

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION** Unison

As we give ourselves and our offerings, we pray, O God, that they may reveal your love in such a way that many will respond. Awaken in us a love for you and for one another that is contagious. Remove from us all apathy, pretension, and greed that we may grow in holiness and compassion, living joyously in communion with you. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen!

We Go Forth to Love God and Serve One Another

***CLOSING HYMN** *Where Charity and Love Prevail*
UMH 549 (vs. 1, 2, 4 & 6)

***BENEDICTION** Responsive

Brothers and sisters, our coming together is not in vain.
God is doing a new thing among us and beyond us.

We have sensed a vision of God's plan for us.
God's sign and wonders await our discovery.

God has compassion on all who seek to serve.
Steadfast love is with all who continue in faithfulness.

God's glorious power is manifested in humility.
Surely God's favor rests upon us here.

Now we go out with courage, entrusted with the gospel.
We carry good news of God's love to our neighbors.

We will be gentle with others as God is gentle with us.
We offer tender care in the spirit of Jesus. Amen!

***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)

22nd 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

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
October 29th, 2023
22nd Sunday After Pentecost

*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
Gather together to hear stories of faith and courage.
Listen for the ways God has acted among us.
Our ancestors in the faith listened for God’s word.
They dared to believe God’s promises.
Leaders like Moses and Paul saw evidence of God’s work.
They believed they were face-to-face with God’s truth.
They looked beyond the present moment.
They lived for dreams not yet realized.
Many felt God’s love in knowing Jesus.
They experienced a new relationship with neighbors.
We have come seeking a community centered in Christ.
We want to feel God’s presence as we worship. Amen!

***DEDICATING HYMN** *Deep in the Shadows of the Past*
TFWS 2246 (vs. 1, 3 & 4)

OPENING PRAYER Unison
God, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the earth was formed, long before there were people on this planet, you were fashioning life in its myriad forms. Out of the billions of years you have been creating, our lives have come to this moment of meeting. We stand in awe before you, amazed to discover that you care about us, tiny blips on the screen of eternity. O God, we want our lives to count for something. Show us how to fit into your plans. Amen!

CHILDREN’S TIME

UMH 191 (vs.1)

Proclamation of God’s Word

***THE GOSPEL LESSON** Matthew 22:34-46 (G) See Insert
John 1:1-4 (A) See Insert

***THE NEW TESTAMENTS** Ecclesiastes 1:1-11 (SCF) See Insert

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

SERMON

What’s Important? Barbara Loomis (G)
Grace and Truth Sharon Asp (A)
Ecclesiastes Reflection Kathy Gionis (SCF)

We Respond to God’s Word

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison
Eternal God, whose wisdom defies our limited insights, and whose commandments are from everlasting to everlasting, open our hearts and souls and minds to your love that surrounds us and seeks a dwelling place in us, that we may regard ourselves as your valuable children and accord the same care and concern to others as we would, at our best, lavish on ourselves. May our lives honor you and display the power of your love to the world. 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

***DOXOLOGY**

UMH 95

***THE GOSPEL LESSON**

Matthew 22:34-46 (G)

³⁴ When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, ³⁵ and one of them, an expert in the law, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" ³⁷ He said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

⁴¹ Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: ⁴² "What do you think of the Messiah?^[a] Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." ⁴³ He said to them, "How is it then that David by the Spirit^[b] calls him Lord, saying,

⁴⁴ 'The Lord said to my Lord,
"Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your feet" ' ?

⁴⁵ "If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?" ⁴⁶ No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

***THE GOSPEL LESSON**

John 1:1-4 (A)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God. **3** All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being **4** in him was life,^[a] and the life was the light of all people.

***THE NEW TESTAMENTS**

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11 (SCF)

1 The words of the Teacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

2 Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher,
vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

3 What do people gain from all the toil
at which they toil under the sun?

4 A generation goes, and a generation comes,
but the earth remains forever.

5 The sun rises, and the sun goes down
and hurries to the place where it rises.

6 The wind blows to the south
and goes around to the north;
round and round goes the wind,
and on its circuits the wind returns.

7 All streams run to the sea,
but the sea is not full;
to the place where the streams flow,
there they continue to flow.

8 All things^[a] are wearisome,
more than one can express;
the eye is not satisfied with seeing
or the ear filled with hearing.

9 What has been is what will be,
and what has been done is what will be done;
there is nothing new under the sun.

10 Is there a thing of which it is said,
"See, this is new"?

It has already been
in the ages before us.

11 The people of long ago are not remembered,
nor will there be any remembrance
of people yet to come
by those who come after them.

TODAY'S SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

OCTOBER 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 will be collecting Operation Christmas Child shoe boxes.

Deadline 11/12/23



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 be collecting loose change for Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF.



ST. CROIX FALLS

Mission committee chair: Kate Murtaugh



Food Shelf
(Communion Sunday)



Sailor Hat Offering:

The Sailor Hat offering will go to support UMCOR

Ministers

All God's People
Pastor Jenny Lee

Central:

Preach:
Pianist
Liturgist
Acolyte(s)
Fellowship
Counter
Cleaning
Sunday School

Barbara Loomis
Toni Koons
Bob Branstad
Willow Nyland
Volunteer Needed
Volunteer Needed
Sandra Erickson & Charlie Glonek
Volunteer Needed



Atlas:

Preach Sharon Asp
Pianist Sharon Asp
Liturgist Colleen Adams-Schween
Usher Sue Olson
Cleaning **Volunteer Needed**
Sunday School Cheryl Olson

St. Croix Falls:

Preach Kathy Gionis
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

Breakthrough Prayers: Please pray for those who have lost loved ones, and for God's peace in the middle east area and all over the world!

Thank you for your support!

PLEASE NOTE:

- 1) **An Online Zoom Service is scheduled for this Sunday at 9:00.** 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=SDZleFNubmEvaDBlcytTRzVxMFllZz09>
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: 22th Sunday after Pentecost.
God bless you all!

Sunday Worship Services:

10/29:

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

REMINDER: For All Saints Sunday next weekend, please sign up those who you would like to be lifted up by lightning candles. The lists should be sent to Colleen Norenberg so that she can prepare name cards listing the saints.

10/26-11/12 Pastor Jenny's Vacation (Thank you all ministers)
11/3 6-8 pm Youth Bowling Day (Contact with Shayna, Youth Director)

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

Jim Mattson 10/29
Cheryl Olson 11/2
Margie Mattson 11/3
Mike Steffen 11/4
Linda Harmon 11/4



Next Sunday (November 5th)

VOLUNTEERS

Central:

Preach:	Rev. Cathy Hamblin
Pianist	Toni Koons
Liturgist	Barbara Loomis
Acolyte(s)	Willow Nyland
Fellowship	Judy Lien
Counter	Volunteer Needed
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson & Charlie Glonek
Sunday School	Volunteer Needed



Atlas:

Preach	Rev. Cathy Hamblin
Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Sue Olson
Usher	Cheryl Olson
Cleaning	Volunteer Needed
Sunday School	Colleen Adams-Schween

St. Croix Falls:

Preach	Rev. Cathy Hamblin
Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Jim Andrews
Usher(s)	Kathy Gionis
Money Counter	Peter Gionis
Bell Ringer	Lynn Hanson
Flowers	Karen Sciacca
Fellowship	Karen 1 st Sunday

Upcoming Events

10/26-11/12 Pastor Jenny's Vacation

11/5 All Saints Sunday/Communion Sunday
(Rev. Cathy Hamblin, UMC retired pastor)

11/12 Veterans Sunday



ECCLESIASTICAL REFLECTIONS

The Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes has had a deep influence on Western literature. It contains several phrases that we all recognize and which have become common in British and American culture, such as “eat, drink and be merry”, “nothing new under the sun”, “a time to be born and a time to die”, and “vanity of vanities, all is vanity”. The American novelist Thomas Wolfe was of the opinion that Ecclesiastes was the most noble, wise, and powerful expression of a person’s life upon the earth. He called the book the “highest flower of poetry, eloquence and truth.” He said, “I could say that Ecclesiastes is the greatest single piece of writing I have ever known, and the wisdom expressed in it the most lasting and profound.” Pete Seeger was so impressed with Chapter 3 of Ecclesiastes that all the lines of his song “Turn! Turn! Turn!”, except one, are taken from that book.

King Solomon is generally given credit for writing the book in his old age. He reigned from 970-931 BCE. But some scholars note that the use of Persian words and Aramaisms point to a date no earlier than 450 BCE with the latest possible date being 180 BCE. The book begins with a narrator who introduces the reader to the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem. The teacher in the story then goes on to discuss the meaning of life and a person’s relationship with God. It is thought that the writer could be a later Solomon or a descendant of David or a subsequent teacher. It doesn’t really matter after all is said and done, and that is probably the attitude the writer would assume---that it doesn’t really matter. It was written 2500-3000 years ago and is still meaningful to many readers today.

The beginning theme of Ecclesiastes is that life is meaningless. “Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities. All is vanity. What do people gain from all the toil at which they toil under the sun? A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises, the wind blows, the streams all run to the sea. There is nothing new under the sun.” Time marches on. The earth was here before us and will be here after us. We can try to control our life by our work, wealth, status, technology, or build nations that rise and fall. We can go climb a mountain and see if the mountain cares. The mountain was there before us and it will be there after us. The point that the author is trying to make is, that it doesn’t matter what we do, for in the end, as far as each individual person is concerned, we all meet the same fate and that is death.

Since May, Peter and I have been to seven funerals or celebrations of life for church family, friends or relatives. One of those was James Erickson who hired

me for my first job out of law school. He had lots of good advise which he liked to share such as: "Always pay your mortgage and taxes first." "Have a clean desk when you meet with a client so they know they have your complete attention." "You can't force a bluebird to land on your shoulder, sometimes you have to wait for it." And, in Ecclesiastical fashion, "In a hundred years, nobody will care or remember what troubles you had today." Going to these funerals gives one pause to think about the meaning of life. In chapter 7, the Teacher says "It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart." At these events where we honor the passing of our loved ones, it is common for friends and family to publicly reflect on their relationship with the person who has left. And that gives us pause to think about our relationships now and the important meaning they have in our life.

Chapter 3 generates a feeling that life does have meaning and that everything has its time:

For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven.

a time to be born and a time to die;

a time to plant and a time to pluck up what has been planted;

a time to kill and a time to heal;

a time to break down and a time to build up;

a time to weep and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn and a time to dance;

a time to throw away stones and a time to gather stones together;

a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;

a time to seek and a time to lose;

a time to keep and a time to throw away;

a time to tear and a time to sew;

a time to keep silent and a time to speak;

a time to love and a time to hate;

a time for war and a time for peace.

The Teacher in Ecclesiastes urges us to appreciate the simple gifts from God such as friendship, a good meal, family, a sunny day. To enjoy life and actually experience it as it is, not as one thinks it should be. At the conclusion of Ecclesiastes, the narrator takes over again in the epilogue and sums up the book by saying that in the end, a person should Fear God and keep his commandments, for that is the whole duty of everyone, the duty to live a life of honesty and integrity before God. In the journey of life, there are many uncertainties and frustrations and the message in Ecclesiastes is to accept the unpredictable and its frustrations, recognizing that the journey itself is important, and enjoy the things in our lives which are simple things, and the most rewarding, not only for each one of us, but to those around us, such as friendship, family and the abundant life God has given us.