

Eternal God, whose empire promises abundance for all and mutual caring, turn us away from indifference to the inequalities that grant to us advantages we enjoy, that we may see and serve those who are hungry, thirsty, ill-clothed, sick, persecuted, or shut out. We seek to be faithful to your rule of love, that together we might experience your gift of eternal life. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.



Upper St. Croix Parish United Methodist Church

SHARING OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS

After each prayer request:
Pastor: Lord, in your mercy,
All: Hear our Prayer.

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

26th Sunday After Pentecost
Reign of Christ

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
God of steadfast love, receive these expressions of our thanks for the glorious inheritance entrusted to us. We hereby enlist ourselves and our resources toward the realization of your eternal purpose for all humanity. May this congregation become more and more a source of hope for each of us and for all we meet. Amen.



Grantsburg-Central,
Since 1897



Atlas, Since 1887



St. Croix Falls,
Since 1859

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)

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
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www.upperstcroixparish.org

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

Upper St. Croix Parish
Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls
November 26th, 2023
26th Sunday After Pentecost
Reign of Christ

*Please stand if you are able.

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

*OPENING SONG TFWS 2056 (vs.1)

God is so Good(x3), God's so Good to me!

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASSING OF THE GREETINGS

"Peace be with you"

We Celebrate New Life in Christ

*CALL TO WORSHIP Responsive

Come, God is seeking to gather us together.

Like a shepherd searching for lost sheep, God calls us.

Something or someone has summoned us here.

Dare we believe that God knows and welcomes us?

God searches out to rescue all who have strayed.

Scattered, weak, and injured ones are drawn to God.

We come, in need of healing, seeking a blessing.

Our faith draws us here, in spite of our doubts.

Come, above all else, to worship and give thanks.

Make a joyful noise to the Creator of all worlds.

God's steadfast love becomes real to us here.

We are reminded of God's immeasurable greatness. Amen.

*DEDICATING HYMN *The Gift of Love* UMH 408 (vs. 1 & 2)

OPENING PRAYER Unison

We come with gladness, loving God, drawn by our need and by a desire to praise you and give thanks. Enlighten the eyes of our hearts that we may be full of hope. Enlarge the circle of our concern that we may see the stranger as next of kin, the hungry person as part of our own family, the one who is sick as a whole individual deserving of our care. Grant us the presence of Christ

that we may learn more fully to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.
We pray in Jesus' name. Amen!

CHILDREN'S TIME

UMH 191 (vs.1)

Proclamation of God's Word

*THE GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 25:31-46

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, 33 and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. 34 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, 35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink? 38 And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing? 39 And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' 40 And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.' 41 Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You who are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels, 42 for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' 44 Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not take care of you?' 45 Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life."

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

Thanks be to God. Amen!

SERMON *"Come, You who are Blessed!"*

Pastor Jenny Lee

We Respond to God's Word

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

NOVEMBER CHURCH MISSIONS




ATLAS

Mission committee chair: Peggy Frederickson

<p>INK JET RECYCLING PROGRAM:</p> <p>Atlas collects and recycles ink jet cartridges and cell phones year-round.</p> 	<p>LOAVES & FISHES NEEDS OUR ONGOING SUPPORT</p> <p>Requested items: Cooking oil (smaller and larger), mayonnaise, sugar 4# size, bar soap, dish and laundry soap. Personal products for and women. They appreciate any and all donations.</p>	<p>Thank you for the Operation Christmas Child donations! Your generosity is much appreciated.</p> <p>Mitten Tree <i>December 3rd</i></p> <p>We will collect mittens, scarves, hats, gloves, etc. for the Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry.</p> 
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GRANTSBURG

Mission committee chair: Deb Hammer

<p>BE A "BACK-PACK BACKER"!</p> <p>REMEMBER ... Every Sunday Is MAC 'N CHEESE SUNDAY! Supporting the Salvation Army's "Happy Kids Back-Pack Program"</p> 	<p>Thank you for all the donations for Operation Christmas Child. They will be a blessing to many children.</p>  <p>We will also be collecting winter clothing supplies for the "Sox Box"</p> 
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ST. CROIX FALLS

Mission committee chair: Kate Murtaugh

<p>Food Shelf <i>(Communion Sunday)</i></p> 	<p>Sailor Hat Offering:</p> <p><i>The Sailor Hat offering will go to support Buying Thanksgiving Food Gift Cards for Families in Need!</i></p> 
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Thank you for your support!

TODAY'S SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Ministers

All God's People
Pastor Jenny Lee

Central:

Pianist
Liturgist
Acolyte(s)
Fellowship
Counter
Cleaning
Sunday School
Snow Removal

Toni Koons
Barbara Loomis
Willow Nyland
Decoration & Lunch
Volunteer Needed
Sandra Erickson & Charlie Glonek
Barbara Loomis & Jenni Stedman
Volunteer Needed

Atlas:

Pianist
Liturgist
Usher
Cleaning
Sunday School

Sharon Asp
Colleen Adams-Schween
Sue Olson
Volunteer Needed
Josie Grimes

St. Croix Falls:

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

Sharon Asp
Jim Andrews
Kathy Gionis
Peter Gionis
Lynn Hanson
Karen Sciacca
Admin Council



Breakthrough Prayers:

Please pray for those who are in need, and for God's peace in the middle east area and all over the world!

PLEASE NOTE:

- 1) **An Online Zoom Service is scheduled for this Sunday at 9:00 am at Central and 11:15 am at St. Croix Falls.** 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=SDZleFNubmEvaDBlcytTRzVxMFIzZ09>
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: 26th Sunday after Pentecost/Reign of Christ
God bless you all!

Sunday Worship Services:

- 11/26: 9:00 am Grantsburg with Zoom (9:15am, Sunday School)
10:00 am Atlas (10:15 am, Sunday School)
11:15 am St. Croix Falls with zoom
- 11/26: Decorate the Church after Service (G & A)
- 11/29: 9:00 -10:00 am Volunteers' Appreciation Day - Loaves of Fishes
at Luck Lutheran Church in Luck
1:00 pm, Advent Craft Group gathering(G)

**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

Marjorie Broker	11/26
Donna Norman	11/28
Blake Reid	11/29
Tanner Gaffey	11/30



Next Sunday (December 3rd)

VOLUNTEERS

Central:

Pianist	Toni Koons
Liturgist	Volunteer Needed
Acolyte(s)	Willow Nyland
Fellowship	Judy Lien
Counter	Volunteer Needed
Cleaning	Volunteer Needed
Sunday School	Barbara Loomis & Jenni Stedman
Snow Removal	Volunteer Needed
Communion	Barbara Loomis

Atlas:

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

St. Croix Falls:

Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Kathy Gionis
Usher(s)	Lynn Hanson
Money Counter	Peter Gionis
Bell Ringer	Karen Sciacca
Flowers	Karen Sciacca
Fellowship	Admin Council
Communion	Kathy Gionis



Upcoming Events

- 12/3: 1st Sunday of Advent
Mitten Tree Sunday (A)
- 12/6: Advent Craft Group/Youth Gathering
- 12/8: Youth Family Worship & Game Night





November 26, 2023.
Matthew 25:31-46

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

“Come, You who are Blessed!”

I want to start with something funny. I heard about this couple who moved to a new neighborhood. While having breakfast one morning, the wife looked out the window and noticed that their neighbor was washing their clothes. The wife said to her husband, “I think they don’t know how to wash. The clothes they washed are so dirty. I am sure they didn’t use detergent.” Week after week, it was the same. She looked out the window, saw the clothes, and made the same comments about how dirty their laundry was. One morning, she looked out the windows in the same way. She was surprised that their clothes were so clean. She said to her husband, “Honey! Look at them. Finally, they learned how to wash.” Her husband smiled and said, “I got up early this morning and cleaned our windows.”

This same analogy works for all of us in our lives. Each of us has a window we look through to see the world, see people, and see things. However, sometimes, we need to notice what we are looking at things through. The window is our mindset, such as our beliefs, bias and prejudices. The window might be the principles of our lives, which is formed by what we have learned and by what we have experienced. The principle might have been great when we first made it. But, my point is that it is time to retake a look at our window, or it may be time to clean and renew it again.

I want to share my foolishness and how I renewed my selfish mindset. I was too foolish to God because I used to pray, “Loving God! I will do whatever you ask me, and I will go wherever you send me as your faithful servant, except two things. One is that “don’t make me work at a hospital”, because I had stayed in a hospital for a long time when I broke my spine. So, I hated being in a hospital. The other is that, “don’t make me a missionary” because I have lived separated from my family since my teens. So, I would like to live with my family members, or at least near them. What do you think of my prayers? Are they reasonable prayers? I made a limitation to serve God and said, “O Lord, I will do whatever you ask me; I can go wherever you send me,” and I should have left it at that. But, I said, except for two things. Guess how that turned out?!

I met a good adviser, Dr. Ken Ehrman, at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary in 2016. When I considered which classes I would take, he suggested I take Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), an introductory course in Hospital chaplaincy. I shared my prayers with him: not to work at a hospital and not be a missionary. Hearing me, he said, “Why did you place limitations on God’s work? Don’t you think that it may be a block on the way God blesses you?” Then, I rethought it and realized how selfish I was being. So, I changed my prayers: “God, whatever you want of me, I will do it with your help.” Then I felt God telling me, “Why don’t you do the two things for me that you previously didn’t want to: hospital and missionary work?”

Then, I worked at a hospital for one and a half years as a chaplain before I came to Wisconsin. At that moment, I worked at the hospital and was incredibly grateful, which renewed my biased mindset and my faith. I was able to recover and renew my body, soul, and spirit by visiting many patients. I was able to get help from many patients instead of helping them. Then, I opened my eyes widely to see God’s guidance and vision. I prayed to God again, “Whatever you ask me, I will do it, and wherever you send me, I will go, period.” The chaplaincy experience made a huge and strong bridge for me to connect with cross-cultural ministry. I might have had cultural shock if I hadn’t had the chaplaincy experience before coming to Wisconsin. Now, I visit those who stay in a hospital, are home bound, and in nursing homes with a grateful heart because I know how much they need visitors. Also, I noticed that the Wisconsin Conference of the UMC requires all candidate-ordained pastors to have chaplaincy experience. How wonderful God’s prophetic guidance is! What if I rejected becoming a chaplain? What if I showed persistence to God to not work at a hospital? Like in my case,

our bias blocks God's blessings. Let's come to God closer with open minds, hearts, and doors to receive God's abundant blessings!

Today's scripture may help us to open our minds and hearts to the Good News. The Good News is that Jesus Christ is coming to gather us together to bless us, even though it is unclear when it will be. One obvious thing is that Jesus will be everywhere, whether we recognize it or not. Then, if you serve Jesus, who will be everywhere, you should be blessed!

Let's listen to the scripture: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from goats. And he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (25:31-34).

Would you sit at Jesus' right or left hand? Yes, indeed, we would sit at Jesus' right hand, because you are blessed. If you are still determining where you will be seated, don't worry, it will be clear. Those who will sit at Jesus' right hand are the people who are to give him something to eat when Jesus was hungry, to give him something to drink when he was thirsty, to invite him when he was a stranger, to clothe him when he needed clothes, to take care of him when he was sick, to visit him when he was imprisoned. However, you may say, "No, we never saw Jesus, who was hungry, sick, a stranger, imprisoned, and in need. Of course, if we saw Jesus, we should treat him well." Both people who sat on Jesus' right and left hands don't remember when they served Jesus or didn't serve him. They both asked him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry, sick, thirsty? When did we see you as a stranger or imprisoned?" Then the king answered them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these members of my family, you did it to me." Jesus would be among the poor, the strangers, the prisoners, the sick, and those in need. I hope we find a little Jesus among our family and neighbors. If anyone comes to your mind now, that will be Jesus whom you should take care of.

We are going back to my foolish prayers. One of my prayers was not to be a missionary. But, I realized that we all are missionaries whom God sends to our home, church, community, country, and the world to care for the little Jesus' around us. There might be a Jesus in our family, church, community, and neighborhood. I would complement those who work for missions near and far, such as Operation Christmas Shoe Boxes, Mitten Tree, Food Pantry, Helping Neighbors, school backpack programs, homeless shelters, relief of disasters, and any going the extra mile. They all are to serve Jesus among those in need.

Obviously, the king comes to judge both those who serve the little ones and those who do not, saying, "Just as you do not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." Remember, if you don't help those in need, you're also judged for not helping Jesus. As we learn to love God and our neighbors, let's love them actively until "thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven." When the coming Jesus is present, we may hear, "Come, you who are blessed!" Thanks be to God. Amen!