

GROWING IN

Grace

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

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NOVEMBER 2023

AUTUMN IS UPON US & ADVENT IS COMING.

Autumn is certainly upon us as nighttime temperatures are beginning to dip below freezing and Advent is coming. For many of us, this year continues to be a challenging and difficult season of life, with many life changes that have put our faith and trust in God to the test.

November is like a season unto itself, one of transition, on the cusp of change. We frame this month with two Holy Days of the church year: All Saints Sunday, November 5th, and Christ the King Sunday, November 19th. Each Sunday has a different focus, and yet in these weeks we hear scripture texts that will challenge us as we move into first Sunday of Advent on November 26th.

You may have noticed if you follow the church year calendar, that we have moved Christ the King Sunday up a week and are beginning our Advent Journey a week earlier as well. This is because this year's church calendar puts the 4th week of Advent and Christmas Eve on the same day (December 24th).

We are also changing the time of our Traditional Christmas Eve Candle Light service to 5pm. It will certainly be dark at the end of the service as we sing Silent Night by Candle Light. The hope is that this time will be more convenient to all who have to plan and coordinate your family Christmas Eve traditions around a 7pm service.

As a community of faith, and a family of faith this past year we have walked with each other, listened and held each other; we have shed tears of sorrow and of joy with each other in the midst of our many changes and challenges, life changing news and life situations.

It would seem that universally we continue walking in new territory and everything seems different and unfamiliar, even the old and familiar ways of being seem different. I believe that in this time we are struggling as we mourn and grieve that past the way it was. It will take some time of grieving together before we can move on into a new and exciting future, the future God is call us into, holding onto what it means to be a Christ Follower, an Disciple (Learner/Student), and an Apostle (Sent One), into our mission field following Jesus and joining with what God is already doing and has called us to do as a co-creative partner, in God's work.

As the people of God in this **Mission Outpost** here in Monroe, we have worshipped and served our world and community together as 2 congregations; Morning Star Lutheran Church and Monroe United Methodist Church, united in and by the grace of God. We continue to work towards formally becoming "United in Grace" – A joined Ministry of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) and The UMC (United Methodist Church). Let us keep the Constitution Team in our prayers as they faithfully do the hard work of sorting out all of the necessary details.

We continue to gather together as we continue to be faithful followers and to be people of joy, grace, hope, and love as we now await the season of HOPE, **Advent!** November 26th begins the season of Advent with expectant wonderings and waiting, as we contemplate how God has come to us in the flesh in 2023, and will come to us and call us to new beginnings in 2024.

We know that God is faithful, is already present and ahead of us, will be with us, will lead us, and will call us into our future. We rest in hope because we know that endings with God are really new beginnings.

I thank God for each of you and for your love and grace as we journey together following and discovering Christ in our midst and in our world.

See you in church!

Grace, peace and love,

Pastor Malcolm



November Worship



We have an opportunity on **ALL SAINTS SUNDAY** to give thanks for all those who have gone before us in the faith. On this day we remember and celebrate the depth and breadth of Christians – that is, the saints.

You will be invited to light a candle during the service in memory of the saints in your life.



CHRIST THE KING SUNDAY is the final Sunday of the church year. It is a day to celebrate Christ, who reigns as Lord of all, and to anticipate the day when all things are made new.

Join us for worship on **Sunday, November 19th** as we celebrate the our King.



We'll be talking about Native American Spirituality at our next **GRACE IN THE WILD, November 18th**. Native American and Indigenous religions are incredibly diverse in practice, belief, and culture, which shape individual religious experiences. Come and wander the trails with us. This is a rain, shine, and as we learned last month, frost event! Come prepared for the weather.



Our **ADVENT JOURNEY** begins on **NOVEMBER 26th, THE FIRST DAY OF ADVENT**.

Read, pray, and reflect with us over the course of the Advent season while we eagerly anticipate the celebration of Christ's birth.

The first Sunday of Advent gives us the opportunity to center our thoughts on **HOPE**.

It's a beautiful chance to remember the hope God offers to our lost and dying world, and the gift He's given us through His Son, Jesus Christ.

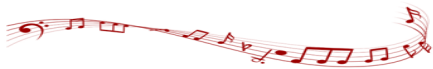
GET CONNECTED – FELLOWSHIP AND STUDY OPPORTUNITIES



Let's bless the Lord (and the congregation!) with music each week during Advent

We meet every Sunday at 9am in the sanctuary. The songs are easy to learn, and you'll have fun while you learn them!

Come and Sing!



BIBLE NERDS

We're meeting this month on Wednesday's the 8th and the 29th in the office.

6:00pm Dinner
6:30 Bible Study

Contact Jasmine with questions.

United Women in Grace
November 4, 10:30am
 in the Fellowship Hall

We will be making jars for the Bazaar. If you have a craft you'd like to work on you may bring that OR we will have supplies for a Hot Cocoa mix for us all to make together.

Hope to see you there!

The Heavenly Crafts Bazaar is coming!

Our annual Christmas Bazaar will be held on Saturday, December 2nd from 9-2pm. It will feature wreaths, craft items, bakery goods and gently used treasures. Soup and pie will be available by donation for a wonderful lunch while you shop. All proceeds go towards helping the underserved in our community and around the world. Help with setup and tear down, serving and cashiering is needed and appreciated.

Heavenly Crafts Bazaar
December 2, 2023
9:00am- 2:00pm
In the Fellowship Hall

OCTOBER 2023 ATTENDANCE
In-Person: 32 Online: 14

November Birthdays & Anniversaries*

Celebrations

02	Rhonda Dean	12	Missy Maxson
09	Jill Sumpter	13	Rob Williams
10	Ken Gross	25	Ric & Marian Hart*



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

From the **Bishop:**

In the song *Amazing Grace* we sing, “I once was lost but now I’m found.”

Because my job sometimes involves travel, there are times when I am wandering unfamiliar airports – trying to find my flight, trying to find edible food,

trying to find a place to charge my phone, trying to find a place where there isn’t a cacophony of sound and crowds of people. And sometimes at airports I also experience a feeling like a disconnection from my “self.” Sometimes I am wandering the airport trying to find my “self.” Strangely, there are moments at airports where I get this feeling as though I am unmoored from what connects me to other people. Honestly, I don’t know if this is something only I experience or if others feel the same way.

There have been a slew of recent articles and social media posts written about how churches are dying and pastors are leaving and people are upset and no one goes to church anymore and so on. These posts are hard to read, and I wonder - is this a sign that we are feeling unmoored? That we are searching for something? Or maybe it is simply being lost.

In the gospel of Luke, Jesus tells two parables – one about a lost sheep and one about a lost coin (Luke 15:1-10). You probably remember these parables – the shepherd leaves the ninety-nine in search of the one. The woman turns over her entire house for the one coin that is missing from her purse. I think that traditionally we hear these parables as Jesus searching for the one who needs to hear the good news of Jesus for the very first time. But I think that is a misreading. The lost lamb was a part of the shepherd’s flock. The lost coin was in the woman’s purse. This story is for insiders. For those who know and yet have gotten lost.

This lostness might be of one’s own volition. The sheep wanders from the prescribed pasture. But it can also be something that just happens. A coin cannot, on its own, get lost. We have all experienced the disruption of the pandemic, the cracks in our government, the warming of our climate causing suffering and death, and so much more. We notice changes in our churches and in our families and in our communities. Many of us have experienced personal troubles and tragedies. These all can lead to a sense of feeling adrift. And it can lead to fractures in our church community and our faith life.

However, the circumstance comes about – because of one’s own actions or because of something that descends upon us – lostness occurs. And even when we know God’s love and grace and comfort, even when we know that community is important, even when we are already part of God’s community and church, we can still feel unmoored, lose our sense of belonging, our capacity to trust. We can get so lost that we don’t know who we are or whose we are or where we belong anymore.

I don’t know where you are at as you read this article today. Perhaps you are feeling snug with the other ninety-nine in the sheepfold of God. Perhaps you are a coin cozy with the

other nine coins. But perhaps you are not. Perhaps you, too, are wondering and wandering. Perhaps you, too, are feeling disconnected from friends or family or your church community. Perhaps you, too, are wandering in Concourse C wondering how in the world you get to Concourse A. Perhaps you, too, are a sheep bleating for help or a coin under the couch cushions.

If this is you, the good news is that God is a searcher and a finder. The amazing news is that God is the shepherd hiking into the wilderness looking for you. The astounding news is that God is the housewife lighting her lamp and sweeping every corner in the house to find you. You are worth looking for. You are loved and desired. And when God finds you, there is rejoicing and laughter and a party! As Dan Erlander writes, “Love is God’s action to bring us into abundant life – reconciled to God, to each other, and all creation!”

In the 2023-24 course offerings of the synod’s LiVE Project there are many ways to be community together and the body of Christ together. There are ways to encourage and uplift one another. There are retreats, ongoing classes, and a year-long “Abide in the Word” Bible Study. (Learn more at <https://www.lutheransnw.org/ministries/the-live-project>) If you are feeling unmoored, lost, alone, adrift, I encourage you to first join in your community at your church and second, to join in the offerings in the wider synod. We are church together. We are journeying together. We get lost, and we get found, together.

Together we sing, “We once were lost but now we’re found.”

-- Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee | bishop@lutheransnw.org



**Pastoral Letter:
Peace is our work, everywhere**

Many people say, “We can’t find goodness anywhere.

*The light of your face has left us, Lord!”
But you have filled my heart with more joy
than when their wheat and wine are every
where!*

*I will lie down and fall asleep in peace
because you alone, Lord, let me live in
safety.*

—Psalm 4:6-8, CEB

My family still resides in and around Decatur, Alabama. If you search Decatur, Alabama, you will learn that before the conflict in Palestine-Israel escalated to all-out war, Steve Perkins, a 39-year-old African-American man, was shot by several Decatur Police officers. Steve’s death on the front lawn of his home invoked outrage across the city and has sparked protests, rallies, memorials, and other calls for justice and peace. I did not know Steve, but I know Steve’s plight. I know what it means to be confronted with violence and live with the threat of death every time I leave my home. With Steve’s death, we add to the litany of unarmed Black men who died at the hands of state-sanctioned violence. I wonder if even being home is as safe as I tell myself it should be.

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My heart aches for Steve's family. It breaks for families in Israel and Gaza already suffering injury and loss. And it will break again for the Palestinians, Israelis and others who will be caught in the crossfire as war rages across the area. With people being held captive by colonialist borders and nationalist policies, there is limited personal and communal agency. With powers from far away dictating strategies and funding war efforts, colonization.

Our high aspiration for peace must always come through acts of justice and insurance of equity. We cannot expect peace if injustice and inequities are commonplace. Our pursuit of peace must begin before we hear gunfire or see bombed-out buildings. That work starts in our homes, neighborhoods, community gathering spaces, and churches as we call out and work against all manner of injustice and inequity – especially when we are not the ones directly affected. That's one way we walk in solidarity with those who are unseen, forgotten, mistreated, or dehumanized.

Another way to work for peace in the land is to acknowledge our privilege, dismantle racism, rebut nationalism, and not shy away from calling out discriminatory acts against others. We may feel like the

Greater Northwest has its own problems and that those problems are nowhere near as dire as what we are witnessing in Palestine-Israel or Decatur, Alabama, but that is not true.

War anywhere in the world is a sign that everyone has work to do. The only way we bury our heads in the sand is to deny the interconnected nature of life and our globalized economic and war-making alliances. Others may be firing guns and dropping bombs in Palestine-Israel, Ukraine, Sudan, or Alabama. Still, our country's failure to have difficult conversations, resolve conflict and honor diverse viewpoints keeps us on the brink of war and economic collapse. When we are silent, apathetic, or too busy to bother with it, peace moves farther into the distance. If peace moves away, so does justice and equity.

Amid all that you are facing, holding, and trying to move forward, I pray the weight of these presenting conflicts will not slow or stop you from living as peaceably and boldly as you can. I pray that we will center equity and justice in all the spaces and places of your life to pursue peace constantly, calling attention to the injustice of war-making and anti-peace policies and actions – at home and abroad.

As Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "An injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." May these words serve as a daily reminder that today's war on the other side of the globe impacts and is informed by how we live on this side. Let us not grow weary. Instead, let us continue with hope and in pursuit of peace in every place so that we can fall asleep and live lives in peace.

*Peace in Palestine-Israel!
Justice for Steve!
Equity for All!
Amen!*



Cedrick D. Bridgeforth
Resident Bishop, Greater Northwest Episcopal Area



A Time for Everything

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8: **"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace."**



Over the last month or so, I've watched the trees change to vibrant red, orange and yellow leaves. Now, as I look out the window, I see the leaves drifting slowly down to the ground. It's still magnificent, but there's a tinge of sadness as I watch the beauty change for winter. Winter will be beautiful, but in its own way. The bare trees won't last forever. They will come back just as beautiful as before, but it will be different then, too.

As with the change of seasons I'm reminded of the changes that I go through. Each season of life is beautiful in its own way. My seasons are changing as well. Sometimes the beauty is obvious. I see God at work in my life and feel His power. Sometimes the beauty of my season feels different. As with the bareness of winter, I find myself feeling isolated. My children are adults, living their own lives. Others in my life have concerns of their own. But spring is coming. I have my first grandchild coming in April. My time of laughter and love is coming.

Where are you in your season? Are you celebrating or mourning? Are you embracing life or giving up? Wherever you are, know that God is with you, joyously sharing the blessings of life. Even in your struggles, know it's for a time. It may feel interminable, but we know God will lead us through the pains of life. If we are looking, we will see the blessings even in the down time. In the midst of winter, we have the blessings of the coming of the Christ child. Snowstorms provide a backdrop to staying inside where it is warm and safe. We can focus on the difficulties of life or shift our focus to the blessings God provides. The seasons will change and so will we.

Jasmine Ray-Symms

www.jasmineraysymms.com

Photo by [Aaron Burden](#) on [Unsplash](#)

NOVEMBER 2023 - MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Happy November –

Pr. Malcolm, Jasmine and I went to the Bishops Luncheon on October 9th and had the opportunity, not only to meet our new Methodist Bishop Cedrick Bridge Bridgeforth, but we also got to meet representatives from, and hear a little about the 20 other Methodist and combined Methodist churches in our district. It was interesting to hear about the struggles, solutions, missions and how the Holy Spirit has done with many churches what He has done with ours – put opportunities and possibilities in their path to allow new ministries and outreach opportunities. While I was not surprised, you may be interested to hear that that are more than a few church in our district that have combined with other denominations to the benefit of both congregations. It’s proof that the way of “doing church” is changing and working well for many new combined congregations. Both MUMC and MSLC have always, in my eyes, been kind and gracious people who share the same creed of beliefs, but simply have a few different rituals and practices in the mechanics of the worship service itself and I think all have done a really good job of accepting new and maybe different ways of worshiping that brings a bit of “newness” back into a service that seemed to be the same every Sunday – changing things up once in a while from the old “ but, we’ve ALWAYS done it that way!” But times have changed and WE have changed together - and we certainly chose a good name for our new congregation, United in Grace, because that is what it takes to become a new, unified body of believes in an ever-changing life around us – Grace. I’m looking forward to the day that we can officially call ourselves that!

One other thing that has come up recently (now that Advent is just around the corner -EEK!) is putting together a new United in Grace Altar Guild to work together to get the church decorated for the Season. So many things need to be done – put up the Advent candle, the Christmas tree, change the statuary in the display case, decorate the altar and the window ledges, hang the wreaths and switch out the banners on the walls – some things that haven’t been done in recent years because there just wasn’t enough help to do them, so lets change that for this year and get volunteers from our new combined congregation and decorate the church to look like the gift to the Savior the He deserves and show all “the reason for the season”! A sign up sheet will be in the narthex so please consider joining in.

Running late on the treasurers report this month, but the lights and heat are still on so we will just have faith that all is well for another month.

This is the month of blessings – find one, give one, BE one!

See you in church!

Nancy Franke


<u>2023 MUMC LAY LEADERSHIP</u>	
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




NOVEMBER 2023 - MORNING STAR LUTHERAN CHURCH

<u>2023 NON-DESIGNATED OFFERINGS AND EXPENSES</u>			
	2023 Budget	August Actual	September Actual
Offerings	\$ 8,917	\$11,856	\$ 6,474
Expenses	\$10,384	\$12,048	\$ 9,966
Surplus/deficit		- \$ 192	- \$ 3,492

<u>2023 MSLC COUNCIL</u>		
Treasurer:	Brian Johnson	425-503-8352
Community Relations:	Jill Sumpter	360-348-7231
Worship:	Kathi Cooley	425-293-8694

 Morning Star Lutheran Church

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



**Daylight Saving Times ends on
Sunday, November 5
Remember to set your clocks back
the night before!**



November 5: ALL SAINTS SUNDAY ~ Scripture: **Psalm 34:1-10, 22; 1 John 3:1-3; Matthew 5:1-12**

November 12: 24TH PENTECOST ~ Scripture: **Psalm 70; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Matthew 25:1-13**

Guest pastor: Kristy Daniels

November 19: Christ the King Sunday ~ Scripture: **Psalm 95:1-7a; Ephesians 1:15-23; Matthew 25:31-46**

November 26: 1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT ~ Scripture: **Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37**

Message: Jasmine Ray-Symms

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



unitedingrace.org