

We Respond to God's Word

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

Gracious God, as we begin this Advent season, open our hearts to Your promise. Help us to stay awake, to live with hope, and to prepare a place for You in our lives. May the light of Christ shine brightly through us, drawing others to Your love. Amen.

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

INVITATION/PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND

OFFERINGS

***DOXOLOGY**

UMH 95

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION** Unison

With joy and thanksgiving we celebrate this opportunity to share. Your promises are more real to us, O God, when we participate in the outreach our gifts make possible. Lead us, we pray, to do what is right with these offerings and with the time and talents you entrust to us. We pray in Jesus' name who will come again as He promised. Amen!

We Go Forth to Love God and Serve One Another

***CLOSING HYMN**

Since Jesus Came into My Heart
TFWS 2140 (vs. 1 & 5)

***BENEDICTION**

Pastor Jenny Lee

***POSTLUDE**

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

Worship resource "Refreshing Rains of the Living Word" by Lavon Bayler



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

1st 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

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Youth Director Shayna Schmid: snssnyder@gmail.com
Parish Secretary Colleen Norenberg: centralumc2016@gmail.com
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www.upperstcroixparish.org

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

Upper St. Croix Parish
Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls
December 1st, 2024
1st Sunday of Advent

*Please stand if you are able.

***PRELUDE** Toni Koons (G)/ Sharon Asp (A & SCF)
***ADVANT SONG** TFWS 2090 (vs. 1)
***LIGHTING THE FIRST CANDLE**

**BLESSING OF ADVENT CANDLE, WREATH AND
CHRISTMAS TREE**

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
Look up, all people, for the realm of God is near;
gather with the saints to praise our Creator.

We rejoice in the promise of salvation
as we give thanks for God’s steadfast love.
The gift of God are for all generations
and for people in every walk of life.

In humble obedience we accept our blessings
and embrace God’s call to responsibility.
Surely God is faithful to the covenant
and eager to instruct us in the ways of peace.

We will watch and pray, and be ready to act.
Let us hear what God has in store for us. Amen.

***DEDICATING HYMN** *Christ for the World We Sing*
UMH 568 (vs. 1, 2 & 3)

OPENING PRAYER Unison

In thanksgiving we lift up our souls to your righteousness, O God
of all truth. We await your revelation, for we cannot make sense

out of life apart from you. Keep us from being paralyzed by our fears.
In the midst of our perplexity grant us signs of renewed vitality and
the promise of better things you have in store for us when Christ
comes to live among us. 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 loved our neighbors,
and 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 THE 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**

Luke 21:25-36
(See insert)

This is the word of God for the people of God.
Thanks be to God. Amen!

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.

²⁵ "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. ²⁶ People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

²⁹ Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; ³⁰ as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. ³¹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³² Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³⁴ "Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, ³⁵ like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place and to stand before the Son of Man."

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

Thanks be to God. Amen!

DECEMBER 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: eggs, milk, mayonnaise, coffee, tea, peanut butter, crackers, cookies.</p> <p>Personal Products for men & women.</p>	<p>MITTEN TREE Sunday, December 8th</p> <p>We will be collecting mittens, scarves, hats, gloves, etc. in December. Our donations will be taken to Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry... they will help keep our neighbors in need warm this winter.</p> <p>Thank you for your kindness.</p> 
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TODAY'S SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Ministers All God's People / Rev. Jenny Lee

Central -Grantsburg

- Pianist Toni Koons
- Liturgist Barbara Loomis
- Acolyte(s) Willow Nyland
- Fellowship Youth Group
- Counter **Volunteer Needed**
- Cleaning Sandra Erickson
- Sunday School Jenni Stedman
- Communion Barbara Loomis

Atlas

- Pianist Sharon Asp
- Liturgist Sue Olson
- Usher Colleen Adams-Schween
- Cleaning **Volunteer Needed**
- Sunday School Program Practice
- Communion Sue Olson





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>INTERFAITH CAREGIVERS</p> <p>We will be collecting financial donations to help support Interfaith Caregivers of Burnett County for the Christmas for Kids event.</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 families in need with Christmas Gift Cards.</p> 
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St. Croix Falls

- Pianist Sharon Asp
- Liturgist Karen Sciaccia
- Usher(s) Jim Andrews
- Counter Peter Gionis
- Bell Ringer Jim Sciaccia
- Flowers Kathy Gionis
- Fellowship Admin members
- Communion Kathy Gionis



Thank you for your support!

PLEASE NOTE:

- 1) An Online Zoom Service is scheduled for this Sunday only at 9:00 am.
- 2) 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=SDZleFNubmEvaDZlc0RzVzVxMFI1Zz09>
BicyTRzVxMFI1Zz09
Phone: +1 312 626 6799,
Meeting ID: 841 4780 8460, Passcode: 568271
- 3) Our Sunday Sermons are on the website at uppercroixparish.org under Sermons!
- 4) Sunday's video may be uploaded on late Sundays!
<https://www.facebook.com/UpperStCroixParishUMC>
- 5) 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: 1st Sunday of Advent/Beginning Lectionary Year C
God Bless you all!

Worship Service Schedule

12/1:	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
12/1:		Christmas Decoration Day (all three churches)
12/3:	9:00-10:00 am	Northwest Clergy Meeting via Zoom
	5:30 -7:00 pm	Advent Study 1 (G)
12/4:	5:30-7:30pm	Youth Gathering
12/5	1:30-2:30 pm	New Membership Class (SCF)
	5:00-7:00 pm	Soup Supper & Advent Study 1 (SCF)
	6:30-8:30 pm	Youth Advent Bible Study (G)

Upcoming Events & News

- 12/8: Mitten Tree (A); Recognition of New Members (SCF)
12/9: Pastor Jenny attends the Diversity Council Meeting in Sun Prairie

Advent Bible Study Schedule:

- Central-G: 12/3, 12/10, 12/17 (5:30pm), and 12/23 (at 2:30 pm)
St. Croix Falls: 12/5, 12/12, 12/19, and 12/23 (at 5:00pm)

Next Sunday (December 8th):

Central -Grantsburg

Pianist Toni Koons
Liturgist Barbara Loomis
Acolyte(s) Willow Nyland
Fellowship Paulie Kratchmer
Counter **Volunteer Needed**
Cleaning Sandra Erickson
Sunday School Jenni Stedman

Atlas

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

St. Croix Falls

Pianist Sharon Asp
Liturgist Karen Sciacca
Usher(s) Jim Andrews
Counter Peter Gionis
Bell Ringer Jim Sciacca
Flowers Kathy Gionis
Fellowship Admin members

Breakthrough Prayers:

Please pray for: Shane Tooze (job transition), Kay Lamphere (hospitalized again), Brianna Salmon (good care), Daniel, those who are traveling and those in need.

Pray for College Students: Mikala Hammer, Renee Tooze, Renae Wright, Dauntay Erickson, Shayna Schmid, Mollie, Magdalena Wright, Olivia McNally, Tanner Gaffey, Taryn Gaffey, Cole Steffen, Nathan Murtaugh, and Joseph Murtaugh.

Praise the Lord: Jim Loomis (No diagnosis founded), Russ Hammer (recovery).

"This kind can come out only by prayer" (Mark 9:29)





December 1st, 2024

Luke 21:25-36

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

Living in the Light of His Promise

I want to start with something funny: A Sunday school teacher was teaching her class about Jesus' return. She asked, "What would you do if Jesus came back today?"

Little Sarah raised her hand and said, "I'd give Him a big hug!"

Tommy chimed in, "I'd ask Him all my questions about dinosaurs!"

But then little Johnny stood up and said confidently, "I'd make sure to look really busy!"

What if Jesus returned this Christmas? What would you do for Him?

Today is the first Sunday of Advent. The word "Advent" comes from the Latin word *Adventus*, which is translated into Greek as *Parousia*, meaning "coming" or "arrival." In the Christian calendar, Advent signifies "*the season of waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ.*"

Advent marks the beginning of the Christian year. In other words, today is the first day of the new year in the Christian calendar. This is the time when Christians begin their annual journey of faith, waiting expectantly for the return of Jesus Christ.

During Advent, we light five unique candles: three purple, one pink and one white, which is placed at the center. Until Christmas Day, we light one candle each week. Each candle holds a special meaning. The first symbolizes hope; the second, peace; the third, joy; the fourth, love; and the fifth, the white candle, represents the light of Christ. It reminds us that Jesus Christ came into a dark world as the light, bringing hope, peace, joy, and love.

Jesus promised His return. In His farewell sermon, He said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:3). In today's scripture, we read, "The Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

The season of Advent invites us to wait for the Lord's return, not just to focus on Christmas Day.

Advent marks the beginning of a new liturgical year—a season of hope, preparation, and anticipation of Christ's coming. Jesus speaks of signs in the heavens and on the earth, urging His followers to remain vigilant and faithful. Let's prepare our hearts and lives not only for Christmas, but also for the promised return of Christ.

Jesus foretells cosmic signs and earthly distress, yet He encourages us to "stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." Advent reminds us that God is faithful to His promises. Just as He sent Jesus into the world, He will fulfill His promise to return. How does the assurance of Christ's return bring hope amidst the uncertainties in your life today?

Someone may ask, “Is there any hope in the world? Wars, poverty, and injustice still reign. The world is full of violence.” We indeed hear more bad news than good news in our daily lives. The world may be filled with violence and destruction, but it is not overcome. Even amidst injustice, poverty, violence, and prejudice, signs of hope remain when we pray, engage in mission work, and live out God’s love through our actions. So, we watch, we wait and we wonder.

Today’s scripture says: “There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near” (Luke 21:25-28). Jesus tells us that redemption often comes at the edge of despair. Though the world is full of violence, poverty and injustice, God never gives up on us. Jesus will come again to save us.

Have you ever experienced hope at the moment of despair? I have. One such moment was when I had a broken spine. My doctor gave up on me, and many around me thought I’d never walk again. It felt as if I were falling off a cliff day by day. But at the edge of despair, God sent a pastor to my hospital room. He brought me a message of hope: “God loves you.” That pastor was a sign that God hadn’t given up on me, even when everyone else had.

Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away” (Luke 21:33). I chose to believe that God could heal me, and by His grace, I walked again. Through that long, dark time, I learned that even at the edge of despair, there is hope. Trust in God. Trust in Jesus Christ. Even if you are standing at the edge of pain, don’t give up hope. God will send someone—a sign, an angel—to help you out.

The ultimate example of hope in despair is Jesus Christ. Born of the Virgin Mary and raised in a poor family, He was an outcast. Yet He made friends with the poor, the sick, and the marginalized. Though He suffered a humiliating death on the cross, it wasn’t the end. He rose from the dead, just as He promised. Jesus is hope for those at the edge of despair and for all who pray in a world of brokenness.

Jesus also urges us not to be weighed down by “dissipation, drunkenness, and the anxieties of life.” Instead, He calls us to pray and remain steadfast. Advent reminds us to hold on to hope—not a wishful hope, but one rooted in the certainty of God’s love and power.

Advent is a season of light, hope and expectation.

Do you enjoy playing ping-pong? As you may know, I do! One of the key skills in ping-pong is to focus on where you want the ball to go. When you hit the ball with your paddle, you must keep your eyes on the place you want it to land, and more often than not, it will go there. But if you look under the table, the ball will almost certainly drop there instead.

Hope is like that—it’s certainty in the midst of uncertainty. Our expectation for the future that Jesus promises should be filled with hope, not despair.

As we light the first candle on the Advent wreath, let it remind us to live in the light of Christ’s promise. Stand firm, stay awake and carry hope into the world, trusting that the One who came in humility will return in glory. This week, take time to reflect on how you can actively live out the hope of Christ’s coming. Let your life be a testimony to the joy and peace of Advent. Thanks be to God. Amen.