

*We Respond to God's Word*

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

O God, as you draw near to us through your words, equip us to fulfill your love. Move us beyond quarreling, jealousy, self-centered minds, worries, fear in the challenging situation that we may come to understand and appreciate those other individuals and other differences with whom we share your love and grace. Grant a larger view of who we are, rather than how we can move on. In Jesus' name. Amen.

SHARING OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYERS/THE LORD'S PRAYER

PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

\*DOXOLOGY UMH 95

PRAYER OF DEDICATION Unison

Eternal God, whose gift of love we can never repay, we offer these symbols of our gratitude. May they equip our church to minister more alertly and lovingly in this community and beyond. Amen.

*We Go Forth to Love God and Serve One Another*

\*HYMN *I Know Whom I Have believed* UMH 714 (vs. 1 & 4)

\*BENEDICTION Pastor Jenny Lee

POSTLUDE

# Upper St. Croix Parish

**ONE Parish THREE Churches:**  
Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls  
November 29th, 2020  
"The First Sunday of Advent"

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**The United Methodist Church**

*10:00 am Online Zoom Service*

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Pastor Jenny Lee:** [jennlee1732@gmail.com](mailto:jennlee1732@gmail.com)  
**Parish Office:** 715-463- 2624 – [centralumc2016@gmail.com](mailto:centralumc2016@gmail.com)  
**St. Croix Falls Office:** 715-483-9494  
[www.upperstcroixparish.org](http://www.upperstcroixparish.org)

**Upper St. Croix Parish**  
**Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls**  
**November 29th, 2020**  
**“The First Sunday of Advent”**

This bulletin is for both in-church and drive-in services (outdoor).

\*Please rise as you are able.

**PRELUDE**

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**BLESSING OF ADVENT CANDLES AND WREATH**

**ADVENT SONG**

**TFWS 2090 (vs. 1)**

**LIGHTING THE FIRST CANDLE**

**PASSING OF THE GREETINGS**

*“Peace be with You!”*

**We Celebrate New Life in Christ**

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP**      Responsive

Wake up, people of God!

Our salvation is near!

**We have been asleep and did not know it.**

**Christ comes to awaken all our potential.**

God’s law of love summons us away

from actions that hurt and destroy.

**We seek to know the ways of God**

**and to walk in the light where Christ leads.**

Let us enter this season of preparation,

expecting to be changed as we worship and serve.

**We will watch and ready ourselves**

**for the coming of One whom God sends. Amen.**

**\*OPENING HYMN**      *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*

**UMH 196**

**OPENING PRAYER**      Unison

**Great God, lift us up in anticipation of Christ’s advent among us.**

**Grant us the vision to see beyond ourselves and to view all**

**humankind as neighbors. Help us to be honest, generous, and**

**merciful in all our relationships. We would attune ourselves to**

**matters of the Spirit so we will be ready for Christ’s coming. To**

**that end, bless our virtual worship today. We pray in Jesus’ name.  
Amen.**

**Proclamation of God’s Word**

**\*THE GOSPEL LESSON**

**Mark 13:24-37**

24 “But in those days, after that suffering,  
the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will not give its light,

25 and the stars will be falling from heaven,

and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

26 Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great  
power and glory. 27 Then he will send out the angels, and gather his  
elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of  
heaven.

28 “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes  
tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 So  
also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he[a] is  
near, at the very gates. 30 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass  
away until all these things have taken place. 31 Heaven and earth will  
pass away, but my words will not pass away.

32 “But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in  
heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Beware, keep alert;[b] for  
you do not know when the time will come. 34 It is like a man going on  
a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each  
with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. 35  
Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the  
house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at  
dawn, 36 or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. 37  
And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

This is the word of God for the people of God.

**Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN OF PREPARATION**      *Special Song-We are in Oneness*

**Korean Caucus Virtual Choir**

**SERMON**

**“Beware, Keep Alert”**

**Pastor Jenny Lee**

*(If you are not able to join us for Zoom Live Service, one of  
your family members may read the written sermon, or view the video  
clip on Facebook.)*

## Announcements (Insert) November 29th, 2020

1. Today is the first Sunday of Advent. Let us have the renewal time of our minds, hearts and souls in Christ's promise and share love with one another.
2. We will have Communion Service next Sunday (12/6). You may pick the communion elements up at the church, or you may prepare them by yourself. (Grantsburg: Tuesday or Wednesday, St. Croix Falls: Thursday)
3. An Online Zoom Service will be held this Sunday (November 29th) at 10 am, and here is the zoom service LINK. This link will be posted on our parish website also. The link will be changed every Sunday.

**Topic: Zoom Live Sunday Service, 11-29**

**Time: Nov 29, 2020 10:00 AM Central Time (US and Canada)**

Click the link to Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85977398264?pwd=OE1Rc081TjNhTGNNL0xnc0h4anBoUT09>

- If you are joining Zoom the first time, you may be asked to download the Zoom app. It is free, you will need it.
- If you want to join with your smart phone with video, click the link.
- If you want to dial the number without video, you may dial the number below and enter with meeting ID and passcode.  
+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)  
Meeting ID: 859 7739 8264  
Passcode: 854062

Any questions regarding technological issues for this service, contact pastor Jenny.

4. You can also participate via **conference call (smart phone or landline)** every Sunday at 10:00 am by calling (1-888) 222-0475 and entering participant code 2938435.
5. We need volunteers to be the liturgist every Zoom Sunday. If you are willing to be a liturgist, let Pastor Jenny know which Sunday you are available, and we welcome a special song with your family members.
6. If you miss a Zoom Live Sunday service, you may view a video clip on Facebook or use materials (mailed, emailed or on the Parish website) for a home service. You may want to send your giving (offerings) to your church. If you have any questions regarding services or offerings, please email the church office at: [centralumc2016@gmail.com](mailto:centralumc2016@gmail.com)

You may send your giving (offering) to the church:

**Atlas UMC:** PO Box 254, Luck, WI 54853

**Grantsburg-Central UMC:** PO Box 128, Grantsburg, WI 54840

**St. Croix Falls UMC:** PO Box 458, St. Croix Falls, WI 54024

7. This Week's Birthdays and Anniversaries:

Blake Reid 11/29

Don Anderson 11/30

Tanner Gaffey 11/30

Ashley Bistram 12/3

Florence Buggert 12/5

Monte Fay 12/5



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November 29, 2020.  
Mark 13:24-37

Pastor Jenny Lee, Ph.D.

## **“Beware, Keep Alert!”**

There was an atheist in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His name was Robert Ingersoll. He was a famous speaker regarding “atheism,” which means “there is no God.” He became famous with many books about “NO God Exists.” One day, when he was about to finish a speech on his belief that “there’s no God,” he took out his watch from his pocket and said, “I want to show you there is no God. The Scripture says that God strikes and kills someone who humiliates God. So, I will insult God and give Him five minutes. Let us see if God hits me and kills my soul in hell.”

It was scary and quiet for the first minute. People began to move into a scared mood. Even though the people did not believe in God, they were still scared in case God existed. Finally, when it reached five minutes, he put his watch back in his pocket and said, “Did you see it? There is no God. If there were a God, He would hit me.” After that, many people followed him with his belief that “there is no God.”

Many people were curious if God exists throughout human history. Some believed in God; some did not; even some brought on wars about whose God was the real God; some would die in public killing many people, believing it was God’s command; Some made people confused that it was the end of the world. However, Jesus said, “watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come” (Mark 13: 5-8).

What do you think about the coming Christ? Do you believe in Christ coming back? Jesus said, “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John14:3). And in the Scripture Acts, when Jesus was taken up to heaven, two angels said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). If you believe so, God is already with you.

In today’s Scripture, it talks about the coming Jesus Christ. It also talks about that before Jesus comes back, there are many difficulties in the world. We faced many difficulties in our lives. Sometimes it is too much like the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we do not know when it will be happen. Jesus says, “About that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert, for you do not know when the time will come” (Mark 13:32-33). It is our blessing that we do not know when Jesus comes back. Because we do not know, we can have hope. If we knew everything happening in the future, we would not have any hope. The reason we have hope is that Jesus promised us; because we believe in God’s Word. Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away” (Mark 13:31). We can hope no matter what kind of difficulties challenge us because we believe in God, and we believe that the Scripture is God’s Word. As God told Joshua, God tells us, “No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. I will be with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Joshua 1:5). Jesus also told us, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). We are the children of God. We have a Steadfast Supporter. When we keep God’s Word in our lives, God will be with us. We know, nevertheless, we face many difficulties in our lives. God sometimes blocks a lion’s mouth but does not

remove a lion in front of us as God protected Daniel ( Hebrews 11:33; Daniel 6: 22). God promised us, “when you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze” (Isaiah 43:2). “Beware, and keep alert” God promised us that God would be with us in the fire and water, but God did not promise us that God removes the fire and water in our lives.

We are currently experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic. It is similar to a worldwide war. Many are going to die. It seemed to like it may never end. Many people are grieving a loss. Some are disappointed in God and why God does not help people who are going to die in the pandemic. Some leave their faith in God intentionally or unconsciously. Perhaps, there are many reasons they leave God: there are perhaps many reasons; because of the pandemic, the closing of churches, having no internet connection, the list goes on and on. “Beware and Keep alert” who knows if it is a spiritual war or spiritual persecution.

Remember our faithful ancestors kept their faith in God even though they were in persecution. The Scripture shows us how they kept their faith in God: “Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted, and mistreated-the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground” (Hebrews 11:36-38). Because the early Christians kept their faith, the good news of Christ could come to us. Otherwise, we would never know about God. So, we have a responsibility to keep our faith and spread the good news to the next generation and to our neighbors.

Do not forget “who you are.” You are the child of God. As long as you hold God, God will take care of you. No matter “how” because “how” belongs to God. God will make things happen that we cannot make happen. Do not keep the problems, worries, concerns, and troubles in your mind. Throw away all negative things from your minds, hearts, and souls. “Beware, and keep alert” of the negative things that destroy your minds, hearts, and souls. Fill your minds, hearts, and souls with positive things. You can do it because you are the child of God.

Today is the first Sunday of “Advent.” The word “Advent” is from “*Adventus*” in Latin, and it is translated to “*Parousia*” in Greek, which means “coming” or “arriving at.” Advent in the Christian calendar means “the season that is waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ.” Advent is the first day of the Christian calendar. So, today is the first day in a new year of the Christian calendar. Therefore, Christians begin their faithful journey of a year, waiting for Jesus Christ, who comes back again. It is also a new day we begin a new life in Jesus Christ.

In the Advent season, we light five unique candles; three purples, one pink or red, and one white. By Christmas Day, we light the candles one by one. Each candle has a special meaning. The first candle is the symbol of hope; the second is peace; the third is joy; the fourth is love, and the fifth white candle symbolizes Christ's light. It symbolizes that Jesus Christ comes to the dark world as the light with hope, peace, joy, and love. As Jesus comes into the world, we pray that Jesus brings us hope, peace, joy, love, and light in the world. Therefore, we begin the Advent season with these candles, waiting for hope, peace, joy, love, and light that Jesus Christ brings us.

Beware, and keep alert of negative things that destroy your minds, hearts, and souls. One of my favorite verses of the Scripture is that “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life” in Proverbs, 4:23. Keep your hearts and minds and souls in God. Everything has the season. If a tree has fruit all the time, we may think there is something wrong. There is a time for the tree to lose its leaves and suffer in chilly weather, thunderstorms, and snowstorms. After overcoming all the sufferings, the tree finally has flowers, new leaves, and fruit. If there is no God, your suffering ends you; but you can start a new life right now because God is with you. God will be with you, help you, and care for you because God loves you so much!

Thanks be to God, Amen!