

THE LORD'S PRAYER
INVITATION/PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND
OFFERINGS
*DOXOLOGY

UMH 95

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION Unison

We give, gracious God, because we are grateful. Your love has sustained us through many trials and temptations. We are thankful for those who have guided our attempts to understand the scriptures. Your loving judgment has provided the pruning our lives require in order to bear fruit. We give in order to extend to others the blessings we have received and to continue the ministry we need as we seek to abide together in your love. Amen!

We Go Forth to Love God and Serve One Another

*CLOSING HYMN *I Need Thee Every Hour*
UMH 397 (vs. 1 & 2)

*BENEDICTION Pastor Jenny Lee

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

NO. 2024-17
April 28, 2024

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

The 2024 Parish Ministry Theme:
“Let’s Replant it” (Galatians 6:7-10)

5th Sunday of Easter



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 Zoom

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
April 28th, 2024
5th Sunday of Easter

*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”

(Waive your hands at one another)

We Celebrate New Life in Christ

***CALL TO WORSHIP** Responsive

Come to worship God whose love was revealed in Jesus.

Let all the ends of the earth turn to our God.

We will worship the Almighty and sing praises.

We will proclaim good news to others.

Beloved, we are called to love as God loves us.

We are to love one another as sisters and brothers.

Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

We seek to let God’s love be perfected in us.

Remember that you have been baptized.

God claims you and has high expectations of you.

Christ is the vine; we are the branches.

We will bear fruit when we abide in the vine. Amen.

***DEDICATING HYMN** *O Blessed Spring* TFWS 2076 (vs. 1 & 5)

OPENING PRAYER Unison

Open our senses to your direction, amazing God, so we may be alert to opportunities you give us. Fill us with good news to share with those who seek meaning for their lives. We are here because we need the good news ourselves. There is much in life that we do not understand. We seek to know your Word and to be led by it. Recall us to the vows of our baptism, reconfirming in us the covenant promises that link us to you and to one another. As we meet you here, our hearts are lifted up in praise. May our worship glorify your name and be pleasing to you. Amen!

CHILDREN’S TIME

UMH 191 (vs. 1)

Proclamation of God’s Word

***THE GOSPEL LESSON**

John 15:1-8

15 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. 2 He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. 3 You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. 6 Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7 If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

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

Thanks be to God. Amen!

SERMON *“Abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ”* Pastor Jenny Lee

We Respond to God’s Word

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

Loving God, whom we praise and glorify as disciples of Jesus Christ, cleanse us today by your word so we may rejoice once more in our baptism and aspire to the perfection of love among us and throughout your world. Prune away the dead debris of our fears and failures so we may become productive branches in the church, reaching out to feed a world starving for genuine love and yearning for community. 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!

APRIL CHURCH MISSIONS

TODAY'S SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

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>We will be collecting supplies to stock the church! Here is a list of suggested items. You can also reference the bulletin board or newsletter! Thank you!</p> <p>ITEMS: Toilet Bowl Cleaner, Air Freshener Spray, Toilet Paper, Paper Towels, Tall Kitchen Bags, Gallon Twist-Tie Bags, Pine-Sol, Cleanser, Dish Soap</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>APRIL SHOWERS</p> <p>We will be collecting supplies to stock the church. Please see the bulletin board or newsletter for more details. Thank you!</p> <p><i>ITEMS NEEDED: D-Cell Batteries, Toilet Cleaner, Gallon Zipper Baggies, Paper Dinner Plates-Dixie Ultra Preferred, Paper Dessert Plates-Dixie Ultra Preferred, Plastic Forks (Forks Only!), Napkins, Bleach (1 Gallon Only), Oven Cleaner (Spray Can), Coffee Creamer Singles (200 max.), Kool-Aid Premix Containers (or Similar), Crystal Light, Juice Boxes (or Similar), Distilled Water, Liquid Hand Soap Individuals or Refills, Hand Sanitizer Individuals or Refills, Type CC Vacuum Cleaner Bags</i></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 UMCOR!</i></p> 
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Thank you for your support!

Ministers

All God's People

Central -Grantsburg

Pianist	Toni Koons
Liturgist	Volunteer Needed
Acolyte(s)	Willow Nyland
Fellowship	Volunteer Needed
Counter	Volunteer Needed
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson & Charlie Glonek
Sunday School	Jenni Stedman

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	Kathy Gionis
Usher(s)	Jim Andrews
Money Counter	Peter Gionis
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: 5th Sunday of Easter
God Bless you all!

Worship Service Schedule

- 4/28: 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
- 4/29: Youth Fun Day (G) cancelled.
- 5/2: 9-10 am NW Clergy Meeting via Zoom
6:30-8:00 pm Senior Youth Gathering
- 5/4: Opening of Fishing in Wisconsin
- 5/6: 1:00 pm Naomi McLean's Celebration of Life Service (SCF)

This Week's Birthdays & Anniversaries

Jim Sciacca 5/1, LuAnne Martell 5/3, Ashleigh Olson
5/4, Colleen Norenberg 5/4, & Kaelyn Richter 5/4



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!

Next Sunday (May 5th)

VOLUNTEERS

Central -Grantsburg

Pianist	Toni Koons
Liturgist	Volunteer Needed
Acolyte(s)	Willow Nyland
Fellowship	Volunteer Needed
Counter	Volunteer Needed
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson & Charlie Glonek
Sunday School	Jenni Stedman

Atlas

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

St. Croix Falls

Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Karen Sciacca
Usher(s)	Kathy Gionis
Money Counter	Peter Gionis
Bell Ringer	Jim Sciacca
Communion	Jim and Karen Sciacca
Flowers	Kathy Gionis



Upcoming Events-Mark Your Calendar

- May 6 Naomi McLean's Celebration of Life Service (SCF)
- May 14 SPRC Meeting
- June 2 Joint Worship Service at St. Croix Falls UMC (10:30 am)
- June 8 Annual Conference & Pastor's Ordination
- 8/6-8/8 2024 VBS

April 28th, 2024

Pastor Jenny Lee, Ph.D.

John 15:1-8

Upper St. Croix Parish UMC



“Abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ”

I want to start with something funny that I found on an internet site: Peter the Apostle is at Jesus’ crucifixion when he hears Jesus call his name. He rushes to the cross and says, “Yes, Master?” Immediately two Roman soldiers grab Peter and march him away from the cross.

Jesus once again calls, “Peter!” Again, Peter comes to the foot of the cross, and once again the soldiers grab him and drag him roughing Peter up a little in the process. For a third time Jesus calls out, “Peter!” and Peter approaches the cross, this time with a little trepidation, but the soldiers let him through. He looks up at Jesus and says, “Yes, Master, what is it?”

Jesus says, “I can see your house from here.”

I grew up in a farming family. My grandfather’s hometown was in North Korea, and he came to South Korea with his four brothers before the Korean War. His first job was washing dishes at a restaurant, and after saving some money, he bought a one-acre rice field. That was the beginning of our family’s farming history. He bought more and more fields for rice and vegetables every year. Finally, he became wealthy from investing in his property. Even though he became rich, I never saw him become lazy. He woke up early every morning, went out to check on his rice and veggies, and checked them again every afternoon and before sunset. Even during the winter when we couldn’t farm, he still went out to make sure his fields were okay. In the last stage of his life, when he had dementia, he would always look out of the window and say, ‘Look! They’re growing so well!’ I couldn’t fully understand how much my grandfather loved his fields, but I remember that whenever he talked about them, his face would light up with joy.

A few weeks ago, during my vacation, I visited one of my friends who lives in Chicago. She has been a pastor serving Anglican congregations for over 30 years, and she has been my mentor since 2011. She invited me to stay in her parsonage after I moved out of campus housing. She is a wise mother to her daughter and a sincere pastor to her congregation. Once I moved into her parsonage, I started gardening in her yard. While I enjoyed gardening, neither she nor her daughter ever got involved. However, during this visit, I noticed seedling plants at the corner of her garage ready for planting in her garden. I said, “I didn’t know you were gardening. Do you enjoy it?” She answered, “Yes, I enjoy it. Now I understand why you wake up early every morning and go out to see the veggies in the garden. It’s because you love to see how they are growing. I do the same every morning and evening, as if I’ve fallen in love with my garden.” I hadn’t realized that I was doing the same thing as my grandfather did. I love seeing my garden and watching how it grows every morning and evening, even though I am here in Wisconsin.

Today’s scripture introduces God as “the Vinegrower.” In the New International Version of the Bible, it translates to “Gardener,” stating, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.” When I read this scripture, I recall my grandfather and how he cared for his field. He removed wild weeds between rice plants and checked if there was enough water or too much water every morning and evening. If the rice plants were

too dense in one area, he would pull them out, ensuring the remaining plants received more nutrition and bore more fruit.

I didn't have this kind of wisdom. When I had more than enough seedling plants, I didn't thin them out. Instead, I kept them, hoping for more fruit, but they ended up producing less. I believe you understand this process better than I do. Perhaps you'll gain a better understanding of this parable. In Jesus' time, many wealthy Israelites were farmers, raising livestock such as cows, oxen, and sheep, as well as tending vineyards. This is why Jesus used many parables about farming or gardening to teach people. Jesus compares God to the gardener, himself to the vine, and his disciples to the branches. As we know, branches should be connected to the vine, or else they wither and die. Even if the branches remain on the vine, if they don't bear fruit, the gardener cuts them off. This may sound alarming, but it's a reminder that even as Christians, if we don't live fruitful lives, God may judge us, cutting us away from Jesus.

However, let's not focus solely on judgment! Instead, let's consider why Jesus gives us a parable comparing God to a gardener. If God is the gardener, what is His greatest wish? As a small gardener myself, my greatest wish is to harvest an abundant yield from my garden by planting veggies and flowers on time and caring for them well, ensuring they are protected from wild animals. I plant them and shield them from wildlife in order to maximize the harvest. When I see them flourishing, I feel full of joy. Similarly, God the Father, as the gardener, might wish to yield a bountiful harvest through His vine, Jesus Christ. This transcends mere matters of salvation; it's a profound event. Yes, we are saved by faith through Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, but that's not the end. It's not sufficient for God. As Christians, we move beyond salvation; we call it Sanctifying grace. Christians are those who, through Jesus, deserve salvation. However, if you're content with just that, it's like giving birth to children and not caring how they grow.

Our God the Father deeply loves us and cares about us and those who are born again through Jesus. In other words, God still cares for those who are saved by faith in Jesus, nurturing them to grow through to a joyful life. This joyful life can be achieved through loving one another. Jesus says, "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you" (John 15:10-12).

The fruits God expects us to bear in everyday life are the fruits of love because we remain in Jesus, who is love. To bear the fruits of love we should abide in Jesus. You might say, "I do volunteer work every week to help our neighbors, and donate to those in need." Yes, you've done great. That is one way to love our neighbors. But, you know that non-Christians also do similar acts of kindness in many ways. What sets Christians apart from Non-Christians? We can find the answer in verse 3, which says, "You have been already cleansed by the word that I have spoke to you." The difference lies in whether we remain in Jesus. The Word of God gives us strength to resist temptation when we face trials. Jesus also said during his trial, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

God never forces us to bear fruits but God cares for us and wants us to bear the fruits. Just as you don't command plants in your garden to bear fruits but instead provide care and nourishment, God provides us with the Word of God as nourishment to bear more fruit. If you love the words of God and remain in Jesus, you may bear the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, which is the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Look at each other and see if their faces shine with joy. Let us be true Christians who bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit in everyday life! That's the will of God in Jesus Christ.

Thanks be to God. Amen!