

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Pastor Jenny Lee

The grace of God is abundantly present to change our lives. God lifts us above our transgressions and cleanses us from our sin. In Christ we are restored to the wholeness God intends for us. In steadfast love, God welcomes and forgives us, restoring to us the joy of salvation. Open your lives to accept the transformation that comes with forgiveness. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Amen.

THANKSGIVING OVER ASHES Unison

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and repentance, so that we may remember that only by your gracious gift are we given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Please come to the front as directed, and receive the ashes on your forehead or back of your hand.

Pastor: Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Receiver: Amen, I believe it.

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

Thank you, God, for the signs and wonders that reveal your presence. Thank you for the covenant fulfilled in Jesus Christ. We want to do our part to share your love with the world. Use our offerings and our lives to bring a realization of your reign among us. Extend your realm by re-creating the church as a true representation of Jesus Christ. May we be humble, teachable, and faithful as we seek to lead others into covenant community. 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)

Worship resource "led by Love" by Lavon Bayler

NO. 2024-07
February 18th, 2024

Upper St. Croix Parish United Methodist Church

The 2024 Parish Ministry Theme:
"Let's Replant It" (Galatians 6:7-10)

Stewardship Month/First Sunday in Lent



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

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
February 18th, 2024
Stewardship Month/First Sunday in Lent

*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

Welcome to the time of covenant renewal.

The God of our salvation greets us here.

We are reminded of God’s promises to us;

We remember the promises we have made.

Sense the Spirit descending on us now.

Hear God’s welcoming voice.

Surely God is with us.

We can hear God calling our names.

See the rainbow in the sky.

Wonder at God’s steadfast love.

All creation proclaims the wonders of God.

We come together to learn what God wants to teach us. Amen.

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

OPENING PRAYER Unison

Lead us in your truth this day, gracious God. We long to know your ways and to be guided by your Spirit. Direct us into that realm where your purposes govern the hearts and minds of all your children. We want to grow in the likeness of Jesus, to learn to live in ways that are pleasing to you. We wait for you now, eager to respond to your instruction. Let nothing cut us off from you as we face the challenges of another week. Amen.

CHILDREN’S TIME (G) UMH 191 (vs. 1)

Proclamation of God’s Word

***THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON** Genesis 18:1-15

18 The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. 2 He looked up and saw three men standing near him.

When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them and bowed down to the ground. 3 He said, “My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. 4 Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. 5 Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.” So they said, “Do as you have said.” 6 And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah and said, “Make ready quickly three measures choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.” 7 Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. 8 Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared and set it before them, and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

9 They said to him, “Where is your wife Sarah?” And he said, “There, in the tent.” 10 Then one said, “I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. 11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. 12 So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I be fruitful?” 13 The Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ 14 Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.” 15 But Sarah denied, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid. He said, “Yes, you did laugh.”

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

Thanks be to God.

SERMON *“Creating Hospitality in Our Church”* Pastor Jenny Lee

We Respond to God’s Word

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

Loving God, whose realm was revealed to humankind in Jesus Christ, open your heavens to us that the Spirit may come among us, reclaiming us, helping us to know our infinite worth in your sight, strengthening us to cope with temptation, equipping us to minister in Christ’s name. May our faithfulness draw others into your covenant community, where mutual trust and joyous service unite us in Christ. Amen.

Ash Service (A & SCF)

PRAYER OF CONFESSION Unison

God of steadfast love, we tremble before you. We know our transgressions. We have rebelled since our earliest days, shutting you out of our lives. We have doubted your presence, ignored your blessings, and resented your inclusiveness. It is hard to be truthful with others and within ourselves. Our worship has slipped into a dull routine. Our sacrifices have been superficial. Blot out our iniquities, we pray, and wash us clean. Renew our spirit in the joy of your salvation. Amen.

FEBRUARY CHURCH MISSIONS

ATLAS

Mission committee chair: Ashleigh Olson

INK JET RECYCLING PROGRAM:

Atlas collects and recycles ink jet cartridges and cell phones year-round.



LOAVES & FISHES NEEDS OUR ONGOING SUPPORT

Requested items: cooking oil (smaller and larger), mayonnaise, sugar 4# size, bar soap, dish and laundry soap. Personal products for men and women.

In February we will be collecting soup and monetary donations to support Souper Bowl of Caring & our local food shelf.



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"



In February we will be collecting soup and financial donations to support Superbowl of Caring through 2/11/24. Superbowl of Caring also benefits the Grantsburg Food Shelf. For the rest of February will be collecting donations in support for our church.



ST. CROIX FALLS

Mission committee chair: Kate Murtaugh



Food Shelf
(Communion Sunday)



Sailor Hat Offering:

The Sailor Hat offering will go to support UMCOR Human Relations!

TODAY'S SERVICE VOLUNTEERS "Stewardship Month"

Ministers

All God's People
Pastor Jenny Lee

Central -Grantsburg

| | |
|--------------|----------------------------------|
| Pianist | Toni Koons |
| Liturgist | Barbara Loomis |
| Acolyte(s) | Willow Nyland |
| Fellowship | Kayleen Branstad |
| Counter | Volunteer Needed |
| Cleaning | Sandra Erickson & Charlie Glonek |
| Snow Removal | Volunteer Needed |



Atlas

| | |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| Pianist | Sharon Asp |
| Liturgist | Colleen Adams-Schween |
| Usher | Cheryl Olson |
| Cleaning | Volunteer Needed |
| Sunday School | Josie Grimes |

St. Croix Falls

| | |
|---------------|-------------|
| Pianist | Sharon Asp |
| Liturgist | Jim Andrews |
| Usher(s) | Lynn Hanson |
| Money Counter | Jim Andrews |
| Bell Ringer | Jim Andrews |
| Flowers | Lynn Hanson |



Breakthrough Prayers:

Please pray for those who are in need, the sick, those who have lost loved ones, 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 at 11:15 am by request.** 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: "Stewardship Month/The First Sunday in Lent
God bless you!

Worship Service Schedule

- 2/18: **Ash Service (Atlas & St. Croix Falls)**
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
- 2/19-2/22: Pastor Jenny Ordained Ministry Interview at Pine Lake
- 2/21: 6:00-8:00 pm, Senior Youth Worship Night at Wood Lake Camp
- 2/22: 12:00-3:00 pm, Pastor Jenny-Diversity Council Meeting via Zoom
- 2/23: 10:00 am -12:00 pm, Pastor Jenny- Participatory Council Meeting via Zoom
- 2/24: 8:00 am-3:30 pm, Junior Youth Tubing Activity

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

| | |
|-------------------|------|
| Betty Wilson | 2/18 |
| Dani Tooze | 2/19 |
| Debra Kunze | 2/19 |
| Mark Nelson | 2/19 |
| Landon Olson | 2/20 |
| Deb & Russ Hammer | 2/22 |
| Iila Tooze | 2/22 |
| Scott Andrews | 2/22 |
| Hannah Smestad | 2/23 |



Next Sunday (February 25th)

VOLUNTEERS

Central -Grantsburg

| | |
|--------------|----------------------------------|
| Pianist | Sharon Asp |
| Liturgist | Volunteer Needed |
| Acolyte(s) | Willow Nyland |
| Fellowship | Volunteer Needed |
| Counter | Volunteer Needed |
| Cleaning | Sandra Erickson & Charlie Glonek |
| Snow Removal | Volunteer Needed |

Atlas

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

St. Croix Falls

| | |
|---------------|---------------------------|
| Pianist | Sharon Asp |
| Liturgist | Karen Sciacca |
| Usher(s) | Jim Andrews |
| Money Counter | Karen Sciacca/Jim Andrews |
| Bell Ringer | Jim Sciacca |
| Flowers | Lynn Hanson |

Upcoming Events-Mark Your Calendar

- February 25, Ad Council Meeting (SCF)
- Lenten Bible Study, 2/29, 3/7, 3/21, and 3/28
- March 23, Easter Spring Craft & Bake Sale (A)
- Youth Retreat, April 19-21 at Wood Lake Camp
(Contact their Youth Director)
- VBS 2024, August 5-8



February 18th, 2024,

Genesis 18:1-15

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



“Creating Hospitality in Our Church” (Stewardship Month #3)

I want to start with something funny that I found on an internet site: A man died and went to heaven. He is at the Pearly Gates by St. Peter, who led him down the golden streets. They walk by mansions and beautiful estates until they came to the end of the road where they stopped in front of a little shack. The man asked St. Peter why he got a simple hut when there were so many mansions where he would be more comfortable. St. Peter replied, “I did the best with the money you sent us.”

It’s a funny story, but it reminds me of the scripture verses, “Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:20-21).

We observe February as Stewardship Month. Today, I want to talk about how we create hospitality in our church. You might wonder, “How is hospitality connected to stewardship?” I found the meaning of hospitality from a dictionary, which states, “Hospitality refers to the development of the relationship between the guest and the host. It also refers to acts or practices of hospitality, such as entertaining and pleasing guests, visitors, and strangers generously and favorably.” (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia). Hospitality also involves generously paying attention to someone in need or performing acts of kindness. In other words, hospitality is the ability to create a space where guests can discover their souls, feeling safe and comfortable.

As God’s stewards, we serve as hosts/hostesses in the house of God, which is the body of Christ, as God has entrusted us with the church and its ministries. Therefore, we should strive to create a space where people feel safe, comfortable, and satisfied. Hospitality involves developing, practicing, and acting with generosity and kindness.

In today’s scripture, Abraham welcomed strangers who visited his home. In Israelite society, lacking stores or restaurants, hospitality was crucial for travelers seeking respite, particularly in the hot desert climate where rest was necessary during the midday heat. Abraham, like others, likely took a rest under his tent when he noticed the strangers approaching. He hastened to greet them, bowing down and addressing them respectfully, “My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.” Though unaware they were divine beings, Abraham’s hospitality stemmed from his habitual practice, not merely because he recognized them as God or angels. His use of “my Lord,” and “your servant” reflected profound respect rather than divine recognition, revealing his character shaped by everyday hospitality. The Letter of Hebrews underscores this virtue: “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it” (Hebrews 13:2), alluding to Abraham’s experience.

Jesus also emphasized hospitality, stating, “Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward” (Matthew 10:40;42). In Israelite society, offering a cup of water to a stranger was considered a significant act of hospitality. Similarly, Abraham didn’t just provide water and food

to the strangers, but he also created a safe and comfortable space for them to rest their bodies and souls, saying, “Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on — since you have come to your servant.” The entire household of Abraham joined in serving the strangers, demonstrating a unified commitment to hospitality. Creating a hospitable environment in a household requires collective effort, and the same applies to our church community. It is through the combined efforts of all members that we can foster hospitality within our church.

Upon returning to Korea just before coming to the USA, I served as a student pastor. In preparation for my journey to the USA, I needed to save money. I worked at the church on weekends (both Saturdays and Sundays) and also worked as a home-schooling tutor for several youth who lived in different cities during the week. I would drive to visit these youth, traveling long distances to teach them. For instance, my schedule included visits to Minneapolis on Mondays, Madison Tuesdays, Duluth on Wednesdays, and Superior on Thursdays. Despite the miles I traveled, I was consistently welcomed by those I visited. They graciously provided food and a place for me to rest before my journey back home. While I did not intentionally seek out these places, I believe God guided me to encounter individuals who exhibited genuine hospitality. Their kindness during times of need left a lasting impression on me. I continue to pray for them and stay connected, seeking opportunities to pay forward the love and care they showed me. During that period, I often reflected and shared with others that God had provided a “widow of Zarephath” at every place I visited, individuals who extended to me their warm hospitality.

We are familiar with the story of the widow of Zarephath, who served the great prophet Elijah. Zarephath was a city devoted to Baal worship, where serving God seemed unlikely. When the prophet Elijah fled from the prophets of Baal, God instructed him to go to Zarephath and stay there. Obedient to God’s command, Elijah journeyed to Zarephath and encountered a widow gathering sticks. He politely asked her, “Would you please bring me a little water in a jar so that I may have a drink?”

As mentioned earlier, offering a stranger a cup of water was considered a sign of excellent hospitality in Israeli society. However, this wasn’t always the case. Some individuals faced challenges in extending hospitality to strangers. Consider the widow whom Elijah encountered. She was gathering sticks, likely to prepare a meal. This circumstance suggests she was a poor widow; had she been married, her husband might have collected the sticks, or if she was wealthy, servants would have done so. Despite her impoverished state, the widow demonstrated kindness by offering Elijah, a stranger, a cup of water. After drinking the water, Elijah asked for bread, saying, “please bring me a piece of bread” (1 Kings 17:11). The widow replied, “As surly as the Lord your God lives, I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die” (1 Kings 17:12). Elijah reassured her, saying, “Don’t be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for you and your son.”

As I read up to this point, I couldn’t help but feel uneasy about how Elijah asked the widow for bread. Put yourself in her shoes—how would you react? Despite the difficulty of her situation, she complied with his request. And you know what? She was blessed abundantly by God’s grace; her flour and oil never ran out. Elijah didn’t just take her bread; he asked for her blessing. Remember what Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40). God has entrusted us with everything, including the church. As the household of God, it’s our responsibility to cultivate hospitality within our church. Everyone who comes to our church is our guest, and it’s our duty to serve them with genuine hospitality, which is made possible by God’s grace working through all of us. Let’s strive to make our church a safe, comfortable, and joyful place for everyone. Thanks be to God. Amen!