

**PASTORAL PRAYER/THE LORD'S PRAYER
INVITATION/PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND
OFFERINGS**

***DOXOLOGY**

UMH 95

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION** Unison

We are thankful for the love that gave us life, for the mission that gives purpose to our days, and for the peace that Christ grants to us. Keep us from needless anxiety, that we may give without counting the cost. We give ourselves as well as our money, that your Word may spread where it is not known and take root where it has not been heeded. Amen!

We Go Forth to Love God and Serve One Another

***CLOSING HYMN** *Go, Tell It on the Mountain*

UMH 251 (vs. 1 & 3)

***BENEDICTION** Responsive

Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.

We will listen and speak as God inspires us.

Put on-as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved-compassion, kindness, meekness, and patience.

We will put on love that bids us in perfect harmony.

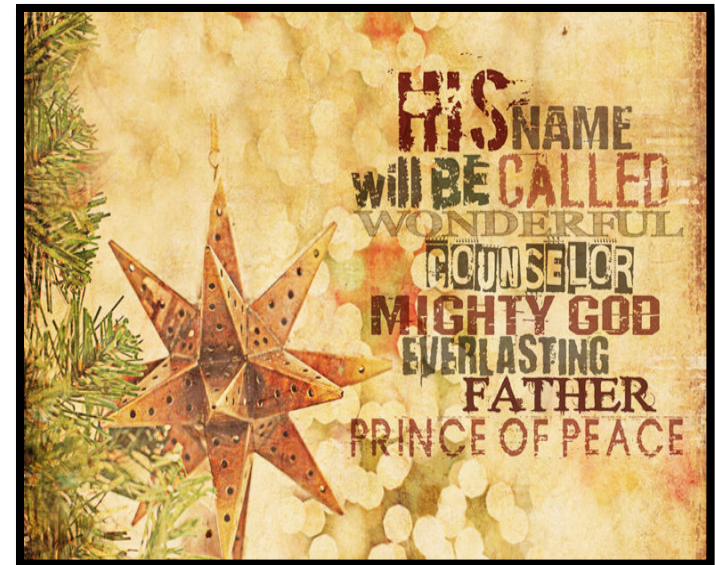
The peace of Christ will rule in your hearts.

We will join with faithful people to give daily thanks. Amen.

POSTLUDE

Upper St. Croix Parish

**ONE Parish THREE Churches:
Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls
December 26th, 2021
"First Sunday after Christmas"**



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

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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
December 26th, 2021

“First Sunday after Christmas”

*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

Jesus is born in our midst. God opens us to worship.

We are here to create hospitality that makes Christ known.

We live in the hope that injustice is not a permanent way of life.

May our ministry express the healing unity of God’s love.

Amen.

***OPENING HYMN** *Blest Are They* TFWS 2155 (vs. 1, 2 & 3)

OPENING PRAYER Unison

Height and breadth, length and depth, the whole universe proclaims your glory, faithful God. Your wisdom fills the universe with possibilities we have not tapped. Your Word comes to us filled with riches we have not mined. Within ourselves is the potential for greatness as yet unrealized. Confront us here with your eternal claim on us that we may become the kind, compassionate, and patient people you intend for us to be. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

CHILDREN’S TIME

UMH 191 (vs. 1)

Proclamation of God’s Word

***THE GOSPEL LESSON**

Matthew 25:31-46

31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before

him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, 33 and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. 34 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ 37 Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? 38 And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? 39 And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ 40 And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ 41 Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; 42 for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ 44 Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ 45 Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

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

Thanks be to God.

SERMON *“Light with Compassionate Love”* **Bishop Hee-Soo Jung**

(View video clip or read the written sermon)

We Respond to God’s Word

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison **(The Book of Worship)**

Creative God, you make all things new in heaven and on earth. We come to you in a new year with desires and old fears, new decisions and old controversies, new dreams and old weaknesses. Because you are a God of hope, we know that you create all the possibilities of the future. Because you are a God of love, we know that you accept all mistakes of the past. Because you are the God of our faith, we enter your gates with thanksgiving and praise, we come into your presence with gladness and a joyful noise, and we serve and bless you. Amen.

SHARING OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS

CHURCH MISSIONS



ATLAS...December

<p>INK JET RECYCLING PROGRAM:</p> <p>Atlas collects and recycles ink jet cartridges and cell phones year round.</p> 	<p>Christmas Special Offering ...</p> <p>10% of our tithe will go to support the St. Croix Falls and Luck school back-pack program...let us all give thanks! Envelopes will be available in the church entry for this offering.</p>	<p>Mitten Tree</p>  <p>Thank you for your donations and support. We sent all the mittens to the Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry in Luck.</p>
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GRANTSBURG...December

<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>Christmas for Kids Interfaith Caregivers</p>  <p>This program helps families with limited income provide a gift for their children. We are requesting financial donations this year-we are collecting the first two Sundays of December. Thank you for your generosity.</p>
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ST. CROIX FALLS...December

 <p>Food Shelf</p> <p>(Communion Sunday)</p>	<p>Sailor Hat Offering:</p>  <p>We gave 12 family Christmas Gift Cards, each \$75.</p>
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TODAY'S SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Ministers All God's People
Pastor Jenny Lee

Today's Service

Central:

Pianist	Toni Koons
Liturgist	LuAnne Martell
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	Sue Olson
Usher(s)	Colleen Adams-Schween
Cleaning	Volunteer Needed
Sunday School	Younger/Older
	No Sunday school

St. Croix Falls:

Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Jim Andrews
Usher(s)	Karen Sciacca
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 am, if possible!

1) Doris Olson's Family-Doris passed away around 3:00 pm on December 20th.

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=SDZleFNubmEvaDBlcytTRzVxMFIIZz09>
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: “First Sunday after Christmas.” May God inspire you in new hope and love!

We have a new 2022 signup sheet for volunteers. Please find a spot where you can help 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

- 12/25-1/7: Pastor Jenny’s vacation
12/26: We view/listen to Bishop Jung’s sermon. (you may view the Cabinet’s full worship service on our parish Facebook page Sunday afternoon.)
12/27-12/29: Wisconsin Korean Clergy Annual Family Retreat in Madison

This Week's Birthdays and Anniversaries:

Josie Grimes 1/1



Next Sunday (January 2nd) Volunteers:

Ministers All God’s People
Pastor Jenny Lee

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 *Volunteer Needed*
Usher(s) *Volunteer Needed*
Cleaning *Volunteer Needed*
Sunday School Younger/Older
No Sunday School

St. Croix Falls:

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



1/2/22: Preachers Barb Loomis at Atlas and Central-G, Kathy Gionis at St. Croix Falls

1/9/22: Communion Sunday, Law Enforcement Appreciation Sunday

1/16/22: New Covent Sunday (*Recognition of Church Leadership*)

Light with Compassionate Love

Psalm 8, Matthew 25:31-46

May Christmastide brings Christ's peace and warm blessings!

It seems to me that there has never been a time when the birth of Christ came to such a need of joy and newness like this year.

May the birth of Christ be born into an eternal hope within you.

The year of 2021 presented us with many challenges and difficulties. It was a year we tried to shrug off a pandemic, a time we were angered by racial injustice, and we live in constant concern about the global ecological crisis.

God's heart must have been filled with this woundedness and pain. And the heart of the Holy Spirit must have lamented for humanity.

Although we receive God's love and salvation and live with blessings moment by moment, it has been a year in which we have been asking questions one after another about how we can become more authentic Christ followers.

I am deeply grateful for the efforts of our church to serve God faithfully amid this reality and to become the hope of the world. Thank you so much for your love of Christ and the church.

We gather here with hope in despair, light in disappointment, and new strength in weakness.

Advent and Epiphany are seasons of wonder and God's complete indwelling in our lives, without any condition or rejection. God is always making all things new.

I hope that you will once again receive the love of Christ, who came as the Savior and light in the darkness—this is the good news of the gospel—now let's make the decision to accomplish God's transformation in the world.

The biblical vision is that injustice and violence never have a permanent place.

The liberation and new order declared through the prophets and proclaimed by the gospel of Jesus Christ is a dream in which good triumphs and evil retreats.

The parable proclaims that *injustice will not be a permanent way of life.*

The fact that injustice never rules the world is our strength and prayer.

To be very simple in the face of this irresistible truth, today's Gospel of Matthew, through parable, whispers the basis of discipleship, and lift us up in renewed vision and hope.

The parable of the sheep and the goats does not simply reveal a world of judgment, but it shows very clearly how we can live the gospel, believe the gospel, and follow the gospel for building beloved community.

We want to be on the side of the sheep. We want to live as disciples who practice authentic love that changes the world, and we can decide not to stand with the goats and the systems and powers of darkness. ***We can decide that injustice will not be a permanent way of life.***

Today's Gospel proves it in practice how we can serve God's kin(g)dom, not just the dominant empire of greed, hatred, and shame of human prejudice and exclusion.

Giving water to the thirsty, giving food to the hungry, loving the little ones, finding the lonely ones in prison, sharing wounds and suffering together are the essence of the gospel's greatness. Let's believe together and talk about the right path that Christian disciples should live.

We can decide that injustice will not be a permanent way of life.

We are thinking of the Afghan neighbors who suddenly came to Wisconsin.

Let's be the neighbors they need and try our best to be the neighbors they live with.

Among the Afghan friends, over 10,000 staying in Fort McCoy Base, about 300 mothers are expecting their babies. More than 70 percent are young neighbors under the age of 18.

I remember reading an interview in which a reporter asked the poet Maya Angelou: "How can you see hope for the future in an America full of impoverished cities, rampant discrimination, endless violence and despair? That's quite a question to consider—for her and for us.

The poet's answer, after some silence, was this: "hospitals across America's cities are still filled with the cries of new children being born. As long as mothers continue to have babies and love them, there is hope for America's cities."

I imagined Afghan mothers with such hope while troubled tide all around them.

They need a community that will welcome them. They will need a stable place to give birth to children and new hope. ***Just as Mary needed a place to make Christ known.***

We have seen with our own eyes that they need a bowl of water, a slice of bread of love, and warm winter clothes.

Let's find a way to be friends with the Afghan refugees here so that the poet's dream becomes our dream.

We need to create welcome that is able to make Christ known.

The heart of the prophetic words of scripture puts the poor at the center of history—and our story. The Gospel centers the marginalized around us that we become the center of true historical restoration and liberation.

We need to create welcome that is able to make Christ known.

II.

"Truly I tell you, just as you did to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (v 43)

God is here among us to reverse the basis by which people are currently occupied by our culturally dominant way of life. God is among us in the Son of Man who resets the way by which life is valued.

God has made the center-act of the human drama “One of the least of these.”

God’s reign is established by mercy and justice for the poor, not by the standards of a human empire. God’s word is among us to reverse harm and reset the world.

I grew up in a very poor background on the ruins of the Korean War. The village we lived in was an island on the border right in front of the armistice line dividing the north and the south.

The scars that the war left behind were long sighs, tensions and trauma that could not be shared with each other.

Looking back now, it was my grandmother who taught me hope at such a time. My grandmother lost many of her relatives in the war. She had a life of deep wounds, but she worked diligently for us and helped us to always have hope for the future.

It was a regular place where beggars always stopped and came to eat a meal my grandmother offered.

It was a poor house, but it was a house that still gave love to beggars who were begging because they had nothing to eat.

My grandmother always prepared kimchi and rice with great care and served them in the house as a respected guest.

The world my grandmother dreamed of always showed me a world where a handful of rice, a small amount of sincerity, love to serve people like a human being, and a world in which everyone respects and serves everyone without regard to them is a good thing—and a central thing.

My grandmother showed me a world where I live not for myself, but a world where we live together, where we cry together, laugh together, suffer together, and hope together.

This parable features a King who governs with hospitality for the least, the broken, and the despised. **Christian ministry expresses the unity of love.** Those who give and receive partake of the same love.

Christian unity can be the hope of the world. The simple love of unity at the heart of an open table can be a medicine that can light up a dark world.

Our church, The United Methodist Church, is a global expression of the unity of love. The Trinity expresses the openness of God to each person. In the Trinity the Father is open to the Spirit.

The Son is open to the Father. The Spirit is open to the Son, and all of them express the difference of their personhood but the unity of love. **Christian ministry expresses the unity of love.**

I hope that we will be more concerned about what we do together to light up the darkness rather than what we agree on and live with as dogmatic stance.

I hope that the church will become a true church to save neighbors and plant the dream of the kingdom of God and not focus on where we differ over the triviality of opinion.

May we commit that Wisconsin will be a land of hospitality and racism-free as we pray and earnestly make our call to build a world where we love each other.

May we hold the belief that God's justice will create a place of living where everyone is treated as true friends, beautiful neighbors, and fellow citizens.

Walter Bruggeman's Love's Win!? says:

"We are free to imagine that the death systems of violence, the greed systems of poverty, and the despairing systems of exploitation have no staying power. They cannot be sustained in the face of self-giving, transformative love. They are conquered!"

We can decide injustice will not be a permanent way of life!

Even if there are difficulties, we can overcome them together. Even if the pain of our history is fractured, we can be renewed if we reflect on it step by step with a reflective heart.

I believe we can decide injustice will not be a permanent way of life!

I believe we need to create welcome that is able to make Christ known.

I believe Christian ministry expresses the unity of love.

I hope this will be a time to make a new resolution on the way we should live together in the light of the Word.

I pray that the blessing of God's abundant blessings and new hope will be with you. God's steadfast love and mercy is yours. Amen