

# GROWING IN

# Grace

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

LOOK INSIDE FOR:

Worship News	pg 2
Bishops' Messages	pg 3
Congregational Care	pg 5
Church Business	pg 7

March 2021

*Dear beloved Siblings in Christ Jesus,*

This newsletter comes to you in the first full week or so of Lent, but also during a pandemic.....

After the first ten days or so, how is Lent going for you this year?

Is there anything in your prayer life or prayer practice that needs fine-tuning before you move forward?

Can you recall a time of prayer this week when you felt particularly close to God?

Where, in prayer or elsewhere, have you felt yourself challenged by God or God's word this week?

What might God want to be offering you in the coming days?

*Below is a prayer practice call the Examen- I invite you into using this particular practice during this wilderness wandering during this Lent of 2021 as you journey to the cross with Jesus in resurrection hope, grace, and love.*

**EXAMEN OF CONSCIOUSNESS-** (Adapted from the Linns, *Sleeping With Bread*)

*I invite you to find some time and a place to let go for a moment, to let go of your own concerns, your own worries and fears and reluctance, and let yourself be led by God, trusting that God, who loves you, will lead you into life. Perhaps create a space that has a candle, perhaps some music, and something special to encounter the living God.*

***Breathe deep and move into the presence of God, then ask yourself the following:***

For what moment today am I most grateful?

For what moment today am I least grateful?

When did I give and receive the most love today?

When did I give and receive the least love today?

When did I feel the most alive today?

When did I feel the least alive today?

When today did I have the greatest sense of belonging to myself, others, and the universe?

When did I have the least sense of belonging?

When was I the happiest today?

When was I the saddest today?

What was today's high point?

What was today's low point?

Be patient, even if no answers come at first.

It is worthwhile to simply be quiet and present to yourself for a few minutes each day.

When it is time, the answers will come.

***Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.***

***As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.***

*Join us*

As we worship together on ...



***Celebrate Easter Sunday Live  
April 4<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m.***

The service will include Holy Communion.

Follow the link to join the Zoom worship:

<https://greaternw.zoom.us/j/95356180384>

Meeting ID: 953 5618 0384

***Worship live on Sunday, March 7<sup>th</sup>  
at 10:00 a.m.***

The service will include Holy Communion

Follow the link to join the Zoom worship:

<https://greaternw.zoom.us/j/95879348557>

Meeting ID: 958 7934 8557

***Virtual Fellowship Hour!***

Stay after the service and stay  
connected to your church  
friends and family!



**TRADITIONS ARE IMPORTANT!**

We may not be able to worship in person, but we can still celebrate our traditions—the things that make us unique and marks us as a family of and with God. Let's keep with our traditions this year! We are making videos for the services - a **Palm Procession** for Palm Sunday and an **Easter Proclamation** for Easter Sunday. We can't make the videos without **YOU!**

**Here's what we need you to do:**

**Find a branch or twig, a big leave or the Palm Cross you received in your Lent Gift Bag. Sit in your chair or march around your house or yard and wave your "palm" with enthusiasm! Record it on your phone or laptop, whatever works for you, and send it to Missy Maxson. It can be 10 seconds or 30 seconds. Have fun with it!**

and

**"He Has Risen Indeed!"** Such a wonderful proclamation and what we'd like you to record yourself saying for Easter Sunday. You can sit or stand, outside or inside, none of that matters. **Just record yourself saying "He Has Risen Indeed!"**

**Email your videos to Missy Maxson no later than March 21:**

**[missymaxson@gmail.com](mailto:missymaxson@gmail.com)**

***Thank you!***





*From the Spirit, March 2021*

This is a picture of a calendar I have on my desk. The date on it is, “March 10, 2020. Yes, I am not making a mistake, the year on this calendar is 2020.

Last year, when I turned the page on this calendar, I had no idea that this date would mark the last time I had a “normal” day in my office – with my staff and I talking, sitting at our desks, crowded together, laughing, doing business – not thinking at all of masks or physically distancing or washing hands (well, hopefully we were washing our hands!).

I have kept this calendar on March 10, 2020 as a snapshot of when life changed to a new reality. Like many of you, I never dreamed that one year later we would all be planning our second Easter of COVID or having second birthdays under these strange circumstances or still not knowing for sure when we might gather together safely.

I did not anticipate the suffering so many people have undergone. The hundreds of thousands of people who have died. So many who are still suffering from the ravages of COVID. The impact of this virus has been brutal for millions of people.

While I consider myself a patient person, truth be told, I am becoming impatient. I am ready to be done with this pandemic. I am ready for the pain and anxiety of this disease to be over. I am ready for the loss of life and health of so many to stop. I am ready for this underlying feeling of anxiety and fear to end.

And you? My guess is you are feeling some of the same things.

But, as we hear in many of the psalms, we don’t stop at despair. As people who believe in resurrection, we don’t stop at death. In this Lenten season as we move towards Easter, we proclaim that we are a people of hope, too. As I read in my devotions this morning from Psalm 147: “The Lord heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds.” Through community with one another, through helping those who are marginalized, through coming together in prayer and song and worship, we are healing the brokenhearted and binding up wounds.

So, let me ask you, even as we wait, what are you looking forward to? Truly, what is bringing you hope right now? What are some things that you have learned and discovered during this pandemic that you want to take forward? We know that God works through all things – how do you see God working in your life and in the life of this nation and world?

I would love to hear from you where you see God’s Holy Spirit – in your congregation, in your home, in your workplace, in the world. Where are you finding hope? Where

are you finding resurrection joy? You are welcome to email me at [bishop@lutheransnw.org](mailto:bishop@lutheransnw.org). I would love to hear from you.

In this Lenten season (a season that sometimes feels like it began last March and is still happening) we trust that we are walking the way of the Lord. God’s hand is guiding us. God’s love is surrounding us. And God brings us hope.

May you feel God’s grace through Jesus in these days. And may we soon gather in-person again.

Stay safe. Wear a mask. Wash your hands. Get a vaccine when you are eligible. And know that we are church together, even when we are physically separated.

In the Hope of Christ,

*Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee*



*From the Greater Northwest Area of the United Methodist Church*

**Beloved in Christ,**

I am writing to you today with two announcements that will impact the United Methodist Church’s Great Northwest Episcopal area this year.

On Epiphany, I applied for voluntary retirement as bishop of The United Methodist Church, effective December 31, 2021. Today, I share this news with you.

It seems too early to announce my retirement long before it arrives, but the many steps that follow regarding the appointment of a new bishop call for it. This is most important this year, with the denominational struggle, the ongoing pandemic, and the financial consequences that each of these things create, keeping additional uncertainty for our United Methodist connection.

While I regret that my retirement may add to the burden on others, I am convinced that this is the right time and the right action for me personally. I will continue to work diligently with conference leaders throughout the year to prepare for whatever lies ahead. And I trust that God will continue to move in the hearts of the faithful, to raise up leaders for the next stage of this pilgrimage.

The other news I share is less personal but it will impact us anyway.

Given the continued presence of COVID-19 in our communities, we look forward to hosting the 2021 Annual Conference, once again, remotely online.

While a date change is possible, please continue to maintain the announced dates of June 9-12, 2021, as we explore alternative possibilities, including multiple virtual

*continued*

sessions. We look forward to hearing from you as decisions are made on plans for general and jurisdictional conferences.

We will let members of each Annual Conference learn more information as it becomes available.

Despite the many challenges and transitions that life brings, in faith we know that love lives on. Please know that I continue to pray for all the people and ministries of the Great Northwest as we all witness this truth together, yet still separated from one another.

With gratitude and hope



**Elaine JW Stanovsky**  
Bishop, Greater Northwest Episcopal Area



**Average monthly views for our  
Online Worship Services:**

**February: 51**

*as of February 21*

**January: 51**

**December: 53**

**November: 49**



## Memories

I have mild cognitive impairment – memory loss. It ranges from mild to serious. On the mild side, I get to watch old TV shows anew. On the more serious side, I don't remember the birth of my children or my wedding day. But there are some situations where it is a blessing: I don't remember arguments.

This has been played out in different ways across various relationships. When this first happened, I simply went on my merry way treating everyone as kindly as I could. In one case, two of my loved ones (I was in a fight with one) were on the phone and I shouted out, "LOVE YOU!!!" There was quiet on the other end. I

didn't know I'd done anything strange but then was told about the argument. I came to remember the fact that we were arguing but to this day, I still don't know what happened fully. This happened multiple times. There were a couple relationships that simply resumed. I apologized to those people and we moved forward even when I didn't remember the argument or was told by others that I wasn't the one at fault. And there were some who wouldn't accept my apology and offer to move on. They held on to the pain and resentment. I was at a loss. I couldn't remember the argument so my blanket apology was all I could offer.

This gives me a glimpse of how God forgives me. **Psalm 103: 11-12 "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."** God loves us so much, he has forgiven all of our sins – as if they were forgotten. Even though it was our wrong actions, our fault, he offers a fresh start, a new beginning to our relationship. But the choice is ours. We can refuse the forgiveness. We can hang onto the hurt. We can blame God, believing He committed the error. He didn't heal the illness. He didn't punish the guilty. He didn't reject the group we think He should have. We hold on to that hurt. The person forgiving may grieve the loss of the relationship but the choice is on the one holding onto the hurt. All I have to offer is an apology. God offers eternal life, peace and joy. When I hold onto the grudge I am wrapped in chains. When I accept God's forgiveness, I am free.

Jasmine Ray-Symms

[jasisymms@outlook.com](mailto:jasisymms@outlook.com)

[www.jasmineraysymms.com](http://www.jasmineraysymms.com)



**The Brown Bag Brigade in Sky Valley**

Although they have been unable to make their signature brown bag lunches during the pandemic, the BBB has nonetheless continued their mission.

To date they have donated **\$12,000** to groups that help feed, clothe, and house those that are in need of help.

Recipients have included Take the Next Step, the Monroe Women’s Gospel Shelter, Sky Valley Food Bank, Monroe Public Schools, Sky Valley Strong, and the Volunteers of America in Sultan.

They hope to resume making lunches in the near future but for now, they are making good use of the money that has been donated to them.

**Thank you for your continued support.**

*Hazel's Little Free Pantry*

Thank you **Jay Morgan** for installing a bar in the pantry, and to the person that drilled holes in the totes. These small updates make a big difference in the day-to-day work of the pantry.

We’re hoping to have a **motion sensor light** installed as there is no light on the porch. Stocking the pantry in the evening is sometimes unavoidable and a light would make it easier and safer.

The pantry is in need of following items:  
**soup (no tomato), boxed mac-n-cheese, chili, stew, granola bars.**

*Thank you for your loving care of our pantry.*

Questions? Call or text Kathi Cooley: 425-293-8694

*And we pray.....*

*Dear Lord, you have been kind and gracious to lead us through this year long pandemic journey. The world is growing weary and we want to be done with Covid, even though Covid doesn't appear to be done with us. Please give us the patience and strength to get through the months ahead. Thank you for being our shepherd, light for our feet, our healer and our strength.*

*Dear Father, please embrace the Wegenast Family as they grieve the loss of Sharon's mother, Patricia Sue Costello, who passed away February 7 after a long illness. We pray your embrace will comfort their grieving hearts and bring them peace.*

*Lord, we lift up all those who are facing illnesses or surgery today: Pastor Malcolm, who will have knee replacement surgery on March 22, George Mooney recovering from a leg injury, and Judie and Jerry Esqueda’s son Gerald, and daughter-in-law Misty, recovering from Covid-19. Gerald is recovering with a mild case of Covid, but Misty is still quite ill. We ask that You would bring healing, comfort, and peace to their bodies. Please calm their fears and let them experience the healing power of Your love.*

*God Bless You All,*

Rhonda Morgan  
 Care Coordinator



**The World is About to Turn:  
 Mending a Nation's Broken Faith**

by Rick Rouse and Paul O. Ingram

Our Lenten Study continues on Tuesday evenings at 6:30.

The zoom link can be found on our website, United in Grace: <https://www.unitedingrace.org/>

**March 2 - Chapter 4:** Walking Humbly with God: Repentance and Reconciliation as a Path to a More Civil Society

**March 9 - Chapter 5:** Values Matter: Discovering Common Values in Many Faith Traditions

**March 16 - Chapter 6:** Embracing Differences: The Gift of Religious Pluralism

**March 23 - Chapter 7:** Building Bridges of Hope: Ten Ways Forward and Epilogue

**March Birthdays & Anniversaries \***

- 3 William Gray
- 5 Emily Brown
- 8 Emily Tompkins
- 13 Harriet Barr
- 15 Madelyn Cook
- 15 Powell Phillips
- 16 Lori Bulis
- 16 Joanne Hultgren
- 20 Jim & Ellen Olson \*
- 22 Michele Cooper
- 25 Ellen Olson
- 27 Markus Gray
- 29 Kari Gray

## *Celebrating Maundy Thursday at Home*

Adapted from a Service by Pastor Nancy Kraft

*This celebration of Maundy Thursday can take place whether you live alone or with others. The optional foot washing is the only element where others would need to be present. If you do live alone, you may consider calling someone else who lives alone and read together, over the phone, portions of the service. Or, if you have the capacity, do a video chat through Zoom, FaceTime, or another platform, so you can even eat the meal “together”!*

*Prepare a favorite meal and serve it using any special dishes, tableware, or tablecloths you may have available. Before you begin your meal, light a candle as a reminder that this isn't just any meal. Something special and holy is about to happen...*

**Read (aloud or to yourself):** Did you know Jesus' last night with his friends was spent in a place called the Upper Room? That's where they gathered around a table for their meal. They thought it was going to be a meal just like so many other meals they had shared with Jesus, but this one turned out to be unlike any meal they had ever known.

You may have seen pictures of the Last Supper where Jesus and the disciples are sitting in chairs, the way we do it. But, actually, they reclined on cushions at a table on the floor. It was a “laid back” occasion.

There were two important things that happened at this meal. It was the first time Jesus took the bread and wine, blessed them, and said, “This is my body,” and, “This is my blood.” Every time we celebrate communion, we're remembering this night when Jesus shared himself with his disciples around the table. He's promised that he continues to come to us, even today, in the bread and wine.

But before Jesus even got to the part where he gave his disciples Holy Communion for the first time, he did something to show them how much he loved them. He knelt before them and washed their feet. This was his way of showing them that, like him, they need to love and serve one another in humility. He gave them a new commandment, that they love one another as he loved them. In fact, the word “Maundy” means commandment.

**Bible Reading:** Read John 13:3-17, and 13:34-35.

**Foot Washing (optional):** If you have someone else living with you, pour some warm water in a basin, get out some towels and wash one another's feet. Even though this can be an embarrassing and ticklish experience for some, it is also a powerful act of servanthood, particularly when children wash their parents' feet. Remember to wash your hands afterward!

**Table Grace:** Before you eat, say this prayer: Lord, Jesus, on this holy night you washed the feet of your friends, and you shared your last meal with them. Bless this meal that we share tonight. Help us to remember that whenever we eat, you are here at the table with us, teaching us to love one another the way you have loved us. Amen.

**Enjoy Your Meal!** As you eat, think about some of the special meals that you have shared with the people you love. If you are with others or are on the phone or a video chat, share your answers to the following questions:

What made these special meals memorable?

How is this like or different than Holy Communion?

What do you miss about taking Holy Communion at Gloria Dei?

**Read After Your Meal:** When we come together to worship in our church building on Maundy Thursday, we end our time together with the stripping of the altar. As we hear a Psalm being read, all the objects on and around the altar are removed: candles, banners, altar book, communion ware, and table linens. When it is finished, the altar is completely bare. The stripping of the altar symbolizes the abandonment of Jesus by his disciples and the stripping of Jesus by the soldiers before his crucifixion. It reminds us of the barrenness of life without the hope of Christ that we have through his resurrection.

To remember this tradition, read Psalm 22 from your Bible (vv. 1-5 is sufficient but for the whole experience, read the entire Psalm!)

You can do a “stripping of the altar” in your own home, using one or more of these activities:

Gather any faith related items you may have in your house – crosses, statues, religious art and symbols that can be easily removed. Pack them away somewhere, in a storage bin or a bag. Cover any large items with a cloth.

Remove all items from your dining table so it's completely empty and thoroughly wash it so it is both cleared and cleaned.

Leave your table bare until Easter morning. Parents: on Saturday night when everyone has gone to bed, unpack and uncover the religious items and decorate your dining room table with Easter joy so your family can awaken to a day of celebration!

**MORNING STAR LUTHERAN CHURCH**

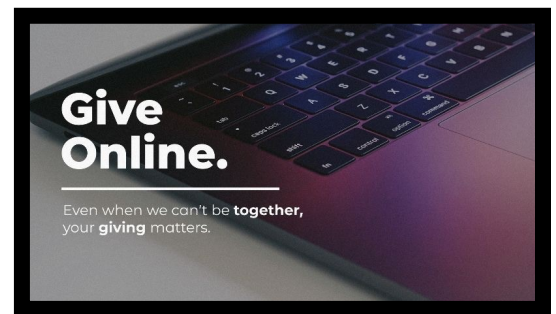
<u>2021 MSLC COUNCIL</u>		
Administrative Director <b>Missy Maxson</b>		206-437-2535
Treasurer <b>Brian Johnson</b>		452-503-8352
Community Relations <b>Cindy Gulbranson</b>		425-210-2095
Facilities - <i>Vacant. If interested please contact Missy.</i>		
Secretary <b>Marla Wardell</b>		360-794-4072
Ministry Director <b>Jill Sumpter</b>		360-348-7231
Worship <b>Kathi Cooley</b>		425-293-8694

<u>NON-DESIGNATED OFFERINGS AND EXPENSES</u>		
	2020 Budget	December Actual
<b>Offerings</b>	\$ 8,333	\$21,152
<b>Expenses</b>	\$10,161	\$10,384
<b>Surplus/deficit</b>		\$10,768

<u>NON-DESIGNATED OFFERINGS AND EXPENSES</u>		
	2021 Budget	January Actual
<b>Offerings</b>	\$ 8,930	\$ 6,018
<b>Expenses</b>	\$10,163	\$11,548
<b>Surplus/deficit</b>		<b>-\$5,530</b>

**MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

<u>2020 MUMC LAY LEADERSHIP</u>		
Board of Trustees Co-Chairs <b>Chris &amp; Don Hoerner</b>		360-563-9309
Finance Chair <b>Mike Obright</b>		206-369-5028
Treasurer <b>Tanya Hubbard</b>		425-210-2095
Financial Secretary <b>Nancy Franke</b>		360-794-6954
Staff-Parish Relations Committee <b>Judie Esqueda</b>		951-201-0061
Membership Secretary <b>Rhonda Dean</b>		425-359-2851
Lay Leader to Annual Conference <b>Nancy Franke</b>		360-794-6954
UMW President <b>Jasmine Ray-Symms</b>		425-223-9866
Recording Secretary <b>Margaret Ray</b>		509-432-3029





Morning Star Lutheran Church



Monroe United Methodist Church

412 South Lewis Street

Monroe, WA 98272-4149

*March 2021*

**March 7: 3 Lent ~ LIVE WORSHIP WITH HOLY COMMUNION ~** Scripture: Exodus 20: 1-17; 1 Cor 1:18-25; John 2:13-22

**March 14: 4 Lent ~ ONLINE WORSHIP ~** Scripture: Numbers 21;4-9; Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21

**March 21: 5 Lent ~ ONLINE WORSHIP WITH HOLY COMMUNION ~** Scripture: Jer. 31:31-34; Hebrews 5:5-10; John 12:20-33

**March 28: PALM SUNDAY ~ ONLINE WORSHIP ~** Scripture: Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Mark 14:1-15:47

**CONTACT US:**

**Pastor Malcolm Brown**

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**MONROE UNITED METHODIST**

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**Phone:** 360-794-8863

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**Music Director:** Lee Ann Obright: 206-369-1621

**Website:** [www.monroeuonline.org](http://www.monroeuonline.org)

**MORNING STAR LUTHERAN**

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**Music Director:** Jill Sumpter: 360-348-7231

**Website:** [www.morningstarlc.org](http://www.morningstarlc.org)

worship  
ONLINE

**Morning Star Lutheran Church &  
Monroe United Methodist  
Church**

**The service is ready for viewing  
Sundays after 6:00 a.m. and is  
available 24/7.**

**YouTube**

