

**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

Receive our tithes and offerings along with ourselves to your honor and glory, loving God. May fruitful results occur through and beyond our sharing. Call us all into the vineyard of meaningful labor and constructive leisure, that your Word, living through us, may call our neighbors to a joyous reunion with you. May we help one another to live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen!

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

**\*CLOSING HYMN**

*Grace Alone*

**TFWS 2162**

**\*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)

“17th 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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**Parish Office:** 715-463- 2624 **St. Croix Falls Office:** 715-483-9494

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

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

**Upper St. Croix Parish**  
**Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls**  
**September 24th, 2023**  
**17th Sunday After Pentecost**

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\*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  
Call on God with praise and thanksgiving.  
Tell of God’s wonderful works.

**Today we open ourselves to God’s presence.**  
**Let the hearts of all who seek God rejoice.**

When we eat, we are reminded of God’s provision.  
When we drink pure water, we give thanks.

**Surely God has blessed us with food and drink.**  
**Daily we are strengthened for tasks we face.**

We are guided by God’s law and grace.  
We benefit from God’s generosity.

**Let all the people worship with joy!**  
**Let all whom God has chosen sing together! Amen!**

**\*DEDICATING HYMN** *Grace Greater than Our Sin*  
UMH 365 (vs. 1 & 4)

**OPENING PRAYER** Unison  
**Glory to your name, holy God. We rejoice in your wonderful works, in miracles you have caused among us, and in the wealth you have entrusted to our stewardship. You have called us to do important work in your vineyard. Wherever we go, we represent your church and interpret your ways to those who observe our words and deeds. Enfold us in your presence and give us strength and courage to pass on the light you have sent to illuminate our journey through life. We are eager to be fed by your Word today. Amen!**

**CHILDREN’S TIME**

**UMH 191 (vs.1)**

**Proclamation of God’s Word**

**\*THE GOSPEL LESSON**

**Matthew 20:1-16**

20 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. 2 After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 When he went out about nine o’clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, 4 and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went. 5 When he went out again about noon and about three o’clock, he did the same. 6 And about five o’clock he went out and found others standing around, and he said to them, ‘Why are you standing here idle all day?’ 7 They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard.’ 8 When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.’ 9 When those hired about five o’clock came, each of them received a denarius. 10 Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. 11 And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, 12 saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ 13 But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? 14 Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. 15 Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ 16 So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

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

**SERMON** **“It is the Grace of God!”** **Pastor Jenny Lee**

**We Respond to God’s Word**

**RESPONDING PRAYER** Unison  
**Gracious God, whose attention to all your children amazes and surprises us, help us this day to hear your call to us, to accept direction, and to follow your commands that the world may become more faithfully your realm, a place acknowledging your rule, a home for those who have been intimidated and afraid, a community in which all are valued and welcomed, whatever their contribution. Amen.**

# 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 Backpack 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.*

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  
Russ Hammer  
Sally Aldorfer  
*Volunteer Needed*  
Sandra Erickson & Charlie Glonek  
*Volunteer Needed*



### Atlas:

Pianist  
Liturgist  
Usher  
Acolyte(s)  
Cleaning  
Sunday School

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

### 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.

## 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: 17th Sunday after Pentecost; God bless you all!

### Sunday Worship Services:

9/24:  
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

9/25-29: Pastor Jenny's Field Trip to Resurrection UMC in Kansas  
9/26: 10:00 am October Newsletter & Calendar Information Due  
9/30: 4:00 pm Megan Branstad's Wedding

**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

Barb Melin 9/25  
Kristie Olson 9/28  
LeAnn Sylvester 9/29



## Next Sunday (October 1st) Volunteers:

### Central:

Pianist	Toni Koons
Liturgist	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
Acolyte(s)	Willow Nyland
Mowing	Russ Hammer
Fellowship	Deb Hammer
Counter	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson & Charlie Glonek
Sunday School	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
World Communion	Barbara Loomis & Mary Lou Wright



### Atlas:

Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Sue Olson
Usher	Colleen Adams-Schween
Acolyte(s)	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
Cleaning	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
Sunday School	Josie Grimes
World Communion	Sue Olson

### St. Croix Falls:

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

## Upcoming Events



Oct. 1	World Communion Sunday
Oct. 4-6	School for Ministry at Green Lake
Oct. 7	UM Men's Meeting (G)
Oct. 22	Joint Service & Charge Conference at Central-Grantsburg



### **“It is the Grace of God!”**

I want to start with something funny that I found on an internet site: A priest and a taxi driver both died and went to heaven. St. Peter was at the Pearly gates waiting for them. “Come with me,” said St. Peter to the taxi driver. The taxi driver followed St. Peter to a mansion. It had anything you could imagine, from a bowling alley to an Olympic-sized pool. “Wow, thank you,” said the taxi driver.

Next, he turns to the Priest, who thinks he will get a better mansion than the taxi driver. But, St. Peter led the Priest to a rugged old shack with a bunk bed and a little old television. “Wait, I think you are a little mixed up,” said the Priest. “Shouldn’t I be the one who gets the mansion? After all, I was a priest, attended church daily, and preached God’s Word.” “Yes, that’s true. But during your sermon, people slept. When the taxi driver drove, everyone prayed.”

If you have several children, you might have heard them complain saying, “No, Mom, that’s not fair!” or “Dad, that’s not fair!” What made them say it? It might have been when they were compared with another sibling. Perhaps they felt their sibling got more than they did. Basically, comparison is likely something like, I am older than others; I work more than others; I am a man; I am a woman; I am younger; I am older: I am better. It is like “meism,” which means “interpreting everything from my perspective.” In other words, they live in an “I-centered world.” You may have seen this happening when your children were younger. As long as they grow in love, they learn about the care of others, especially caring for the weak, the last, and the powerless. Then, their mindset might shift to a God-centered mindset or a parent’s mindset. I myself lived an I-centered life until I understood this scripture. This parable story was difficult for me to understand among the many biblical stories. It seems totally unfair. I didn’t want to go to heaven if the Kingdom of Heaven was like that.

Today’s scripture begins, “The Kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who has a vineyard and needs laborers for his vineyard.” The landowner looked for workers early in the morning, at about 9 o’clock, around noon, and again at three o’clock. Whenever he found those idle at the marketplace, he sent them to his vineyard with an agreement for their daily wage.

However, the real surprise of the story comes next. We hear that the landowner went out again at five o’clock! It was almost the end of the day, yet he still found more people standing around. He asked this last group of workers, “Why are you standing here idle all day?” They said to him, “Because no one has hired us.” He said to them, “You also go into my vineyard. And I will give what it is right.” At first, it did not make much sense. They probably had little time to work when they arrived at the vineyard. We may wonder why this landowner sent them to his vineyard at the last minute. He may have had a lot of work to be done in a hurry.

Let’s imagine which people these might have been. They were the last ones who were left in the job market. Perhaps they were not physically active. Maybe they were older. Perhaps they lacked experience. Perhaps they did not have any work permits. Perhaps they might not have legal status. Whatever the reason was, one thing was clear: they were not wanted! That’s why they were left to be the last ones. This landowner did not seem to care about any of the qualifications. He merely invited everyone and paid everyone the same wage. How does the landowner treat all the workers in the same way, whether working all day or for less than one hour? We may say, “That’s not fair.” Surely, those who were hired early in the morning entered the vineyard in gratitude because they got a job. Yes, of course, they worked well with good skills. While the people are working, they saw others who came to the vineyard later, thinking, “Hum, they are not good workers, don’t



have good enough skills,” and then saw that they received the same daily wage, the people may have expected that they would get more. However, the landowner gives them the same wage as they contracted. So, they are upset with the landowner, “No, it is not fair! We worked more hours, and we had better skills. So, we should receive more.” But, the landowner says, “I gave you what I agreed to give you. Then I gave them what I wanted to with my generous heart.” They forgot when they were first hired that they entered the vineyard with gratitude.

I have similar experiences with these people. When I began to plant a new church in Chicago, I was grateful to God as God called me to do His work. As the church grew, we hired several seminarians as student pastors. The church council and a lead pastor decided all seminarians should be paid the same compensation regardless of work hours. I was also a seminarian, but I was a church planter; I had been in the church ministry for more years than they had, and I am a Ph. D. student while they were freshmen in the Master of Divinity. Don't you think I should get more compensation? I didn't understand the church council's decision then. I thought I should quit working at that church.

I prayed to God to see if I should stop working at the church. And God led me to recall when I started planting that church with gratitude. Then, I found this scripture. I read this scripture repetitively, and I cried with repentance. I noticed that I received more grace as I worked more years and studied more than they had. The grace of God is priceless. Once understanding this, I worked joyfully.

When I was appointed at this parish in a three-point charge, someone said, “It's not fair: one works at one church while the other works two or three churches, then they get paid the same compensation.” Do you think that's fair? The other said, “Well, you may work at each church 1/3 the time, then work the same hours and invest the same energy as those who work at one church.” I said, “Well, I will work at all three churches giving my best to all, then God may fill me with His grace and energy more than others who work at a one-point charge.” Yes, God fills me with more grace and energy than others, then I can work joyfully with gratitude.

This parable story has sometimes been used to explain God's grace: God's love does not depend on our merits. No matter how many hours, days, or years we have given to God's work and His ministry. The good news is that God's love has no boundaries. The unconditional love of God is for all people.

God's grace is not comparable because each of us is a unique child to God. God's fairness and justice are for those in need, the powerless, the weak, the last, and the least. The more we share God's love, the more the grace of God increases, 30 times, 60 times, or 100 times. Even though we have a small gift like a tiny mustard seed, the seed grows and becomes a big tree that birds may have shelter on when we share with others. May the Holy Spirit empower us to share God's love with the last, the least, and the vulnerable and guide us to experience the Kingdom of heaven. Everyone has the equal right to receive the grace of God.

Do you think you work for the church more than others? If you do so, you may receive God's grace more than others. Your dedication to the church is very precious to God. Bless you for your joyful commitment to God's ministry. Thanks be to God, Amen!