

SHARING OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS

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

PRAYER SONG

This is our prayer. This is our prayer, O God!

UMH 487

THE LORD'S PRAYER

INVITATION/PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

*DOXOLOGY

UMH 95

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION Unison

While we are waiting and preparing for Christ to appear, we are seeking, O God, to act as faithful followers. May our offerings extend the promise of salvation to people whose lives are broken by neglect, abuse, bad choices, and sinful ways. May these gifts offer hope to all whose suffering and their loss seems too heavy to bear. May our church be a listening, caring presence for all its members, and through us for all those we meet in our work and leisure. Amen!

We Go Forth to Love God and Serve One Another

*CLOSING HYMN *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus* UMH 196

*BENEDICTION Pastor Jenny Lee

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

Worship resource "led by Love" by Lavon Bayler

NO. 2023-50
December 10th, 2023

Upper St. Croix Parish United Methodist Church

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

2nd Sunday of Advent



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: snsnyder@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 10th, 2023
2nd Sunday of Advent

*Please stand if you are able.

***PRELUDE** Toni Koons (G)/ Sharon Asp (A & SCF)
***ADVANT SONG** TFWS 2090 (vs. 2)
***LIGHTING THE SECOND CANDLE**

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS
PASSING OF THE GREETINGS
“Peace be with you”
(Waive your hands at one another)

We Celebrate New Life in Christ

***CALL TO WORSHIP** **Responsive**
The day of God is coming; lift up your voices.
Cry out with the strength God provides.
We await God’s coming day with anticipation.
We seek the peace and patience God provides.
Comfort, comfort my people, says our God.
Speak tenderly to my suffering people.
We will prepare the way for One who is coming.
We look forward to baptism in the Spirit.
God will feed us like a shepherd.
God will gather us in gentle, caring arms.
God’s hand is upon us in blessing;
We are welcomed by God’s steadfast love. Amen.

***DEDICATING HYMN** *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*
UMH 211 (vs. 1 & 2)

OPENING PRAYER **Unison**
Righteous and holy God, your glory is revealed to us day by day as valleys of despair are lifted up and mountainous problems are leveled. In your presence, we see more than our immediate situation. We catch a glimpse of your eternal purposes. So come among us now and speak your word of peace. Feed us with your truth, and equip us to welcome Christ’ coming. Amen.

CHILDREN’S TIME

UMH 191 (vs.1)

Proclamation of God’s Word

***THE GOSPEL LESSON**

Mark 1:1-8

1 The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ.

2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way,

3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord;
make his paths straight.’ ”

4 so John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And the whole Judean region and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals. 8 I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

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

Thanks be to God. Amen!

SERMON *“Prepare the Way of The Lord!”* **Pastor Jenny Lee**

We Respond to God’s Word

RESPONDING PRAYER **Unison**



God of good news, who sent John the Baptist as a messenger to people of his day and who speaks to us in numerous words and deeds of the saints of all ages, open us now to receive what we most need today, that we may serve as vital messengers who prepare the way of the Lord to others who are looking for meaning and hope in their lives. 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</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>We will be collecting financial donations for Christmas for kids through interfaith Caregivers of Burnett County.</p> 
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ST. CROIX FALLS

Mission committee chair: Kate Murtaugh

<p>Food Shelf (Communion Sunday)</p> 	<p>Sailor Hat Offering:</p> <p>The Sailor Hat offering will go to support Buying Christmas Food Gift Cards for Families in Need!</p> 
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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
- Kayleen Branstad
- Volunteer Needed**
- Sandra Erickson & Charlie Glonek
- Barbara Loomis & Jenni Stedman
- Russ Hammer

Atlas:

- Pianist
- Liturgist
- Usher
- Cleaning
- Sunday School

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

St. Croix Falls:

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

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



Breakthrough Prayers:

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

Thank you for your support!

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: 2nd Sunday of Advent
God bless you all!

Sunday Worship Services:

12/10:	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
12/10:	12:15 pm	Ad Council Meeting (SCF)
12/13:	1:00 pm	UMW Christmas Luncheon (G)
	6:30 8:00 pm	Youth Worship night at Wood Lake camp
12/15:	1:30 pm	Ad Council Meeting (A)
12/17:	10:00 am	Sunday School Christmas Program & Potluck (A)

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

Adalyn Snyder 12/12

Copelan Grimes 12/13



Next Sunday (December 17th)

VOLUNTEERS

Central: Pianist Toni Koons
Liturgist *Volunteer Needed*
Acolyte(s) Willow Nyland
Fellowship Paulie Kratchmer
Counter *Volunteer Needed*
Cleaning Sandra Erickson & Charlie Glonek
Sunday School Barbara Loomis & Jenni Stedman
Snow Removal *Volunteer Needed*

Atlas:

Pianist Sharon Asp
Liturgist Sue Olson
Usher Colleen Adams-Schween
Cleaning *Volunteer Needed*
Sunday School Christmas Program-Potluck following

St. Croix Falls:

No service at SCF.

Instead, they will join the Atlas Church Service Christmas Program at 10am. If you need a ride, please contact Ad Council members.

Upcoming Events-Mark Your Calendar

12/17 Sunday School Christmas Program & Potluck (A)
12/20 Advent Craft Group (1pm)

12/24

Christmas Eve Service

10:00 am at St. Croix Falls UMC

4:00 pm at Atlas UMC

7:00 pm at Central UMC Grantsburg



12/25-12/27 Korean Clergy and Family Christmas Retreat at Wisconsin Dells
12/27 Youth Christmas Party



December 10th, 2023.
Mark 1:1-8

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

“Prepare the Way for the Lord!”

I want to start with something funny that I found on an internet site: A Christian guy named Bill saw an advertisement online for a Christian horse, so he went to check it out. The horse’s owner said, “It’s easy to ride him. Just say “Praise the Lord!” to make him go, and “Amen!” to make him stop.” Bill got on the horse and said, “Praise the Lord!” Sure enough, the horse started to walk. “Praise the Lord!” he said again, and the horse began to trot. “Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!” he yelled, and the horse broke into a gallop. Bill enjoyed his ride so much that he almost didn’t notice the cliff he and the horse were about to go over. Bill shouted “AMEN!” at the top of his lungs, and the horse stopped right at the edge of the cliff. Relieved, Bill said, “Phew! Praise the Lord!”

It is the most exciting season waiting for Christmas. We decorate with many greeneries, Christmas trees, and lights on the streets, at home, and at church. Why do we do that? Are you decorating, expecting to get lots of food and presents, having family gatherings, seeing friends, and having lots of fun? Or are you decorating to celebrate Jesus’ birthday? Yes, indeed, we do some of these things to celebrate Christmas with family, exchange presents, have fun, and share food. But remember who the main person is on Christmas Day. Have you ever been to a birthday party without a birthday person?

I talked about the meaning of “Advent” last Sunday. It is “to wait for the coming Jesus.” Yes, indeed! The church, home, and street decoration should be for Jesus Christ. It should be preparing the way for Jesus Christ. In other words, we should prepare the way for the Lord to come into our minds and hearts. If you have anything you are focusing on rather than Jesus, you should prepare the way for the Lord so that the Lord comes to your mind as the main focus.

Today’s scripture talks about preparing the way for the Lord. John the Baptist is there. We know John the Baptist was the person who prepared the way for the Lord before Jesus worked his public ministry and who baptized Jesus. The center of his world was Jesus Christ. He waited for Jesus his whole life. He came from the wilderness to prepare the way for Jesus Christ and proclaimed a baptism of repentance to forgive sins (Mark 1:3-4). At that time, nobody knew about baptism. John the Baptist was the first person to perform a baptism. That’s why we call him “John the Baptist.” He taught people that baptism is the way to prepare for receiving Jesus Christ as the Savior and the Lord. The people thought the Messiah would come as the King of the world. Jesus Christ indeed came as the King of the Kings. But, he came to serve all people, not to be served by the people. Many people didn’t believe that Jesus Christ was the Messiah God promised because he was born into a poor family.

The Prophet Isaiah wrote, “See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness; Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” In Israelite society, if the Roman King planned to visit an Israelite city, all the Israelite people worked hard to make a way, renovating the buildings and cities to show the King. The Israelites should make their way straight for the King because the King came riding in a carriage. So, the King’s visit was a big event for all the citizens of Israel. The words, “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight” is a parable to

Jesus Christ, which means that the King of kings, Jesus Christ comes to you, you should repent all your sins, and purify your minds to receive Jesus Christ as your King. That's why John the Baptist proclaimed, "repent for the forgiveness of your sins, and receive baptism" to prepare for the coming Jesus.

You may say, "Pastor Jenny, I received baptism already. So, do you think I am ready for the coming of Jesus Christ?" I would say, "Yes and No." The baptism we received already is only to initiate the unity of the body of Christ. John the Baptist says, "I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mark 1: 8). We learned that one baptism by water is enough in our lifetime, but the baptism by the Holy Spirit is as good as we can receive. So, it is time to prepare for the Holy Spirit by renewing our minds, hearts, and souls. And, the Christmas season is a good time to prepare our minds and hearts for the coming Lord by the Holy Spirit.

I want to share about a man who never knew how to prepare the way for the Lord. He is the author of the Gospel of Mark. He was not one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. But, he wrote a Gospel book, written and is the very first in the New Testament. Mark was there when Jesus was arrested. You may find his story in the Gospel of Mark. He wrote about himself as an unnamed young man: "A certain young man was following him [Jesus], wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked" (Mark 14:51). Imagine that he went to sleep early that night and heard an unusual noise outside. He woke up about midnight because of this noise and went outside wondering what was happening. He wasn't wearing regular clothes. The linen cloth he wore was like a bedsheet. He went out wearing a bed sheet because he was in a hurry to see what was happening. At the moment, when he followed the crowd, he saw that Jesus was arrested and that all disciples left Jesus and ran away (Mark 14:50). Finally, he also ran away naked.

Mark was a person who looked things over curiously. He lived in the place Jesus offered to his disciples at the Last Supper and the First Communion, and where the Pentecost event happened. We know it was the upper room. That was his house. Mark looked over everything that happened around Jesus and was never involved in it. However, he joined in the Apostle Paul's first missionary trip as his helper (Acts 13:5). It took a long time for him to grow in faith, which he became the person preparing the way of the Lord. He started inviting Jesus to the center of his mind. He found in faith that Jesus is the Son of God and the center of the world, as he wrote in the Gospel of Mark.

He prepared the way for the Lord, writing the Gospel of Mark that the good news is Jesus Christ. Even though it was written in the Prophet Isaiah a long time ago, he found it much later than five hundred years. He proclaimed the good news for all the people, especially for the poor, the weak, the powerless, the oppressed, and the sick, that Jesus Christ came to the world as a human being to serve all the people and save all the people from their sins. He says, "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). He asks the people to see what he saw, Jesus Christ. He says that Jesus Christ coming to us is the beginning of the good news. In his first chapter, he introduced John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus Christ because he indirectly tells us through his book, the Gospel of Mark, "Prepare the way of the Lord."

Now, we are in the advent season. Christmas is around the corner. How could you prepare for the Lord? Two weeks ago, I talked about "Jesus will be everywhere, such as the sick, the hungry, the thirsty, the prisoners, the homeless, and those in need." Remember, Jesus came to the world to serve the people, not to be served. We are Christians who follow Jesus. You may also prepare Christmas for your neighbors who need help and share your food and presents with them. God bless you all who prepare the way for the Lord! Thanks be to God. Amen.