

PRAYER SONG

UMH 487

This is our prayer. This is our prayer, O God!

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**INVITATION/PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND
OFFERINGS**

***DOXOLOGY**

UMH 95

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION Unison**

Accept our offering of praise and our offering of ourselves, O God,
along with our tithes and contributions toward our church's mission.
You have given us life and guidance for living. You have made us
partakers of your own Spirit. We rejoice in the opportunity to receive
and share your Word. May the ministry in which all of us have a
share bear much fruit, bringing in an abundant harvest for your
realm. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen!

We Go Forth to Love God and Serve One Another

***CLOSING HYMN** *Standing on the Promises*

UMH 374 (vs. 1 & 2)

***BENEDICTION**

Pastor Jenny Lee

***POSTLUDE**

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

 **Upper St. Croix Parish
United Methodist Church**

The 2023 Parish Ministry Theme:
“Fill My House” (Luke 14:23)

7th Sunday After Pentecost



**Grantsburg-Central,
Since 1897**



Atlas, Since 1887



**St. Croix Falls,
Since 1859**

SUNDAY SERVICES:

**9:00 AM at Grantsburg with Online Zoom Service
(9:15 AM, Sunday School)**

10:00 AM at Atlas (Sunday School-summer break)

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

CONTACT INFORMATION

Pastor Jenny Lee: jennlee1732@gmail.com

Youth Director Shayna Schmid: snssnyder@gmail.com

Parish Secretary Colleen Norenberg: centralumc2016@gmail.com

Parish Office: 715-463- 2624 **St. Croix Falls Office:** 715-483-9494

www.upperstcroixparish.org

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

Upper St. Croix Parish
Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls
July 16th, 2023

*Please stand if you are able.

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

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASSING OF THE GREETINGS

Peace be with you!

(Waive your hands at one another)

We Celebrate New Life in Christ

***CALL TO WORSHIP** Responsive

God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

Open yourselves this day to receive the Word.

We have committed ourselves to follow the light.

We come now to be instructed by God's law.

Minds set on the flesh are hostile to God.

Let us, therefore, open ourselves to the Spirit.

We reach out for more than we can see and hear.

We long to know Love's embrace deep within.

The Spirit of God raised Jesus from the dead.

That Spirit dwells in you and offers you new life.

We praise God, who saves us and gives us hope.

God cares for the earth and for each one of us. Amen.

***DEDICATING HYMN** *Grace Greater than Our Sin*

UMH 365 (vs. 1 & 4)

OPENING PRAYER Unison

All-powerful God, we celebrate the freedom you give us to make our own response to all the possibilities you lay out before us. We are grateful for the revelation you provide through the witness of many in the Scriptures. Through their words, help us to discern your Word. Come to us in the midst of our diversity to bring understanding and mutual caring. Open us to a new appreciation of our birthright as your children. Beyond all our clamor for the thing of this world, we long for the richness of spirit you alone can provide. Feed us here, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen!

CHILDREN'S TIME (G)

UMH 191 (vs.1)

Proclamation of God's Word

***THE GOSPEL LESSON**

Matthew 13:1-9;18-23

13 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. 2 Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. 3 And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell on a path, and the birds came and ate them up. 5 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. 6 But when the sun rose, they were scorched, and since they had no root, they withered away. 7 Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. 8 Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9 If you have ears, hear!"

18 "Hear, then, the parable of the sower. 19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. 20 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, 21 yet such a person has no root but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. 22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of this age and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. 23 But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

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

Thanks be to God.

SERMON

"The Prevenient Grace of God"

Pastor Jenny Lee

We Respond to God's Word

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

The Spirit of Life, whose care for us is constant through low times of despair and high moments of hope, teach us your ordinances that we might not forget your steadfast love. May your words be our joy as you keep us in your grace, that we may bear fruit in our realm, even a hundredfold. Amen.

SHARING OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS

After each prayer request:

Pastor: Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our Prayer.

JULY CHURCH MISSIONS

ATLAS

Mission committee chair: Peggy Frederickson

INK JET RECYCLING PROGRAM:

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



LOAVES & FISHES NEEDS OUR ONGOING SUPPORT

Requested items: Bread, eggs, milk, cheese, fresh vegetables (carrots, potatoes), fresh fruit (apples, oranges), canned meat, dish soap, lotion, toothpaste, toothbrushes, paper towels. They appreciate any and all donations.

We appreciate your ongoing support!

1. We will focus on financial support of our church to help expand our ministry.
2. Donate items for the thrift sale (8/5)

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"



CUMC's mission for July is to help support Atlas United Methodist Church financially and through donations to their Thrift & Bake Sale and scheduled for August 5th. Donations can be dropped off at Central for delivery to Atlas prior to the sale. Thank you for your continued support of the Upper St. Croix Parish.

ST. CROIX FALLS

Mission committee chair: Kate Murtaugh



Food Shelf
(Communion Sunday)



Sailor Hat Offering:

The Sailor Hat offering will go to support Harbor House

Thank you for your support!

TODAY'S SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Ministers

All God's People
Pastor Jenny Lee

Central:

Pianist
Liturgist
Acolyte(s)
Mowing
Fellowship
Counter
Cleaning
Sunday School

Toni Koons
Volunteer Needed
Willow Nyland
Dave Huff
Julie & Bob Branstad
Dave Huff
Charlie Glonek and Sandra Erickson
Barb Loomis



Atlas:

Pianist
Liturgist
Usher
Acolyte(s)
Cleaning
Sunday School

Sharon Asp
Colleen Adams-Schween
Sue Olson
Volunteer Needed
Volunteer Needed
Younger/Older
Summer Break-VBS: Aug. 7th-10th

St. Croix Falls:

Pianist
Liturgist
Usher(s)
Money Counter
Bell Ringer
Flowers
Fellowship

Sharon Asp
Kathy Gionis
Jim Andrews
Peter Gionis
Jim Sciacca
Ladies of the Church
Ad Council Members



Break through Prayers: Please pray for those who are moving and transitioning in their lives.

PLEASE NOTE:

- 1) **Online Zoom Services are scheduled for this Sunday at 9:00 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 under Sermons!
- 3) You may watch a recorded video of the service on our parish Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/UpperStCroixParishUMC>
- 4) We will also send you a weekly bulletin and written sermon through post mail and email. If you have any questions regarding the mailing weekly materials, please contact our parish secretary, Colleen Norenberg.

This Week's Calendar:

Today: 7th Sunday after Pentecost; God bless you all!

Sunday Worship Services:

7/16: 7th Sunday after Pentecost

9:00 am Grantsburg (9:15 am, Sunday School)
10:00 am Atlas (No Sunday School)
11:15 am St. Croix Falls

7/16-7/18: Pastor Jenny attends the Provisional Elder Retreat at Paine Lake Camp

7/18: No office Hours

7/19: 1:00 pm Ad Council Meeting (G)

4:00 pm Pastor Jenny meets the new DS at New Richmond UMC

7/20: 11 am-1 pm Pastor Jenny at Loaves & Fishes in Luck

7/21: 10:30 am Diversity Council Zoom Meeting

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!

VBS is from August 7th - August 10th

First Registration Deadline: by July 14th (All Kids will get a shirt)

Second Registration Deadline: by July 28 (Kids may not get shirts)

We need your help as volunteers. A sign-up sheet is available.

Find a spot and be a part of Vacation Bible School.

Questions: Contact Shayna Schmid (Youth Director)

Next Sunday (July 23rd) Volunteers:

Central:

Pianist Toni Koons
Liturgist *Volunteer Needed*
Acolyte(s) Willow Nyland
Mowing *Volunteer Needed*
Fellowship *Volunteer Needed*
Counter *Volunteer Needed*
Cleaning Charlie Glonek and Sandra Erickson
Sunday School Barb Loomis

Atlas:

Pianist Sharon Asp
Liturgist Colleen Adams-Schween
Usher Sue Olson
Acolyte(s) *Volunteer Needed*
Cleaning *Volunteer Needed*
Sunday School Younger/Older
Summer Break-VBS: Aug. 7th-10th

St. Croix Falls:

Pianist Sharon Asp
Liturgist Kathy Gionis
Usher(s) Jim Andrews
Money Counter Peter Gionis
Bell Ringer Jim Sciacca
Flowers Ladies of the Church
Fellowship Ad Council Members

Upcoming Events

July 26, SPRC Meeting

July 27, VBS Staff Meeting (G)

July 30, All Kid's Pool Party Grantsburg Pool

August 5, Thrift & Bake Sale (A)

THIS WEEK'S BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES



Mark Harmon 7/20
Chelsie Kunze 7/21
Marguerite Walsten 7/23





Pastor Jenny Lee, Ph.D.
Upper St. Croix Parish UMC

July 16th, 2023
Matthew 13:1-9;18-23

“The Preventive Grace of God”

I want to start with something funny I found on an internet site: Two men were boasting about their rich kin. One said, “My father has a big farm in Connecticut. It is so big that when he goes to the barn on Monday morning to milk the cows, he kisses us all goodbye, and he doesn’t get back till the following Saturday.” “Why does it take him so long?” the other man asked. “It’s because the barn is so far from the house.” “Well, that may be a pretty big farm, but compared to my father’s farm in Pennsylvania, your father’s farm isn’t bigger than a city lot!” “Why, how big is your father’s farm?” “Well, it’s so big that my father sends young married couples out to the barn to milk the cows, and their grandchildren bring back the milk.”

The bad thing many of us usually do is to compare ourselves with others. In my family we used to be compared with our siblings: Parents or grandparents might say the first one was taller at this age, but the other is so much smaller, or the first one could speak at this age, but the second one is slower; the first one walked at ten months old, but the second one didn’t. Did anything similar happen to you? Why do you think this happens?

I have four siblings: an elder sister, elder brother, younger sister, and younger brother. I was the middle child. I grew up in a big Confucian family, which was a very patriarchal family. In other words, it was a male-centered family. My elder sister was always compared with my elder brother, and my younger sister compared with my younger brother. So, my two sisters gave up going to college, which meant they obeyed our patriarchal family system, which meant no higher education for girls. I heard from my sisters that they used to be compared with my brothers, which made them have low self-esteem and an inferiority complex.

I learned that comparing with others is found in most social systems, such as at home, school, the workplace, and even in political parties. The comparison makes people compete. So, every time there is a winner and a loser. If two or three people gather together, there are comparisons and competition. This kind of system, perhaps, is to encourage people to develop, improve and evolve. It is the world system we live in. The so-called “fair world” makes people who work hard winners. Do you think this is true? Well, think of my family system; was it fair to the girls?

You may wonder if I am talking about politics or social justice. No, but I want to talk about the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is totally different from the world-system. An example is here: Matthew 20:1-16 tells us about the kingdom of God (heaven). It says the kingdom of God is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. He hired people in the early morning with an agreement of a certain payment amount; he did the same at 10 am, noon, 3 pm, and even just before one hour before work was done for the day. And then, he gathered all employees to give them payment as they had made an agreement at the beginning of their work. They all received the money in gratitude, but later those who came in very early knew that all were getting the same amount. They complained to the owner, who said, “I gave you what I promised you initially. And I also gave them what I promised them. Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my money?”

From our perspective (it might be a world perspective), we may think it is wrong. Those who came in earlier should get more than those who came in later. Why did he give the same amount of money to those who worked all day and those who worked for just one hour?

But, it is the rule of God and the grace of God. God's grace is there in the same way whether we have believed in God for forty years or for one year. Think of ourselves: even though we may have believed in God for our whole life, we don't always run as a winner in faith. We sometimes run in faith, but sometimes stay there, struggling with many challenges. If God loves only those who run faster in faith all the time, is anyone confident God chooses to love them? In other words, is anyone confident God would choose you, if God chose to love us by our faith?

Today's scripture is a parable story of the sower. Jesus taught people many parable stories, especially parable stories of farmers and shepherds, because they were familiar with the Israelite's life. Nevertheless, many people couldn't understand his teachings because he mostly talked about the kingdom of God. The story of the sower is, as Jesus explained to his disciples in Mathew 13:18-23, perhaps about our faithful minds and hearts. But, it is also about the kingdom of God because Jesus' priority was to teach people about the Kingdom of God. As we read the scripture today, the farmer sowed seeds; some were on the path, some were on the rocky ground; some fell among thorns; and some fell on good soil. And then, only the seeds that fell on the good soil get the grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Up to this point, reading the scripture, I wondered why the farmer sowed seeds everywhere? Why didn't he sow or plant the seeds only on good soil? He is so silly; if he sows seeds only on good soil, he harvests more. And then, I read the explanation of the parable story in verses 18-23. I realized that "Aha, that is God's grace!" The sower might be God. I want to repeat the verses: "Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

Yes, it is about faith. "Faith comes from what is heard, and what we hear comes through the Word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). It is about, according to our hearing of the Words, how our faith may grow in the fruits of faith, Christlikeness. However, God didn't choose only the good person. We also don't only spread the good news to good people. Matthew 5:45 says, "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." God wants us to hear the Word of God and invites us to his kingdom. Even though we are sometimes lazy in faith, God loves us with steadfast grace. It is the prevenient grace of God. If God chose us by faith, we couldn't be baptized, confirmed, and be Christians. The parable of the sower tells us of God's grace. Even though our hearts sometimes are like the path, rocky ground, and thorny bushes, God gives us his grace. Only we can't feel his grace when our hearts are full of worries, anxieties and challenges. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7). Let's come close to the Word of God all the time so that we may hear it and grow in the grace of God! Thanks be to God. Amen!