

GROWING IN

Grace

February 2024

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



Lent is Anglo-Saxon: meaning "*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 14th) and lasts for 40 days taking us through Holy Week, (March 24th – 29th) to Easter Sunday (March 31st). The 40 days do not include Sundays as we are Easter people and therefore Sundays are in Lent not of Lent. 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.

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***.

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 from a stance of scarcity, not enoughness and Eeyorness, but 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



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.

Wednesday evening Lenten services begin February 21, at 6:00 with a Simple Soup Supper, followed by a Taize' Service at 7:00

We invite you to come and experience a beautiful form of prayer, inspired by the ecumenical community in Taize, France. In our modern era of noise and technology, Taize' Prayer provides a service of quiet meditation and inner peace - it is a call to be still. In a time when we are quick to classify people by race, religion, nationality, political party, and countless other categories, Taize' reminds us of the living presence of God that we all share in common.

Come at 6:00 for the soup supper. The Taize' service begins at 7:00. There is a sign-up sheet in the narthex for soup and bread.



All are welcome and encouraged to join the Lent & Easter Choir. Rehearsals are every Sunday before church at 9:00.

February Birthdays

3	Rob Hughes	19	Jay Morgan
7	Martin Paietta	23	Ric Hart
9	Lori Johnson	24	Patrick Cook (Jr.)
13	Denny Coates	28	Patrick Cook
19	Cindy Gulbranson	28	Ben Ault

WORSHIP ATTENDANCE JANUARY 2024

In Person: 33 Online Views: 15

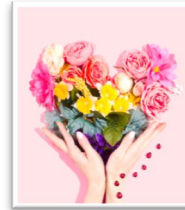
GET CONNECTED - FELLOWSHIP AND OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES

United Women in Grace



Our next United Women in Grace meeting will be held Saturday, February 3rd at 10:30am in the Fellowship Hall. Our theme this month is **LOVE**.

We'll be discussing the best way to share the love by voting which charities will receive donations from the proceeds of the bazaar. Every person will have a voice.



Our March meeting is our annual **Women's Retreat**.

The retreat will be held in the Fellowship Hall on **March 2nd from 9:30am-2:00pm** with Breakfast and Check-in at 9:00am. Our

theme this year is **"Listening Hearts"**. We will have prayer, study, activities and crafts. Please join us as we draw closer to God and each other.

Registrations are due February 25. Cost is \$20. Scholarships are available.

Books, TV & Movies
is having a **Potluck!**
Tuesday, Feb. 20, 6:30



Our host this month is Kaitlyn Ault. Bring something yummy to eat and meet at Kaitlyn's at 6:30. You'll find her address in the directory.

UNITED IN GRACE MISSION UPDATES

The Cold Weather Shelter was open overnight for almost 2 weeks during the cold snap we had in January and provided a warm place to sleep for many on those nights. While its not filling to capacity each night (which is 18), I know it is appreciated by those who got out from the cold when the weather got down into the 'teens. Volunteers are always needed along with donations of food (prepared and non) on the nights that the shelter is open. This is run by Volunteers of America who can be contacted at [Volunteer in Snohomish County | VOAWW](#).

Grace Garage, community free clothing closet is now opening every Sunday 11:15 to 1:15, right after our church service and is now staffed by our own church volunteers, due to some family problems from the original organizer. The garage has not been opened to the community since November, which we were unaware of, and several of us felt that it was a good enough mission to try and continue. We could sure use help to keep the garage consistently open at the advertised time on Sunday, to bring the folks back that are in need of clothes but stopped coming because the garage wasn't open consistently. If you can spare an hour or two on Sunday after service, please sign up on the clip board at church or just come on by any Sunday!

CAN YOU MAKE A SANDWICH?

The Brown Bag Brigade has been operating for 17 years! Over time the volunteers have dwindled due to life circumstances and currently there are only 4 people that make and deliver the lunches and snacks. It's time to bring in some new sandwich makers!

They meet at the Congregational Church on Wednesday mornings at 8:45 in the Fellowship Hall. If this is something you'd like to do or if you'd like more information, please call Kathleen Sallee at 425-387-2638

The Brown Bag Brigade and Hazel's Little Free Pantry

The **Second Sunday of every month** is dedicated to the **Brown Bag Brigade**, and the **Last Sunday** is dedicated to **Hazel's Little Free Pantry**.

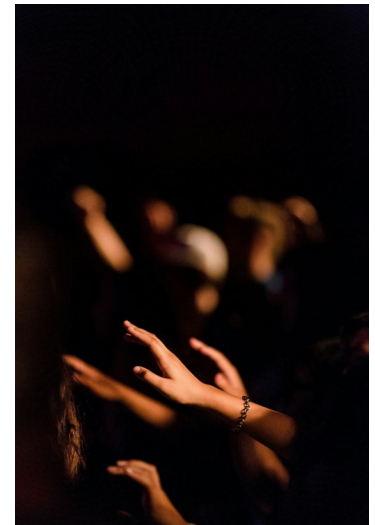
Specially marked envelopes are found in the backs of the pews and on the Greeters desk on Sunday morning. It's because of YOUR support that these ministries are able to continue. Thank You.

--- THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF THESE UNITED IN GRACE MINISTRIES! ---

Praise God

I have had a challenging life and an interesting faith journey. It took years to heal from severe childhood hurts and adult health issues. I doubted God’s love and providence. My trust had been broken and it took a long time to regain it. But God was faithful – as He always is. He patiently guided me to look to Him for healing. I’d like to say all my pain disappeared and I became this mature Christian that relied solely on God. It didn’t and I didn’t.

However, I’m in a much different place now. I have a family that stands by me no matter what. I have a support system made up of friends who know me and still love me. I have talented doctors that have found treatments to help me. I have a counselor that works with me to show me my value and Pastor Malcolm and church members to challenge and encourage my faith. Doors have opened to ministries that make me feel like I’m giving back to my church and community.



If I could go back in time, I would trust God more and my ego less. It’s easy to look back and see God at work now but I confess I waited until God had done a lot to truly trust His love for me. While He was at work, I was thinking He wasn’t doing enough. I wished He would answer my prayers in specific ways instead of taking the time to see what He was doing.

I think what would have helped me would have been – and is now – taking the time to just praise God. Praise His blessings. See how He is at work. Look over your life and see the little things like a kind word from a stranger or a hug from a child. Trust His love, knowing that He is by your side or lifting you up through the challenges of life. Even if all that feels like too much or not enough, praise Him anyway. Pray He opens your eyes to what He’s doing and praise Him even in the dark. Because He IS at work. He does love you and He is with you. Praise God!

Jasmine Ray-Symms

www.jasmineraysymms.com

Photo by [Jacob Bentzinger](#) on [Unsplash](#)

FEBRUARY SUNDAY MORNING MINISTRY SCHEDULE				
<i>Thank you for serving. You are an indispensable part of the body of Christ and we thank you.</i>				
	FEBRUARY 4 5TH EPIPHANY	FEBRUARY 11 TRANSFIGURATION	FEBRUARY 18 1ST LENT	FEBRUARY 25 2ND LENT
Worship Asst.	Christine Coco	Missy Maxson	Nancy Franke	Jasmine Ray-Symms
Greeters	Velma Smith	Perry & Val Cole	Denny & Diana Coates	Brian & Lori Johnson
Ushers	Kaitlyn Ault	Perry & Val Cole	Denny & Diana Coates	Brian & Lori Johnson
Acolyte	Ric Hart	Valerie Cole		Brian Johnson
Reader	Ben Ault	Jasmine Ray-Symms	Christine Coco	Missy Maxson
Comm. Prep.	Charlie Brown	Kathleen Sallee	Jasmine Ray-Symms	Harriet Barr
Serve Comm.	John & Tanya Hubbard	John & Tanya Hubbard	Jasmine Ray-Symms	Christine Coco
Coffee Hour	Missy Maxson	Rebekah Kirby-Jones	Christine Coco	Pamela Gore
Altar Flowers	Jill Sumpter	Priscilla High	Alan Masta	Pat Holtz
Soundboard	Kathi Cooley	Charlie Brown	Kathi Cooley	Charlie Brown



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

Today as I write this, I am acutely aware that I am home.

You see, I was supposed to be on a plane today – traveling to the Holy Land – with thirty people from this synod. We were going to see holy sites: the Church of the

Holy Sepulchre, the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem, Galilee, Jerusalem, and so much more.

Besides visiting these holy sites, we were going to be with our Lutheran siblings in Palestine and Israel. We were going to visit with and learn from Bishop Azar, the pastors, and the laypeople of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL). We were going to visit our Lutheran schools in Bethlehem, Beit Sahour, Ramallah, and Beit Jala. We were going to visit the only liberal arts university in Palestine – Dar Al-Kalima University in Bethlehem. We were going to visit the Lutheran hospital, Augusta Victoria Hospital. And we were going to visit our Jewish siblings who work for justice and peace.

Today as I write this, I am acutely aware that today is the one hundredth day since fighting began in the Holy Land.

On October 7, 2023 Hamas killed around 1,200 people and kidnapped over two hundred. It was a horrible and horrendous attack on women, children, and the elderly.

Following this attack, Israel began striking with guns, bombs, and other devices of war. At this moment, the death toll in Gaza is 24,100 dead with 61,000 others wounded. It is estimated that two-thirds of those killed in Gaza so far are women and children –all non-combatants. Almost the entire population of Gaza is now displaced, and starvation and disease are rampant.

By anyone's estimate, these are horrifying statistics, and they cannot, at all, begin to acknowledge the pain and anguish from all sides.

Now, I am not an expert of the Holy Land or the Israel-Palestinian conflict. I cannot begin to parse out all that happens in this area of the world – especially in such a short article as this. But as a baptized child of God, pastor, and your bishop, I know that this war is not God's way. I know that God calls us to advocate for those whose voices have been silenced. I know that God calls not for a pretend cease fire but true dialogue. I know that God calls us to a just peace where all people are recognized as human.

As many of you know, I was part of a group of seventeen ELCA bishops who went to the Holy Land last year. While we were there, we visited the ELCJHL schools in Palestine and Israel. We saw Muslim and Christian children learning together. We saw dancing and singing. We listened to their stories and we rejoiced at the hope we saw there. When

we visited Augusta Victoria Hospital during this same visit, we saw Muslim doctors treating Christian patients and vice versa. When we visited with an Israeli non-profit dedicated to justice for the Palestinians, we saw Jews and Muslims, Israelis and Palestinians, working together for peace and justice.

Dear Beloveds in Christ, please take to heart what our brother in Christ, ELCJHL Bishop Sani Ibrahim Azar, said on Reformation Day 2023 while speaking at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem:

“It is very hard to speak about hope here in Jerusalem ... As Palestinian Christians, we have been here for many years, not recognized, but calling for reconciliation. We are serving people's needs and we are working for the future of the whole human family...The priority right now is to end the war, to stop the killing of women and men, children and the elderly ... We hope that our Christian brothers and sisters elsewhere in the world are praying for us, praying for Christians in the Holy Land and for the rights of Palestinians to exist here.”

As we are privileged to be in our homes – and as millions have been displaced from their homes – let us pray for true peace, work for justice, and speak out against hatred.

Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it... The Lord is near to the broken-hearted, and saves the crushed in spirit. Psalm 34:14, 18

• Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee

bishop@lutheransnw.org



FEBRUARY - MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

MUMC December Treasurers report

	December	YTD
TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$ 6,902.21	\$ 70,950.40
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	\$ 8,359.26	\$ 94,888.45
Difference	- \$ 1,457.05	- \$ 23,938.05

As we ended the year 2023, MUMC did have a shortfall in giving vs expenses of almost \$24K. Luckily, investments, past years surplus and interest income have been available to pay this. As we prepare to join together as one church, United in Grace, the new financial team that will be elected at that time will make up a new budget and all line items will be looked at carefully to see how they can be reduced. Your MUMC financial and executive team will also be looking at ways to reduce high cost items such as the utilities. As always, we are grateful for all of you who support this church and ministry in so many ways and we go forward in faith that God will provide.

See you in church!

Nancy Franke
MUMC Financial Secretary

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
UWF President	Jasmine Ray-Symms	425-223-9866
Recording Secretary	vacant	

FEBRUARY 2024 - MORNING STAR LUTHERAN CHURCH

2024 NON-DESIGNATED OFFERINGS AND EXPENSES

	2024 Budget	November Actual	December Actual
Offerings	\$ 8,917	\$ 5,541	\$25,430
Expenses	\$10,384	\$10,645	\$10,669
Surplus/deficit		- \$ 5,104	\$14,761

2024 MSLC COUNCIL

Treasurer:	Brian Johnson	425-503-8352
Community Relations:	Jill Sumpter	360-348-7231
Worship:	Kathi Cooley	425-293-8694

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Happy February, everyone!

As we get further into the planning for our church merger into United in Grace, the time has come to get a financial plan in place to help Morning Star's treasury stretch their existing funds hopefully long enough to continue paying only contracted salaries until the United in Grace merger is fully completed.

The executive board has approved the financial plan below that will require a vote to implement.

On Sunday, February 11th right after the service, we will be holding a congregational meeting of both congregations to take a church vote to approve a financial plan facilitated by MUMC to help MSLC stretch its existing treasury and continuing member offerings, to hopefully last until our coming together as United in Grace is completed and we are combining all finances under the new treasury of United in Grace. Below is the basic plan, copies of which will be available the day of the vote as well, along with more information. There will be a presentation of the plan and time for discussion on the day of the vote and this vote will be taken with only those who are there in person. This is in line with the original plan we all agreed to when we took an all church vote in 2022 to go forward together to become one church as United in Grace, and use any assets that MUMC had to support MSLC when their funds ran out.

ALL

Church Meeting



**To vote on the Proposed Financial Plan
between MUMC and MSLC.**

**Sunday, February 11, immediately
following the service.**

Must be present to vote.

Financial Plan -

MUMC stops collecting rent, utility, custodian, or any other commonly shared reimbursements from **MSLC** and, in addition, takes on Bryce and all of his hourly costs for technical services and his repair services around the church. **MSLC** will continue to pay their own salaries for Kathi, Pr. Malcolm, and Jill plus the payroll taxes (in full, no reimbursements back from **MUMC** since we take on Bryce in full), plus any other monthly costs that they have that are not shared expenses.

When **MUMC** stops charging **MSLC** anything for shared expense, we will also stop reimbursing them for any shared expenses that they are paying. This should make things a lot less complicated on the **MUMC** accounting end as well.

The individual churches will continue to keep any offerings designated for that specific church until the joining together as United in Grace is completed.

Eventually, in 6 months by current calculations, **MSLC** will only have the funds of what comes in from congregation offerings, which will hopefully be enough to use to continue to pay their contract salary to Pr. Malcolm only. At that time, **MUMC** will take on paying both Kathi and Jills salaries until the joining together as United in Grace is complete.

See you in church!


Nancy Franke

MUMC Financial Secretary

Tanya Hubbard

MUMC Treasurer

 Morning Star Lutheran Church

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

February 2024

LOOKING AHEAD THIS MONTH:

- * **United Women in Grace**
Saturday the 3rd, 10:30am
- * **Visiting Congregations & Blending Team**
Sunday the 4th, immediately after the service
- * **Congregation Meeting**
Sunday the 11th, immediately after the service
- * **Ash Wednesday -**
Wednesday the 14th, 7pm
- * **Books, TV, & Movies Potluck**
Tuesday the 20th, 6:30pm
- * **Lenten Soup Suppers**
February 21st - March 20th, 6pm
- * **Lenten Taize' Worship**
February 21st - March 20th, 7pm
- * **Grace in the Wild**
Saturday the 24th, 10:am

February 4: FIFTH EPIPHANY ~ Scripture: **1 Corinthians 9:16-23; Gospel - Mark 1:29-39**

February 11: TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY ~ Scripture: **2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Gospel - Mark 9:2-9**

February 14: ASH WEDNESDAY: Scripture: **Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20b--6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21**

February 18: FIRST LENT ~ Scripture: **1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15**

February 25: SECOND LENT ~ Scripture: **Romans 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38**

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



unitedingrace.org