

look up and listen, speak to us now. We are troubled by many things. Break into our thoughts to reveal great joy at the heart of life, that we may worship wholeheartedly, offer you our best, and lead others to the discoveries of faith in everyday life. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

SHARING OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS
PASTORAL PRAYER/THE LORD'S PRAYER
INVITATION/PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND
OFFERINGS

*DOXOLOGY UMH 95

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION Unison

For the joy of giving, we offer the products of our labor for the ministry of this church, in outreach to the world. With concern for those who are poor, oppressed, and needy, we rededicate ourselves as helpers and advocates. Out of devotion to Christ, we commit our best, that the church may bear witness among the principalities and powers of this world. Help us all, O God, to be faithful stewards. Amen!

We Go Forth to Love God and Serve One Another

*CLOSING HYMN *We Three Kings* UMH 254 (vs. 1, 2 & 5)

*BENEDICTION Responsive

God sends us on our way, a bold and confident people
Look up, and be guided by the star of joy.

We will open our eyes to the presence of God.

We will look for God's activity all around us.

God's purposes in Christ are to be lived out by us.

We are called to invite others to share in God's grace.

We will witness to all we have seen and heard.

By God's power, we will minister to others.

The Glory of God has risen among us.

We are blessed beyond all deserving.

What we have received, we pass on with joy.

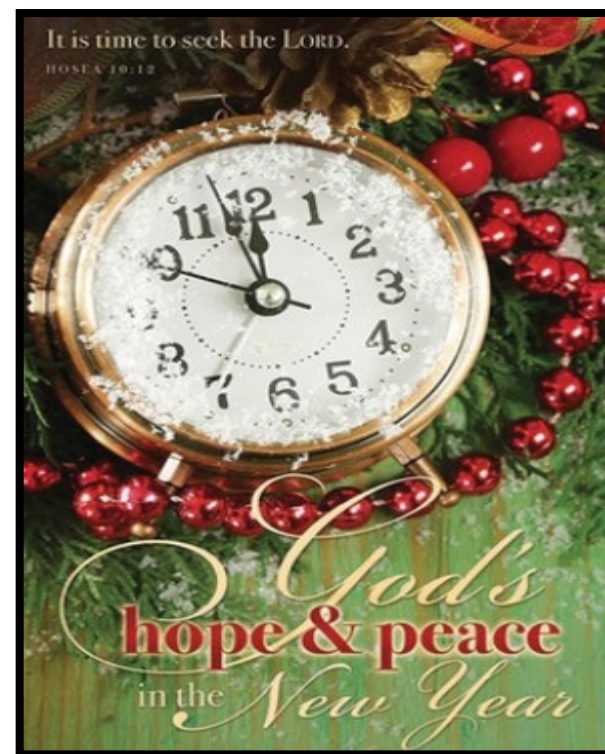
We offer to all the unsearchable riches of Christ. Amen.

*POSTLUDE

Worship Resources "Gathered by Love" by Lavon Bayler.

Upper St. Croix Parish

ONE Parish THREE Churches:
Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls
January 2nd, 2022
"Epiphany of the Lord Sunday"



The United Methodist Church

8:30 AM at Central-Grantsburg with Online Zoom Service
9:45 AM at Atlas ~ 11:15 AM at St. Croix Falls

CONTACT INFORMATION

Pastor Jenny Lee: jennlee1732@gmail.com

Parish Office: 715-463-2624 – centralumc2016@gmail.com

St. Croix Falls Office: 715-483-9494

www.upperstcroixparish.org

Upper St. Croix Parish
Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls
January 2nd, 2021
“Epiphany of the Lord Sunday”

*Please stand if you are able.

***PRELUDE**

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASSING OF THE GREETINGS *“Peace be with you”*

We Celebrate New Life in Christ

***CALL TO WORSHIP** Responsive

Arise, shine; for your light has come.

The glory of God has risen among us.

We are awake; we are alive!

Praise God for deliverance and blessings.

Lift up your eyes to see all around you.

Let your hearts rejoice, and be radiant with hope.

May justice water the earth like a shower;

Let righteousness and peace abound.

Receive again the promises of the gospel.

Participate in the mystery of Jesus Christ.

God’s ways are being revealed to us today.

Our church proclaims the unsearchable riches of Christ. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN** *What Child is This* **UMH 219 (vs. 1 & 3)**

OPENING PRAYER Unison

Eternal God, we come with boldness to claim our relationship with you because your purposes become clear to us in Jesus Christ. We are grateful for pioneers in the faith whose stewardship has salvaged for us a way of life rooted in the gospel. The flames you ignited in them have not gone out, in spite of our faithlessness. Your wisdom is still proclaimed in the church, challenging centers of earthly power with the claims of heaven. Today our search for meaning has led us to this place of worship. You are here; we rejoice! Amen.

CHILDREN’S TIME

UMH 191 (vs. 1)

Proclamation of God’s Word

***THE GOSPEL LESSON**

Matthew 2:1-12 (C & A)

2 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” 3 When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: 6 ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.’” 7 Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 8 Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” 9 When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. 11 On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Isaiah 60:1-6 (SCF)

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. 2 For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. 3 Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. 4 Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses’ arms. 5 Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. 6 A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

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

Thanks be to God.

SERMON

Barb Loomis (C & A)

Kathy Gionis (SCF)




We Respond to God’s Word

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison



God of the stars, whose guidance is always available to those who

CHURCH MISSIONS



ATLAS...January

<p>INK JET RECYCLING PROGRAM:</p> <p>Atlas collects and recycles ink jet cartridges and cell phones year round.</p> 	 <p>We will be collecting soup and monetary donations to support Super Bowl of Caring.</p>	<p>Help Support the Food Shelf in Luck</p> 
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GRANTSBURG...January

<p>BE A "BACK-PACK BACKER"!</p> <p>REMEMBER ... Every Sunday Is MAC 'N CHEESE SUNDAY! Supporting the Salvation Army's "Happy Kids Back-Pack Program"</p> 		<p>Collecting soup and coins to support Souper Bowl of Caring</p>
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ST. CROIX FALLS...January

 <p>Food Shelf</p> <p>(Communion Sunday)</p>	<p>Sailor Hat Offering:</p>  <p>Funds will go to the Salvation Army.</p>
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Thank you for your support!

TODAY'S SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Ministers All God's People
Pastor Jenny Lee

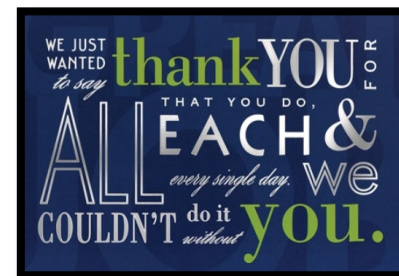
Today's Service

Central:
 Preacher Barb Loomis
 Pianist Toni Koons
 Liturgist Toni Koons
 Snow Removal Stan Chute
 Acolyte(s) Willow Erickson
 Fellowship **Volunteer Needed**
 Counter **Volunteer Needed**
 Sunday School Younger/Older
 LuAnne Martell/Barb Loomis

Atlas:
 Preacher Barb Loomis
 Pianist Sharon Asp
 Liturgist Colleen Adams-Schween
 Usher(s) Sue Olson
 Cleaning **Volunteer Needed**

No Sunday school

St. Croix Falls:
 Preacher Kathy Gionis
 Pianist Sharon Asp
 Liturgist Karen Sciacca
 Usher(s) Jim Andrews
 Money Counter Peter Gionis
 Flowers Kathy Gionis
 Fellowship Ad Council members



BREAKTHROUGH PRAYERS FOR THIS WEEK:
 "This kind can come out only by prayer" (Mark 9:29)
 Please pray every morning at 8:30, if it is possible!

1) For those who lost everything due to the tornado in Kentucky. You may donate support through "UMCOR."

PLEASE NOTE:

- 1) An Online Zoom Service is scheduled for this Sunday at 8:30 am. The link will be posted on our parish website and Facebook page. Click the LINK to Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84147808460?pwd=SDZlZFNumBEvaDBlcytTRzVxMFIIZz09>
Phone: +1 312 626 6799,
Meeting ID: 841 4780 8460, Passcode: 568271
- 2) Our Sunday Sermons are on the website at upperstcroixparish.org under Sermons!
- 3) You can hear “the service by Phone,” whenever you are able by calling 1-715-298-0854.
- 4) You may watch a recorded video of the service on our parish Facebook page.
<https://www.facebook.com/UpperStCroixParishUMC>

This Week’s Calendar:

Today: “Epiphany Sunday.” “Happy New Year! and May God’s presence be with you!”

We have new 2022 signup sheets for volunteers. Please find a spot where you can be a part of the church. We are the church, which is growing in faith together.

Sunday Worship Service:

- 8:30 am Grantsburg
9:45 am Atlas “Christmas Program”
11:15 am St. Croix Falls

12/28-1/7 Pastor Jenny’s Vacation

1/2 No Sunday School (A)

1/5 6:30 pm, Youth Gathering (SCF)

1/8 8am, UM Men’s Meeting (G)

This Week’s Birthdays and Anniversaries:



Mike & Terry Giles

1/6

Next Sunday (January 9th) Volunteers:

Ministers All God’s People
Pastor Jenny Lee

Central:

Pianist Toni Koons
Liturgist *Volunteer Needed*
Snow Removal Stan Chute
Acolyte(s) Willow Erickson
Fellowship *Volunteer Needed*
Counter *Volunteer Needed*
Sunday School Younger/Older
LuAnne Martell/ Barb Loomis

Atlas:

Pianist Sharon Asp
Liturgist *Volunteer Needed*
Usher(s) *Volunteer Needed*
Cleaning *Volunteer Needed*
Sunday School Younger/Older
No Sunday School

St. Croix Falls:

Pianist Sharon Asp
Liturgist Karen Sciacca
Usher(s) Jim Andrews
Money Counter Peter Gionis
Flowers Kathy Gionis
Fellowship Ad Council Member (3rd Sunday)



1/9/22 COMMUNION SUNDAY, “LAW ENFORCEMENT APPRECIATION SUNDAY.”

1/12/22 1PM, UMW MEETING (G)
6:30 PM, CONFIRMATION CLASS (G)

1/16/22 NEW COVENANT SUNDAY (RECOGNITION OF CHURCH LEADERSHIP)

Matthew 2:1-12

A little background to start this message. Epiphany is January 6th, next Sunday January 9th is the first Sunday after Epiphany. I thought that this would be a great opportunity to hear about the Wise men. Epiphany is very special to me.

Who here put up their Christmas tree the day after Thanksgiving?
Who took their tree down shortly after Christmas?

I grew up in a family that observed the lighting of the Advent candles. Every evening during Advent we gathered, took turns reading parts of the Bible over the four weeks and lighting the candles.

We did not put up a Christmas tree until the day before Christmas. My husband believes that my Dad was cheap and used Advent to postpone getting a tree. But for me it had special meaning. The tree was a symbol of Christmas. And it stayed up for twelve days. Hence the twelve days of Christmas.

Most churches have candlelight services on Christmas Eve. I grew up with candlelight service on Epiphany, in the Episcopal Church. We moved frequently. In one community where I lived, the tree from the church was burned along with some of the trees from church members. It was a bonfire that was as bright as daylight. Candles were lit from this fire and a candlelight service was held in the light of that fire.

We were encouraged to keep the candle lit all the way home. That may have been a good tradition in rural England where people walked to and from church, but piling a family of six into a car with lit candles is not always a good plan. Beyond that, the meaning did leave a mark on me. We were taking the light of Christ into the world.

Christmas did not stop on December 25th. I do not recall the Sundays after January 6th being the 1st, 2nd, 3rd etc. Sunday after Epiphany. To me they were the Sundays of Epiphany, that awareness and understanding that Christ is here now and always.

In Luke's account of Jesus' birth, the poor and lowly were the focus.
In Matthew's account:

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage" When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him. (Matthew 2:1-3)

We often speak of these wise men as "kings". We sing "We Three Kings" during Christmas and Epiphany. It is one of my favorite carols. It even explains the significance of the gifts of Gold, Frankincense, and myrrh.

Matthew does not identify them as “kings” but as magi. Our English word would likely have been “magician”. They were probably not Magicians as you or I would define the word. Some say they were Astrologers. Some say they were Astronomers. The two studies most likely overlapped in the Persian society making them the scientists of their day. Persia would be today's Iran.

They traveled about a thousand miles to Jerusalem to pay homage to the newborn King. Their journey would have taken three to six months.

Why would these educated men make this journey? It must have been an extraordinary light.

Our scientists today have different theories on what the magi and others saw.

Some believe it was a comet thus the idea of leading them.

Some believe it was a Supernova.

And some believe it was Jupiter aligned with Regulus and later the planet Venus. Also creating a direction to follow.

Whatever occurred, it led these magi to believe that a great king was being born in Judea.

Why did God, the God of the Jews beckon these people to Jerusalem? They were people that were not Jews and probably had beliefs quite different from the Jewish people.

The Gospel of Matthew points toward God's concern for all people. Jesus was not only the king and savior of the Jews but of everyone.

In a sense, the magis' story parallels the story of Jonah in the Old Testament. Jonah saw the people of the ancient city of Nineveh as wicked but God saw them as worth saving. Despite the fact that they were not Jews and did not worship Him.

The story of the magi tells us about how God looks at people of other faiths. God deeply cares about all people. The magi becomes that message of the Gospel and how it would be taken to the entire world.

We are called to be messengers of God today and everyday. How! By the way we conduct ourselves, speaking about our beliefs, and bringing the Good News of great joy to others, through our words and actions.

The star itself points to our role of leading people of other faiths to Jesus.

We are meant to be a light, a sign that draws others to Christ.

The wise men turned up in Jerusalem. They went to Herod's court. They might have assumed that the child must be Herod's. They asked about the child “born “ king of the Jews. Herod was not a Jew , but an Idumean (e/du/me/an). He was appointed king of the Jews by Rome. This is why Herod and his court were frightened by the mission of the magi. How could Herod be the father of the “king of the Jews”

It always puzzled me why didn't one of the priest go with the magi to Bethlehem. I have concluded that, by joining the magi, they would have acknowledged who the magi were seeking and the priest were afraid of Herod.

We know the story of how Herod asked them to return and report to him. Of course at that time the magi didn't know that Herod intended to kill the child.

Our nativity stories and songs often included the magi at the stable. But Matthew says they entered "the house" This was likely the home of Joseph's parents, which had now become Joseph and Mary's home. Young families often moved in with the parents of the groom. After all, Mary and Joseph were still newlyweds.

Our reference to three wise men or kings comes from the gifts that they gave. Three gifts are listed ; gold, frankincense, and myrrh. There could have been two or even ten magi traveling. What truly matters is that they made the journey to find the child of royal birth.

Enough history and enough of the breakdown of today's scripture.

What does it all mean to us?

Christmas is God's gift to us--a gift of light and life, hope and grace. It is a reflection of God's concern for the world, and God's desire to heal it and drive away the darkness. Is Christmas over? Not for me, because Epiphany is a part of Christmas.

Epiphany comes with a mission, a calling, and a responsibility.

We must bear Christ's light into the world. We can do that by expressing our love through works of mercy and justice. We can be kind not just to those we see all the time but to others. We can seek out ways to make the world a better place. We are invited to receive Christ's light, but not only receive it. We are invited to bear the light, to walk in the light , and to take the light into the world.

When Pastor Kookho was with our parish, he liked to give us assignments. So. Think of three things you can do in this next week to be Christ's light to the world. Call someone you haven't talked to in a very long time. Volunteer at the food shelf. This could be a regular commitment or a one time event. Volunteer to read to residents at the nursing home. Volunteer at the library. There is a woman that I do not know personally, but if she is in the grocery store when I am there, I have seen her greeting people , including me with "Don't you look good today." "Is that a new outfit?" Use your imagination. She brings light into the world . She does not complain about the weather. She does not complain about the prices. She brings light. Don't be afraid to share the light of Jesus, even if it is just being kind.

Turn and look at the person to your right, turn to your left, look in front of you, and behind you. Next week share what you did or plan to do with these people.

Our world is changing. I have seen major network News Anchors express the importance of Christ in their lives not just this past season but throughout the year. They share favorite devotional material. Good Morning America 3rd hour has Faith Friday every week. I saw a TV show that had one of the main characters saying the Lord's Prayer with another character about to step into a dangerous situation. The times are changing. Can we be part of the change?

Here is a thought to ponder: when the magi were told in a dream to return to their homes by a different way, did it mean only a physical route or did it mean that their heart was also different when they returned home.

We **can** take Christ's light into the world.

Christ be with you

And also with you

Amen