

we may be saints who serve, for the sake of all your hurting children. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

NO. 2022-51  
December 18th, 2022

## SHARING OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS

*After each prayer request:  
Pastor: Lord, in your mercy,  
All: Hear our Prayer.*

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

\*DOXOLOGY

UMH 95

\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION Unison

Loving God, we would not weary you with empty words or with routine tips of obligation. You have granted us life with such abundant possibilities that we can never do enough to express our gratitude. You have honored us by calling us saints and disciples. Therefore, we offer ourselves and our abundance in the confidence that you will continue to provide for us in whatever circumstances we face. Use us as ministers of your grace. Amen.

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

\*CLOSING HYMN

*Away in a Manger*

UMH 217

\*BENEDICTION

Pastor Jenny Lee

\*POSTLUDE

Toni Koons (G) / Sharon Asp (A & SCF)



# Upper St. Croix Parish United Methodist Church

ONE Parish THREE Churches  
"4th Sunday of Advent"



Grantsburg-Central,  
Since 1897



Atlas, Since 1887



St. Croix Falls,  
Since 1859

## SUNDAY SERVICE:

*8:30 AM at Grantsburg with Online Zoom Service*

*9:45 AM at Atlas (10:00 AM, Sunday School)*

*11:15 AM at St. Croix Falls with Online Zoom Service*

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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[www.upperstcroixparish.org](http://www.upperstcroixparish.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/UpperStCroixParishUMC>

**Upper St. Croix Parish**  
**Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls**  
**December 18th, 2022**  
**“4th Sunday of Advent”**

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\*Please stand if you are able.

**\*PRELUDE** Toni Koons (G) / Sharon Asp (A & SCF)  
**\*ADVANT SONG** TFWS 2090 (vs. 4)  
**\*LIGHTING THE FOURTH CANDLE**  
**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**  
**PASSING OF THE GREETINGS**  
*“Peace be with you”*

**We Celebrate New Life in Christ**

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP** Responsive  
Come away from times of weariness.  
Dare to accept the energy God offers you.  
**Restore our energy, O source of all power.**  
**Let your goodness flow through us.**  
Come away from all your insignificant distractions.  
Dare to let God show you a larger picture.  
**Help us to examine the flow of our lives.**  
**Reveal to us what is really important.**  
Come away from the scorn of enemies.  
Dare to laugh with those who have laughed at you.  
**Lead us to think of others in new ways.**  
**Let us find grace and peace in Emmanuel. Amen.**

**\*DEDICATING HYMN** *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*  
UMH 211 (vs. 1 & 2)

**OPENING PRAYER** Unison  
Shepherding God, whose signs are everywhere, restore in us your light that we may discern what you are about. Shine upon this assembly to give life to our tired routines. Fill our longing hearts with quiet confidence. Awaken the child in us to experience your revelation. By your presence with us, deepen the prayers we utter, and turn our fears to eager anticipation. Touch us to lend strength

and confidence as we reach out to one another for help and healing. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen!

**CHILDREN’S TIME (G)**

**UMH 191 (vs.1)**

**Proclamation of God’s Word**

**\*THE GOSPEL LESSON** **Matthew 1:18-25**  
18 Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. 19 Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. 20 But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” 22 All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

23 “Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,”

which means, “God is with us.” 24 When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife 25 but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

This is the word of God for the people of God.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**SERMON** *“Things Would Happen as You Believe!”* Pastor Jenny Lee

**We Respond to God’s Word**

**RESPONDING PRAYER** Unison  
Righteous God, your gifts of grace and peace are delivered in strange and unexpected places. Lead us to stand firmly in faith so that your promise of Emmanuel be a sign to us of salvation near at hand. Restore us to that quality of life and relationships which has been your intention for humanity since the beginning of time, that

# DECEMBER CHURCH MISSIONS

## ATLAS

Mission committee chair: Peggy Frederickson

### INK JET RECYCLING PROGRAM:

Atlas collects and recycles ink jet cartridges and cell phones year round.



Collecting canned food to support Loaves and Fishes food pantry in Luck.



Atlas will support these two missions in December:

**Mitten Tree & Christmas Eve Special Offering**  
 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.

## GRANTSBURG

Mission committee chair: Deb Hammer

### BE A "BACK-PACK BACKER"!

REMEMBER ... Every Sunday Is MAC 'N CHEESE SUNDAY! Supporting the Salvation Army's "Happy Kids Back-Pack Program"



Grantsburg will support these two missions for December, please see bulletin board for details:

- 1) Christmas for Kids
- 2) Middle School Supplies

## ST. CROIX FALLS

Mission committee chair: Kate Murtaugh



**Food Shelf**  
 (Communion Sunday)



### Sailor Hat Offering:

December's Sailor Hat offering will go to buy Christmas Marketplace Food Gift Cards for families in need!

Thank you for your support!

## TODAY'S SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Ministers All God's People  
**Pastor Jenny Lee**

### Central:

Pianist Toni Koons  
 Liturgist **Volunteer Needed**  
 Acolyte(s) Willow Nyland/Indie Tooze  
 Snow Removal Tom Geopfert  
 Fellowship **Volunteer Needed**  
 Counter **Volunteer Needed**  
 Cleaning Charlie Glonek and Sandra Erickson  
 Sunday School Younger/Older  
 LuAnn Martell/Barb Loomis

### Atlas:

Pianist Sharon Asp  
 Liturgist Sue Olson  
 Usher(s) Colleen Adams-Schween  
 Acolyte(s) Copelan Grimes  
 Cleaning **Volunteer Needed**  
 Sunday School Younger/Older  
 Josie Grimes/Jamie Steffen

### St. Croix Falls:

Pianist Sharon Asp  
 Liturgist Karen Sciacca  
 Usher(s) Kathy Gionis  
 Money Counter Peter Gionis  
 Bell Ringer Jim Andrews  
 Flowers Kathy Gionis



### BREAKTHROUGH PRAYERS FOR THIS WEEK:

"This kind can come out only by prayer" (Mark 9:29)  
 Please pray every morning at 8:30, if you are able!

*Please pray for our neighbors in need!*

## PLEASE NOTE:

- 1) **An Online Zoom Service is scheduled for this Sunday at 8:30 and 11:15 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](http://upperstcroixparish.org) under Sermons!
- 3) You may watch a recorded video of the service on our parish Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/UpperStCroixParishUMC>

### This Week's Calendar:

- Today: 4th Sunday of Advent.  
God loves you all as who you are!  
**Sunday Worship Service:**
- 12/18: 4th Sunday of Advent Service  
8:30 am Grantsburg with Zoom  
9:45 am Atlas (10 am, Sunday School)  
11:15 am St. Croix Falls with Zoom
- 12/18: 12:15 pm, Ad Council Meeting (SCF)
- 12/20: 11:00 am -1:00pm, Pastor Jenny volunteers at Loaves & Fishes in Luck  
6:30 pm, Ad Council Meeting (G)  
6:30-7:30 pm, Youth & Kids Christmas Program Rehearsal (G)
- 12/21: 5:30-7:30 pm Youth & Kids Christmas Program (G)  
5:30 pm, Potluck / 6:30-7:30 pm Performance (Santa's Cookie Problem)
- 12/22: 5:00 -7:30 pm, The Last Gathering of the Advent Bible Study (SCF)  
5:00 pm Soup Supper, 6:00-7:30 pm Bible Study
- 12/24: Christmas Eve Service  
10:00 am St. Croix Falls; 4:00 pm Atlas; 7:00 pm Grantsburg

**PLEASE NOTE: WHEN WRITING A CHECK PLEASE MAKE IT PAYABLE TO YOUR INDIVIDUAL CHURCH. WHEN THE OFFERING IS MAILED IN WE ARE THEN ABLE CREDIT THE APPROPRIATE CHURCH. THANK YOU!**

### This Week's Birthdays & Anniversaries

Patrick Grimes 12/18, Brody Woltz 12/19, Brittney Woltz 12/22, and Charles & Mary Lou Wright 12/23.

*If you know anyone's birthday is missing, please let pastor Jenny know.*

### Christmas Eve (December 24) Volunteers:



#### Central:

- Pianist Toni Koons  
Scripture Readings  
Dauntay Erickson, Charlie Glonek and Renee Tooze  
Special Music Julie Brastad  
Willow Nyland  
Acolyte(s) Willow Nyland/Indie Tooze  
Snow Removal Tom Goefert  
Fellowship **Volunteer Needed**  
Counter **Volunteer Needed**  
Cleaning Charlie Glonek and Sandra Erickson

#### Atlas:

- Pianist Sharon Asp  
Scripture Readings  
Cole Steffen, Copelan Grimes and Chase Steffen  
Special Music Sharon Asp  
Usher(s) Sue Olson  
Acolyte(s) Chase Steffen  
Cleaning **Volunteer Needed**

#### St. Croix Falls:

- Pianist Sharon Asp  
Karen Sciacca, Kathy Gionis and Jim Andrews  
Special Music Sharon Asp  
Usher(s) Kathy Gionis  
Money Counter Peter Gionis  
Bell Ringer Jim Andrews  
Flowers Kathy Gionis

## Mark Your CALENDAR



- The January newsletter will be available on January 8th, 2023
- The Parish Photo Album (8/2021-7/2022) is available in hard copy

Dec. 25: No Sunday Service

Dec. 25-27, Korean Clergy Family Retreat in Madison

Jan. 1: Wisconsin Cabinet Online service

December 18th, 2020  
Upper St. Croix Parish UMC  
Matthew 1:18-25



Pastor Jenny Lee, Ph.D.

## **“Things Will Happen as You Believe!”**

I want to start with something funny. I think I shared this story before: A little girl asked her mum, “How did the human race appear?” Her mom answered, “God made Adam and Eve, and they had children, and so all mankind was made.” Two days later, the girl asked her dad the same question. Her dad answered, “Many years ago, there were monkeys from which the human race evolved.” The confused girl returned to her mum and said, “Mum, how is it possible that you told me God created the human race, and dad said they developed from monkeys?” Her mum said, “Well, dear, it is very simple. I told you about my side of the family, and your dad told you about his.”

There are still many arguments and conflicts about belief, even among Christians. However, it is not necessary to argue about which one is right; if you believe in Jesus Christ our Savior, believe in God the Creator and believe in the Holy Spirit, the Helper, that is good enough. The Triune God never changed throughout Christian history. I like the wisdom in the early church. When the disciples preached the Gospel, many people didn’t believe in Jesus. Instead, they persecuted the disciples. Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law (St. Paul’s teacher), said, “So, in the present case, I tell you, keep away these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God” (Acts 5: 38-39). If we argue the conflict of belief, it never stops. Instead, everyone gets hurt. So, please don’t try to argue with others who don’t agree with you, but keep your faith in God. And respect others with open hearts and minds.

John Wesley advised if you want to see which one is the truth in God, please use the principle of interpretation, named “Wesleyan Quadrilateral” which includes Scripture, Tradition, Experience, and Reason. Based on the Scripture, you may reflect on things with Church tradition, your experience, and common reason. Read the Scripture daily to grow in your faith because “all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the people of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16), and “For the Word of God is living and active” (Hebrews 4:12). And, through the Scripture and prayers, the Holy Spirit may guide you to the right way. However, remember, we all are not perfect, and open minds for God may work among us.

Today’s Scripture shows us how Jesus the Messiah was born. Christians have believed in the Virgin birth for over 2000 years. According to the 2022 Status of Christian Report (Life Way Research), there are about 2.56 billion Christians worldwide. Even though 2.56 billion people believe in the Virgin birth, if you still question Christ’s Virgin birth, it’s fine because you are here before God. Faith begins from doubt. One of the Disciples, Thomas, was a suspect disciple but later became a great believer and missionary. The Virgin birth is not an issue to argue, have faith in God. It is good enough to grow in faith if you believe in God the Creator and the Owner of life and death.

When I was a seminarian, a professor told us, “Don’t worry whether you believe in the Virgin birth because Joseph, Mary’s husband, believed it and accepted her. That’s enough. Don’t argue about it.” When I

heard that, I felt it was a ridiculous joke! But, as we read the Scripture, God knows our human minds and sends an angel to Joseph to tell him the truth. In the Israelite society, if a virgin conceived, it was a big scandal. The husband or the people might suit her, and the elders in the community could judge her as a sinner by stoning her publicly. However, today's Scripture says, "Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly." Joseph didn't want to suit her in public but send her away quietly. At that time, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, Son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

The angel called Joseph, son of David. He was a descendant of King David. If he was a descendant of King David, he must know the Scripture; Prophet Isaiah said, "Look, the Virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means God is with us." Sometimes we can't match what we know and what we believe. Joseph did so at first, but later after the dream, he recognized that the Messiah would come through the descendant of King David and in the Virgin birth. He took Mary as his wife. I hope we grow in faith enough to see things happen as we believe.

Remember when Jesus heals the sick, he used to say, "Your faith has healed you" (Mark 5:34, Luke 17:19, Matthew 9:22). Jesus did not say, "I healed you." But he said, "your faith has healed you," or "Your faith made you well." That is the reality we have to believe. Do not separate your faith from the reality of everyday life. "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Hebrew 11:1). Things will happen as you believe. Our confession that we are saved in faith through Jesus Christ by the grace of God has to be true in daily life. Our God is the God who makes the impossible possible. Do not let your God be small. Our God can make the impossible possible. Do not put God into the book of your Bible. God is the Living God, moving around us, in us, and among us, and still working for us.

We all are ordinary human beings, but God is extraordinary. God chose ordinary people and worked with them extraordinarily. Our faith may grow in risk and suspicion. In the first century, the sick were treated like sinners in society. They could not come out to public places. Even though they heard that Jesus might heal them, they needed the courage to come to Jesus. They could have been stoned by people. However, their faith was in hope. Jesus knew that they came to him with courage, and he said, "Your faith has healed you."

In today's Scripture, the Virgin Mary was an ordinary woman like us. Angel Gabriel said, "Mary, you have found favor with God. And you will conceive in your womb and bear a son." Mary also thought of human things before the angel, saying, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel explained simply, "your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:36-37).

When God chose Mary to bear God's son, she might have been scared between God's grace and her society's reality. She knew that nothing is impossible through God. On the other hand, she knew society must treat her as a sinner. Joseph, her finance might leave her, and she might be stoned. She had to make a deadly decision. She had to have the courage to receive God's grace. Today, we may need the courage to grow in faith, "Here I am, Lord. Let it be with me." Things will happen as you believe. Is anyone suspicious of your faith in God? As we lit the candle of love, God's love may cover all things to be good enough in your everyday life. Thanks be to God. Amen.