

GROWING IN

Grace

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

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September 2023

Greetings in Christ!

This morning, as I do most Tuesday mornings, Kathi and I get together in the church office to review last Sunday's service, Dorothy Garrison's Celebration of Life last Saturday, this week's service, worship and event planning for the fall, and begin to think about Advent and Christmas. It was a busy morning and in the midst of that conversation we both lamented that we were sad that summer was coming to an end. The night had brought us enough rain to measure, which we have had very little of this Summer. As I am writing today is quite cool and overcast after we have had an unusually warm and dry summer and the air is at least clean for now after days of thick smoke and haze from wildfires in our state.

Kathi (Kathi Cooley is the Church Administrator for both congregations), and I are just not ready to say goodbye to summer yet. We, perhaps like you are wondering what the Fall and Winter seasons will have in store for us in Western Washington. As I sit at home to write I have opened the windows so that I can hear the rain drops land on the fir branches and maple leaves. It is both music to my ears as God's creation is getting much needed watering and a reminder that Autumn will be upon us soon even though it seems that summer only just began yesterday!

Autumn is, above all else, a time of change. It is also a time of new beginnings. In addition to the changing weather, the hours of daylight shorten, curtailing or eliminating our evening outdoor activities. It is not as dramatic for us here in the Pacific Northwest, yet we still experience the changes in nature from our un-watered brownish lawns turning plush green again with the fall rains, to the changing leaves giving us glimpses of the brilliant colors of autumn. Our lifestyles often change as well; autumn means back to the routine, back to work, back to school, and some of us will travel south to warmer, dryer climates this fall.

I believe the first act of love is to listen to one another. Inviting and listening then is our call into hospitality, the radical hospitality that Jesus lived out in practice and taught. We are God's called people here in this mission field of Monroe, called to listen to each other and to our world. We are called to hear the deepest thoughts, needs and desires of others and then to speak and act out the proclamation of the living word of God made Flesh in Jesus the Christ. Right Here! Right Now! This often messy and disturbing word of God made flesh in Jesus the Christ calls us to listen, to hear and to see. Jesus calls us to be and do love abundantly, and we act because of the abundant love and grace we have been given by God through Jesus the Christ

Let us ponder the hospitality of grace where all are welcome and the gifts of the other who come into our lives is both wanted and needed. as they come to us because we are incomplete without them. They might even bring God to us in new and interesting ways if we can keep our hearts, eyes and ears open.

I would like to invite us as a congregation and us individually to practice God's hospitality and grace filled welcome to all. For the months ahead as we move toward Advent and Christmas, I would like to encourage you to invite your neighbors into your home. Consider standing on your front porch or steps or on in your front yard and wonder who might come, and then welcome them in, especially if you don't know them! Remember what it is like when you feel like an outsider and let that help you to invite. Maybe even invite those into your home who attend church whom you don't know well or not at all.

Might we also stand on the front steps of the church and prayerfully wonder who of God's beloved children might need for someone to listen to their hearts and needs, and to hear, experience God's mercy, love and grace.

Whatever you do, have fun with it! And, pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance and blessing as you invite others into your household of faith. If God worked through such households of faith in the time of Paul to increase the body of Christ, then surely God will be at work through such gatherings today in your home.

May you continue to seek, find, and receive God's hope, love and grace this autumn in surprising ways and in unexpected gatherings in your homes!

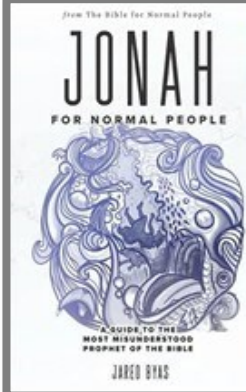
See you in church!

Pastor Malcolm

Don't miss this...



Blessing of the Backpacks
 Sunday, September 10,
 10:00am



Bible Nerds Returns!
 Begins September 13
 Second and Fourth
 Wednesdays
 6:00pm Dinner
 6:30pm Bible Study
 Fellowship Hall
 Contact Jasmine with Questions

ICE CREAM SOCIAL!



During the Fellowship Hour!

ADULT EDUCATION IS BACK!



Jesus and Java
 Sunday Mornings
 beginning Sept 24th
 at 8:30am in the
 Fellowship Hall
 It is not necessary to
 purchase the book.
 Drop-ins are welcome!

United in Grace

Wild Church
Worship and Nature Combined

Saturday, September 23rd @ 10am
 Meet at Osprey Park - 705 1st St., Sultan
 Bring a snack and a lawn chair.

All are Welcome

**Choir begins on
 Sunday, September 17th**

We'll meet after church to get ready for
 the following Sunday, and at 9:30 on the 24th
 for a quick run-through.

All are Welcome!
Come, Sing, & Make a Joyful Noise!

Blessing of the Animals!

United in Grace is partnering with Monroe Congregational, UCC, for a Blessing of the Animals on **Saturday, September 30th**. All pets welcome! Bring your 4-legged, scaly, or feathered friends to be blessed. Time to be determined.



Ministries

Hazel's Little Free Pantry Financial Report

Hazel's Little Free Pantry was born during the pandemic to help those not easily able to meet everyday food and personal needs. It has grown to so much more since then, and the Pantry Team thought you'd like to know how your donations are spent and how far they go.

January 1 through July 31:

- Contribution Revenues: \$2,043
- Operating Expenses (food) \$1,910

Hold over for next month: \$ 133

- The team buys canned soups, tuna, and other proteins, ramen noodles, oatmeal, breakfast and protein bars, snack food, juice, peanut butter, fruit cups, Vienna sausage, and milk.
- We are fortunate to now have regular donations of milk, peanut butter, and oatmeal.
- For the time being, we have someone that has been donating cereal and crackers, but we don't know how long she will be able to continue.
- We rely solely on donations for feminine hygiene products, soaps, shampoos, etc.

It costs approximately \$330 per month, or \$10.75 per day to fill the pantry. (This is taking into account the food and other items that are donated). This number goes up significantly in the winter when more canned food (protein) is needed.

Your \$20 donation fills the pantry for 2 days; \$50 would fill the pantry for almost 5 days.

Thank you for faithfully and cheerfully giving to help Hazel's Little Free Pantry continue.

Brown Bag Brigade

The Second Sunday of every month is Brown Bag Sunday. Specially marked envelopes are found in the backs of the pews and on the Greeters desk on Sunday morning. You may also mail your offering at any time to the church office.



SEPTEMBER SUNDAY MORNING MINISTRY SCHEDULE

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

	SEPTEMBER 3	SEPTEMBER 10	SEPTEMBER 17	SEPTEMBER 24
Worship Asst.	Nancy Franke	Christine Coco	Missy Maxson	OPEN
Greeter	Velma Smith	The Ault Family	Joel & JoLynn Garrison	Denny & Diane Coates
Ushers	Joel & JoLynn Garrison	Joel & JoLynn Garrison	Christine Coco Loggan Coco-Cron	Denny & Diane Coates
Acolyte	Ric Hart	Ben Ault	Pete Maxson	OPEN
Communion Prep.	Jasmine Ray-Symms	Kathleen Sallee	Harriet Barr	OPEN
Serve Communion	Jasmine Ray-Symms	Kathleen Sallee	Joel & JoLynn Garrison	OPEN
Coffee Hour	OPEN	Kathleen, Christine, Priscilla	Missy & Peter Maxson	OPEN
Altar Flowers	Garrisons	Velma Smith	Jill Sumpter	OPEN
Soundboard	Kathi Cooley	Charlie Brown	Kathi Cooley	Charlie Brown

Putting God in the Center

I'm really enjoying my training courses to become a Certified Lay Minister. I love to learn and combining my love of learning with my love of God is fantastic. The courses are all done online with students from all over the country, so we get some interesting discussions going. Not all of us agree on what's being taught and it's interesting to get to think about what God is trying to tell us and not just what the instructors think.

One discussion that I found particularly meaningful was in my "Planning and Leading Worship" class. The discussion centered around the idea that worship is our way of celebrating God, not what we get out of it. Frequently, we pick apart the service, "I didn't care for those hymns", "The sermon didn't speak to me", "The slides got messed up", "The reader stumbled over the words". We miss the whole point of the service: to glorify God.

I will confess, I can be guilty of all of those comments. The class challenged my assumptions teaching me to look at the service not as a collection of parts but as a way to truly worship our Creator God in church and not just while walking outside in nature. To spend more time reflecting on the words of the hymns, asking God to reveal His message to me in the sermon, understanding that mistakes happen in the service because only God is perfect, and reflecting on the scripture being read not the person reading it.

The class also challenged my approach to the service when I'm a part of it. I was shown how to really study and pray over the scripture when I'm asked to lead. To approach each role as a gift to God instead of just how I do it or what I get out of it. So, now I'm challenging you. The next time you're in worship, turn your eyes to our Forgiving God. Relish the opportunity to give back to God in thanks for all that He's done for you. Soften your heart to the humanness of others. Let the service wash over you, letting God speak to you in it but also give of yourself in praise to the triune God we serve.

Jasmine Ray-Symms

www.jasmineraysymms.com

Photo by [Kelvin Moquete](#) on [Unsplash](#)



The Monroe United Methodist Church All Church Conference is Monday, September 25th, at 7:00pm at the church, which you are all invited to. The UMC District Superintendent, Pr. Mark Galang will be there to certify the annual business of MUMC and confirm the committee chairpersons that will serve for another year (for which we are all very grateful), and on into the new combined church of United in Grace. If necessary, they will be voted in by the those who attend.

As in the past only current members of MUMC can have their vote counted, but this will change after we become United in Grace and this is likely the last UMC All Church Conference we will have that would not welcome all the congregation to vote, as all who are in United In Grace will be included in the future after the merger is complete.

While this is not the place to ask specific questions about the new United in Grace policies and procedures that have not yet been written, if you have any questions or concerns about current MUMC policies or procedures, please plan to attend.

Sound Bath August 30th



The acoustics in the sanctuary are fantastic and ideal for a Sound Bath. Everyone that attended came away centered and renewed.

The next Sound Bath is November 28, at 7pm

Come and be still for the Advent Season.



September Birthday & Anniversary* Celebrations

- 2 Katherine Hubbard
- 3 Jasmine Ray-Symms & Brittany Symms *
- 5 Delaney Wardell
- 9 Alan & Harriet Barr *
- 9 Sharon Wegenast
- 10 Delaney & Marla Wardell *
- 12 Dennis Olson
- 12 Russ & Jill Sumpter *
- 14 Samantha Missel
- 16 Chris Missel
- 18 Callie Maxson
- 20 Jakob Wegenast
- 21 Patrick & Renée Cook *
- 22 Allene Zanger
- 24 Diane Harris
- 25 Russ & Rhonda Dean *
- 27 Jodi Fowler
- 27 Bret & Jodi Fowler *
- 29 Chris Gray
- 31 Diane Coates

Jerry and Judie Esqueda made it to their new home in Pennsylvania. Their mailing address is: 800 Lincoln Avenue, Latrobe, PA 15650

 From Discipleship Ministries
The United Methodist Church

Prayer Partner Project Launches Fall 2023

BY MOTOE YAMADA FOOR

Do you pray? How often do you pray? Do you want to grow as a follower of Jesus Christ? Do you want to have someone you can trust and with whom you can share? If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, sign up for the Prayer Partner Project! You can register as an individual, or as your church or your church group, such as United Women in Faith, a Bible study group, a craft team, and so forth. You will pick a prayer partner (a friend, co-worker, family member, or neighbor within or outside of the church). You and your prayer partner will decide how often you will pray for one another and how often you will communicate.

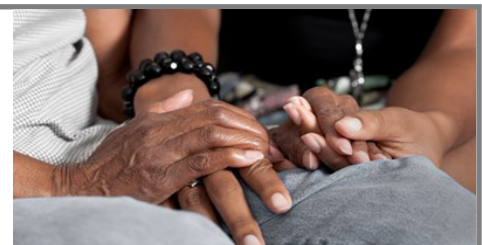
Click the link below to register for the Prayer Partner Project and we'll let you know as soon as it becomes available:

[Register Today!](#)

So many things are happening in the world, and for a time like this, we must go back to the basics of discipleship. Jesus often prayed.

“And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray.” (Matthew 14:23a, NRSV)

The essential spiritual practice of discipleship will bring you closer to Christ through encountering God’s grace in prayer.





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

From the **Bishop:**

I went to the musical *1776* a few nights ago where I learned some new things about how the Declaration of Independence came to be written. As I watched, I felt proud to be an American – to be part of a group of people who wanted freedom from tyranny, freedom to vote, freedom from an empire far away.

There were also moments in this play when I was horrified at some decisions made. At the last minute, the clause to abolish slavery was removed so that all of the representatives would sign the document. The most powerful song in the musical, *Molasses to Rum*, reminds the audience how all the colonies were complicit in the selling of humans – not just the south. (<https://genius.com/John-cullum-molasses-to-rum-lyrics>)

As an American, I hold two realities. First, I rejoice in the wonder and aspiration of the United States of America. I am grateful for this country and I love what it is striving to be. At its best, it is a country where freedom and liberty are supreme. It is a place where care is given to those arriving on its shores. It is a place where people can freely go to church and other places of worship (or not go at all). In short, the United States is a promise of what can be.

At the same time, I hold the truth of this country's sins. Enslaved men built the White House, the U.S. Capitol building, and others. Homes of former presidents including George Washington's Mount Vernon and James Madison's Montpelier were built by men "owned" by them. The land that we in the Northwest Washington Synod are living on was once land that belonged to Samish and Duwamish, Lummi, and Muckleshoot and many others. Japanese people were unjustly imprisoned during World War II. Sundown laws and redlining laws were written throughout this country. As a white woman, I know that I could not vote until 1919. For women of color, the right to vote did not come until later. People who are part of the LGBTQIA+ communities have been harassed and discriminated against, beaten up and killed in this country. And discriminatory practices and violence continue to this day. In short, the systems in this country have violated and harmed people since its inception.

This is what it means to be an American: to vote, to engage in civic society, to appreciate this country, to grieve past and present sins, and to truthfully stand up and speak when it falls short of its ideals.

But what about those of us who are American and also Christian? Unequivocally it means that as much as one might love this country, this is not where our ultimate allegiance lies. For we are part of the body of Christ that extends beyond the borders of any country. As Lutheran Christians, we know that we are named, chosen, and called by God through Jesus. We hold deeply the joy that we are freed from sin, and, because of this, we are called into radical love, acceptance, and welcome – far beyond being a citizen of any country. We are freed to live beyond racism, injustice, and bigotry. Martin Luther wrote that freedom is a gift from God, not just for our sake, or our country's sake, but for the sake of the world.

Tragically, there are those who want to distort this freedom. To somehow merge Christian and American identities. Rather than freedom, conflating religious authority with political authority leads to tyranny and marginalization - especially of minority groups. Christian Nationalism is neither patriotic nor is it faithful. You do not have to be Christian to be a "true" American. And you do not have to be American to be Christian. At its heart, it is idolatrous. As the First Commandment states, "You shall have no other gods."

Together, as faithful Christians, let us live into Jesus' words –into radical love, acceptance and welcome. Let us speak truth to power and stand with those without power. Let us follow Jesus who commands us to love everyone as our brothers and sisters and siblings including our fellow citizens, those of other belief systems, and those of other nations. Together, as faithful Christians, let us stand up and speak out against Christian Nationalism and any system that marginalizes, harms, and subjugates another. As Jesus announces in the gospel of Luke, *'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because God has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. God has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'*

For freedom Christ has set us free. May we live and dance and revel in the freedom of Christ.

+ Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee / bishop@lutheransnw.org



AUGUST 2023

In-Person: 34 Online: 10

SEPTEMBER 2023 - MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Well, friends, the fair is almost over and the kids are back in school, which always means fall to me! Not sure how long my goldfinches will stay around as I understand that they leave for the winter (having never has them until this year, I am unsure).

Good news to report on the new caretakes for the church who should be starting their duties by the time you get this newsletter. We are ‘keeping it in the family’ and I am so happy to let you all know that we will have two caretakers sharing the duties as well as the parsonage – Dean Ray (Peggy Ray’s son and congregation member) will live upstairs and Brent Smith (Velma’s son and already a long time member of our congregation) will live downstairs, and both will watch over our church property and security. I believe this pairing is a perfect solution to our caretaker needs and was a gift and a blessing from God who saw our need and gave a solution. I hope you will all welcome Dean and Brent to the job and let them know if you have any security questions or concerns. Along with a very deep cleaning of the parsonage that was done by our own handyman and resident Mr. Clean Bryce Cooley, is the need of a few items to making sharing the parsonage easier. Trustees would like to put in a utility sink in the laundry room downstairs but drainage may be a problem. If anyone has any suggestions on how this might be accomplished, or if you might recommend a good local plumber to call, please let me know.

Next, I hope you all take notice of all the tree and shrub trimming and removal in the parsonage front and back yard that our trustee chairman and resident gardener, Ric has been doing to the very neglected landscape. This was a big job that will have to be maintained and Ric has been talking about getting back to the All-Church Fall and Spring cleaning /maintenance party days that we a great change no only at fellowship together but a great way to get the needed work done and show our pride of the church grounds to all who pass, as well as our honor to God. I hope you will all help when the time comes.

Just an FYI, MUMC received a generous \$5,000 bequest from the estate of the daughter of Myrtle Bengston, who was an MUMC member some 20 years ago. If any of you remember Myrtle, it would be nice to know a bit about her. She obviously thought a lot of this church and we are very grateful for the gift that will be put into the general fund.

Treasurer’s Report

June 2023	TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$ 4,060.32	July 2023	TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$ 4,120.30
	TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	\$ 7,663.95		TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	\$ 7,082.09
		Short - \$ 3,603.63			Short - \$ 2,961.79

As you can see, our expenses are running about twice what giving is, but we keep the faith and look to better days when both churches giving will be combined and the expenses hopefully lowered as we become United in Grace. Thanks to all who give of their time and talents as well as their monetary offerings to help with the costs of running the church, and for your faithful contributions to mission programs to help others.

May you recognize God’s blessings in the little things you encounter each day and pass on His grace, given to you, to all you encounter.

See you in Church!

Nancy Franke

MUMC Financial Secretary

2023 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	vacant	
Membership Secretary	Kathi Cooley	425-293-8694
Lay Leader to Annual Conference	vacant	
UWF President	Jasmine Ray-Symms	425-223-9866
Recording Secretary		



SEPTEMBER 2023 - MORNING STAR LUTHERAN CHURCH

2023 NON-DESIGNATED OFFERINGS AND EXPENSES

	2023 Budget	June Actual	July Actual
Offerings	\$ 8,917	\$ 7,882	\$5,795
Expenses	\$10,384	\$11,090	\$9,825
Surplus/deficit		- \$ 3,208	- \$4,030

2023 MSLC COUNCIL

Ministry Director:	Kathleen Sallee	425-387-2638
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



Sept. 3: 14TH PENTECOST ~ COMMUNION ~ Scripture: Gospel: Matthew 16:21-28
Sept. 10: 15TH PENTECOST ~ COMMUNION ~ Scripture: Psalm 119:33-40; Romans 13:8-14; Matthew 18:15-20
Sept. 17: 16TH PENTECOST ~ COMMUNION Scripture: Psalm 103:[1-7] 8-13; Romans 14:1-12; Matthew 18:21-35
Sept. 24: 17TH PENTECOST ~ COMMUNION Scripture: Psalm 145:1-8; Philippians 1:21-30; Matthew 20:1-16

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Live stream/editor: Bryce Cooley

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MORNING STAR LUTHERAN

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



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