

**RESPONDING PRAYER Unison**

Creator of friendships, whose love lifts us from mindless to caring community, we thank you for the guidance of your commandments and the promises of joy in Jesus Christ. We seek to love as we have been loved, to risk like itself for the sake of our sisters and brothers, and to bear fruit that will last. Grant us the strength and courage we need. 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**

Generous and loving God, we dedicate to your service the work of our hands, the earning of our time and efforts, and our vision for the future. May faith sustain us as we offer our best to you in praise and thanksgiving and joyous dedication. We seek to work for the reign of your truth and extension of the friendship granted to us in Jesus Christ. Let our offering bear fruit in the lives of all who are helped by it. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen!

*We Go Forth to Love God and Serve One Another*

**\*CLOSING HYMN** *Trust and Obey* **UMH 467 (vs. 1 & 4)**

**\*BENEDICTION** **Pastor Jenny Lee**

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

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

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

**6th Sunday of Easter/Communion Sunday**



**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**

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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**Parish Office:** 715-463- 2624 **St. Croix Falls Office:** 715-483-9494

[www.upperstcroixparish.org](http://www.upperstcroixparish.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/UpperStCroixParishUMC>

**Upper St. Croix Parish**  
**Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls**  
**May 5th, 2024**  
**6th Sunday of Easter/Communion Sunday**

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\*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 all who are born of God;

Abide in the love revealed in Jesus Christ.

**We come in response to the one who calls us friends.**

**We are here in obedience to Christ’s command.**

Remember God’s steadfast love and faithfulness.

Let hands and voices echo God’s praise.

**Let our lips pour out a joyful noise.**

**Let our hands reflect a serving savior.**

Sing a new song to God who does marvelous things.

Obey God’s commandments which are not burdensome.

**We clap our hands and sing for joy.**

**We live by faith that conquers the world. Amen.**

**\*DEDICATING HYMN** *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*

UMH 526 (vs. 1 & 2)

**OPENING PRAYER** Unison

Come, Holy Spirit, to lift us from empty routines to the surprising joy of your love. Loosen our tongues to praise you with sincere delight. Open our hearts to trust your leading through times of difficulty and days of despair. Calm our doubts and guide us through the mires of fear. You have called us together for mutual support in a time of worship that unites our spirits. We remember that we have been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Teach us to follow where Christ leads. 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 you love,**

**we have not heard the cry of the needy.**

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

**through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

(prayers 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**

**SHARING HOLY COMMUNION**

**COMMUNION SONG**

TFWS 2260

**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**

John 15:9-17 (See insert)

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

**Thanks be to God. Amen!**

**SERMON** *“The First and Last Command of Christ”* 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.**

**(Together) 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 John 15:9-17

9 As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. 10 If  
you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have  
kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. 11 I have said  
these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be  
complete.

12 “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved  
you. 13 No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s  
friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 I do not  
call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the  
master is doing, but I have called you friends, because I have made known  
to you everything that I have heard from my Father. 16 You did not  
choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit  
that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my  
name. 17 I am giving you these commands so that you may love one  
another.

# MAY CHURCH MISSIONS

# TODAY'S SERVICE VOLUNTEERS



## ATLAS

Mission committee chair: Ashleigh Olson

<p><b>INK JET RECYCLING PROGRAM:</b></p> <p>Atlas collects and recycles ink jet cartridges and cell phones year-round.</p> 	<p><b>LOAVES &amp; FISHES NEEDS OUR ONGOING SUPPORT</b></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><u>Community Referral Agency (CRA)</u> <i>In May we will support CRA in Milltown. They provide shelter and services for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.</i></p>  <p><i>They are specifically in need of condiments, sugar, batteries and refill cleaning pads for their Swiffer. There is a general list of items they are looking for in the May newsletter and on the bulletin board at church.</i></p> <p><i>Please note that items should be new or in good to very good condition.</i></p>
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## GRANTSBURG

Mission committee chair: Deb Hammer

<p><b>BE A "BACK-PACK BACKER"!</b></p> <p>REMEMBER ... Every Sunday Is MAC 'N CHEESE SUNDAY! Supporting the Salvation Army's "Happy Kids Backpack Program"</p> 	<p><u>Global Mission Secondary School in Tanzania</u></p> <p><i>In May we will be collecting Donations for Yung Seon (Christine) Kim in Tanzania. We sent money to support the building of the Global Mission Secondary School in 2020 and our donations will go to help support this school.</i></p> 
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## ST. CROIX FALLS

Mission committee chair: Kate Murtaugh

<p><b>Food Shelf</b> (Communion Sunday)</p> 	<p><b>Sailor Hat Offering:</b></p> <p><i>The Sailor Hat offering will go to support The St. Croix Food Shelf!</i></p> 
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Thank you for your support!

## Ministers

## All God's People

### Central -Grantsburg

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

### Atlas

Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Colleen Adams-Schween
Usher	Sue Olson
Cleaning	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
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



## 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=SDZleFNubmEvaDBlcytTRzVxMFIIZz09>  
Phone: +1 312 626 6799,  
Meeting ID: 841 4780 8460, Passcode: 568271
- 2) Our Sunday Sermons are on the website at [upperstcroixparish.org](http://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: 6th Sunday of Easter/Communion Sunday  
God Bless you all!

### Worship Service Schedule

- 5/5: 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
- 5/6: 1:00 pm Naomi McLean's Celebration of Life Service (SCF)
- 5/6-5/7: Provisional Elder Workshop at Pine Lake Camp
- 5/8: 1:00 pm UMW Meeting (G)  
5:30-8:00 pm Junior Youth Gathering (G)
- 5/9: 10:30 am-1 pm Pastor Jenny Volunteers at Loaves & Fishes in Luck  
6:30-8 pm Senior Youth Gathering
- 5/10: 5-8:00 pm Family Worship and Game Night (G)
- 5/11: Opening Fishing in Minnesota

## This Week's Birthdays & Anniversaries

Naomi McLean 5/6

Casper Rahkola 5/7

Nathan Murtaugh 5/11



*PLEASE NOTE: WHEN WRITING A CHECK PLEASE MAKE IT PAYABLE TO YOUR INDIVIDUAL CHURCH. WHEN THE OFFERING IS MAILED IN WE ARE THEN ABLE TO CREDIT THE APPROPRIATE CHURCH. THANK YOU!*

## Next Sunday (May 12th)

### VOLUNTEERS

#### Central -Grantsburg

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

#### Atlas

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

#### St. Croix Falls

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

### Upcoming Events-Mark Your Calendar

- May 6 Naomi McLean's Celebration of Life Service (SCF)
- May 12 Mother's Day Sunday
- 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





May 5th, 2024

Pastor Jenny Lee, Ph.D.

John 15:9-17

Upper St. Croix Parish UMC



## **“The First and Last Command of Christ”**

I want to start with something funny that I found on an internet site: A young man called his mother and announced excitedly that he had just met the woman of his dreams. Now what should he do? His mother had an idea: “Why don’t you send her flowers, and on the card, invite her to your place for a home-cooked meal?” He thought this was a great idea and arranged a date for a week later. His mother called the day after the big date to see how things had gone. “The evening was a disaster,” he moaned. “Why? Didn’t she come over?” asked his mother. “Oh, she came over, but she refused to cook.”

What was wrong with the young man? He didn’t know how to express his love to her. If you love someone, you have to show them your love. Love is not merely an abstract word but a certain and active attitude.

Dear beloved congregation, as we gather together this morning, we’re reminded of the profound and enduring love that our Lord Jesus Christ has for each and every one of us. In the scripture we have just read from the Gospel of John, Jesus speaks to his disciples about the importance of love—love that is rooted in the love of God the Father, love that is unconditional and sacrificial, and love that binds us together as friends of Christ.

I do appreciate the description of love in the scripture 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7. I believe it is the best description of love. It says, “Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable; it keeps no record of wrongs; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” It’s an amazing description of what love looks like. On the other hand, it seems difficult to maintain that love. However, love can be learned naturally as we experience love from others. For example, if a baby is raised in a family that loves each other, the baby grows in love just as much as their physical body grows. We, as Christians, are born from God, who is love itself. And those who are born from God know love because we are born to receive love and to give love.

Today, I want to reflect with you on the significance of this message of love, which is Jesus’ first and last command. The passage is Jesus’ farewell message to his disciples after he washed the feet of his disciples. He had already taught his disciples that the first and second commandment of God is “love” when a law-teacher asked him, “which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matthew 22:37-40). And, after the last supper and washing his disciples’ feet, Jesus still emphasizes, “love God and love one another” as his last wish to his disciples. Jesus loved his disciples until the end of his life, and even more so, after his ascension to heaven, he sent the Holy Spirit in order to care and love his people. The disciples who have received his love could love God and love one another. The First Letter of John says, “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Jesus says, “All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” which means that the whole Bible speaks about the love of God and loving our

neighbors. We trust in the Bible as the Word of God and trust in Jesus as our Savior and Lord. If we were to summarize the essence of the Bible in one word, it would be “love.”

So, we should follow his first and last command. And what is his command? Simply this: to love one another as he has loved us. As we love one another, people may know we are disciples of Jesus. Yes, we are Christians. This is not a passive love, but an active and vibrant love that calls us to action. Jesus tells us that if we keep his commands, we will remain in his love.

The greatest love Jesus has shown is to forgive our sins while we were still sinners, even when we didn't know about him yet. Before we fully understood God's love, God showed us his love by sending his only Son. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believe in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). What other love can compare to God's love?

We wonder how we can pay it forward. Here is an example to gain a better understanding of God's love from the Gospel of Matthew 18:21-35. Once upon a time, in a town, there was a man who had a lot of debts to repay to an elder. The debts were much more than everything he owned, and even if he sold his wife and children, it still wouldn't be enough to pay it back. However, one day, the elder asked him to repay the debt within a few days. He fell to his knees and begged him, “Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.” And the elder took mercy on him, canceled the debt, and let him go free.

A few days later, he met his friend who owed him a small amount of money. He asked and forced his friend to repay it. His friend begged him to be patient and give him more time, but he refused and put him into prison. Then, the elder who forgave and canceled his debt heard what happened with him and his friend. He called him and said, “I canceled your debt because you begged me, but you put your friend into prison without forgiveness or mercy. Now repay all your debts to me. Otherwise, you will be thrown into prison.”

Likewise, while we received forgiveness of our sins, what if we cannot forgive others? We recite the Lord's Prayer every Sunday, saying, “Forgive us our trespass, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” The word “trespass” can be translated to “debt,” meaning, “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” What if we cannot forgive our debtors? Might God not forgive our sins?

Which church is the good church? Is it the church where the pastor preaches good sermons? Is it the church with numerous members and attendees at Sunday service? It's simple. The good church is the one that loves God and loves one another as Jesus commanded. Let us go forth from this place, empowered by the love of Christ, to love one another as he has loved us. Let us be agents of change and instruments of peace in a world that is longing for love. And let us take comfort in the promise that whatever we ask in the name of Jesus, the Father will give us. May the love of God abide in us always, and may our joy be complete as we abide in his love. Thanks be to God. Amen!