



**Upper St. Croix Parish**  
**Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls**  
**June 29th, 2025**

**“3rd Sunday After Pentecost”**

\*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

The agendas of the world place many gods before us,  
but today we seek the counsel of the One who is truly God.

**We went to hear once more of a God who cares,  
a God who has high expectations of us.**

Let nothing stand in the way of our listening,  
and no looking back prevent our following Christ.

**For freedom Christ has set us free;  
therefore, we will not submit to the yoke of slavery.**

Let us celebration the freedom that is ours in Christ,  
turning away from temptations of the flesh that enslave.

**We will not use people for our own ends,  
but seek to love our neighbors as ourselves. Amen.**

**\*DEDICATING HYMN** *O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee*  
UMH 430 (vs. 1 & 2)

**OPENING PRAYER** Unison

Holy and loving God, we gather this day in the power of Your Spirit, grateful for Your mercy that renews us each morning. As we worship, open our hearts to Your Word and strengthen us to follow Christ without hesitation. Shape us to be people of grace, courage, and compassion, bearing witness to Your love in all we do. Let Your joy fill this place and guide our lives. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

**CHILDREN’S TIME (G)**

UMH 191 (vs. 1)

**Proclamation of God’s Word**

**\*THE GOSPEL LESSON**

**Luke 9:51-62**

*(NRSV, p. 70-71 in the New Testament, and p. 872-873 in the Living Bible)*

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

**SERMON**

*“No Excuses, If you Love”*

**Rev. Jenny Lee**

**We Respond to God’s Word**

**RESPONDING PRAYER** Unison

Gracious God, thank You for calling us to follow Jesus with hearts full of love. Help us let go of all excuses and walk forward in faith. Fill us with Your Spirit so we may respond with obedience, patience, and compassion. Teach us to love You above all else and to love others as You have loved us. May our lives reflect Your grace as we follow You each day. 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!*

**THE LORD’S PRAYER**

**INVITATION/PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS**

**\*DOXOLOGY**

**UMH 95**

**\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION** Unison

Generous God, we bring these gifts to You with grateful hearts, knowing all we have comes from Your hand. Bless and multiply these offerings, that they may be used to share Your love, feed the hungry,

# JUNE CHURCH MISSIONS



## ATLAS

Mission committee chair: Ashleigh Olson

<p><b>INK JET RECYCLING PROGRAM:</b> 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>For June we will continue collecting items for Community Referral Agency (CRA) in Milltown that provides shelter and services for survivors of domestic violence and assault.</p> <p>Items should be new or in good to very good condition. Please see the newsletter or bulletin board at church for a list of suggested items.</p> <p>Thank you!</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>In June we will be collecting financial donations for CUMC's discretionary fund.</p> <p>This fund is used by the pastor to assist individual who reach out to the church for help.</p> <p>This can be money for gas, food or other essential needs.</p> 
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## ST. CROIX FALLS

Mission committee chair: Kate Murtaugh

<p><b>Food Shelf</b></p> <p><i>(Communion Sunday)</i></p> 	<p><b>Sailor Hat Offering:</b></p> <p><i>The Sailor Hat offering will go to support Polk County Drug Court.</i></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
Scripture Reading	Toni Koons
Acolyte(s)	Willow Nyland
Fellowship	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
Mowing	Dave Huff
Counter	Dave Huff
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson
Sunday School	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>

## Atlas

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

## St. Croix Falls

Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Jim Andrews
Usher(s)	Lynn Hanson
Counter	Peter Gionis
Bell Ringer	Kathy Gionis
Flowers	Women of the church
Fellowship	Admin Members



**THIS WEEK'S BIRTHDAYS**

Jamie Steffen  
7/12



## PLEASE NOTE:

- 1) There is Zoom Service only at 9:00 AM.
- 2) Our Sunday Sermons are on the website at upperstcroixparish.org under Sermons!
- 3) We will also send you a weekly bulletin and written sermon through post mail and email.
- 4) Please note that we send you every week **USCP Weekly ENews with Photos & Sunday Worship Materials** through 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 After Pentecost. May God bless you!

## Worship Service Schedule

6/29:	9:00 am	Central-Grantsburg UMC (with Zoom)
	10:00 am	Atlas UMC
	11:15 am	St. Croix Falls UMC
6/30:	10:30 am-1:30 pm	Harmony Choir Rehearsal at Cumberland UMC
7/4:		Independence Day

## Breakthrough Prayers:

**Please pray for:** Kayleen Branstad (Babysitting), Julie Branstad (friend, Marylynn-healing, and Judy and Duane-lost ten trees in the storm), Paulie Kratchmer (her granddaughter, Brooke and her mission team), Michelle (Toni's friend-surgery, 7/14), Barbara Loomis (recovery), Anneliese Snyder (recovery), Kathy Gionis (her friend, Sue-healing), Karen Sciacca (her son-looking for new house), those who are involved in service, and those who are affected by the nature disasters.



**Praise the Lord with Joy and Gratitude:** Megan Baglio (back to work), Mikala Hammer (recovery-back to work), Karen Sciacca (her son, self-control during Marathon), and Kathy Gionis (family gathering)

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

## Next Sunday (July 6):

### Central -Grantsburg

Pianist	Toni Koons
Scripture Reading	Toni Koons
Acolyte(s)	Willow Nyland
Fellowship	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
Mowing	Dave Huff
Counter	Dave Huff
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson
Sunday School	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
Communion	Barbara Loomis

### Atlas

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

### St. Croix Falls

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



## Upcoming Events & News

7/28-31:	2025 Vacation Bible School (Registration is open now)
7/13:	The First Volunteer Training Day (5:30-8:00 pm)
7/20:	The second Volunteer Training Day (3:30-5:30pm)
7/23:	The Last Volunteer Training Day (6:00-8:30 pm)

*Thank you very much for your dedication!*



## **“No Excuses, if You Love”**

I want to start with something funny that I found an internet site: A young man called his mother and announced excitedly that he had just met the woman of his dreams, and asked his mother, “Now what should he do?” His mother had an idea, “Why don't you send her flowers and on the card invite her to your place for a home-cooked meal?” He thought this was a great strategy and arranged a date for a week later. His mother called the day after the big date to see how things had gone. “The evening was a disaster,” he moaned. “Why didn't she come over?” asked his mother. “Oh, she came over, but she refused to cook.”

Do you remember the first time you met your spouse? What made you decide to marry them? When I was serving a younger congregation in Chicago, most of the members were in their twenties and thirties—and most of them were single. As you can imagine, the most exciting thing for them was having a boyfriend or girlfriend. If someone had a blind date, everyone would gather around to hear how it went.

If they didn't like the person, they always had many reasons—too short, too old, no sense of humor, talked too much, boring, didn't make enough money, and so on. But if they liked the person, they would simply say, “I like him,” or “I like her.” That's it. No reason or explanation needed. I learned something important from them: when you don't like something or someone, you can find a thousand reasons. But when you do, there's often just one—you simply love them. Love, in the end, covers everything.

When you fall in love, it doesn't matter whether someone is tall or short, attractive or plain, funny or boring, a great cook or not. If you love them, you go after what—or whom—you love. If you love your spouse, your friends, or your coworkers, you often find yourself following their lead—because love shapes your choices. No excuses, if you love.

When Jesus called His disciples, they followed Him without any questions. Mark 1:16–20 shows us how they responded to His call: “As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.’ And immediately they left their nets and followed him.”

How could this happen? I've often wondered how they were able to follow Jesus so quickly—without hesitation or questions. The answer is: because it was Jesus. The Holy Spirit may have already been at work in their hearts, guiding them to recognize and respond to His call.

Now think about this: how many people have you seen immediately follow you when you invite them to church? Even among your own family members, it's rare for someone to come right away—especially to a regular Sunday service. Of course, on Christmas, Easter, or for a special event, it might be easier to get them to say yes.

But don't be discouraged by your loved ones who haven't followed yet. Remember, it's not about you—it's about the Spirit. It's about prayer and patience, not just your love or effort. Don't give up. Keep inviting them. Keep praying. As you continue to ask them with a heart full of hope and prayer, the Holy Spirit will guide them—just as the Holy Spirit once guided the first disciples.

In today's Scripture (Luke 9:51–62), we see a contrast. Some people did not follow Jesus when He called them. This was the final stage of Jesus' public ministry. He had already set His face toward Jerusalem—His mind and mission were urgent. He intended to take a shortcut through a Samaritan village, but the Samaritans wouldn't allow Him to pass through.

Why? Because the Jews wouldn't allow Samaritans to worship at the Jerusalem Temple—they were seen as Gentiles, outsiders. So, the Samaritans returned the sentiment: if they weren't welcome in Jerusalem, they wouldn't let Jesus and His followers pass through.

The disciples were upset. James and John asked, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" They were angry that anyone would dare reject Jesus. But they didn't fully understand who Jesus was. If people don't accept your invitation to church, pray for them—they may not know who Jesus truly is yet.

Jesus continued calling people to follow Him. But many had excuses. One said, "I will follow you, but let me first bury my father." Another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me say farewell to those at home." Their responses were very different from those of the first disciples. We may wonder: what's wrong with burying a loved one before following Jesus? Why did Jesus reply, "Let the dead bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God"?

To understand this, we need to consider the cultural background. According to the Law (Numbers 6:6; Leviticus 21:10–11), religious leaders were prohibited from touching a dead body before worshiping God. They believed touching the dead made them unclean.

Remember the story of the Good Samaritan? A priest and a Levite passed by the injured man, afraid of becoming unclean. But a Samaritan—who didn't follow that law—stopped and helped with loving care. Jesus taught us to act like the Good Samaritan. So, when Jesus said, "Let the dead bury their own dead," He was showing that the Law is meant to serve love. The Law without love becomes violence. Those who keep the Law without love are spiritually dead. Jesus never rejected the Law. He said, "Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to destroy them but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17). Because Jesus is love, the Law is fulfilled in Him.

Paul writes: "If I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing." (1 Corinthians 13:2–3)

Love is everything. If you love, there are no excuses. God sent Jesus because He loves us. Jesus died on the cross because He loves us. We follow Jesus because we love God—there is no other reason to be a Christian. Open your mind and heart so that God may work in you. Walk with Jesus each day. Don't look back at the things of this world. No excuses—if you love Jesus.

Jesus says, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." If you say farewell to the world to walk with Jesus, don't desire it anymore. Remember Lot's wife—she looked back and became a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26). To walk with Jesus, we may need to give something up. But remember, there is only one reason God calls us: love. Let us love God and love one another—day by day.

Thanks be to God. Amen.