

**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**

**\*DOXOLOGY**

**UMH 95**

**\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION** Unison

**We honor you, O God, as we give. We know we do not live or die by ourselves but are a part of a large community, linked in ways beyond our knowing with you and all generations of your children. We are accountable to you and share in responsibility for one another and for the care of this planet. Thus, we dedicate our resources and our lives to you for the work of your realm. Receive our gifts and draw us to yourself. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen!**

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

**\*CLOSING HYMN**

*Freely, Freely*

**UMH 389**

**\*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)

**16th Sunday After Pentecost**



**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**

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

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



# 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!

### Disaster Relief



## 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  
Dave Huff  
Pauline Bistram  
*Volunteer Needed*  
Sandra Erickson & Charlie Glonek  
*Volunteer Needed*

### Atlas:

Pianist  
Liturgist  
Usher  
Acolyte(s)  
Cleaning  
Sunday School

Sharon Asp  
Sue Olson  
Cheryl Olson  
*Volunteer Needed*  
*Volunteer Needed*  
Colleen Adams-Schween

### 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](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>
- 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: 16th Sunday after Pentecost; God bless you all!

### Sunday Worship Services:

- 9/17:
- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| 9:00 am  | Grantsburg with Zoom (9:15 am, Sunday School) |
| 10:00 am | Atlas (10:15 am, Sunday School)               |
| 11:15 am | St. Croix Falls with Zoom                     |
- 9/17: 12:15 pm Ad Council Meeting (SCF)
- 9/19 6:30 pm\ Ad Council Meeting (G)
- 9/20 6:30 pm SPRC & Treasurers Meeting at the Parsonage
- 9/21 11:00 am -1:00 pm Pastor Jenny volunteers at Loaves & Fishes in Luck

**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

Linda Hokanson	9/18
Dustin & Chelsie Kunze	9/20
Anneliese Snyder	9/22



## Next Sunday (September 24th) Volunteers:

### Central:

Pianist	Toni Koons
Liturgist	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
Acolyte(s)	Willow Nyland
Mowing	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
Fellowship	Sally Aldorfer
Counter	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson & Charlie Glonek
Sunday School	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>



### Atlas:

Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
Usher	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
Acolyte(s)	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
Cleaning	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
Sunday School	Cheryl Olson

### 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

## Upcoming Events

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Sept. 25-29 | Pastor Jenny's Field Trip to Resurrection UMC in Kansas |
| Sept. 30    | Megan Branstad's Wedding at Central-Grantsburg          |
| Oct. 1      | World Communion Sunday                                  |



September 17th, 2023  
Matthew 18:21-35

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



## “The Sinners Who Are Forgiven”

I want to start with something funny that I found on an internet site: A priest was called away for an emergency. Not wanting to leave the confessional unattended, he called his rabbi friend from across the street and asked him to cover for him. The rabbi told him he wouldn't know what to say, but the priest told him to come on over, and he'd stay with him for a little bit and show him what to do.

The rabbi comes, and he and the priest are in the confessional. In a few minutes, a woman comes in and says, “Father, forgive me for I have sinned.” The priest asks, “What did you do?” The woman says, “I committed adultery.” The priest says, “How many times?” and the woman replies, “Three.” The priest says, “Say two Hail Mary's, put \$5 in the box, and go and sin no more.” A few minutes later, a man enters the confessional. He says, “Father, forgive me, for I have sinned.” “What did you do?” “I committed adultery.” “How many times?” “Three times.” The priest says, “Say two Hail Mary's, put \$5 in the box, and go and sin no more.”

The rabbi tells the priest that he thinks he's got it, so the priest leaves. A few minutes later, another woman enters and says, “Father, forgive me, for I have sinned.” The rabbi says, “What did you do?” The woman replies, “I committed adultery.” The rabbi, getting it off pat, says, “How many times?” The woman replies, “Once.” The rabbi says, “Go and do it two more times. We have a special this week, three for \$5.”

Today's scripture continues on the subject of “forgiveness.” I want to repeat what happened in last week's scripture. In summary, if you have brothers or sisters who sin against you, you should try to reconcile with them. If they don't listen to you, ask your close friends two or three of them, to pray together; if it still doesn't work, ask the church to pray together; then, where two or three gather in Jesus' name, he will be there. It is essential to forgive and reconcile with one another because it relates to God as well as people.

Then, Peter, who listens to Jesus, came and said to him immediately, “Lord, if brother or sister sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” Peter was the best disciple of Jesus and understood Jesus' lesson well at this point, and proudly said, “Ok, Lord, you mean we should forgive one another. But I wonder how often I should forgive them if they sin against me. Is it enough to forgive them seven times?” They have learned they should forgive others up to three times. However, Peter said, “Is it enough to forgive others seven times?” The number seven in the scripture is a heavenly number, meaning they would forgive as much as possible. But Jesus said, “Not seven times, but I tell you, seventy-seven times,” which means “forgive others beyond human limitation.”

Can you imagine what “forgiveness beyond human limitation” looks like? You may say we are human; how can we forgive others beyond human limitation? Whenever two or three people gather in Jesus' name, they should pray together. Otherwise, we can't make it happen.

I want to share a Korean film, “Secret Sunshine” (Cinema: Korean, 2007). It is not a religious movie, but it tells us how difficult it is to forgive others who sinned against us. A woman had just lost her husband in a car accident, and she and her four-year-old son moved to a small town to live a new life

after the loss of their loved one. When they are about to settle in that town, her son is taken and killed by a kidnapper. She had almost lost her mind; she cried daily in depression; she quit her job; and she couldn't sleep most nights.

Meanwhile, one of her neighbors invited her to the church. She seemed to be fine as long as she was committed to the church ministry. She testifies how God helped her to get peace, and she planned to forgive the kidnapper who killed her precious son. One day, she visited the jail to see the kidnapper so that she may forgive him. However, when they see each other before she tells him she forgives him, the kidnapper smiles and says, "I am at peace because God forgives me. I will pray for you so God may also give you peace." Hearing him, she felt terrible, thinking how God forgave him before she did. She felt betrayed by God and all Christians, thinking of them as hypocrites. Then, she gets into a more terrible situation emotionally, spiritually, and physically, and goes against the church ministry, interrupting the ministry and gossiping about church leaders. Can you understand her situation? What would you do for her if you knew this woman? "Forgiveness" is an act you give with your whole heart, which may go beyond human limitation.

Jesus tells us a story to help us understand "why" and "how" we should forgive the one who sins against us: "For this reason, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves." "Forgiveness" might be like a king who would be compared with the kingdom of heaven, meaning it might be extraordinary.

The story is this: There was a slave who was in debt for ten thousand talents to his Lord. His Lord ordered him to pay him back by selling his wife, his children, and all his possessions. However, ten thousand talents was an enormous amount, likely one country's income for a year. Even though he sold all his family and his possessions, he still couldn't pay them back. So, the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." Then, the Lord forgave him the debt and released him with mercy. But when he went out as free man, he met a fellow slave who owed him a hundred denarii. A hundred denarii was like a typical wage for working a hundred days. The slave says, "Pay what you owe." The fellow slave says, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you." But he refused, throwing him into prison until he would pay the debt. The other fellow slave saw it and reported it to the Lord. Then, his Lord summoned him and said, "You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave as I had mercy on you?" And in anger, his Lord handed him over to be tortured until he could pay his entire debt. "So, my heavenly Father will also do this to you if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

"Forgiveness" is not an easy word, but an act done with your whole heart, which is not easy for us. However, suppose you think of it as if you all were debtors who never paid back your debt by yourselves, but have been paid back by God's only Son, Jesus Christ. In that case, if you believe that you all were sinners forgiven by God's unconditional and steadfast love, you may do so to others as you pay it forward. It is like when Jesus on the cross forgave the people who killed him and how Stephen prayed for the people who stoned him, "Lord, forgive them their sins" (Acts 7:60).

After Jesus taught us the Lord's prayer, "Forgive us our debts (trespass/sins) as we forgive those who trespass against us" (Matthew 6:12), he added, "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (sins)" (Matthew 6:14-15). Remember, we are debtors by God's grace and Jesus' love, so we should pay it back as forgiven sinners. Going back to the Korean movie "Secret Sunshine," who needs God's grace and mercy, the woman or the kidnapper? We all need God's grace and mercy to forgive and to be forgiven. Thanks be to God. Amen!