

calm the wars within and resolve the differences among us. May our lives embody good news in all we say and do. Amen!

NO. 2024-50
December 15th, 2024

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!

THE LORD'S PRAYER

INVITATION/PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

*DOXOLOGY

UMH 95

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION Unison

We praise you with our offerings, gracious God, and honor you with our gifts. Keep us from accepting more than our share of the world's resources or from thinking we have achieved all our successes by our own efforts. Take control of our lives in ways that will draw us nearer to you, yet increase our sense of responsibility toward your other children. Amen!

We Go Forth to Love God and Serve One Another

*CLOSING HYMN

Joy to the World

UMH 246 (vs. 1 & 2)

*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)

3rd 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

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>

Worship resource “Refreshing Rains of the Living Word” by Lavon Bayler

Upper St. Croix Parish
Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls
December 15th, 2024
3rd Sunday of Advent

*Please stand if you are able.

***PRELUDE** Toni Koons (G)/Sharon Asp (A & SCF)
***ADVANT SONG** TFWS 2090 (vs. 3)

***LIGHTING THE THIRD CANDLE OF ADVENT**

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

Sing aloud to God, our strength and our song;
rejoice and exult with all your heart.

God is our midst, renewing us;

We will be glad and sing praises.

We have come together in faith

to draw water from the wells of salvation.

As we have received the water of baptism

we seek once more to be cleansed and made whole.

Come to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire;

for God is ready to change your life.

God is restoring us before one another;

We are witnesses to God’s transforming power. Amen.

***DEDICATING HYMN** *Come, Though Long-Expected Jesus*

UMH 196

OPENING PRAYER Unison

We call on your name, Sovereign God of the universe. May your deeds be known among all the nations, and especially within us. We see little we can do to change the world, but we want to be open to possibilities for inner transformation and more caring and compassionate outreach. Move us toward authentic trust and love, we pray. Amen!

CHILDREN’S TIME

UMH 191 (vs. 1)

Proclamation of God’s Word

***THE GOSPEL LESSON**

Luke 3:7-18

7 John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 9 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

10 And the crowds asked him, “What, then, should we do?” 11 In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none, and whoever has food must do likewise.” 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” 13 He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” 14 Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

15 As the people were filled with expectation and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, 16 John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

18 So with many other exhortations he proclaimed the good news to the people.

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

Thanks be to God. Amen!

SERMON

“What Should We Do?”

Pastor Jenny Lee

We Respond to God’s Word

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

God of our weakness and our strength, move our hearts to praise you, to trust and rejoice in your saving grace. God of our hungers and our contentment, lead us toward the generosity you intend and away from undue concern about self and possessions. God of peace, be with us to

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. 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. Thank you for your kindness.</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>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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Thank you for your support!

TODAY'S SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Ministers All God's People / Rev. Jenny Lee

Central -Grantsburg

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|---------------|-------------------------|
| Pianist | Toni Koons |
| Liturgist | Barbara Loomis |
| Acolyte(s) | Willow Nyland |
| Fellowship | Judy Lien |
| Counter | Volunteer Needed |
| Cleaning | Sandra Erickson |
| Sunday School | Jenni Stedman |

Atlas

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



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 |

THIS WEEK'S BIRTHDAY'S

- | | |
|----------------|-------|
| Stan Chute | 12/15 |
| Tom Fedje | 12/16 |
| Ruth Blackburn | 12/16 |
| Mage Harmon | 12/17 |
| Kim Wheeler | 12/18 |
| Patrick Grimes | 12/18 |
| Brody Woltz | 12/19 |



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=SDZleFNubmEvaDBlcytTRzVxMFllZz09>
Phone: +1 312 626 6799,
Meeting ID: 841 4780 8460, Passcode: 568271
- 3) Our Sunday Sermons are on the website at upperstcroixparish.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: 3rd Sunday of Advent
God Bless you all!

Worship Service Schedule

12/15:	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
12/17:	10:30 am-1:00pm	Pastor Jenny Volunteers at Loaves & Fishes in Luck
	5:30-7:30pm	Advent Study 3 (G)
12/18:	5:30-7:30pm	Junior Youth Gathering
12/19	1:00 pm	Pastor Jenny Meets Ordination Candidates via Zoom
	5:00-7:30 pm	Soup Supper & Advent Study 3 (SCF)
	6:30-8:30pm	Youth Advent Bible Study 3 (G)
12/21	10am-12:00pm	Christmas Cookie Decorating for K-up Kids
	1:00pm	Youth Leaders' Christmas Luncheon
12/22	10:00 am	SCF & Atlas Christmas Program and Potluck (A)

Upcoming Events & News

- 12/22: Atlas Sunday School Christmas Program and Potluck Dinner (No service at SCF)**
- 12/24: Christmas Eve Candlelight Services:**
SCF-10:00 am; Atlas-4:30 pm; Central/G-7:00 pm
- 12/29: Central-G Youth Christmas Program and Pizza Party**

Next Sunday (December 22nd):

Central -Grantsburg

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

Atlas

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

St. Croix Falls

Joining Atlas Worship for Children's Christmas Program & Potluck at 10:00 am

Breakthrough Prayers:

Please pray for: Georgeanne Koons (recovery/healing), Julie Branstad (surgery, 12/12), Amanda & Dave (healing and peace), Nancy Branstad (Healing & recovery), Virginia (COVID), Mary Beth (her husband, stroke), Mikala Hammer (safe travels), Colleen Norenberg (surgery, 12/17), Troy Olson (recovery & strength), Kay Lamphere (healing), Brianna Salmon (good care), Lynn Hanson (surgery, 12/12), Ginger (surgery & recovery).



Praise the Lord: Shane Tooze started a new job. The Youth Fundraiser Pizza Sale successfully raised \$558. Thank you for your support! We received a \$1,000 grant for the Youth Spring Retreat from the Wisconsin Foundation.

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



December 15th, 2024

Luke 3:7-18

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



“What Should We Do?”

I want to start with something funny. At a Christmas Eve service, a pastor, quizzing some children about the nativity, asked, “What gifts did the three wise men give the Christ child?” “Gold!” one child yelled. “Frankincense!” shouted another. After a pause, a third asked, “Gift cards?”

This joke reminds me to ask: What are you going to prepare for Jesus? I have a Christmas cactus. As you may know, it begins flowering during Advent and comes into full bloom around Christmas Day. Its blossoms bring cheer and joy to those who see them, reminding us that this is the season to prepare for Jesus. Yes, even a plant prepares for Christmas.

Today is the third Sunday of Advent. We lit the third candle, symbolizing joy, as we prepare for Christ’s arrival. One of my favorite scriptures comes from Philippians, a letter written by the Apostle Paul while imprisoned in Rome for preaching about Jesus Christ. Despite his circumstances, Paul exhorts, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near” (Philippians 4:4-5). How was Paul able to rejoice in such a circumstance? Can you imagine being unjustly imprisoned and still finding a way to rejoice? This is the mystery of faith in God. Let us delve deeper into today’s scripture.

In today’s scripture, John the Baptist challenges those seeking baptism, saying, “Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham” (Luke 3:8).

The Jewish people believed their lineage made them God’s chosen people. But John reminds them—and us—that privilege is not a guarantee of righteousness. We are God’s people, not because of our abilities or works, but only by His grace. This calls us to humility and a deeper understanding of God’s work.

When John warns, “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (Luke 3:9), the crowd asks, “What should we do?” His answer is simple yet profound: “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none, and whoever has food must do likewise” (Luke 3:11). Sharing with those in need is the way to bear good fruit.

Then tax collectors came to be baptized and asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” John replied, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” Soldiers also asked him, “What should we do?” He answered, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusations.” For leaders and those in power, bearing fruit means practicing justice and walking humbly with God. Each of us is called to carry out God’s work in our own places. This is how we bear good fruit in our daily lives. In other words, it is how we prepare for the Lord.

We see an example of joy in daily life through the story of the Samaritan woman at the

well (John 4:1-34). You may know the story of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-34). When Jesus and His disciples arrived in the city of Samaria, they were weary from their journey and decided to rest near Jacob's well. While His disciples went into the city to buy food, Jesus sat by the well. A woman came to draw water, and Jesus asked her for a drink. At that time, Jewish men typically did not speak with Samaritans, so the woman was surprised by His request. Eventually, she realized that He was the Messiah. Believing in Him, she left her jar at the well and went into the city to share the good news, saying, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?"

Her joy in spreading the good news energized Jesus as well. When the disciples urged Him to eat, He replied, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to complete His work" (John 4:34). Doing God's work brought Jesus joy, even when He was physically tired.

God's work should energize us with joy, not lead to burnout. Yet, we sometimes feel burdened, which can cause miscommunication, frustration, or even harm. If you feel overwhelmed, pause, pray and refocus on God's will. His work is not driven by anger or anxiety but by joy and gentleness.

As Paul says, "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Let me share a story of joyful giving. Sam, a little boy, loved Christmas—not for the gifts he would receive, but for those he could give. With little money but a big heart, he found a box of mismatched socks in his attic. Inspired, he crafted them into quirky sock puppets, each unique with buttons for eyes and ribbons for hair.

On Christmas Eve, Sam delivered his puppets door-to-door, surprising his neighbors. Each puppet came with a note: "This little puppet may not be perfect, but it's made with love, just like you are in God's eyes. Merry Christmas!"

By Christmas morning, the neighborhood was alive with laughter and puppet shows. Sam's simple, imperfect gifts brought joy and unity, reminding everyone that Christmas is about love, creativity, and giving from the heart.

Sam's story points us to God's ultimate gift—Jesus. Born humbly, He brought immeasurable joy and salvation to the world. Like Sam's puppets, our imperfect offerings can bring love and light to others.

This season, let us ask God, "What should we do?" and seek ways to share joy, kindness, and love. May this Christmas be your most joyous yet, filled with blessings for you and your loved ones. Thanks be to God. Amen.