

***DOXOLOGY**

UMH 95

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION** Unison

May these offerings help to free your people, O God, from bondage to sin. Unite us in a community of mutual caring in which differences are resolved as we listen to one another and seek to offer understanding. May the light of your love shine through all our efforts to share your good news. Keep us in the light when we are tempted to ignore and violate your commandments. With these prayers, we dedicate our gifts. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen!

We Go Forth to Love God and Serve One Another

***CLOSING HYMN** *Help Us Accept Each Other*

UMH 560 (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)

**15th Sunday After Pentecost
Rally Sunday**



**Grantsburg-Central,
Since 1897**



Atlas, Since 1887



**St. Croix Falls,
Since 1859**

SUNDAY SERVICE:

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

10:00 AM at Atlas (10:15 AM, Sunday School)

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

CONTACT INFORMATION

Pastor Jenny Lee: jennlee1732@gmail.com

Youth Director Shayna Schmid: snsnyder@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

September 10th, 2023

15th Sunday After Pentecost/Rally Sunday (A)

*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”

We Celebrate New Life in Christ

*CALL TO WORSHIP Responsive

Tell the whole congregation of God’s people:

This is a day for new beginnings.

This is a time of God’s appearance.

This is the moment for faithful response.

Praise God in the assembly of the faithful.

Make melody to God and sing a new song.

Praise God for life enriched by love.

Praise God for love that fulfills God’s law.

This is the hour to wake from our sleep.

This energy of God’s love fills this place.

Here we claim our identity as Christian’s.

Here we become the church of Jesus Christ. Amen!

*DEDICATING HYMN *We Are the Church*

UMH 558 (vs. 1 & 2)

OPENING PRAYER Unison

This is a festival day, glorious God, a day of remembering your faithfulness through the centuries, a time for celebrating your vibrant presence with us, a pause of anticipation for the seasons yet to be. We rejoice at the assurance that you take pleasure in us, that we are known by you, called by you, empowered by you to live honorably and humbly, in the spirit of Christ. We would exalt your name and sing for joy, knowing that we can trust you for the guidance and direction we need. Amen!

CHILDREN’S TIME

UMH 191 (vs. 1)

Proclamation of God’s Word

*THE GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 18:15-20

15 “If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If you are listened to, you have regained that one. 16 But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17 If that person refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a gentile and a tax collector. 18 Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

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

Thanks be to God.

SERMON

“I Am There Among You!”

Pastor Jenny Lee

We Respond to God’s Word

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

Eternal God, to whom we owe all we have and all we are, and whose law of love points to fulfillment in this life and beyond, show us how to live honorably and help us to make those choices that are pleasing to you, that your church may become a trusting community that leads many to lives of quality and realization, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

SHARING OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS

After each prayer request:

Pastor: Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our Prayer.

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

SEPTEMBER 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.

In September the children will collect loose change to support the Moolah for Milk program. Thank you for your generosity!



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"

We will support the survivors and victims of the Hawaiian wildfires. Please check out the church bulletin board for more information. Thank you!



ST. CROIX FALLS

Mission committee chair: Kate Murtaugh



Food Shelf
(Communion Sunday)



Sailor Hat Offering:

The Sailor Hat offering will go to support St. Croix Falls School's backpack program.

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
Volunteer Needed
Judith McCann
Volunteer Needed
Sandra Erickson & Charlie Glonek
Volunteer Needed

Atlas:

Pianist
Liturgist
Usher
Acolyte(s)
Cleaning
Sunday School
Fellowship

Sharon Asp
Colleen Adams-Schween
Sue Olson
Volunteer Needed
Volunteer Needed
Cheryl Olson
Rally Sunday

St. Croix Falls:

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

Sharon Asp
Kathy Gionis
Karen Sciacca
Peter Gionis
Jim Andrews
Church Gardeners
Ad Council Members



Breakthrough Prayers:

Please pray for the kids and teachers who are going back to school.

Thank you for your support!

PLEASE NOTE:

- 1) **An Online Zoom Service is scheduled for this Sunday at 9:00 am and 11:15am.** 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: 15th Sunday after Pentecost; God bless you all!

Sunday Worship Services:

- 9/10: Rally Sunday(A)
9:00 am Grantsburg with Zoom (9:15 am, Sunday School)
10:00 am Atlas (*Sunday School, Rally Sunday: Fellowship following service*)
11:15 am St. Croix Falls with Zoom
- 9/10: 2:00 pm Pastor Jenny at Continuing Care Center
- 9/13 1:00 pm UMW Meeting (G)
- 9/14 7:00 pm Provisional Elder Mentoring Meeting via Zoom
- 9/15 1:30 pm Ad Council Meeting (A)
- 9/16 10:00 am New DS Rev. Peace Kim's Installment Service at Barron UMC

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!

Upcoming Events



- 9/17 Ad Council Meeting (SCF)
9/19 Ad Council Meeting (G)
9/20 SPRC Meeting at Parsonage
9/25-
9/27 Pastor Jenny's Field Trip to Resurrection UMC in Kansas

Next Sunday (September 17th) Volunteers:

Central:

Pianist	Toni Koons
Liturgist	Volunteer Needed
Acolyte(s)	Willow Nyland
Mowing	Volunteer Needed
Fellowship	Pauline Bistram
Counter	Volunteer Needed
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson & Charlie Glonek
Sunday School	Volunteer Needed



Atlas:

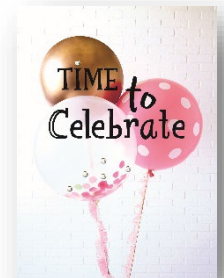
Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Sue Olson
Usher	Cheryl Olson
Acolyte(s)	Volunteer Needed
Cleaning	Volunteer Needed
Sunday School	Colleen Adams-Schween

St. Croix Falls:

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

THIS WEEK'S BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

Briana & Jared Olson	9/10
Troy & Kristie Olson	9/10
Sasha Chute	9/11
Don Anderson	9/12



September 10th, 2023
Matthew 18:15-20

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



“I Am There Among You!”

I want to start with something funny that I found on an internet site: a minister parked his car in a no-parking zone in a large city because he was short of time and couldn't find a space in an official parking lot. Then he put a note under the windshield wiper: “I have circled the block ten times. If I don't park here, I'll miss my appointment. Forgive us our trespasses.” When he returned, he found a citation from a police officer along with this note: “I've circled this block for ten years. I'll lose my job if I don't give you a ticket. Lead us not into temptation.”

Which part made you laugh? It may be a part of the Lord's Prayer. Other than during Sunday service, when do you pray with the Lord's Prayer? It may be when you want to empower yourself through prayer, when you are confused about how to pray, or when you are struggling. I used to repeat the Lord's Prayer whenever I saw anyone who couldn't forgive. The Lord's Prayer reminds me how God forgave me and how I should forgive the one who went against me.

I love the part, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Then, when I was able to forgive, I felt that I was released from the burden of hate. Forgiveness is a resource of the power of love. In other words, if you forgive others who have gone against you, you get the power to love others, which means to love yourself as well as them. God asked us to forgive others who trespass against us because God loves us so much; God knows if we can't forgive others, we may live in a prison of hate, anger, and resentment, and then we destroy ourselves.

Today's scripture is a little bit difficult to understand, so many misunderstand it. The scripture begins, “If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. But if the person doesn't listen to you, share the fault before two or three witnesses; finally, if the person doesn't listen to them, bring it to the church; if the person still doesn't listen to the church, just let such a one be excommunicated like the tax collector or the Gentile.” Have you ever heard this passage? Do you think it sounds right? No, it is not true. It is not about the excommunication of the church member. I will repeat part of the last sentence, “if the person refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a tax collector or a Gentile.” We should remember how Jesus treated the tax collectors and the Gentile. Jesus was a friend of tax collectors and reached out to the Gentile to heal and save them. We may treat them like non-Christians as if we were reaching out to someone new, with kindness and the good news. In other words, they need Jesus. We should pray for them in the name of Jesus. Then, Jesus will be there among us who pray. Jesus says, “when two or three gather together, I am there among you.”

Right before this passage, Jesus told the people about the parable of the lost sheep: If a shepherd lost one sheep among one hundred sheep, he would go out to search for the one who left the ninety-nine sheep on the mountains. Then, if he found it, he would be happier about that one than the ninety-nine sheep. Jesus then says, in the conclusion, “So, it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.” Jesus, who said, “to lose the one is not the will of the Father,” is not likely to say anything about “excommunication.” Suppose you interpret this passage as the excommunication of the church member, as some may see the cross of Jesus as a symbol of a curse. Remember, the cross of Jesus means the love of healing and the blessing of resurrection.

Look at verse 18, “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” It is about relationship; “you bind/loose on earth” refers to a relationship with people, and you will be bound/loosed/ in heaven refers to a relationship with God. So, in other words, if you have a good relationship with people, you may have a good relationship with God. Jesus says, “If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First, go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23-24). Remember when you have a broken relationship with someone, you might feel angry with God as well as the person.

Therefore, this passage is not about excommunication, but forgiveness and reconciliation with one another. If you still wonder why this passage is about forgiveness, please look at verse 18:21: Right after this lesson, the Disciple Peter asked Jesus, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” and Jesus answered, “Not seven times, but seventy-seven times.” The disciple Peter also understood it as forgiveness. Jesus wants us to forgive others as He forgave us. We are sinners whom God forgives, but we should forgive one another; like a shepherd who found the lost sheep.

However, we know forgiveness is not easy. We need to pray together. In other words, the passage means that if you broke a relationship with a Christian, try to reconcile with them alone first; if it doesn’t work, you may ask to pray together with two or three people close to you. Then, if it still doesn’t work, you may ask the church to pray together. Jesus says, “If two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven because “where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” We often cite this passage when we pray, especially in a small group. Jesus knew that there might be an argument or conflict when two or three people gather together. Therefore, God is always there among us, no matter how many people gather together. Remember, God is there not only where praying together, but He is also where the argument or conflict is.

I have experienced how powerful praying together is: Two years ago, when I was ordained as a provisional elder in Sun Prairie, I invited my friend. She planned to come with her husband. However, the day before they left, her husband had a minor stroke and went to an emergency room for urgent surgery while I was driving to Sun Prairie. When I heard about it from my friend, I pulled my car over to pray for her husband. Meanwhile, my colleague who would be ordained with me called me to ask if I had any guests. So, I shared with her what my friend and her husband were going through. Then, she called as many as she could to pray together. When I arrived at a hotel room, I heard her husband’s surgery went well and was successful. Prayer is powerful, and praying together is more powerful.

Here is a biblical example as well: At the early church, the Disciple Peter was imprisoned by King Herod’s persecution. The church earnestly prayed together for Peter. On that night, before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the prison. The angel woke Peter up, and the chains fell off Peter’s wrists, and he was released from the prison (Acts 12:1-10).

We live in a world with too much fighting, and many wars, conflicts, and arguments. Remember, “God sent his only Son Jesus Christ because he loved the world so much that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Jesus came to the world to love the people, to serve the people, and to save the people. We should follow what Jesus did. Remember, wherever we are, God is there among us! Thanks be to God! Amen!