We Respond to God's Word

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

Loving God, thank You for the example of Mary, who chose worship over hesitation. Help us to pour out our best for You, not holding back in fear or doubt. Teach us to value what is eternal rather than what fades. Forgive us when we cling to temporary things or hesitate to surrender fully. Give us hearts that love extravagantly, serve joyfully, and trust You completely. May our lives be a fragrant offering, pleasing in Your sight. Guide our choices, Lord, that we may walk in faith, embrace Your calling, and live in the fullness of Your grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

SHARING OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS

PRAYER SONG

After each prayer request: Pastor: Lord, in your mercy, All: Hear our Prayer.

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

May nothing be worth more to us, O God, then the opportunity to know Jesus Christ, to share in Christ's suffering, and to know the transforming power of the resurrection. Bless these offerings, that our church programs may bear fruit and your mission may be accomplished, here and everywhere in the world. Amen!

We Go Forth to Love God and Serve One Another

*CLOSING HYMN	Hymn of Promise	UMH 707 (vs. 1 & 2)
*BENEDICTION		Rev. Jenny Lee
*POSTLUDE	Toni Koons (G)/	'Sharon Asp (A & SCF)



The 2025 Parish Ministry Theme: "Do Good and Share with Others" (Hebrews 13:16)

5th Sunday in Lent





Atlas



Grantsburg-Central Since 1897

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

Rev. Jenny Lee, Ph. D.: jennlee1732@gmail.com Youth Director Shayna Schmid: snssnyder@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 April 6th, 2025 5th Sunday in Lent

*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 to sit at the feet of Jesus, to worship and hear God's message for you.

We count everything else as loss

because knowing Jesus is worth so much more.

God has done great things for us,

and is doing a new thing among us now.

We come, not because we are righteous, but because our faith compels us to stand with Christ. The power of Christ's resurrection

is ours to proclaim and to share.

Forgetting what lies behind, we press toward the goal of the upward call of God in Jesus Christ. Amen.

*DEDICATING HYMN Grace Alone TFWS 2162

OPENING PRAYER Unison

We are glad as we gather to recognize your presence. You are with us in our tears and in our shouts of joy. You uphold us in times of sowing and times of reaping. You stand by us when we complain and withhold, and when we are thankful and generous. Move us now to be more like Christ, in whose name we worship. Amen! Sacrament of Holy Communion

INVITATION FOR COMMUNION Rev. 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 THANKSGIVINGUMH 13-14 (or See insert)THE LORD'S PRAYERSHARING 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

John 12:1-8

(NRSV p. 106 in the NT, or p. 912 in the Living Bible)

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

SERMON "A Better Choice and A Better Life" Rev. 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.

APRIL CHURCH MISSIONS

ATLAS	Missi	ion committee chair: Ashleigh Olson
INK JET RECYCLING PROGRAM: Atlas collects and recycles	LOAVES & FISHES NEEDS OUR ONGOING SUPPORT	We will be collecting supplies for the church in April. Thank you for your support!
ink jet cartridges and cell phones year- round.	Requested items: eggs, milk, mayonnaise, coffee, tea, peanut butter, crackers, cookies. Personal Products for men & women.	Suggested/Needed Items: -Styrofoam coffee cups 8 1/2oz (no large ones) -Plastic drink cups 9oz -Small luncheon paper plates -Gallon plastic bags with twist ties -Furnace filters 20x16 (lasting 3 months or longer)

GRANTSBURG

BE A "BACK-PACK

BACKER"!

Mission committee chair: Deb Hammer

REMEMBER ... Every Sunday Is MAC 'N CHEESE SUNDAY! Supporting the Salvation Army's "Happy Kids Back-Pack Program"

APRIL SHOWERS We will be collecting supplies for the church in April.



Supply Needs: Please check the Mission Board and the April newsletter for a detailed list of items needed. Thank you for your ongoing support of our monthly missions.

ST. CROIX FALLS Mission committee chair: Kate Murtaugh



TODAY'S SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Ministers All God's People / Rev. Jenny Lee

Central -Grantsburg

Communion Barbara Loomis	Cleaning Sandra Erickson Sunday School Volunteer Needed	Sunday School Communion	Volunteer Needed	Than Voly
		Counter	Volunteer Needed	
Cleaning Sandra Erickson	Counter Volunteer Needed	Fellowship	Volunteer Needed	
Counter Volunteer Needed Cleaning Sandra Erickson		Acolyte(s)	Willow Nyland	han
FellowshipVolunteer NeededCounterVolunteer NeededCleaningSandra Erickson	Fellowship Volunteer Needed	Scripture Reading	Toni Koons	T
Acolyte(s)Willow NylandFellowshipVolunteer NeededCounterVolunteer NeededCleaningSandra Erickson	Acolyte(s) Willow Nyland Fellowship Volunteer Needed	Pianist	Toni Koons	
Scripture Reading Acolyte(s) Fellowship Counter Cleaning Sandra Erickson	Scripture Reading Toni Koons Acolyte(s) Willow Nyland Fellowship Volunteer Needed			

Pianist Liturgist Usher Cleaning Sunday School Communion

St. Croix Falls

Pianist Liturgist Usher(s) Counter Bell Ringer Flowers Fellowship Communion Sharon Asp Colleen Adams-Schween Sue Olson **Volunteer Needed** Cheryl Olson Sue Olson

Sharon Asp Kathy Gionis Lynn Hanson Peter Gionis Jim Sciacca Kathy Gionis Admin Members Jim and Karen Sciacca

THIS WEEK'S BIRTHDAYS

Willow Nyland 4/6 Lee Frederickson 4/8 Howard Berenschot 4/10



PLEASE NOTE:

- An Online Zoom Service is scheduled for this Sunday only at 9:00 am. 1)
- The link will be posted on our parish website and Facebook page. 2) Click the LINK to Join Zoom Meeting https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84147808460?pwd=SDZIeFNubmEvaD BIcytTRzVxMFIIZz09

Phone: +1 312 626 6799, Meeting ID: 841 4780 8460, Passcode: 568271

- Our Sunday Sermons are on the website at upperstcroixparish.org under Sermons! 3)
- 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: 5th Sunday in Lent. God bless you!

Worship Service Schedule

4/6:	9:00 am 10:00 am 11:15 am	Grantsburg with Zoom (9:10 am, Children's Time) Atlas (10:15 am, Sunday School) St. Croix Falls
4/6:	2:00 pm	Pastor Jenny Leads Worship at C.C.C.
4/8:	3:30-4:30 pm	Pastor Jenny Leads Mentee Group via Zoom
4/9:	1:00 pm	UMW Meeting (G)
	5:30 -7:30 pm	Youth Activity (G)
4/10:	10:30 am-1:00 pm	Pastor Jenny Volunteers at Loaves and Fishes in Luck
	4:00 pm	Ministry T. F. Meeting (SCF)
	5:00-5:40 pm	Lenten Soup Supper (SCF)
	5:40 -7:30 pm	Lenten Bible Study (SCF)
4/12:	8:00 am	UM Men's Meeting (G)
	9:00 am-1:00 pm	Spring Craft & Bake Sale (A)

Upcoming Events & News

*March: Membership Caring Month (Take care of one another.) *Lenten Bible Study every Thursday at St. Croix Falls

5:00 pm (Soup Supper) & 5:40 pm (Lenten Study) (*Questions? Contact Pastor Jenny*)

- 4/13: Passion/Palm Sunday
- 4/17: Maundy Thursday Service, at 4:00 pm at SCF
- 4/18: Good Friday Service, at 5:30 pm at Grantsburg
- 4/20: Easter Sunday (Sharing of Life-plants & seeds)
- 4/26: Spring Sale and Lunch at Grantsburg-Central

Next Sunday (April 13th):

Central -Grantsburg

Pianist Scripture Reading Acolyte(s) Fellowship Counter Cleaning Sunday School

Toni Koons Toni Koons Willow Nyland Paulie Kratchmer Volunteer Needed Sandra Erickson Volunteer Needed



Atlas

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

St. Croix Falls

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

Breakthrough Prayers:



Please pray for: Sue Olson (healing), Dorothy Miller (hospice), Georgeanne Koons (surgery and healing), Ken Olson (recovery), Ron Aldorfer (healing), Joy (healing & continuing care), Lynn Hanson (healing), Nancy Tober (recovery), Shea Wojtowicz (healing), Sanci and Rifle Harshman (healing), Jameson Koser (healing), Jim Loomis (strength), those struggling with illness and/or addiction, undocumented immigrants and for the U.S.A, and Myanmar (earthquake), the world (God's peace).

Praise the Lord in gratitude and joy: Karen and Jim Sciacca (birth of their new grandson).

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

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



"A Better Choice and A Better Life"

I want to start with something funny that I found on the internet: There was a preacher who fell into the ocean and couldn't swim. A boat came by, and the captain yelled, "Do you need help, sir?" The preacher calmly replied, "No, God will save me." A little later, another boat came by, and a fisherman asked, "Hey, do you need help?" Again, the preacher replied, "No, God will save me." Eventually, the preacher drowned and went to heaven. He asked God, "Why didn't You save me?" God replied, "Fool, I sent you two boats!"

Do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior? Yes, you do—that's why you are here today. But there are many people who do not choose Jesus. Remember, God is not fake; God is real. God is the living God. If we truly believe this, we should make choices with a God-centered mindset.

As I reflect on my life, I sometimes think about the good and bad choices I have made. A few years ago, I had a conversation with my spiritual mentor about making wise choices. She shared three of the best choices she ever made, ones she never regretted:

- 1. Attending seminary and becoming a Methodist pastor.
- 2. Adopting her daughter.
- 3. Marrying her husband.

After hearing her story, I reflected on my own life and asked myself: What choices have I made that I will never regret? The best choice I have ever made is believing in Jesus and dedicating my life to Him. Without Jesus, I would not be here today. Whenever I found myself in a dark place, Jesus was my strength and my rock. He lifted me up. Jesus is my hope and the very reason I live.

What about you? What is the best choice you have made in your life?

As a pastor, one of the most heartbreaking things is seeing people lose their faith and leave the church when they face difficulties. They say they still believe in Jesus and are holding onto their faith, but they stop attending church because of their circumstances. However, the reality is that those who leave rarely return. Knowing how long it takes—if they ever come back—makes my heart ache.

Especially after the pandemic, many people have left the church. Of course, they have their reasons. But there is no excuse to leave Jesus. The better choice—the choice you have made—is to stay connected to the church and to Him.

Life is filled with choices. We make choices every day—what to eat, where to go, how to spend our time. Some choices seem small, while others shape our entire lives. In today's passage, Mary of Bethany makes a choice that reveals the kind of life God desires for us: a life of devotion, love, and true worship.

The Gospel of John, chapter 12, opens with Jesus at a dinner given in His honor, just days before His crucifixion. Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead, is reclining at the table. Martha is serving, and then there is Mary—who does something extraordinary. She takes a jar of expensive perfume—pure nard, worth nearly a year's wages—and pours it on Jesus' feet, wiping them with her hair. This act is extravagant, humble, and deeply personal.

Now, imagine these three people. Each of them chose a path that reflected their devotion to Jesus.

• Lazarus chose to listen to Jesus' message.

- Mary chose to offer her expensive perfume, preparing for Jesus' death.
- Martha continued to serve others, working behind the scenes.

You may remember that when they first met Jesus, Mary chose to sit at His feet and listen to His teaching, while Martha busied herself in the kitchen, serving Jesus and His disciples. However, Martha became frustrated and asked Jesus to tell Mary to help her. But Jesus gently replied: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:38-42).

Some misunderstand this passage, thinking that Jesus was saying listening to His message is better than serving others. But that is not the point. The real lesson is that whatever we choose to do for the Lord, we should do it with joy and gratitude, without complaint or criticism.

In today's scripture, we see how much their relationship with Jesus had grown. They had become His beloved friends, and their home was a place He loved to visit whenever He traveled to Jerusalem. After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, they held a celebration. But what began as a party for Lazarus' resurrection became a moment to prepare for Jesus' coming death.

Even in this moment, they each made their own choices: Lazarus chose to listen; Mary chose to pour out her love in worship; Martha chose to serve. And this time, there was no frustration, no complaints—only love, devotion, and gratitude. This is the better choice: choosing a life centered on Jesus, a life of worship.

On the other hand, Judas Iscariot criticizes Mary, arguing that the perfume could have been sold and the money given to the poor. On the surface, his concern seems valid, but John tells us the truth: Judas wasn't thinking about the poor—he was thinking about himself. He was a thief, stealing from the money bag. His words sounded noble, but his heart was far from Jesus. Judas walked with Jesus but never truly gave his heart to Him. He made a different choice—a life of selfishness, deception, and ultimately, destruction.

Jesus defends Mary: "Leave her alone. She has kept it for the day of my burial. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me." Mary understood something the others missed—Jesus was on His way to the cross. Her act of love was a preparation for His burial. She made the better choice, and Jesus honored it.

Mary's choice reminds us that the best life is not found in wealth, status, or even good deeds alone—it is found in loving and worshiping Jesus.

- First, choose worship over worry Like Martha (Luke 10:38-42), we can be distracted by many things. But Jesus reminds us that only one thing is truly needed: sitting at His feet.
- Second, choose devotion over distraction The world is full of demands, but nothing is more important than knowing Christ.
- Lastly, choose the eternal over the temporary Mary's perfume was costly, but she recognized that Jesus was worth far more.

Are we living for what truly lasts?

Mary chose the better path—a life centered on Jesus. Judas chose poorly and lost everything.

What about us? Are we offering Jesus our best, or just what's left over? Are we worshiping in spirit and truth, or merely going through the motions?

A better choice leads to a better life—the life Jesus came to give us.

Let's choose worship. Let's choose devotion. Let's choose Jesus.

What choice will we make today? Will we pour out our best for Jesus, or will we hold back?

The invitation is open. A better life begins when we choose Him.

Thanks be to God. Amen.