

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

Child of humankind, born of God, reveal to us once more the power and glory which claims us all. Let your Word make its impact within and among us that we may keep awake and accept your mission for us and enlist all our efforts in watchful service. Come to reign among us and rule in every heart. 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!

INVITATION/PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

***DOXOLOGY**

UMH 95

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION Unison**

Gracious God, we give our best to you, not out of guilt or fear, but with gratitude and faith. You have been our support in times of need. Every breath we take is a gift from you. We would be awake and watchful for opportunities to make a difference, to help others be alert for your presence, to value life in all its fullness, and to learn to care. We dedicate these symbols of thankfulness and all the days of our lives to those purposes. Amen!

We Go Forth to Love God and Serve One Another

***CLOSING HYMN** *Marching to Zion* **UMH 733 (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)

1st Sunday of Advent/Mitten Tree Sunday (A)



Grantsburg-Central
Since 1897



Atlas
Since 1887



St. Croix Falls
Since 1859

SUNDAY SERVICES:

**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: 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
December 3rd, 2023

1st Sunday of Advent/Mitten Tree Sunday (A)

*Please stand if you are able.

***PRELUDE** Toni Koons (G)/ Sharon Asp (A & SCF)
***ADVANT SONG** TFWS 2090 (vs. 1)
***LIGHTING THE FIRST CANDLE**
***BLESSING OF ADVENT CANDLE, WREATH AND CHRISTMAS TREE**

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS
PASSING OF THE GREETINGS

“Peace be with you”

(Waive your hands with one another)

We Celebrate New Life in Christ

***CALL TO WORSHIP** Responsive

Awake, people of God, and stay alert for Christ’s coming.

Grace to you and peace from God who sent Jesus to us.

Make your ways known to us, O God.

Show us once more your awesome presence.

We are all God’s people; no one is excluded.

Come together as God’s family for worship and prayer.

Let the mountains quake before you, mighty God.

Let the nations tremble in awe and reverence.

Praise the One who grants us the gift of life.

Give thanks for God’s steadfast love.

Heaven and earth will pass away,

But the Word of God is true for all times and places. Amen.

***DEDICATING HYMN** *Awake, O Sleeper*

UMH 551 (vs. 1, 2 & 3)

OPENING PRAYER Unison

Amid threatening clouds of anger and selfish strife, come, O God, to bring light. Into our days of worry and anxiety, send a confident hope. Enrich us with spiritual gifts that transcend disappointments and spill out in generous compassion for all your

suffering children. Meet us today where we are so we may be equipped for trials yet to come and for joys yet to be revealed. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Sacrament of Holy Communion

INVITATION FOR COMMUNION

Pastor Jenny Lee

CONFESSION AND PARDON Unison

Merciful God,

We confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart.

We have failed to be an obedient church.

We have not done your will,

we have broken your law,

we have rebelled against your love,

we have not loved our neighbors,

and we have not heard the cry of the needy.

Forgive us, we pray. Free us for joyful obedience,

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(All pray in silence)

Hear the good news: Christ died for us while we were yet sinners;

that proves God’s love toward us.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! **Amen.**

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

UMH 13-14 (See insert)

THE LORD’S PRAYER

GIVING (RECEIVING) THE HOLY COMMUNION

COMMUNION PRAYER Unison

Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you

have given yourself to us. Grant that we may go into the world in the

strength of your Spirit, to give ourselves for others, in the

name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Proclamation of God’s Word

***THE GOSPEL LESSON**

Mark 13:24-37 (See insert)

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

Thanks be to God. Amen!

SERMON

“Keep Awake!”

Pastor Jenny Lee

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: “take, eat; this is my body which given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: “drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ’s offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other,

and one in ministry to all the world,

until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever. Amen.

*THE GOSPEL LESSON

Mark 13:24-37

24 “But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, 25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

26 “Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. 27 Then he will send out the angels and gather the elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

28 “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 30 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

32 “But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Beware, keep alert, for you do not know when the time will come. 34 It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. 35 Therefore, keep awake, for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening or at midnight or at cockcrow or at dawn, 36 or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. 37 And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

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



Thanks be to God. Amen

TODAY'S SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

DECEMBER 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 men and women.</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> 
--	--	---



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>We will be collecting financial donations for Christmas for kids through interfaith Caregivers of Burnett County.</p>
---	---

ST. CROIX FALLS

Mission committee chair: Kate Murtaugh

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

Thank you for your support!

Ministers

All God's People
Pastor Jenny Lee

Central:

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

Toni Koons
Barbara Loomis
Willow Nyland
Judy Lien
Volunteer Needed
Sandra Erickson & Charlie Glonek
Barbara Loomis & Jenni Stedman
Russ Hammer(except 12/2)
Barbara Loomis



Atlas:

Pianist
Liturgist
Usher
Cleaning
Sunday School
Communion

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

St. Croix Falls:

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

Sharon Asp
Kathy Gionis
Lynn Hanson
Peter Gionis
Karen Sciacca
Karen Sciacca
Admin Council
Kathy & Peter Gionis



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: 1st Sunday of Advent/Mitten Tree Sunday (A)
God bless you all!

Sunday Worship Services:

- | | | |
|-------|------------------|--|
| 12/3: | 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 |
| 12/3: | | Mitten Tree Sunday (A) |
| | 12:00 pm | Fellowship luncheon(SCF) |
| 12/5: | 10:30 am-1:00 pm | Pastor Jenny volunteers at Loaves & Fishes in Luck |
| 12/6: | 1:00 pm | Advent Craft Group Gathering (G) |
| | 1:00 pm-4:00 pm | Diversity Council Meeting via Zoom |
| | 6:00 pm-8:00 pm | Youth Gathering |
| 12/7 | 9:00 am-10:00 am | North West Clergy Meeting via Zoom |
| 12/8 | 5:30 pm-8:00 pm | Youth Family Worship and Game Night |

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

Mikala Hammer 12/7
Sharon Asp 12/9



Next Sunday (December 10th)

VOLUNTEERS

Central:

Pianist	Toni Koons
Liturgist	<i>Volunteer Needed</i>
Acolyte(s)	Willow Nyland
Fellowship	Kayleen Branstad
Counter	<i>Volunteer Needed</i>
Cleaning	<i>Volunteer Needed</i>
Sunday School	Barbara Loomis & Jenni Stedman
Snow Removal	Russ Hammer

Atlas:

Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Colleen Adams-Schween
Usher	Sue Olson
Cleaning	<i>Volunteer Needed</i>
Sunday School	Cheryl 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

Upcoming Events-Mark Your Calendar

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 12/6 & 12/20 | Advent Craft Group (1pm) |
| 12/10 | Ad Council Meeting (SCF) |
| 12/13 | UMW Christmas Luncheon (<i>All women in the parish are invited</i>) RSVP by 12/6 to Mary McNally |
| 12/13 | Youth Worship Night at Wood Lake Camp |
| 12/17 | Atlas Sunday School Christmas Program & Potluck |



December 3rd, 2023.

Mark 13:24-37

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



“Keep Awake!”

I want to start with something funny I found on an internet site: There was a Christian lady who lived next door to an atheist. Every day, when the lady prayed, the atheist guy could hear her. He thought, “She sure is crazy, praying all the time like that. Doesn’t she know there isn’t a God?” Many times while she was praying, he would go to her house and harass her, saying, “Lady, why do you pray all the time? Don’t you know there is no God?” But she kept on praying.

One day, she ran out of groceries. As usual, she prayed to the Lord, explained her situation, and thanked God in advance, for whatever God would do for her. Also, as usual, the atheist heard her praying and thought to himself, “Humph, I’ll fix her.” He went to the grocery store, bought a whole bunch of groceries, took them to her house, dropped them off on the front porch, rang the doorbell, and hid in the bushes to see what she would do. When she opened the door and saw the groceries, she began to praise the Lord with all her heart, jumping, singing, and shouting everywhere. The atheist then jumped out of the bushes and told her, “You are crazy. God didn’t buy you those groceries. I bought them!” Hearing this, she started running down the street, shouting and praising the Lord. When he finally caught her, he asked what her problem was. She said, “I knew the Lord would provide me with some groceries, but I didn’t know he was going to make the devil pay for them!”

Throughout human history many people have wondered if God existed. Some believed in God; some did not; even some brought on wars about whose God was the real God; some would die in public, killing many people, believing it was God’s command. Some made people question whether it was the end of the world. However, Jesus said, “Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come” (Mark 13: 5-8).

What do you think about the coming Christ? Do you believe Christ is coming back? Jesus said, “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John14:3). And in the Scripture Acts, when Jesus was taken up to heaven, two angels said, “Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). If you believe so, God is already with you.

Today’s Scripture talks about the coming of Jesus Christ. It also talks about how, before Jesus comes back, there will be many difficulties in the world. However, we do not know when it will happen. Jesus says, “About that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert, for you do not know when the time will come” (Mark 13:32-33). It is our blessing that we don’t know when Jesus will come back. We would not have any hope if we knew everything about the future. We have hope because Jesus promised us in God’s Word. Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away” (Mark 13:31). We can hope no matter what kind of difficulties challenge us because we believe in God, who is our steadfast supporter. As God told Joshua, “No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. I will be with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Joshua 1:5). Jesus also told us, “Therefore,

go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). As the scriptures tell us, God is our Steadfast Supporter. When we keep God’s Word in our lives, God will be with us. We know, nevertheless, that we face many difficulties in our lives. God sometimes blocks a lion’s mouth but does not remove a lion in front of us as God protected Daniel (Hebrews 11:33; Daniel 6: 22). God promised us, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze” (Isaiah 43:2). “Beware, and keep alert.” God promised us that He would be with us in the fire and water, but God did not promise us that He would remove the fire and water from our lives.

Remember, our faithful ancestors kept their faith in God even though they were persecuted. The Scripture shows us how they kept their faith in God: “Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted, and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground” (Hebrews 11:36-38). Because the early Christians kept their faith, the good news of Christ could come to us. Otherwise, we would never know about God. So, we are responsible for keeping our faith and spreading the good news to the next generation, our neighbors, and the world.

Do not forget “who we are.” We are the people of God. As long as you hold God, God will take care of you. No matter “how,” because “how” belongs to God. God will make things happen, but we cannot make things happen. Do not keep the problems, worries, concerns, and troubles in your mind. Throw away all negative things from your minds, hearts, and souls. “Beware and keep alert” for the negative things that destroy your minds, hearts, and souls. Fill your minds, hearts, and souls with positive things. You can do it because you are the people of God.

Today is the first Sunday of “Advent.” The word “Advent” is from “*Adventus*” in Latin, and it is translated to “*Parousia*” in Greek, which means “coming” or “arriving at.” Advent in the Christian calendar means “the season that is waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ.” Advent is the first day of the Christian calendar. So, today is the first day in the new year of the Christian calendar. Therefore, Christians begin their faithful journey of a year, waiting for Jesus Christ, who comes back again.

In the Advent season, we light five unique candles: three purple, one pink or red, and one white. Through Christmas Day, we light the candles one by one each week. Each candle has a special meaning. The first candle symbolizes hope; the second is peace; the third is joy; the fourth is love; and the fifth white candle symbolizes Christ’s light. It symbolizes that Jesus Christ comes to the dark world as the light with hope, peace, joy, and love. As Jesus comes into the world, we pray that Jesus brings us hope, peace, joy, love, and light in the world. Therefore, we begin the Advent season with these candles, waiting for the hope, peace, joy, love, and light that Jesus Christ brings us.

Beware and keep alert for the negative things that destroy your minds, hearts, and souls. One of my favorite verses of Scripture is, “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life” in Proverbs 4:23. Keep your hearts, minds, and souls in God.

Everything has a season. If a tree always has fruits, we may think something is wrong. There is time for the tree to lose its leaves and suffer in chilly weather, thunderstorms, and snowstorms. After overcoming all the suffering, the tree finally has flowers, new leaves, and fruit. If there is no God, your suffering would end you, but you can start a new life right now because God is with you. God will be with you, help you, and care for you because God loves you so much! Keep awake in faith!

Thanks be to God, Amen!