

GROWING IN

Grace

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February 2023

Pastor Malcolm's thoughts for February 2023

During the month of February, as we continue in the season of Epiphany on a journey to Ash Wednesday when we begin the 40 days of Lent, 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.

On Thursday evening, January 26th 2023, the first small gathering of 3 key leaders from each church (Morning Star Lutheran Church and Monroe United Methodist Church) of "United in Grace" met. We met with a lot of excitement and many questions as began the blending process.

I am filled with excitement and hope as we listen to and are open to the nudging of the Holy Spirit leading us and guiding us. The room was filled with the grace and love of God through Jesus the Christ as we began to step out into the unknown.

This will be an exciting, confusing, hope filled, challenging and at times, a bumpy journey as we midwife a new congregation; gather, claimed and sent by God through the Holy Spirit.

I invite you to pray this prayer with us and for us in this new and unknown time, especially when you feel confused and have a lot of questions:

***O God,
we have been marked with the cross of Christ and You have claimed us for the sake of the world,
gathered us for the sake of the world and send us out for the sake of the world.***

***You have called us, your beloved servants, of this place, your mission Outpost named Grace United
in Monroe, to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils
unknown.***

***Give us faith to go out with good courage not knowing where we go, but only that Your hand is
leading us and Your love and grace supporting us, through Jesus Christ our Lord ~ AMEN***

We are 2 congregations of Christ followers, gathering as one on a mission, God's mission, to bless and heal a broken world. As **United in Grace** this sole mission of God then becomes our sole mission as well. We are people of Grace united by the Holy Trinity, on a journey to discover God's amazing grace and love, and seeking to encounter the living presence of God and risen Christ in our daily lives through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

We are called to be courageous and to be the interruption in the lives of others we encounter as we are the living presence and the bearers of God's love, grace, hope and the peace of Christ for them.

Grace and Peace,

Pr Malcolm



ASH WEDNESDAY WORSHIP

February 22nd Service @ 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.

You are invited to an Ash Wednesday service on February 22nd at 7:00 pm. The service will include the imposition of ashes which you will be receiving before the service.

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.

We recall these words, **'Earth to Earth, Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust'**, 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,



LENT Anglo-Saxon: "spring"

As early as the mid-fourth century, Christians have observed a time of preparation before the Easter celebration. The Lenten season begins on Ash Wednesday (February 22nd) and lasts for 40 days taking us through Palm Sunday (April 2nd), Holy Week (April 3rd - 8th), to Easter Sunday (April 9th). The forty days of Lent 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.

In Epiphany we walked with Christ while he was among us on the earth, joining with him in establishing his 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. Now we retreat with Jesus into the wilderness to reflect.

continued on the next page

Lent is a 40 day journey that begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Good Friday. 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.

I invite you, literally into a time of getting more rest, of slowing down, of taking a breath, and of letting go of hurry, worry, anxiousness, and fear. I invite you to say **NO** to adding more stuff to your calendars, and to consider what you would remove from your calendar and your mind which does not give you life and a renewed heart. In his Lenten Journal theologian, Henri Nouwen, 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.’”

Let us find time to go deeper with God!

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

The Volunteer Sign-Up form inadvertently wasn't passed around the sanctuary last week so we were unable to get sign-ups. This gives you a preview of what's open so you can sign-up next week or email the office today!

	FEBRUARY 5 5TH EPIPHANY	FEBRUARY 12 6TH EPIPHANY	FEBRUARY 19 TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD	FEBRUARY 26 1ST SUNDAY IN LENT
Worship Assistant	Nancy Franke	OPEN	OPEN	Missy Maxson
Greeter	Markus & Timothy Gray	OPEN	OPEN	Kathi Cooley
Ushers need 2	Markus & Timothy Gray	OPEN	OPEN	Kathi Coley
Acolyte	Timothy Gray	Markus Gray	OPEN	OPEN
Reader	Joel Garrison	OPEN	OPEN	Missy Maxson
Serve Communion need 2	OPEN OPEN	N/A	OPEN OPEN	OPEN OPEN
Communion Prep.	Kathleen Sallee	N/A	Kathleen Sallee	OPEN
Coffee Hour	OPEN	OPEN	Amy Halgren	OPEN
Soundboard	Kathi Cooley	Charlie Brown	Kathi Cooley	Charlie Brown

**- United in Grace -
Informational Congregational Meeting
Sunday February 26th**



On Sunday February 26th, the First Sunday in Lent, District Superintendent Mark Galang of Puget Sound Missional District of the United Methodist Church (UMC), and Deacon Diane Johnson, the Director for Evangelical Mission of the Northwest Washington Synod, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in American (ELCA) will be with us in worship and for some time of conversation in the Fellowship Hall immediately following the service.

We don't know exactly how this meeting will go, however I have asked that they would introduce themselves, their respective roles in each denomination and briefly how their joint conversations' have been and their current thoughts about our journey.

We will also have the first of many conversations that morning and will focus most of our questions around denominational matters. The initial small group who met has a lot of questions and I know that each of you has a lot of questions and perhaps concerns. We know that this will be a process as we blend into "United in Grace" and that this will be the first of many gatherings over time as we learn and begin the work to create this new vision of the Body of Christ in Monroe named "United in Grace":

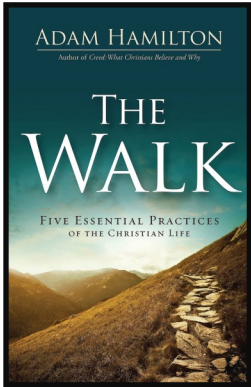
The Initial Guiding team that met was Pr. Malcolm, Kathi Cooley, Missy Maxson, Kathleen Sallee, Nancy Franke, and Tanya Hubbard.



JANUARY 2023

In Person: 34 Online Views: 21





Lenten Book Study begins February 26

Our Lenten study this year will be Adam Hamilton's "The Walk". This six-week study reviews the five essential practices of Christian Living: worship, study, serving, giving, and bearing witness to our faith. The study will be held on Sunday mornings at 8:45 in the Fellowship Hall beginning February 26th. This will allow attendees to also participate in choir. It is not necessary to purchase the book in order to participate in the study. For more information, or if you'd like to participate, call Jasmine Ray-Symms @ (425) 223-9866 or call Kathi in the church office @ 360-794-2111



The women of Morning Star Lutheran and Monroe United Methodist Churches joined forces and worked hard fundraising so now it's time to have FUN!

UWF invites all women to come together on Saturday, February 4th at 10:30am in the Fellowship Hall. We'll play games, have prizes and spend time getting to know one another better while drawing closer to God.

You don't want to miss this!

Books, TV & Movies!

February 21st - 6:30pm Host - Kathi Cooley



Share your favorite reading & viewing entertainment this winter over snacks and drinks at this month's BTM. You'll find Kathi's address in the new directory or you can call her at 425-293-8694.

Ladies, are you stressed? Feeling a little disconnected? Come join the women of United in Grace for a day of fun, relaxation and rejuvenation!

United Women in Faith are hosting a women's retreat on Saturday, March 4th from 9am-3pm in the Fellowship Hall. Our theme this year is "Smile", and we know everyone could use a smile so we'll be doing a lot of it!

Registration is \$20 to cover costs but don't let that stop you from coming! Scholarships are always available! Come and bring a friend!

Registration forms are available at church on Sunday's or you can call Jill Sumpter @ (360) 348-7231 or Jasmine Ray-Symms @ (425) 223-9866



February Birthdays

- | | | | |
|----|------------------|----|--------------------|
| 7 | Martin Paietta | 19 | Jay Morgan |
| 9 | Lori Johnson | 23 | Ric Hart |
| 13 | Denny Coates | 24 | Chris Hoerner |
| 19 | Cindy Gulbranson | 24 | Patrick Cook (Jr.) |

Dear Morning Star and Monroe United friends,
 2022 was a rough ride, but we have so much to be thankful for!
 Here are a few highlights -



- Kidz Club restarted with many former Kidz clubbers returning in leadership positions!
- We connected students in Monroe School district with much needed Mental Health services!
- Weekly Community Dinners restarted!
- 10 graduated from our series with Ventures on starting small businesses are now applying for start-up capital!
- Monthly Legal Clinics with Snohomish County Legal Services began!
- Next Step fully-certified as Snohomish County Family Resource Center!
- We have now reached over \$700,000 out our door, paying 1,258 bills for basic needs, for 431 Monroe families!! WOW!!

And these are just what fits in this small card!

Thank you for making this story yours—making a profound impact on local struggling families with your support in 2022.

Gratefully,
 Sarah Lunstrum,



**Hazel's Little Free Pantry Sunday :
 February 26th**

Special offerings are taken on the last Sunday of the month for our ministry to neighbors in need.

Specially marked envelopes are found in the back of the pews.

Donations can also be mailed to the church office:

412 S. Lewis St. Monroe WA, 98272

Brown Bag Brigade

Every Wednesday at 9am, Brown Bag Brigade volunteers meet in the Fellowship Hall of the Monroe Congregational Church. We make lunches and snack bags to deliver to Take the Next Step, the Union Gospel Mission Women's Shelter, and Monroe Boys and Girls Club, and have fun while we work together. Donations from our churches and some community sponsors allow us to purchase supplies, which cost about \$150 per week.

Would you like to help? In addition to donations, new volunteers are always welcome! Contact Kathleen Sallee for more information.

Thank you for your continued support of these ministries

What do you have to give up?

Pastor Malcolm recently preached on Jesus calling the first disciples. I was struck by it as I've been examining my own calling. As I listened to the sermon, I thought about **Matthew 4:18-20**: "As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.' At once they left their nets and followed him." I thought about how their whole world got turned upside down. They had a career and Jesus tells them to give it up. His only instruction, "Come, follow me" and their response? "At once they left their nets and followed him."



I thought about my reaction to God's calling. God calls me, "Come follow me." "Are you sure God? You want me to do this? Or this? Or maybe this?" "Come follow me." "So, you're saying I should do this and this but not this?" "Come follow me." "Now? I have some things I need to do first". "Come follow me." I really want to. I want it more than anything but –. "Come follow me."

The disciples dropped everything to follow Christ. They got fame but not the way we think of fame. They had the closest relationship with Jesus as His disciples, but it required a lifetime of sacrifice. They had difficult lives without financial gain and paid the ultimate price for that devotion. I tell myself I want to be that obedient but I struggle with the minor sacrifices I've had to make. It's hard to look at our lives and ask, "are we responding to Jesus' call? Have we dropped everything to follow Him?" But I think when we do, we deepen our relationship and obedience to Christ. We make things complicated when it's really quite simple. God asks for one thing, "Come follow me."

Jasmine Ray-Symms

www.jasmineraysymms.com

Photo by [Anna Monina Rafal](#) on [Unsplash](#)

My Daily Lenten Prayer

Author unknown

*Gracious God,
Thank you for the gift of today.*

*May my living reveal
your goodness.*

*Refresh me, invite me,
to discover your presence
in each person that I meet
and each event encountered.*

*Teach me when to speak
and when to listen,
when to ponder, when to share.
In moments of challenge and decision
attune my heart to the
whispering of your wisdom.*

*As I undertake ordinary
and unnoticed tasks
gift me with simple joy.
When the day goes well
may I rejoice!*

*When it grows difficult
surprise me with new possibilities.
When life is overwhelming
call me to sabbath moments
to restore your peace
and harmony.
Center my heart
in the heart of Christ.*

Amen



From the Spirit, February 2023

From the ELCA Bishop:

When I was in sixth grade, my teacher decided that we were going to build chicken skeletons. From real chickens. So, the teacher divided us into groups. A local farmer donated the chickens. Each group had to boil and boil and boil their chicken. When all the flesh and tendons, etc. were boiled off, and the bones were clean, then we had to build the chicken back up so that it formed a complete bird.

When I think back on this project, I wonder what we were learning. Anatomy? Names of bones? I'm not sure. But what I did learn was community, relationship, and collaboration. Without the people in my group – and the different skills and gifts that they had – we would not have been able to put this chicken back together. We had to make sure that the bones were sorted into the right boxes (the feet bones, the leg bones, the wing bones, the beak, etc.) We had to make sure the bones weren't wet and that there wasn't anything left on the bones so it didn't stink. (My mom claimed it did stink. Side note, I was elected to bring home the completed chicken. My mom was not pleased and at some point, it disappeared from the living room bookcase.)

Anyway, getting back to community, relationship, and collaboration ... as I think of our synod, and what God is calling us to do and to be together, I think that these three things are key. I know that many of you are already in relationship and collaboration with other ELCA congregations around you. Perhaps you share your building with other ministries. Perhaps you share a food bank or work with a school. Perhaps affordable housing is part of your collaborative work. Many of you have preschools. All of these are wonderful ways to collaborate.

I'm wondering if we can think even bigger and more relationally than that. What if people from geographically close congregations met and talked about who they are. What their hopes are. What their fears are. What they need from others. What they have to offer others. What might come out of these conversations and relationships? Perhaps a way to share staff? Perhaps a way to more impactful in the community? Perhaps new ways of using property? I'm not sure. It would be interesting and exciting to find out.

As I have mentioned before, study after study indicates that pastors today are lonely and feel isolated and anxious about the future. As my staff and I travel around the synod, we hear that many congregations also feel lonely and isolated and anxious about the future. Hearing stories and knowing some of the difficulties, doesn't it seem that it would be better to build relationship with one another and collaborate rather than every congregation trying to figure it out on their own?

Here are three ways that we are encouraging congregations to be in community, build relationships, and collaborate.

First, we continue to expand the LiVE Project (Living into Vocational Engagement). We are excited about the synod's collaboration and building relationship with the Trinity Education Foundation who is contributing funding this year and partnering with us. I encourage you to visit www.lutheransw.org/ministries/the-live-project and learn more.

Second, in lieu of a Synod Assembly this year, we are hosting two Synod Gatherings in the spring with forums where relationships and collaboration are key. Watch for information in early February on the two Gatherings (May 13 in Mount Vernon and May 20 in Bellevue) via email and on our website here: www.lutheransw.org/events/synod-gatherings.

Third, the Grace Grant application this year asks applicants with whom they are collaborating on the proposed project. The application process is open February 1 – May 31. Read about the focus areas and how to apply for this final year of funding here: www.lutheransw.org/pages/grace-grants

You know, I could never have built that chicken alone. Nor would I have wanted to. Truthfully, even with my group, it was messy

and hard. In my memory, we had a few bones left over that we quietly threw in the garbage. And yet, I am still in relationship with many of the people in my sixth grade group. And we are bonded from the chicken-building experience.

As the body of Christ, may we build relationship, be in community, and collaborate together. I'd love to hear what you are doing in your congregation towards this. Please email me at bishop@lutheransw.org.

Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee

Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee



AN EPIPHANY MESSAGE FROM THE WJ COLLEGE OF BISHOPS

The Western Jurisdiction's College of Bishops offer a short video message for Epiphany. In it, they reflect on the season of change underway in The United Methodist Church and the promise reflected in the generosity and grace of ministries across the region as faithful disciples "respond to God's call to be nurturing communities, ministries and churches where love lives."

To view the video to go: <https://vimeo.com/784667910>

Below is the full transcript from the video:

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ on this day of Epiphany from the bishops of the Western Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church.

Today, we recall the story of three Magi who, according to the Gospel of Matthew, followed a star to visit the baby Jesus. They came to honor the one who was born king of the Jews. When they found him, they were overwhelmed with great joy, and offered their gifts to him.

After they had paid their respects to the Christ Child, they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, who wanted to know where the baby was. He wanted to harm this One who was seen as a threat to his power. The Magi heeded the angelic message and returned home by another road.

We are a people who have lived in darkness, who have seen a great light. It is this light that leads us home through roads we haven't intended to travel, journeying with people we never intended to be in relationship with, listening to voices that are both strange yet life-giving.

In this season of great change in The United Methodist Church, as some choose disaffiliation, we are walking an unfamiliar and uncomfortable road. It is hard to have some churches divided on whether to stay United Methodist and other churches already heading out the door.

We also know that it is in moments like this—of uncertainty and fear—that God breaks into our lives and offers us a way forward.

As new and continuing bishops, serving the Western Jurisdiction, we are excited by what God is doing in communities across our connection. We give thanks for congregations committed to extending God's generous grace and wide welcome to all people. We rejoice in ministries that share the love of God to those beyond the walls of the church. We celebrate lives touched and changed by an encounter with Christ.

We believe that the best days for United Methodism could still be before us. To live into the promise, we must respond to God's call to be nurturing communities, ministries and churches where love lives. As we enter 2023, may we, like the Magi, follow the star so that we may be bearers of the Christ light to a weary world. May the ways we share this light be a beacon of hope to those who are struggling. May this light be so compelling that people will want to know more. May this light illumine a new and unfamiliar yet life-giving path that leads us all home to the Body of Christ.

FEBRUARY 2023 - MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Happy February everybody –

Our year is off to a good start at MUMC and MSLC under **United In Grace**.

The ground work on our new sign will be starting within a week or so and the brick foundation will follow soon after. We will be using the bricks that were taken up from the Prayer Garden work last year (just the blank ones – the named ones are still there, if you haven't seen them). Thanks to Jerry for cleaning them all up and getting them ready to use!

The electronic sign is at the sign company being customized with our names on top and we have been sent information from the company that supplies the sign about offering free instruction on how to put messages on the sign from any computer! We hope to have one or two people volunteer to take this on as a project and put frequent messages of information about the church and its services, as well as messages of hope, humor and reminders of Gods love for all who pass by on Lewis Street and see it! If you are interested in learning how to help with the sign messages, please let me know. You can email me at nfranke@comcast.net.

Year end figures below show that MUMC December giving way exceeded the bills paid, due in large part to your faithful giving and the generous year end support from Mike and Lee Ann Obright and Tom and Pat Taylor who sent offerings designated for the General Operating Fund, for wherever is needed. We continue to do God's work through our weekly services, mission and outreach, thanks to everyone who offers their time, their prayers and their offerings, to support the entire church of MUMC and MSLC under **United In Grace**.

A special HUGE thank you to Tanya Hubbard, our MUMC treasurer for the last 99 years or so (ok, maybe its only 5 years, but it seems like forever!!!!). Without her dedication to managing the books so well, we could not operate. Please give her your thanks as well when you see her next. 😊

Blessings to you all –

Nancy Franke

Financial Secretary - MUMC

FOR MONTH ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2022

YTD 2022

TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$ 14,364.45	\$ 83,501.75
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	\$ 8,362.26	\$ 89,493.10
Total for the month of December	+ \$ 6,002.19	- \$ 5,991.35 for year end 2022

2022 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 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



FEBRUARY 2023 - MORNING STAR LUTHERAN

2022 NON-DESIGNATED OFFERINGS AND EXPENSES

	2022 Budget	November Actual	December Actual
Offerings	\$ 8,917	\$ 6,098	\$24,457
Expenses	\$10,384	\$10,551	\$11,568
Surplus/deficit		- \$ 4,453	\$12,889

2022 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

February
2023



ASH WEDNESDAY
IMPOSITION OF ASHES

FEBRUARY 22 - 7:00PM

February 5: **FIFTH EPIPHANY - COMMUNION** ~ Scripture: [1 Corinthians 2:1-12 \[13-16\]](#); [Matthew 5:13-20](#)
February 12: **SIXTH EPIPHANY** ~ Scripture: [1 Corinthians 3:1-9](#); [Matthew 5:21-37](#)
February 19: **TRANSFIGURATION ~ COMMUNION** ~ Scripture: [2 Peter 1:16-21](#); [Matthew 17:1-9](#)
February 22: **ASH WEDNESDAY** ~ Scripture: [Joel 2:1-2, 12-17](#); [2 Corinthians 5:20b--6:10](#); [Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21](#)
February 26: **FIRST LENT ~ COMMUNION** Scripture: [1 Corinthians 1:10-18](#); [Matthew 4:12-23](#)

CONTACT US:

Pastor Malcolm Brown

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Phone: 360-794-2111

Office Administrator: Kathi Cooley

Music Director: Jill Sumpter

MONROE UNITED METHODIST

Phone: 360-794-8863

Email: office@monroeumconline.org

Website: www.unitedingrace.org

MORNING STAR LUTHERAN

Phone: 360-794-2111

Email: msslc@morningstarlc.org

Website: www.unitedingrace.org

10:00 SUNDAY MORNINGS IN-PERSON
AND LIVE STREAMED ON YOUTUBE



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