

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

\*DOXOLOGY

UMH 95

\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION Unison

In the name of Jesus Christ we have come to do your will, gracious God. Our spirits rejoice in your saving mercy. Receive our offerings as a practical expression of our gratitude and love. May all who are given stewardship over these gifts use them to your glory. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen!

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

\*CLOSING HYMN *O Come, All Ye Faithful* UMH 234 (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)

**4th Sunday of Advent/Christmas Program (A)**



**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-Christmas Program)  
No Service at St. Croix Falls***

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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**Parish Secretary Colleen Norenberg:** [centralumc2016@gmail.com](mailto:centralumc2016@gmail.com)

**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**  
**December 22nd, 2024**  
**4th Sunday of Advent**

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\*Please stand if you are able.

**\*PRELUDE** Toni Koons (G)/Sharon Asp (A & SCF)  
**\*ADVANT SONG** TFWS 2090 (vs. 4)

**\*LIGHTING THE FOURTH 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

Let us magnify the name of our God together  
and ponder the wonder of God’s majesty.

**Our Creator knows our names**  
**and chooses us to be carriers of good news.**

Rejoice that God restores our strength  
and equips us for tasks to which we are called.

**God has done great things for us;**  
**Holy is God’s name, now and forever.**

God values us even when others ridicule and scorn;  
God turns even our mistakes into blessings.

**From generation to generation, God is faithful;**  
**We leap for joy when we feel God near us. Amen.**

**\*DEDICATING HYMN** *Hark! the Herald Angels Sing*  
UMH 240 (vs. 1 & 2)

**OPENING PRAYER** Unison

Let your face shine on us, O God, to bring the salvation for which we long. Hear our prayers when we call on you, and do not turn away from our cries. Keep us from empty petitions and arrogant pretensions. Cure us from insincerity and selfishness. Meet us here so that we may experience new life as we respond to your call. Amen!

**CHILDREN’S TIME (G)**

**UMH 191 (vs. 1)**

**Proclamation of God’s Word**

**\*THE GOSPEL LESSON**

**Luke 1:39-45**

39 In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, 40 where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit 42 and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43 And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? 44 For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”

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

**Thanks be to God. Amen!**

**SPECIAL MUSIC (A)**

**Wendell Hauble**

**SERMON (G)** *“Joyful Expectation: When Faith Moves Us”*

**Pastor Jenny Lee**

**CHRISTMAS PROGRAM (A)**

**See Insert**

**We Respond to God’s Word**

**RESPONDING PRAYER** Unison

Gracious God, as we eagerly await a joyful Christmas, help us to walk in faith, rejoice in Your promises, and encourage one another in love. Fill us with the joy and love of Your Spirit, so that we may leap with expectation for the coming of Christ. We pray in Jesus’ name. 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!*

# CHRISTMAS PROGRAM (A)

First Christmas Story by our Sunday School Kids

**Readers:**

*Chase Steffen*

*Copelan Grimes*

*Noah Dennison*

*Mary - Wren Grimes*

*Joseph - Landon Olson*

*Angel - Elli Olson*



**Music:**

**Oh Little Town of Bethlehem** (pg. 230, vs. 1 and 2)\*

**Away in the Manger** (pg. 217 vs. 1 and 2)\*

**Angels We have heard on High** (pg. 238, vs. 1 and 3)\*

**Twinkle, Twinkle, Christmas Star - Sunday School**

**We Three Kings - Sunday School**

**Go Tell it on the Mountain** (pg. 251, vs. 1 and 2)

**Joy to the World** (pg. 246, vs. 1, 2, and 4)\*

\* Congregation please join the children and sing.

DECEMBER CHURCH MISSIONS

**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: eggs, milk, mayonnaise, coffee, tea, peanut butter, crackers, cookies. Personal Products for men &amp; women.</p>	<p><b>MITTEN TREE</b> Sunday, December 8th</p> <p>We will be collecting mittens, scarves, hats, gloves, etc. in December. Our donations will be taken to Loaves &amp; 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><b>BE A "BACK-PACK BACKER"!</b></p> <p>REMEMBER ... Every Sunday Is MAC 'N CHEESE SUNDAY! Supporting the Salvation Army's "Happy Kids Back-Pack Program"</p> 	<p><b>INTERFAITH CAREGIVERS</b></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><b>Food Shelf (Communion Sunday)</b></p> 	<p><b>Sailor Hat Offering:</b></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**

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



**Atlas**

- |               |                         |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| Pianist       | Sharon Asp              |
| Liturgist     | Sue Olson               |
| Usher         | Colleen Adams-Schween   |
| Cleaning      | <b>Volunteer Needed</b> |
| Sunday School | Christmas program       |
| Fellowship    | Potluck dinner          |

**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 & ANNIVERSAIRES**

- Brittney Woltz 12/22  
Charles & Mary Lou Wright 12/23  
Janelle Smestad 12/25  
Lee & Peggy Frederickson 12/27



## 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=SDZleFNubmEvaDBlcytTRzVxMFIIZz09>  
Phone: +1 312 626 6799,  
Meeting ID: 841 4780 8460, Passcode: 568271
- 3) Our Sunday Sermons are on the website at [upperstcroixparish.org](http://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: 4th Sunday of Advent/ Christmas Program (A)  
*God Bless you all!*

### Worship Service Schedule

12/22:	9:00 am	Grantsburg with Zoom (9:15 am-Sunday School)
	10:00 am	Atlas (Sunday School-Christmas Program)
		No Service at St. Croix Falls
12/23:	2:00-3:30pm	Advent Study 4 (G)
	5:00-7:30pm	Soup Supper & Advent Study 4 (SCF)
12/24:	10:00 am	Christmas Eve Service (SCF)
	4:30 pm	Christmas Eve Service (A)
	7:00 pm	Christmas Eve Service (G)
12/25-27:		Korean Caucus Winter Retreat at Wisconsin Dell

### Upcoming Events & News

- 12/29:** Youth Christmas Program and Pizza Party (G)  
**12/31-1/3:** Church Office Closed (No Office Hours)  
**1/1:** Happy New Year! Youth Gathering (G)  
**12/29-1/5:** No Sunday School (A)

## Next Sunday (December 29th):

### Central -Grantsburg

Pianist	Toni Koons
Liturgist	Barbara Loomis
Acolyte(s)	Willow Nyland
Fellowship	Youth Group-Pizza Party
Counter	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson
Sunday School	Jenni Stedman

### Atlas

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

### 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:** Georgeanne Koons (strength), Julie Branstad (recovery & strength), Amanda & Dave (healing and peace), Nancy Branstad (healing & recovery), Colleen Norenberg (recovery & healing), Troy Olson (recovery & strength), Kay Lamphere (healing), Brianna Salmon (good care), Lynn Hanson (recovery), Ginger (recovery), Harley Koser (healing).

**Praise the Lord:** Poinsettias are donated in memory of John Adams by Steffen and Grimes Family (A).

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

December 22nd, 2024.

Luke 1:39-45

Pastor Jenny Lee, Ph.D.

Upper St. Croix Parish UMC



## “When Faith Moves Us”

I’d like to start with something funny I found on an internet site. A couple was driving down the road when they came across a sign that said, “Nacogdoches, forty miles ahead.” They began arguing about how to correctly pronounce “Nacogdoches.” The husband got so upset that he told his wife, “When we get to the town, I’ll prove you wrong!” They drove silently for the next thirty minutes.

When they arrived, the husband pulled the car over at the first fast-food restaurant. Both marched up to the counter, and the husband said to the young woman working there. “My wife and I have been arguing for thirty minutes. “Would you please tell us, very slowly and very clearly, how to pronounce the name of this place?” The young woman’s eyes got really big, and leaning over the counter, and she said, “Bur~ger~ King.”

What’s important here isn’t the couple’s story but how it resonates with us. How often do we get distracted by small things? This season of Advent calls us to focus on what truly matters.

Today, we lit the fourth candle of love, which reminds us of God’s profound love for humanity, revealed in Jesus Christ. Today’s scripture invites us into a moment of joyful expectation—a meeting between Mary and Elizabeth, charged with the Holy Spirit and overflowing with faith.

The passage begins with Mary setting out in haste to visit Elizabeth. This wasn’t just a casual trip—it was a journey of faith.

Imagine Mary, a teenage girl recently engaged to Joseph through her parents’ arrangement. She hadn’t truly met or spent time with her fiancé. Then, one day, an angel appeared to her, saying:

“By the grace of God, you will bear a child, and you shall name him Jesus.” Mary likely felt more fear than joy. She would have been acutely aware of societal norms—being an unwed mother could bring shame, end her engagement, and lead to rejection. Even though the angel assured her the child was conceived by God’s grace, she knew people might not believe her. At that time, being an unwed mother could even result in the severe punishment of stoning.

In her fear, the angel Gabriel reassured her: “Your relative Elizabeth, in her old age, has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.” Hearing this, Mary responded with faith: “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”

Mary’s faith moved her through fear, suspicion, and into trust. She immediately set out to visit Elizabeth. As Adam Hamilton writes in *Prepare the Way for the Lord*, Elizabeth and Mary were not only relatives but also shared a mentor-mentee relationship. Mary likely sought spiritual advice and encouragement from Elizabeth, running to her without hesitation.

Advent calls us to movement, too—not just physical but spiritual. Mary’s journey reminds us that faith often requires stepping out of our comfort zones and seeking those who affirm and encourage us in our calling.

When Mary arrived, Elizabeth’s greeting was profound. The child in her womb, John the Baptist, leapt for joy. This moment was more than a family reunion—it was the meeting of two miracles. Elizabeth, once barren, carried the forerunner of Christ. Mary, a young virgin, bore the Savior. Both women were living testimonies that nothing is impossible with God.

Where have you seen God’s miraculous work in your life? Advent is a time to reflect on how God has surprised us with grace and provision.

Elizabeth’s response is deeply moving. Filled with the Holy Spirit, she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!” Her words were a prophetic blessing, recognizing Mary’s story before she even shared it. Elizabeth also honored Mary’s faith:

“Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”

This reminds us of the power of belief. Mary could have doubted or resisted Gabriel’s message, but her faith allowed her to embrace the unknown and trust in God’s promises.

Adam Hamilton quotes Frederick Buechner in *Wishful Thinking*: “Doubts are the ants in the pants of faith. They keep it awake and moving.”

Let me share a story. Last summer, on my way home from playing ping-pong, I noticed beautiful yellow wildflowers by the roadside. I pulled over to take a closer look and took a photo to identify them later. As I drove home, I felt something moving in my pants—on my ankle, then up my leg! It wasn’t long before I figured it out: I’d picked up a tick. That little tick kept me focused and moving until I dealt with it.

Doubts, like that tick, make us move. They unsettle us, prompting us to seek answers. In a sense, doubts are the starting point of faith—a station on the journey that motivates us to grow.

What doubts do you hold right now? Though they may feel like obstacles, they can propel your faith forward.

This Advent season, let’s reflect: Like Mary, are we moving in faith toward what God is calling us to do? Are we attuned to the Spirit’s work, ready to leap with joy when we encounter Christ? Are we surrounding ourselves with people like Elizabeth, who affirm and celebrate God’s work in us?

In these final days of Advent, may we embody the joyful expectation we see in Mary and Elizabeth. Let our faith move us. May our hearts leap with joy, and may we find strength in the community of believers. This is the season to share the love of God. Jesus brings love to the homebound, the lonely, and those seeking to be loved—through us. Blessed are you who share God’s love with one another. Let your faith move you to bring joy and love to yourself and others.

Thanks be to God. Amen!