

Recognition of the 2024 Advent Bible Study

St Croix Falls UMC
*Karen Sciacca, Jim Sciacca, Jim Andrews, Kathy Gionis,
Peter Gionis, Sharon Asp, Sara Koser, Mike Koser*

Atlas UMC
Sue Olson, Wendell Hauble, Bob Determan

Central UMC
Barbara Loomis

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

Bless these offerings, along with us, O God, for our growth and the purposes You have designed. May all we give honor the name of Jesus and shape us into more faithful followers. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

We Go Forth to Love God and Serve One Another

*CLOSING HYMN *Where He Leads Me* UMH 338 (vs. 1 & 2)

*BENEDICTION Pastor Jenny Lee

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

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

NO. 2024-52
December 29th, 2024

Upper St. Croix Parish United Methodist Church

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

1st Sunday after Christmas Day



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 (Sunday School-winter break)
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>

Upper St. Croix Parish
Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls
December 29th, 2024
1st Sunday after Christmas Day

*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**

Give thanks to God with your whole heart
in the company of this gathered congregation.

**Great are the works of God,
studded by all who have pleasure in them.**

The wonderful works of God are remembered
from generation to generation.

**God is gracious and merciful,
full of honor, righteousness, and majesty.**

The covenant of God is faithful and just,
all God’s precepts are trustworthy.

**The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom,
and all who are in awe before God have good understanding.
Amen.**

***DEDICATING HYMN** *Go, Tell It on the Mountain*
UMH 251 (vs. 1 & 2)

OPENING PRAYER **Unison**

Gracious God, You have chosen us for an abundant life. Teach us to be compassionate and forgiving, kind and patient in all our dealings. Help us to set aside false pride and serve with meekness and humility. We come before You in the name of Jesus Christ, giving thanks that You have called us to be bearers of Your covenant. Amen.

Proclamation of God’s Word

***THE GOSPEL LESSON**

Luke 2:41-51

41 Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. 42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. 43 When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents were unaware of this. 44 Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day’s journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. 45 When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. 46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 When his parents[a] saw him they were astonished, and his mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously looking for you.” 49 He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”[b] 50 But they did not understand what he said to them. 51 Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them, and his mother treasured all these things in her heart.

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

Thanks be to God. Amen!

SERMON (A & SCF) *“Finding Where You Belong”* **Pastor Jenny Lee**

YOUTH CHRISTMAS PROGRAM (G)

(See insert)

We Respond to God’s Word

RESPONDING PRAYER **Unison**

May we grow in thanksgiving and praise as You speak to us once more. Remind us of Your wonderful works and the heritage of faith and trust that is ours. Help us to find our rightful place, where we can live for Your glory. Encounter us now in all Your majesty, so that the word of Christ may dwell in us richly. Grant us understanding and the wisdom to follow wherever You lead. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Youth Christmas Program (G)

“The Amazing Story of Christmas”

Part I: Mary and Joseph

Narrator: Anneliese Snyder

Congregation Song: UMH 217 “Away in a Manger”

Part II: The Animals

Narrator: Emma Anderson

Congregation Song: UMH 227 “The Friendly Beasts”

Part II: Angels

Narrator: Mage Harmon

Congregation Song: UMH 240 “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing”

Part IV: Shepherds

Narrator: Willow Nyland

Congregation Song: UMH 251 “Go, Tell It on the Mountain”

Part V: Wise Persons and Star

Narrator: Leland Snyder

Congregation Song: UMH 254 “We Three Kings”

Part VI: Conclusion

Congregation Song: UMH 246 “Joy to the World”



DECEMBER CHURCH MISSIONS

ATLAS

Mission committee chair: Ashleigh Olson

<p>INK JET RECYCLING PROGRAM: 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

Pianist	Toni Koons
Liturgist	Barbara Loomis
Acolyte(s)	Willow Nyland
Fellowship	Pizza Party-Youth Group
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	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

THIS WEEK'S BIRTHDAY'S & ANNIVERSAIRES



Josie Grimes
1/1

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 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 after Christmas Day, and the last Sunday of the year!
God bless you and Happy New Year!

Worship Service Schedule

12/29:	9:00 am	Grantsburg with Zoom (Youth Christmas Program)
	10:00 am	Atlas (Sunday School-winter break)
	11:15 am	St. Croix Falls
12/31-1/3:		<i>Church Office Closed (No Office Hours)</i>
1/1:	5:30-7:30 pm	Happy New Year/Youth Gathering
1/2:	9:00 am	Northwest Clergy Meeting via Zoom
	6:30 -8:30 pm	Calm Psalms Group
1/3:	5:30-7:30 pm	Family Game Night
1/7:	6:30 pm	SPRC Meeting via Zoom

Upcoming Events & News

12/29:	Youth Christmas Program and Pizza Party (G)
12/31-1/3:	Church Office Closed for New Year's
1/1:	Happy New Year!
12/29-1/5:	No Sunday School (A)
1/7:	SPRC Meeting via Zoom

Next Sunday (January 5th):

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
Communion	Barbara Loomis

Atlas

Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Sue Olson
Usher	Colleen Adams-Schween
Cleaning	Volunteer Needed
Sunday School	Winter Break
Communion	Sue Olson

St. Croix Falls

Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Jim Andrews
Usher(s)	Lynn Hanson
Counter	Peter Gionis
Bell Ringer	Jim Sciacca
Flowers	Kathy Gionis
Fellowship	Admin Members
Communion	Karen & Jim Sciacca



Breakthrough Prayers:

Please pray for: Ron Alderfer (Healing & Strength), Barbara Loomis (Figuring out back pain), Luann Ward (Healing & Recovery), Georgeanne Koons (Strength), Julie Branstad (Strength), Nancy Branstad (Healing), Colleen Norenberg (Recovery), Troy Olson (Recovery & Strength), Brianna Salmon (Good Care), Lynn Hanson (Recovery)

Praise the Lord: Julie Branstad (thankful surgery went well), Bob Determan (Cancer Free), Deb & Russ (Family Union), Kay Lamphere (Thankful for good procedures), Thanks for the Advent Study Group, well done, faithful servants!

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





December 29th, 2024.

Luke 2:41-52

Pastor Jenny Lee, Ph.D.

Upper St. Croix Parish UMC

“Finding Where You Belong”

I'd like to start with something funny I found on an internet site. A dad asked his son why he kept getting lost playing outside. The son replied, “I was just trying to act out the prodigal son in the Bible, but I forgot the way home!” The dad said, “Well, at least you're not eating pig food—yet!”

We often misplace things unintentionally. Sometimes, we even put something in a specific place because it's important, only to forget where we placed it. Later, when we find it, we ask, “Who put it here?” Is there anyone who has never misplaced something? We all have moments like this.

But what about people? A person, too, has places they should not go and places they are meant to be. Wouldn't someone who knows where they belong, and stays there, appear truly beautiful in the Lord's eyes?

Today is the last Sunday of the year. As we gather, it's natural to reflect on what has passed and anticipate what lies ahead. Today's Scripture recounts a moment of transition in Jesus' life—His boyhood trip to Jerusalem where He stays behind in the temple. This story provides us with a profound model for our spiritual journey, especially as we close one chapter and prepare to begin another.

The childhood of Jesus is only briefly mentioned in the Gospel of Luke. According to today's text, Jesus and His family visited the Jerusalem Temple every year for the Feast of Passover. The Passover is one of the most significant and foundational festivals in the Israelite tradition. It commemorates God's deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, as described in Exodus 12.

After the festival, Mary and Joseph left for home, assuming Jesus was somewhere with their relatives. A day into their journey, they realized He was missing. Imagine their panic!

Doesn't this remind us of how often we lose sight of Jesus in our daily lives, assuming He is with us? We believe in Emmanuel—God with us. But do we truly sense His presence every moment? The end of the year is a time to pause and ask ourselves: Have I drifted away from Jesus?

Mary and Joseph returned to the temple and found Jesus sitting among the teachers, listening, and asking questions. It was likely a profound moment of learning and teaching. Mary, understandably upset, said, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously looking for you.” Jesus replied, “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?”

This moment highlights an essential truth: we should know where we belong and to whom we belong. As children of God, we are called to belong to Him and remain in His presence.

I want to share a story about my mother. Before my entire family came to faith, my mother was the only believer. She was a woman of prayer who never missed early morning prayer services after her faith was renewed and her stomach illness healed.

If she wasn’t home, we knew she was at church. One day, my father, who was drunk at the time, thought my mother had done something inappropriate with her pastor. During a Sunday service, he stormed into the church, interrupting the sermon, and demanded, “Who is the pastor? Come and see me.” My father found the pastor on the pulpit and grabbed him by the collar. But the pastor calmly smiled and said, “Welcome to our church. Your wife has been praying for you to come here. God has answered her prayers.” The congregation responded with, “Praise the Lord!”

A year later, my father was baptized by that same pastor and became a Christian. This story reminds us that God never forgets or gives up on us who step in the church no matter why. My mother believed the church was the house of God, and she found strength and renewal there.

For us, the “Father’s house” is not just a building but any place where we intentionally seek God—in worship, Scripture, prayer, community, or even in our homes. As we prepare for a new year, let’s resolve to make space in the “temple” of our lives for Jesus.

Jesus was found in the temple, not wandering aimlessly but engaging with God’s Word—listening, asking questions, and growing in wisdom. Let us seek Jesus where He is: in the Word, in prayer, and in the company of believers.

Are you putting Jesus at the center of your life? As 2025 approaches, let it be a year of intentional seeking and rediscovery of His presence. If you try to act like the prodigal son in the Bible, as in the funny story I shared at the beginning, you might find yourself experiencing the consequences, like eating pig food. Instead, come back to God’s house, where you truly belong. Begin the new year with a commitment to seek Him intentionally. Return to the “temple” regularly through worship, study and prayer.

Mary and Joseph’s search for Jesus was frantic, but it ultimately led them to Him. Trust that God will guide you through uncertainties and lead you to deeper fellowship with Him.

As this year draws to a close, we’re reminded that Jesus is not only present in the major milestones but also in the quiet moments of reflection, growth, and devotion. Like Mary and Joseph, we may lose sight of Him at times, but He is always waiting for us in the Father’s house.

Thanks be to God. Amen!