us on our journey together to the empty tomb.

*Pastor Malcolm*



### 2025 UNITED IN GRACE COUNCIL MEMBERS

#### Council Officers:

Council Chair: Michael Gore - [goremw@msn.com](mailto:goremw@msn.com)  
 Council Co-Chair: Ben Ault - [bendieseldx@gmail.com](mailto:bendieseldx@gmail.com)  
 Treasurer: Valarie Cole - [valariejcole@gmail.com](mailto:valariejcole@gmail.com)  
 Secretary: Christine Coco - [christinecoco@live.com](mailto:christinecoco@live.com)

#### Committee Chairpersons:

Finance: Gwen Paietta - [gwenpaietta@gmail.com](mailto:gwenpaietta@gmail.com)  
 Worship: Nancy Franke - [nfranke@comcast.net](mailto:nfranke@comcast.net)  
 Facilities: Perry Cole - [perrycole58@gmail.com](mailto:perrycole58@gmail.com)  
 Congregation Life: Jasmine Ray-Symms - [jasisymms@outlook.com](mailto:jasisymms@outlook.com)  
 Mission & Outreach: Jay Morgan - [j.morgan40@gmail.com](mailto:j.morgan40@gmail.com)

Council Meetings are typically held on the second Sunday of the month. Congregation members are welcome to attend any regularly scheduled meeting.

**From Mission & Outreach** - Please don't forget to reply to me what you would like to see us do for outreach. Or just let me know what you already do and how we might help.

*Jay Morgan*

#### From your Worship Committee -

Hi All-

Here we are in March – entering into the Holy season of Lent and all the preparing for all the special services that will accompany that. The worship Core committee of Pr. Malcolm, Charlie Brown, Kathi Cooley, and I (Jill Sumpter is also a part of this committee but was unable to attend) met last month to discuss preparations for this event, along with other worship concerns and questions that have come from the congregation.

As we go forward, the first thing I would like to do is form a TEAM list of those who would be willing to fill specific positions for the church service and preparation and seasonal decorating, when needed.

I will be putting out TEAM sign lists in church to form our teams in the next week or so. These will include Communion prep, ushers, communion servers, worship assistants, readers, sound board technician (will train 😊) and altar and lobby seasonal decorating. We will still be using the monthly sign up sheet for the individual Sundays,

continued on next page

but the TEAM's list will provide Kathi with a roster to draw from of those willing to serve if an upcoming Sunday is in need and, so please sign up on the team list even if you only want to be an emergency fill in, as well as those who regularly sign up to fill spots on the monthly list. All who sign up will get a written procedure of the spot they are volunteering to fill and will be a good resource to use if you find at the last minute that you cannot fill the spot you signed up for. Also a great way to "branch out" and try out becoming a part of the worship service, even if it's just once, and see the Sunday conversation with God from a more participatory view. You might be surprised how much you might just enjoy it! 😊

Other things that your worship committee is working on are discussing the sources for our Sunday music selections and possibly having some come from hymnals and song books that we have in the pews, for those who like to see the actual music and sing the different parts. Jill, our wonderful music director, uses many sources to keep the music updated and introduce us to newer songs of faith and worship, but also carefully balances the old standard hymns that we know and love, and that may just make worshipers want to hold that old hymnal in their hands and really feel the music in the notes they sing. We are all blessed by Jill's efforts every week, don't you think? 😊

That's all for now. Don't forget the Ash Wednesday Service on Wednesday April 5<sup>th</sup> at 7pm, and be sure to check out all the church happenings and dates of special services that are updated weekly on the United in Grace calendar on the website [www.unitedinGrace.org](http://www.unitedinGrace.org).

See you in church!

*Nancy Franke*  
Worship Chairperson



The service will be livestreamed for those unable to attend.



We are meeting this month at Lord Hill Park at the end of Tester Road in Monroe.

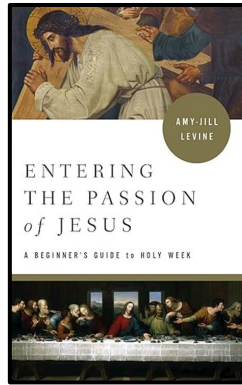


Join us for a Lenten evening of Sound and Stillness on Wednesday, March 12, at 7:00 PM. Step into an oasis of communal peace and quiet as we begin our journey toward Palm Sunday and Holy Week. Together, we will wait in the darkness for the coming light. Dress comfortably and bring a yoga mat, pillow, and blanket. The Sound Bath is offered at no charge, but a freewill offering will be collected to help cover costs. We look forward to sharing this sacred time with you.

## FELLOWSHIP, STUDY, AND OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES

### **Bible Nerds is returning in March with a new study for Lent.**

We'll be reading "Entering the Passion of Jesus: A Beginner's Guide to Holy Week" by Amy-Jill Levine. 'From Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem to his prayerful agony in Gethsemane, Levine brings forward aspects and details that open doors for beginners as well as seasoned readers of the Bible. She shows how the text raises ethical questions for the reader, and how we all face risk in our Christian experience.'



Bible Nerds meets every other Wednesday, **beginning on March 5<sup>th</sup>**, which is also Ash Wednesday, so this first meeting will start slightly earlier than usual **with dinner at 5:30, then a slightly shorter study starting at 6, wrapping up in time for everyone to attend the Ash Wednesday service at 7:00.**

**Future meetings** will return to the original start time of **6:00 for dinner and 6:30 for study.** For any questions, please contact Kaitlyn Ault.

### **Looking to explore your faith with others in a fun, supportive environment? Check out Jesus and Java Sunday mornings at 8:15 in the Fellowship Hall.**

- February 23<sup>rd</sup> - March 9<sup>th</sup>  
**Examining Liturgy**
- March 16<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup>  
**No Study**
- April 6<sup>th</sup> - May 11<sup>th</sup>  
**Making Sense of the Bible**



*It is not necessary to read the books to participate!*



### BOOKS, TV & MOVIES!

March 18 - 6:30pm  
HOST: Missy Maxson

Spring is just around the corner, and we couldn't be more excited! Let's get ready for the season by coming together to share our favorite books, movies, and TV shows over snacks and drinks. Join us at Missy and Pete's house on the 18<sup>th</sup> — check the directory for their address. Hope to see you there!

~SAVE THE DATE~

*"From Burnout to Bliss"*

UNITED WOMEN IN GRACE  
2025 WOMEN'S RETREAT

SATURDAY, APRIL 12  
9:30AM - 2:00PM





Our Muslim neighbors have warmly invited us to join them for Iftar (the evening meal to break the fast) every Saturday at sunset during Ramadan. Ramadan is a sacred time of fasting, reflection, and community. This is a wonderful opportunity to experience their traditions, share in meaningful conversation, and build relationships across faiths. Enjoy a warm welcome, delicious food, and insights from their Imam. All are invited—come as you are and share in this spirit of hospitality and connection! For tickets, go to: <https://tinyurl.com/mz2h5j66>  
23515 Old Owen Road, Monroe



### **YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN THE LENT AND EASTER CHOIR!**

Practice begins March 9<sup>th</sup> at 9:15 in the sanctuary. All levels and abilities are welcome.

**Join Jill and let your voice be heard!**

**SPECIAL SUNDAYS FOR OUR MINISTRIES**

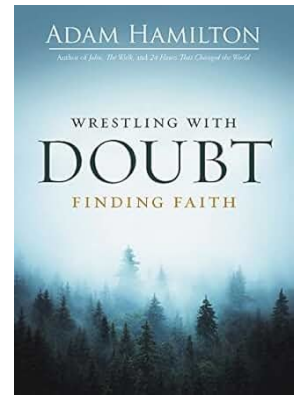
**BROWN BAG SUNDAY — MARCH 9**  
**HAZEL'S LITTLE FREE PANTRY SUNDAY — MARCH 30**

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.

**March 2025**

Our Adult Sunday School class, Jesus and Java, just wrapped up Adam Hamilton’s “Wrestling with Doubt Finding Faith”. We asked questions and explored what it means to have a faith with doubts. There were no easy answers, but we were able to explore ideas and share the doubts we feel. There were six questions we examined:

- Is There a God?
- The Good Book? Wrestling with the Bible
- Are All Non-Christians Going to Hell?
- Is Heaven Real?
- When Prayers Go Unanswered?



**Why do the Innocent Suffer?**

I think it’s fair to say we all struggle in some way with these doubts. As I started writing this, I was thinking my struggle is with “When Prayers Go Unanswered”, but really, I wonder about all of these in one way or another. I consider my faith strong, but I know I question my life and my understanding of God at times. “God, are you really there? Do you really love me?” “Is the Bible true? Is it inerrant or is it a collection of essays written by fallible humans?” “Are there limits to God’s love? Do we really go to Hell if we don’t believe specific things?” “Why is there suffering in the world? If God is omnipotent, why does He allow such pain in the world?” There’s a meme on Facebook going around. Man: “God, why do you allow things like hate, famine, war, suffering, disease, crime, homelessness, despair, etc. to exist in our world?” Jesus responds, “Interesting that you should ask because I was about to ask you the exact same question.”

We talk about having faith in God. I think that means we strive to trust Him without having all the answers. God’s love is limitless. He is stronger than our doubts. He is strong enough to handle our questions. Just as a small child asks mom or dad a million questions, we can sit with our heavenly Father and ask all the questions on our heart. We are safe with Him. We are secure with Him. We are loved by Him.

**Jasmine Ray-Symms**

425-223-9866  
 jasisymms@outlook.com  
[www.jasmineraysymms.com](http://www.jasmineraysymms.com)

**MARCH SUNDAY MORNING MINISTRY SCHEDULE**

*Lots of openings still left this month. Stop by the Volunteer Sign-Up desk in the narthex & sign-up!*

	MARCH 2	MARCH 9	MARCH 16	MARCH 23	MARCH 30
<b>Worship Asst.</b>	Missy Maxson	Nancy Franke		Nancy Franke	Missy Maxson
<b>Greeters</b>	Perry & Valarie Cole	Bev Rice	Denny & Diana Coates		
<b>Ushers</b>	Perry & Valarie Cole		Denny & Diana Coates		
<b>Acolyte</b>	Charlie Brown	Valarie Cole			
<b>Reader</b>	Missy Maxson	Rebekah Jones-Kirby	Jill Sumpter	Michael Gore	Missy Maxson
<b>Comm. Prep.</b>	Susan Slate	Kathleen Sallee		Harriet Bar	
<b>Serve Comm.</b>	Nancy Franke Rebekah Jones-Kirby				Nancy Franke
<b>Coffee</b>		Rebekah Jones-Kirby	Missy Maxson	Pamela Gore	
<b>Altar Flowers</b>	Rebekah Jones-Kirby	Jill Sumpter		Jill Sumpter	
<b>Sound-board</b>	Kathi Cooley	Charlie Brown	Kathi Cooley	Charlie Brown	Kathi Cooley

**TREASURER REPORT FOR MARCH**

Valarie Cole

I've spent January and February transitioning from Monroe United Methodist Church & Morning Star Lutheran Church to United in Grace Church. This has involved starting a new company, merging churches, new payroll, new accounting software and lots of help as I'm learning my way around what we have, where it's located, and what our bills look like. I've included the January Financials below. If you have any questions or want more details, please let me know.

One of the items we have merged is our Kroger/Fred Meyer Community Rewards. This is a program that gives a portion of your purchases back to our church. If you are currently enrolled in the Community Rewards, please check your account online. It should now state that United in Grace Church is your Community Rewards organization. If you shop at Fred Meyer and have a rewards card that isn't linked to an organization, you can do that under your account. Our organization number is WQ122. If you have any questions or need help setting this up, I would be happy to help you.

Another important item that I need **help with is counting the offering each week**. We need 2 people each week and it should take about 30 minutes or less. This includes taking the offering to the church office, counting & recording giving, & dropping the deposit at Umpqua bank in the night deposit box. We did this prior to Covid and provides internal controls and separation of duties. I will train those willing to help. If you are interested in helping with this, please let me know. I would love to have a few teams who can work together so it's not an every week job for just two people.

**January Financials**

<b>General Fund</b>			
	<b>Income</b>		
	General Fund	\$ 11,192.01	
	Hazel's Pantry	\$ 205.00	
	<b>Total Income</b>		\$ 11,397.01
	<b>Expenses</b>		
	General Fund	\$ 18,436.14	
	Hazel's Pantry	\$ 452.83	
	<b>Total Expenses</b>		\$ 18,888.97
	<b>Ahead/Behind</b>		\$ (7,491.96)
<b>Brown Bag Brigade</b>			
	Income	\$ 391.00	
	Expenses	0	
	<b>Ahead/Behind</b>		\$ 391.00



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

Dr. Anna Lembke, a psychiatrist and an expert in addiction, states: "Rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide are going up in countries all over the world, and they're going up fastest in the richest nations of the world. ... We are now turning to [electronic] devices and to the Internet to meet our physical, emotional, sexual, educational, every need we have. We don't really need other people anymore. We can get those needs met from the internet. I think that's a very scary prospect because I think it means that we will become more and more isolated." ("Digital Drugs Have Us Hooked. Dr. Anna Lembke Sees a Way Out," *The Daily by The New York Times* podcast, 2/1/2025)

What Dr. Lembke is talking about is the dopamine hit that people receive while on their phones and other devices. More and more research is coming out that dopamine, the neurotransmitter that motivates us to do things we think will bring pleasure, is being activated by electronic media in the same way that junk food activates over-eating.

So why am I (a theologian, pastor, and bishop - but not a scientist) talking about this? Well, I think that the moving from human interaction to electronic interaction is of theological and pastoral concern. You see, at the same time that more and more research is telling us about the harm that is happening when we get "hits" of dopamine from electronic media, we are also hearing (and experiencing in our own lives and social networks) that loneliness and anxiety and stress are rising. In isolation, we might lose trust in others and in our institutions, experience a crumbling of empathy, be susceptible to disinformation, and build walls instead of bridges to another.

Now, before you say to me, "Do you know what is happening in this world?" Please hear me – I know. I know. There is a lot going on in our families, with people we care about, in the United States, and in the world as a whole. I, too, am feeling despair and disbelief. There are valid reasons for feeling anxiety and stress. And we might feel isolated and scared because of these circumstances.

But I implore you, please don't try to navigate all of the things you are experiencing alone – without anyone around you. Please don't always turn to your phone and doomscroll or neglect relationships or separate yourself. Instead, I encourage you to look for those spaces where you can physically connect with another person or people. Please find those places where you can authentically, truly be yourself – in your joy, in your sorrow, in your anxiety, and more.

I pray that one of these places is your church community. That you can pray and sing and learn and grow, that you can receive and grant forgiveness through Jesus, receive the sacraments, take action through the Spirit, give and receive care, and that you can rest when needed. I pray that you may do this all in a sacred space where you deeply connect with others – even if you don't always agree with one another. I pray that you can have meaningful relationships, conversation, and can be there for one another. I pray that you receive love just as you love others. I pray that if you are feeling lonely or despairing, there are those you can reach out to who will sit with you and bring God's promises again to you.

In these days, when it feels like there is so much, may you feel God's love and grace surrounding you in the community of others. May we trust in Jesus' promise, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

+Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee  
[bishop@lutheransnw.org](mailto:bishop@lutheransnw.org)



**March Birthdays and Anniversaries \***

- 3 William Gray
- 5 Emily Hughes
- 13 Harriet Barr
- 14 Susan Slate
- 15 Madelyn Cook
- 15 Powell Phillips
- 22 Michele Cooper
- 26 Tristan Brown
- 26 Christina Gore
- 27 Markus Gray
- 29 Kari Gray
- 30 Michael & Pamela Gore \*

**CHURCH ATTENDANCE**

**February 2025**

**In person: 33    Online: 12**

# MARCH 2025

## LOOKING AHEAD THIS MONTH:

- \* **Jesus and Java**  
Sunday's @ 8:15 in the Fellowship Hall
- \* **Bible Nerds**  
Begins Wed. the 5<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm in the Fellowship Hall
- \* **Ash Wednesday Service**  
March 5<sup>th</sup> at 7pm
- \* **Church Council Meeting**  
Sunday the 9<sup>th</sup> at 11:15am in the Office
- \* **Lenten Sound Bath**  
Wednesday the 12<sup>th</sup> at 7pm in the Sanctuary
- \* **Books, TV, & Movies**  
Tuesday the 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 @ Missy Maxson's home
- \* **Grace in the Wild**  
Saturday the 29<sup>th</sup> at 10am @ Lord Hill Park

## SCRIPTURE FOR MARCH:

**March 2: Transfiguration of Our Lord** ~ Scripture: Psalm 99; 2 Corinthians 3:12–4:2; Luke 9:28-37

**March 5: Ash Wednesday** ~ Scripture: Joel 2:1-2,12-17; Psalm 51:1-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20b–6:10; Matthew 6:1-6,16-21

**March 9: First Lent** ~ Scripture: Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16; Romans 10:8b-13; Luke 4:1-13

**March 16: Second Lent** ~ Scripture: Psalm 27; Philippians 3:17-41; Luke 13:17-4:1

**March 23: Third Lent** ~ Scripture: Psalm 63:1-8; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; Luke 13:1-9

**March 30: Fourth Lent** ~ Scripture: Psalm 32; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

## CONTACT US:

### Pastor Malcolm Brown

**Phone:** 360-794-2111

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

**Office Administrator:** Kathi Cooley

**Music Director:** Jill Sumpter

**Live stream editor:** Bryce Cooley

**Phone:** 360-794-2111

**Phone:** 360-794-8863

**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 ON YOUTUBE



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

# March 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 8:15 Jesus and Java <b>10 Worship</b> <b>Transfiguration Sunday</b>	3	4	5 12:30pm Refit 5:30pm Bible Nerds <b>Ash Wednesday Service</b> 7pm	6	7	8 
9 <b>Brown Bag Sunday</b> 8:15 Jesus and Java 9:15 Choir <b>10 Worship</b> 11:15 Council Mtg. <b>1<sup>ST</sup> LENT</b>	10	11	12 12:30pm Refit Class Fellowship Hall  7pm Lenten Sound Bath Sanctuary	13	14	15
16 9:15 Choir <b>10 Worship</b>  <b>2<sup>ND</sup> LENT</b>	17	18 6:30pm Books, TV, & Movies Host: Missy Maxson	19 12:30pm Refit Class Fellowship Hall  6pm Bible Nerds Fellowship Hall	20	21	22
23 9:15 Choir <b>10 Worship</b>  <b>3<sup>RD</sup> LENT</b>	24	25	26 12:30pm Refit Class Fellowship Hall	27	28	29 10am Grace in the Wild at Lord Hill Park
30 <b>Hazel's Little Free Pantry Sunday</b> 9:15 Choir <b>10 Worship</b>  <b>4<sup>TH</sup> LENT</b>	31					