

GROWING IN

Grace

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

LOOK INSIDE FOR:

Bishop Shelley Wee	pg. 3
Prayer Garden	pg. 4
Outreach	pg. 6
Church Business	pg. 7

September 2021

Greetings in Christ!

Last year I began my September Newsletter article with the following words:

We are now almost 6 full months into this new reality of living in a COVID world in the year of 2020. We are experiencing life in new and unprecedented ways like no other time in our living memories or our world history. We are in a moment, a new time to perhaps consider so much about our past, present and future.

This moment is now, and the future of the church is wide open.

Autumn is, above all else, even in in a normal world, a time of change. It is also a time of new beginnings. As this fall begins, our calling is the same as it has been in the past; to experience and hear God's voice, to practice the presence of God, to become closer to God and to follow God on God's mission to bless and heal our world. God has not stopped speaking and calling us even if we are limited in our gatherings and movements in our lives.

Today, in September of 2021, now almost eighteen months of continuing to live in a Covid world I am thinking more about the future of our ministry together as two congregations under one umbrella. I have been thinking a lot about the word "Ubuntu" and what it means as we navigate our world, the pandemic, and our life as a missional outpost in Monroe.

Ubuntu is a term meaning "humanity". It is sometimes translated as "I am because we are." This word is an ancient African philosophy to remind us and the world that we are shaped by our relationships with others. It's a way of living that begins with the premise that **"I am" only because we are.** In practice, ubuntu means believing the common bonds within a group are more important than any individual arguments and divisions within it. "People will debate, people will disagree; yet it is about coming together and building a consensus around what affects the community."

When we come back into our building to worship together, we will continue to look forward into our future and seek God's preferred future for us under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We will do so by remembering where we were in our conversations as separate congregations working to discern our possible future together under one umbrella or under the fabric of a large tent. This conversation will begin to move forward again around the question of what it might look like to be one ministry with a new identity united in grace, while still maintaining our denominational identities and heritage. This new identity might even be called **"United in Grace"** or **"Grace United"** *A joint ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the United Methodist Church.* Perhaps a topic for a later conversation?

During this COVID time both congregational councils have discussed and approved jointly working together in the following ways:

***Joint Worship**

***Joint Staffing** - including jointly paying Jills, Custodians, Kathi's to an extent, and Bryce's salary's

***Joint Newsletter** - **"Growing in Grace"**

***Joint Website** - MSLC has already dropped its old website- <https://www.unitedingrace.org/>

*** Sharing cost of worship computer and other expenses**

As I looked back, in an effort to more fully understand what the future conversation might look like, I thought that it would be helpful to remind us as to the work that began after I was appointed as the pastor of Monroe United Methodist church on July 1, 2019.

By July 11th, 2019, the Council leaders (Missy Maxson- Morning Star Lutheran & Nancy Franke- Monroe United Methodist) in an email conversation began having a dialogue as to what the Holy Spirit might be leading us jointly into.

continued on next page

from previous page

They both expressed the sense that the Holy Spirit has been leading us down an obvious road to merging in some way and to grasp and understand that we will definitely be stronger together. They also understood, as do I, that the road may not be easy, but it does mean we will need to stay positive, communicate clearly, and keep praying.

September 8th – Rally Sunday -Nancy attended the MSLC service and Missy attended the MUMC service. Both sharing the other's desire to start the conversation about joining forces and to announce the prayer vigil.

September- and October -Volunteers were sought by both councils to be on a Joint Ministry Leadership Team.

September 28th - 29th - 24 Hour Prayer Vigil from 9:30am Saturday Sept. 28 to 9:30am Sunday took place followed by a joint service with a joint meeting after the service to lay out ideas and have Q&A and ask for all members to discern if they feel called to serve on JMLT.

December 1st, 2019- Monroe United Methodist Church at its Annual Congregational Charge Conference Meeting confirmed by vote to affirm their desire by a majority vote to continue to look into, explore, and move forward with a plan to join both congregations into one while still maintaining their United Methodist memberships and affiliations.

December 8th, 2019-Morning Star Lutheran Church at its Administrative Congregational meeting after much discussion, many questions and concerns, confirmed by a majority vote to also continue to explore joining our ministry with Monroe United Methodist Church.

December 2020- March 2021- We worshiped together during Advent and Christmas Eve.

March 8th -We had our last in-person joint worship service.

March 13th- All in person worship was halted due to the pandemic.

March 29th – We began the first of joint on-line worship services. As of this newsletter we have now 78 services recorded on YouTube.

I believe and am convinced that God is still speaking and has given us all that we need, the people and resources, to partner with God in God's mission for Monroe and for our world. The future comes to us as a gift from God and will be revealed to us if we but listen and follow. God invites us to listen, to think creatively with the Holy Spirit, and to dream about the unimaginable possibilities which God has planned for us. So, we ask: **Who** God has called us to be and to **What** God has called us to do in this time right now and in this place right now.

This may indeed lead us into new ways of being and doing. We will be invited by the Holy Spirit to do things we have not done before, don't know how to do, and possibly to do things we may not even want to do. We are being invited to follow God into our world and to join in with what God is already doing. We rest in hope because we know that endings with God are new beginnings.

In my June Pastors report I made the following proposal for the Formation of Joint Guiding Team.

My proposal is that we set up a 'Guiding Team' made up of representatives from both congregations (perhaps 1 or 2 people and perhaps one from the council), and myself as a pastoral and spiritual guide. This team would set a timeline, process, short - and long-term goals in order to discern whether or not to intentionally move forward with this this collaborative venture. We would create listening meetings, and groups within the congregations as we discern this possible work. This will be a process that will take as much time as is needed until the Guiding Team believes it has enough information to make a recommendation to both churches' councils and congregations.

It has become very clear to me that we need to be working more closely together interdependently and not independently. I have always believed that we are always better together embracing 'Ubuntu" - ***I am because we are.***

We thank God for each of you and for your love and grace as we walk this new journey together in this new and unprecedented time in history, following and discovering Christ in our midst and in our world.

United in Grace, Peace and Love,

Pr Malcolm, Missy Maxson, Nancy Franke

Growing in Grace is the monthly newsletter of Morning Star Lutheran and Monroe United Methodist Churches. We invite and encourage you to submit articles and photos for publication in the newsletter. The deadline for submissions is the 15th of each month.

Send your submission to mslc@morningstarlc.org.





From the Spirit, September 2021

On August 1, 2021 I began my third year in the office of bishop for the Northwest Washington Synod. It is my pleasure and joy to serve God and to journey with you through this office. I am thankful for your partnership, your understanding, your forgiveness, your passion, and your faithfulness.

We are living in a time of great turmoil and great opportunity. We are living in (to use a much-overused word) unprecedented times. What does this mean for us as individuals? The Northwest Washington Synod? The ELCA? The Body of Christ?

Many of us feel **grief**. Grief at what once was but is no longer. Grief that the world keeps changing around us and we cannot figure out our place or our sense of call in the middle of so much shifting. It is difficult when the world feels rocky and unsteady. It is hard to understand that what we often took for granted is no longer. Recently I visited my hometown in eastern Washington. The town is half the size it was when I was growing up. As I walked through the downtown, businesses that have been there for decades are gone. Boarded up. Abandoned. My world felt rocked. And I grieved. What do you grieve?

Many of us feel **anger or resentment**. We divide ourselves into camps. We use the words, “us” and “them” and act as though “our” camp is always right and holy and just. We throw words around like weapons and we refuse to truly listen to the other – because we are “right” and they are “wrong.” And nothing will persuade us otherwise. In John 8 we hear Jesus tell the men who wanted to throw rocks at a woman accused of adultery, “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” When the men leave, Jesus says to the woman, “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.” What would it mean for us to live into these words of Jesus?

Many of us feel **exhausted**. We are tired. We are weary. For a brief moment it felt as though we were moving beyond COVID19 and then suddenly, with the Delta variant, we were pushed back into worry and concern (I am writing this in the middle of August – perhaps the numbers will be better before you read this in September!). Quite frankly, I am tired of changing things on the calendar – wondering if something should be in-person or online, wondering if I am doing something risky or if I am not taking the variables into enough consideration. It is wearisome. What makes you exhausted?

Many of us feel there is **something more that we are missing**. We ache for connection with God and with others. We feel lonely when we are alone, and we feel even more isolated when we are in a group. We long for meaning. We yearn to truly live, move, and have our being in the Spirit (Acts 17). How does the community of Christ answer the loneliness so many are feeling? What

have we missed in the life of the church and participants? How do we sink even more deeply into the waters of life that God has called us to and given us in our baptisms?

Many of us are **hopeful**. Yes, I fully am living in the reality of all that I said above. I am not a Pollyanna. And yet, I trust that God is here, God is present, God is active – in this beautiful, flawed world of ours. Right now, in our congregations and in our neighborhoods, there are grief-stricken, angry, exhausted, aching-for-connection people. And right now, God has given us the opportunity to not only reach out to these people, but to listen and reflect, grow and learn together. What a calling! What an opportunity!

I encourage you to check out the **LiVE** Project where you can connect, learn, and grow deeper in faith together and with others. <https://lutheransnw.org/ministries/the-live-project>

You might also be interested in **Living Legacy** where congregations are encouraged to have deep conversations about their values, their dreams, and what God is calling them to do and to be into the future. <https://lutheransnw.org/programs/livinglegacy>

The synod staff and I are here to journey, listen, and reflect with you. Thank you for these last two years. I look forward to this new year together in Christ.

Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee

bishop@lutheransnw.org

There is no message from Bishop Stanovsky this month.



SEPTEMBER GUEST PREACHERS

The sermon on September 5 is offered by Deacon Dianne Johnson, provided by The NWWA ELCA Synod as a means of support for congregations.

Margaret Ray, retired, licensed, local pastor, will offer the sermon on September 12 as Pr. Malcolm will be on vacation.

It is with great sadness that we share the news with you of the closure of The Church of Our Savior, Episcopal. After many years of thoughtful prayer and consideration, they closed in mid August. Please keep our Lewis Street neighbors in your prayers.



PRAYER GARDEN WORK DAY

September 25, 2021 9 a.m. – noon

We will remove the bricks from the labyrinth area of the Prayer Garden and prepare for a layer of bark.

Volunteers will need to bring equipment to dig up bricks and shovel gravel.

Don and Chris Hoerner usually care for the Prayer Garden but with Don's upcoming 7th surgery they're no longer able to take care of this.

New volunteers are needed for this task.

Please come help. Many hands make light work.

Proverbs 16:9

*In their hearts humans plan their course,
but the Lord establishes their steps.*

Life seemed to be going along just fine... then here comes Covid... messing up all my plans! Anybody else feel that way? I guess I needed to be reminded just who IS in charge.

So, when we last met, we were 'planning' to join forces with the Methodists, with a joint service - we didn't know what the entire plan would be but it was a start. Little did we know God had his own plan to join us together - Worshiping Online! It never crossed our minds that our two little churches be doing Online YouTube services! But that is where the Lord led us. I do hope you have seen our Worship Services available each week on YouTube or a link on our Facebook pages. When you do view either Facebook or YouTube, please hit the LIKE button. We can spread *The Good News* and witness to others with just lifting one finger, and pressing one button. Thank you!

While on the subject, I would like to brag on a few people who work faithfully to produce our high quality Online service every week...so far, there have been over 70 'episodes'. Kathi Cooley deserves high praise as she puts together the 'Script,' finds the inspirational videos and designs the graphics. Bryce Cooley has recently stepped into big shoes following Missy Maxson as the editor. They both have done an outstanding job. Jill Sumpter is our Music Director. It is wonderful to hear her playing and singing. Nancy Franke and Pastor Malcolm work tirelessly to bring us hopeful and inspirational words that carry us through the week. Thank you to Peggy Ray for stepping in where needed. I also want to thank all the 'Readers' who volunteer (or have the arm twisted a bit) each week. It is so wonderful seeing the familiar and much missed faces.

Our Online service is one way of staying in touch, connected, and in relationship with each other and there are other ways to keep our community of faith active and connected. I encourage you to reach out, with a phone call, a letter, card or even a text. Check in with other people in your life, especially with those who may be feeling lonely, particularly the elderly and those living alone. Relationships need to be tended, given attention.

We have our Free Little Pantry up and running. It has been stocked daily this summer and is usually empty the next morning. The Pantry is blessing others in our larger community. Donations are always welcome, contact the office for more information.

Brown Bag has started back up. Many of our regular distribution points are not open. We are looking for other groups, people in our community that may be feed with Brown Bag Lunches. If you have ideas or leads please let the office know.

Our Prayer Chain is very active. If you would like to be added to the prayer chain or would like prayers said for you or others, please contact the Prayer Coordinator (for both congregations) Rhonda Morgan and your requests will be added and sent out. morganrhonda@gmail.com

I know there are many ways we are and can serve, stay connected & in contact with each other, our community and our God. The one thing I have to remember is to step back, get out of the way and Let the Lord Lead.

Be Gentle with Yourself, Kind to Others, Go in Peace, Serve the Lord!

Cindy Gulbranson

MSLC Council Communications Leader





Take Heart

John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

This has been a hard week for me. After 11 ½ years my best friend and comforter, my dog Kia, had to be put down. After battling diabetes, liver disease and possibly pancreatic cancer, we were told it was time to say goodbye. I've been surrounded by love and support by others who have experienced this time of loss but mostly, I'm comforted knowing that while I'm in pain now, this pain will not last forever.

John 16:33 is a wonderful comfort to me. As the Delta variant of the COVID virus attacks ever more vulnerable people, we can know God is with us and will overcome sickness. As people struggle with weakened businesses, job loss and stretched paychecks, we know we can give our sorrows and struggles to God. God doesn't tell us He will fix everything and this world will be rainbows and daisies. He straight out says, "**you will have trouble**" but it doesn't stop with our troubles. We are not left alone in our pain. God loves us in our struggles so, "**take heart! [He] has overcome the world!**"

Jasmine Ray-Symms
www.jasmineraysymms.com

Dear Friends, in Christ,

As I reflect on recent weeks I acknowledge the dark events that have transpired:

Covid-19 cases are rising, hospitals are overwhelmed, and people are dying.

Haiti has experienced another earthquake and tropical storm, Afghanistan has fallen to the Taliban, and the Gulf Coast has been ravaged by Hurricane Ida. The suffering in these areas is hard to comprehend.

Fires rage in the Western United States and tropical storms on the East Coast have caused severe flooding and loss of life.

But I also acknowledge the One who is the Light of life and that we, the Church, is to be a light for the world. Please continue to pray for our world and God's people.

*"Holy One, You are our comfort and strength
 In times of sudden disaster, crisis, or chaos.*

*Surround us now with your grace and peace
 Through storm or earthquake, fire or flood.*

*By your Spirit, lift up those who have fallen,
 Sustain those who work to rescue or rebuild,
 And fill us with the hope of your new creation;
 Through You, our rock and redeemer."*

Author Unknown -

In Christ,
 Rhonda Morgan
 Prayer Coordinator

**SUNDAY
 WORSHIP
 ATTENDANCE**

Average monthly views for
 YouTube and Facebook services:

August: 54 July: 66
June: 54

September Birthday & Anniversary* Celebrations

- 2 Catherine Hubbard
- 2 Dennis & Shelly Nagy *
- 3 Brittany Symms
- 5 Delaney Wardell
- 8 Mike Obright
- 9 Alan & Harriet Barr *
- 9 Sharon Wegenast
- 10 Delaney & Marla Wardell *
- 12 Dennis Olson
- 12 Russ & Jill Sumpter
- 14 Samantha Missel
- 15 Jeff Schroeder
- 16 Chris Missel
- 18 Callie Maxson
- 20 Jakob Wegenast
- 23 Dorothy Garrison
- 21 Diane Coates
- 21 Patrick & Renée Cook
- 24 Diane Harris
- 25 Russ & Rhonda Dean *
- 27 Jodi Fowler
- 27 Bret & Jodi Fowler *
- 29 Chris Gray

HAZEL'S LITTLE FREE PANTRY

Serving our neighbors!

Shopping List

- ✓ Cup-a-Soup
- ✓ CRACKERS
- ✓ tuna
- ✓ Granola Bars
- ✓ TRAIL MIX
- ✓ Bottled Water
- ✓ individual shelf stable milk
- ✓ Vienna Sausage
- ✓ Raman Noodles
- ✓ canned spaghetti
- ✓ Canned Chili
- ✓ Canned FRUIT
- ✓ CEREAL

Donations are Always Welcome!

LEAVE ON THE BACK PORTCH OF CHURCH ANNEX/OFFICE

Thank you for your continued generous support of our shared mission

If you have any questions about donations, you can contact any of the pantry coordinators:
Cindy @ 425-210-2095; Nancy @ 425-345-6954; Kathi @ 425-293-8694

THE BROWN BAG BRIGADE HAS BEGUN MAKING LUNCHES AGAIN!

We are currently preparing less than 50 lunches a week, but word of mouth travels fast and we're certain to be increasing production soon.

We will be contacting our Fabulous Cooking Bakers as soon as that happens.



A Bible Study on the Gospel of John will begin Tuesday, October 5th. The study will run for six Tuesdays and will be led by Peggy Ray. More information will be coming soon.

SECURITY IN THE CHURCH BUILDINGS

Two weeks ago while conducting his nightly security check, our caretaker Jerry found the side door of the church left not only unlocked, but open, right next to the Little Free Pantry. Unfortunately, this is far from the first time a door has been left open or unlocked when he checked.

We know that many of you have keys to the church, and many more know the code to the lockbox, so its hard to say who might have entered and left the door open. It goes without saying that this this is a big security risk, not only for things being stolen, but for someone to enter the church unauthorized, which could be a danger for anyone else going in.

We ask that if you have a key to the church, OR use the code to the lock box to get into either the church or the annex, that you be very vigilant in remembering to check **ALL** doors when you leave (especially of you enter by one door and leave by another) to make sure the buildings are kept safe and secure.

Thanks for your attention to this important matter and for all you do for MUMC and MSLC !

Thank you,
Kathi Cooley
Nancy Franke

SEPTEMBER 2021 MORNING STAR LUTHERAN CHURCH

<u>NON-DESIGNATED OFFERINGS AND EXPENSES</u>			
	2021 Budget	June Actual	July Actual
Offerings	\$ 8,930	\$ 7,989	\$10,484
Expenses	\$10,163	\$10,383	\$ 9,760
Surplus/deficit		- \$ 2,394	\$ 724

2021 MSLC COUNCIL

Administrative Director Missy Maxson	206-437-2535
Treasurer Brian Johnson	452-503-8352
Community Relations Cindy Gulbranson	425-210-2095
Facilities Jay Morgan	425-903-1678
Secretary Marla Wardell	360-794-4072
Ministry Director Jill Sumpter	360-348-7231
Worship Kathi Cooley	425-293-8694

SEPTEMBER 2021 MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Hi everyone!

Well, here we are in September already and 18 mos. into the pandemic and away from each other, but still we are a church family together – keeping in touch with each other and still sharing our lives and our joys and concerns as best we can, and still supporting the work of your church with your time, your talent, your prayers and your resources. This is what a family does and it has been so wonderful to see that over the time that we have been away from our weekly face to face contact, that has changed very little. Let us be a blessing to all.

Here is the MUMC financial status for July 2021. Thank you all for your faithful giving!

<u>TOTAL RECEIPTS</u>	July 2021	YTD 2021				
	\$10,136.56	\$52,561.07				
<u>TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS</u>	July 2021	Budget amt	YTD actual	YTD Budget	Annual Budget	% spent
	\$5,545.24	\$7,382.75	\$45,396.24	\$43,084.42	\$88,593.00	51%

A few projects going on around the church: Work to begin soon on replacing the ramp handrails and building new ones around the front deck of the annex, along with a few siding patches. This Project is being headed up by Jay Morgan, our new trustee member, and we are very grateful for his time and skill on this project. Ric Hart and Jerry Esqueda have also volunteered to help with the construction, along with a few MSLC members that Jay will be *convincing* to volunteer as well. If you are interested in helping, please let me know.

Also, the Prayer Garden is getting a much needed clean out and the labyrinth removed to replace with bark to make maintenance easier and the areas itself more useful to peaceful meditation. Right now it is a mass of weeds and very overgrown plants. This project will be headed up by Peggy Ray with Ric Hart and Jerry providing some labor, but could certainly use some help from both congregations to get this done. Usually Don and Chris Hoerner have tended to the Prayer Garden almost exclusively, but as you know Don has had 9 surgeries (the latest one on 8/26 for a fractured femur after the hip replacements on 8/24) since February and been in a rehab center for the past few months until the actual hip replacement could be done. Chris says this latest surgery will keep him in Bethany Rehab for a while still. We are all filling in as best we can for trustee chairs Don and Chris, and thank all that have stepped up to help with property issues. Our prayers go out to Don for swift healing and to Chris for patience and endurance!

Hope you are all doing well. Thanks so much for your cards and notes that help us keep in touch and let us know that our “family” is still thinking of those that are keeping the porch lights on at MUMC / MSLC ! Until we meet in person, stay safe, mask up and keep the faith!

God bless us EVERYONE!

Nancy Franke

2021 MUMC LAY LEADERSHIP

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

 Morning Star Lutheran Church

 Monroe United Methodist Church

412 South Lewis Street
Monroe, WA 98272-4149


September
2021

September 5: 15TH PENTECOST ~ Online Worship Holy Communion ~ Scripture: Psalm 146 / Mark 7:24-37

September 12: 16TH PENTECOST ~ Online Worship ~ Scripture: Psalm 103: 1-13 / Matthew 18:21-35

September 19: 17TH PENTECOST ~ Online Worship Holy Communion ~ Scripture: Psalm 145:1-8, Matthew 20:1-16

September 26: 18TH PENTECOST ~ Online Worship ~ Scripture: Psalm 25:1-9; Matthew 21:23-32

CONTACT US:

Pastor Malcolm Brown

Email: prmalcolmb@gmail.com **Phone:** 360-794-2111

MONROE UNITED METHODIST

Office Administrator: Jasmine Ray-Symms

Phone: 360-794-8863

Email: office@monroeumonline.org

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

Website: www.monroeumonline.org

MORNING STAR LUTHERAN

Office Administrator: Kathi Cooley

Cell Phone: 425-293-8694

Phone: 360-794-2111

Email: mvlc@morningstarlc.org

Music Director: Jill Sumpter: 360-348-7231

Website: 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

