

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

Loving God, we want to see Jesus, not to prove a theory, but to experience a presence; not to observe from a distance, but to become involved; not just to listen, but to follow and to serve in the sanctifying grace. We are your children as you justified us. Lead us to grow in faith actively to involve in God's ministry to expand your kingdom. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

SHARING OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS

*After each prayer request:
Pastor: Lord, in your mercy (Grace),
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**

We dedicate these offerings to the proclamation of your word, the teaching of your ways, and the living of your will for all humankind. We reach out with joy and gladness to offer your love to the world. May these gifts enable the sharing of your presence with many who have not experienced a sense of their own value as your children. As we keep a covenant with you, we would also share its joys and obligations with our neighbors. Amen.

We Go Forth to Love God and Serve One Another

***CLOSING HYMN**

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

UMH 140 (vs. 1 & 3)

***BENEDICTION**

Pastor Jenny Lee

***POSTLUDE**

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

Worship resource "led by Love" by Lavon Bayle

 **Upper St. Croix Parish
United Methodist Church**

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

**Membership Caring Month
5th 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
March 17th, 2024
Membership Caring Month/
5th 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**
The days are surely coming, says our God;
The day is here to affirm a new covenant.
We call on God’s steadfast love and mercy.
We seek a strong and vital relationship with our God.
God’s law will be written on our hearts.
Our Creator claims us and forgives our faithlessness.
We are eager to know the God who loves us.
We are ready to learn God’s intention for us.
God offers us the joy of salvation.
Our brokenness can be healed and wholeness restored.
We are open to the new and right spirit God offers.
We seek guidance for our daily living. Amen.

***DEDICATING HYMN** *My Jesus, I Love Thee*
UMH 172 (vs. 1 & 2)

OPENING PRAYER **Unison**
As Jesus offered up prayers and supplications to you, O God, we cry out to you today. You know our losses and our fears. You understand our suffering and pain. We wish to see Jesus, to know the healing touch felt by so many. We want to hear a reassuring voice. We long to see a new day when evil is overcome and wrong cannot prevail. Lift us up and draw us to yourself as we worship in this hour. Equip us for our daily living as we seek to be true to your covenant with us. Amen.

CHILDREN’S TIME

UMH 191 (vs. 1)

Proclamation of God’s Word

***THE GOSPEL LESSON**

Luke 15:11-32

11 Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the wealth that will belong to me.’ So he divided his assets between them. 13 A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant region, and there he squandered his wealth in dissolute living. 14 When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that region, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that region, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. 16 He would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, and no one gave him anything. 17 But when he came to his senses he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! 18 I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.’ ” 20 So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. 21 Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ 22 But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate, 24 for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

25 “Now his elder son was in the field, and as he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. 27 He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has got him back safe and sound.’ 28 Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. 29 But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command, yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ 31 Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’ ”

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

Thanks be to God.

SERMON

“The Journey of Salvation”

Pastor Jenny Lee

MARCH CHURCH MISSIONS



ATLAS

Mission committee chair: Ashleigh Olson

<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>Jackson Area Ministries Gardening Project</p>  <p>We will be collecting garden seeds to support the Jackson Area Ministries Gardening Project. Please see the bulletin board or March newsletter for more details. Thank you!</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!</p> <p>Supporting the Salvation Army's "Happy Kids Back-Pack Program"</p> 	<p>Harbor House Crisis Shelter</p> <p>We will be collecting donations to support the Harbor House Crisis Shelter in Superior, WI. Please see the bulletin board or March newsletter for more details.</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><i>The Sailor Hat offering will go to support Polk County Drug Court.</i></p> 
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Thank you for your support!

TODAY'S SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

"Membership Caring Month"

Ministers All God's People
Pastor Jenny Lee

Central -Grantsburg

Pianist Toni Koons
Liturgist **Volunteer Needed**
Acolyte(s) Willow Nyland
Fellowship Toni & Georgeanne Koons
Counter **Volunteer Needed**
Cleaning Sandra Erickson & Charlie Glonek

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
Bell Ringer Jim Sciacca
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!

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: Membership Caring Month/Fifth Sunday in Lent
God bless you!

Worship Service Schedule

- 3/17: 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
- 3/19: 6:30 pm SPRC Meeting (via Zoom)
- 3/20: 6:30-8:00 pm Senior Youth Gathering (G)
- 3/21: 5:30 pm Soup Supper (SCF)
6:10 pm Lenten Bible Study #3 at SCF and via Zoom
- 3/23: 9:00 am -1:00 pm, Easter Spring Craft and Bake Sale (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!

The Week's Birthdays and Anniversaries

Deloris Olson 3/18
Paulie Kratchmer 3/18
Pam Clausen 3/20
Rene Wright 3/20
Chase Steffen 3/23
Kayleen Branstad 3/23



Next Sunday (March 24th)

VOLUNTEERS



Central -Grantsburg

Pianist	Toni Koons
Liturgist	<i>Volunteer Needed</i>
Acolyte(s)	Willow Nyland
Fellowship	<i>Volunteer Needed</i>
Counter	<i>Volunteer Needed</i>
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson & Charlie Glonek

Atlas

Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Mariah Gaffey
Usher	Sue Olson
Cleaning	<i>Volunteer Needed</i>
Sunday School	Josie Grimes

St. Croix Falls

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

Upcoming Events-Mark Your Calendar

- Lenten Bible Study, 3/21, and 3/28
- March 23, Easter Spring Craft & Bake Sale (A)
- March 28, Maundy Thursday Service (SCF)
- March 29, Good Friday Service (G)
- Youth Retreat, April 19-21 at Wood Lake Camp
(Contact their Youth Director)

Youth Group Retreat Donation Needs

Youth group is going on a retreat to Wood Lake Bible Camp April 19th to 21st.

We are looking for donations for our weekend to save costs. Please reach out to Shayna with any questions 920-312-2857.

- Old T-shirts
- Fleece Scraps
- Empty Water Bottles
- Yarn
- Fabric Fill
- Socks (don't need to be pairs)
- Snack bags of Chips
- Individual wrapped snacks (No Nuts)

Donations can be left in the church office or given to Pastor Jenny. Thank you for your support!



Youth retreat benefits:

- Developing community with other believers who are dealing with similar circumstances in life
- Refocusing on and growing in relationship with God
- Intentional time for prayer and meditating on Scripture
- Learning from and being mentored by godly adults
- Spending time surrounded by God's creation
- Having fun

We welcome everyone to join our Holy week services!

***Upper St. Croix Parish United Methodist Church:
Atlas, Central-Grantsburg, and St. Croix falls***

HOLY WEEK

Maundy Thursday: St. Croix Falls UMC

5:30 pm Soup Supper*
6:10 pm Lenten Study Session
7:15 pm Maundy Thursday Service*

** We welcome everyone to join us for the Soup Supper and Maundy Thursday Service!*

Good Friday Service: Central-Grantsburg UMC

5:30 pm Good Friday Service with Anointing of Healing

Easter Sunday Services 3/31/24:

9:00 am Central UMC-Grantsburg

A simple brunch will be held following service at 9:45 am.

10:00 am Atlas UMC

11:15 am St. Croix Falls UMC

** We will share a seed plant as a way of sharing life on Easter Morning. If you want to share yours, you may bring seeds or seed plants.*



ATLAS UMC

Craft & Bake Sale

Saturday, March 23rd ~ 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Atlas United Methodist Church

Downtown Atlas ~ 2110 295th Avenue ~ County Road B

Spring is almost here! Stop by and shop a variety of wonderful homemade treats and crafts-they will make great Easter basket stuffers and gifts!

Goodies of All Kinds!

Breads * Bars * Cookies * Candies * Cupcakes * Jellies

Homemade Crafts

March 17th, 2024
Luke 15:11-32

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



“The Journey of Salvation”

(Membership Caring Month #3)

I want to start with something funny that I found on an internet site: A man dies and goes to heaven. Of course, St. Peter meets him at the Pearly Gates. St. Peter says, “Here’s how it works. You need 100 points to make it into heaven. You tell me all the good things you’ve done, and I give you a certain number of points for each item, depending on how good it was. When you reach 100 points, you get in.”

“Okay,” the man says, “I was married to the same woman for 50 years and never cheated on her, even in my heart.” That’s wonderful,” says St. Peter, “that’s worth three points!” Three points?” he says. “Well, I attended church all my life and supported its ministry with my tithe and service.” “Terrific!” says St. Peter. “That’s certainly worth a point.” “One point?!!” I started a soup kitchen in my city and worked in a shelter for homeless veterans.” “Fantastic, that’s good for two points,” he says. “Two points!?” Exasperated, the man cries. “At this rate the only way I’ll get into heaven is by the grace of God.” “Bingo, 100 points! Come on in!”

Today, I want to talk about “how God’s grace and salvation work” as the third part of my membership sermon series. You may wonder how this relates to membership and God’s grace and salvation. Allow me to offer an example. Some of you may know that I enjoy playing ping-pong on Mondays, and have been doing so since the fall of 2019. Monday mornings find me at the Webster Community Center, engaging in ping-pong. Most members of the ping-pong club are quite skilled, as they play three times a week. Our usual game is doubles, involving four people at once. There is much joy and cheerful shouting during our games.

However, to emerge victorious, competition is, of course, a factor. At times, I jokingly tell the opposing team, “Your mistake is our blessing and fortune.” This is because the more mistakes they make, the more points our team gains. In our matches, each team competes, and the mistakes of the opposing team become our team’s fortune. This rule is common in the competitive world we live in. However, our ping-pong group does not solely focus on competition or the desire to win, but rather on fellowship within the group.

Therefore, the mistakes of the opposing team are not merely our fortune; they are opportunities for everyone to come together with cheerful shouts. This camaraderie forms the basis of our group’s identity: a family united in love and care, where membership means sharing the same mindset of love and care for one another. This, I believe, is grace in action within our ping-pong community.

Today’s scripture will give us more insights into “how to work with grace and salvation” within a Christian family. The parable story in today’s scripture goes like this: A father has two sons; the younger son asked for his inheritance while his father was still alive. It was not right to request his father’s inheritance before his father passed away. However, his father granted his request. Upon receiving his inheritance, the younger son left home and spent all the money he had been given. Soon after, a famine struck in that whole country, and he found himself unable to sustain his life. He ended up working for a person who owned pigs, and he was so hungry that he even ate the food meant for the pigs. He deeply missed his home and his father, who had an abundance of food and a

comfortable home to offer. Realizing the mistakes he had made, he felt regret and repented for his actions. He decided to return to his father's house. His father had been waiting for his return every day. When he finally saw his son coming, he ran to him, welcomed him back home, and arranged a celebration in his honor.

However, the older son, who had always stayed with his father and worked in his field, became upset with his father for celebrating his brother's return. The father then said to his older son, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found."

The founder of Methodism, John Wesley, explained the way of salvation with the steps of grace; prevenient grace, justifying grace, and sanctifying grace. We can understand God's grace and salvation, as John Wesley explained, through this parable story. The Father may be compared to God and the two sons to us. For the prevenient grace, grace is given to everyone from birth, whether they know about God or not. It is as if the two sons have lived in their father's house since birth, surrounded by his abundant grace and love. However, they have the choice to stay in his father's house or leave.

The father sometimes grants his sons' requests even if they are wrong, because freewill is allowed for all humankind. Yet, the father always waits for his sons' return with repentance. Prevenient grace is God's love and caring for all humans until they return to Him. This grace is fair to both Christians and non-Christians, as God can "cause his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45). It is as if Jesus Christ died for all humans even though we are yet sinners.

However, justifying grace is something very few people receive, as seen when the second son returns to his father with regret and repentance. Justifying grace is God's grace when sinners come back to God, and God accepts them as His sons and daughters with forgiveness and love. It is as if God says, "You are my beloved son," as He did when Jesus was baptized. It is like when we are baptized, when we are confirmed in faith, and when we repent for our sins; God is pleased and celebrates in heaven, just as the father did when his second son returned in the story.

Regarding sanctifying grace, it isn't fully explained in the story. However, we can observe the attitude of the first son toward his father and brother. We might consider the first son as representing a Christian who remains in God's house, actively involved in church ministry like us. If Christians fail to grasp God's grace and love, they might find fault with God for accepting sinners with forgiveness and love, and may even judge their brother as a sinner still.

Sanctifying grace involves growing in God's grace; it means embracing others who are different from us by loving our neighbors, sharing generously what God has given us through mission work, and actively engaging in God's ministry to expand His kingdom. Even though we don't witness how the two sons grow in God's grace in the story, we learn one important lesson: we should accept and love the second son as our brother, just as God continues to love him.

Do you know which step of grace you are on? No one is perfect. We learn and grow in God's grace day by day. We cannot judge anyone, but we should love everyone as God loves us. We are a family in Jesus Christ. A Christian's duty is to love God and love our neighbors. Therefore, as we observe March as Membership Caring Month, we need take care of those who have lost their faith and help them find their way back to God. Let's reach out to our family members who have lost their faith in God and encourage them to return. This is the way we live in the sanctifying grace of God. Thanks be to God. Amen!