

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION Unison**

Generous God, You have given us the Kingdom, not as a reward, but as a gift of grace. As we bring these offerings, we do so with joyful and thankful hearts. Use them to build Your upside-down Kingdom—where the hungry are fed, the lonely are welcomed, and the servant becomes the host. Bless both the gift and the giver, in Jesus' name. Amen.

We Go Forth to Love God and Serve One Another

***CLOSING HYMN** *Freely, Freely* **UMH 389**

***BENEDICTION** **Rev. Jenny Lee**

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

NO. 2025-32
August 10th, 2025

 **Upper St. Croix Parish
United Methodist Church**

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

“9th Sunday After Pentecost”



Grantsburg-Central
Since 1897



Atlas
Since 1887



St. Croix Falls
Since 1859

SUNDAY SERVICES:

9:00 AM at Grantsburg (with Zoom Service)

(9:10 AM, Children's Time)

10:00 AM at Atlas (Sunday School on Summer Break)

11:15 AM at St. Croix Falls

CONTACT INFORMATION

Rev. 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
August 10th, 2025
“9th 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

Be watchful and ready;

The Human One is coming at an unexpected hour.

We are ready for Jesus Christ to enter our lives;

We would be servants and disciples.

You are offered a place in God’s dominion,

a dwelling place in the community where God rules.

God’s realm is coming and is already here.

We are becoming whom God wants us to be.

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for,

the conviction of things not seen.

The world was created by the Word of God,

made out of things that do not appear. Amen.

***DEDICATING HYMN** *I Stand Amazed in the Presence*

UMH 371 (vs. 1 & 2)

OPENING PRAYER Unison

Loving and gracious God,

You invite us into a Kingdom that turns the world upside down—

where the last are first, the humble are lifted, and the Servant

becomes the Host. As we gather for worship, quiet our anxious hearts,

light the lamps of our faith, and clothe us with readiness to serve. May

Your Spirit move among us, reminding us that it is Your good

pleasure to give us the Kingdom. We offer You our praise, our trust,
and our love. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

CHILDREN’S TIME (G)

UMH 191 (vs. 1)

Proclamation of God’s Word

***THE GOSPEL LESSON**

Luke 12:32-40

(NRSV, p. 75 in the New Testament, and p. 877 in the Living Bible)

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

Thanks be to God. Amen!

SERMON

“The Kingdom of God: An Upside-Down Reality”

Rev. Jenny Lee

We Respond to God’s Word

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

Gracious God, thank You for the upside-down grace of Your Kingdom, where the least are lifted, the servants are honored, and Christ Himself serves us in love. Teach us to live ready—not with fear, but with joy and generosity. Help us to keep our lamps lit, our hearts open, and our hands willing to serve. Shape us by Your love, so that when You come, You find us faithful. In Jesus’ name we pray. 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

AUGUST 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>For the month of August Atlas will be collecting funds for UMCOR for US disaster response and recovery. Examples are Texas flooding and tornados in Minnesota.</p> <p>Thank you for your ongoing support!</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>This month will be collecting financial donations for UMCOR as a delayed donation for World Refugee Day which was June 20, 2025. World Refugee Day IS the international day to honor people who have been forced to flee.</p>  <p>Together, we can champion their right to seek safety, build support for their economic and social inclusion, and advocate for solutions to their plight. Thank you for your support!</p>
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ST. CROIX FALLS

Mission committee chair: Kate Murtaugh

<p>Food Shelf</p> <p><i>(Communion Sunday)</i></p> 	<p>Sailor Hat Offering:</p> <p><i>The Sailor Hat offering will go to support those affected by the flooding in Mexico</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	Volunteer Needed
Mowing	Volunteer Needed
Counter	Volunteer Needed
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson
Sunday School	Volunteer Needed

Atlas

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

St. Croix Falls

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



THIS WEEK'S BIRTHDAYS

Charles Wright 8/15



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 E-News 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: 9th Sunday After Pentecost. May God bless you!

Worship Service Schedule

8/10:	9:00 am	Central-Grantsburg UMC (with Zoom)
	10:00 am	Atlas UMC
	11:15 am	St. Croix Falls
8/10:	9:45 am	Fellowship (A)
	1:00-3:00 pm	Family Swim Day (Grantsburg Pool)
	2:00 pm	Pastor Jenny Leads Worship at C.C.C.
8/11:	5:00 pm	VBS Volunteers' Dinner & Evaluation (G)
8/12:	6:30 pm	SPRC Meeting via Zoom
8/13:	9:30 am-2 pm	UMW Thrift Shopping & Lunch
	5:30-7:00 pm	Kids Gathering 5 & Up (G)
8/14:	2:00 pm	Ministry TF Team Meeting (SCF)
8/15:	1:30 pm	Admin Council Meeting (A)
	6:30 pm	Music on the Overlook (SCF)
8/17:	12:15 pm	Admin Council Meeting (SCF)

**MARK
YOUR CALENDAR!**

Next Sunday (August 17th):

Central -Grantsburg

Pianist	Toni Koons
Scripture Reading	Toni Koons
Acolyte(s)	Willow Nyland
Fellowship	Volunteer Needed
Mowing	Volunteer Needed
Counter	Volunteer Needed
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson
Sunday School	Volunteer Needed

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Pianist	Sharon Asp
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Bell Ringer	Jim Sciacca
Flowers	Women of the church
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Upcoming Events & News

8/12	6:30 pm, SPRC Meeting via Zoom
8/24:	10:30 am, Joint Service at Atlas Park (Blessing of the backpacks, our animals, and our teachers)

Thank you very much for your dedication!

August 10th, 2025

Luke 12:31-40

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



“The Kingdom of God: An Upside-Down Reality”

I want to start with something funny I found on an internet site: A taxi driver and a minister died on the same day and stood before God to be judged. First, God asked the taxi driver, “Where did you work?” The taxi driver answered, “I worked in New York City.” God looked at the record and said, “Okay, go to heaven through the golden gate.”

The minister overheard this and felt proud, expecting an even greater reward than the taxi driver. But when he stood before God, God didn’t ask him anything. He simply looked at the record and said, “Go to hell.” Shocked, the minister cried out, “Lord, there must be some mistake! I was a minister! I worked hard for Your people! How could You send the taxi driver to heaven and me to hell?”

God replied, “I judge by results. When the taxi driver was driving, people prayed. But when you were preaching, people fell asleep.”

Have you ever been caught off guard—in a good way?

Imagine you’ve been working all day, preparing your home for guests: sweeping the floors, setting the table, lighting the candles. Then, when the guests arrive... they take off your apron, sit you down, and say, “Let us serve you.” It sounds backwards. Upside-down. But in the Kingdom of God, this is the kind of grace we meet. The Kingdom of God is upside-down: the servant becomes the host.

I enjoy cooking and sharing food with my loved ones. So, I often invite my friends over for a meal. To get ready, I clean the house, plan the menu, and go grocery shopping. I can understand Martha—how busy her mind must have been! Of course, it’s a joyful experience to prepare for a gathering, but it also comes with a lot of work.

Then, when my friends arrive, we enjoy our time and the meal together. And afterward, they make me sit down, take off my apron, and they clean up—washing all the dishes. We work together and respect one another. It’s full of joy, laughter, and happiness. Where the host becomes a servant, and everyone shares in the work with love—there is the Kingdom of God.

In today’s passage, Jesus paints a picture of what it means to live ready for the Kingdom—not with fear or frantic effort, but with expectation and trust. And then he gives us a glimpse of the greatest surprise of all: the servant becomes the Host.

Jesus begins not with a warning, but with a comfort: In verse 32, Jesus says, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” He doesn’t say we need to earn the Kingdom. It’s God’s joy to give it. This is not a demanding Master, but a generous Father. We are not abandoned sheep—we are His “little flock.” Because of this promise, we are free from fear, and free to live differently. That’s why Jesus goes on to say:

“Sell your possessions and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit.” (vs. 33–35)

This is not just a list of commands—it’s a portrait of an upside-down Kingdom, where giving is richer than keeping, where serving is greater than ruling, where trust replaces fear, and where God, the King, becomes our Host and Servant.

Jesus tells us not to be afraid, because it is the Father's good pleasure to give us the Kingdom. The Kingdom is a gift—not earned by performance, but received by grace. And in this Kingdom, everything is turned on its head. Jesus invites us into lives of radical readiness: not storing up more, but giving more; not being anxious, but being attentive.

We're called to be dressed for action—like someone ready to go at a moment's notice—and to keep our lamps lit, like someone joyfully watching for the Master's return. This is not a fearful waiting. It's the alert joy of someone expecting good news: like a child looking out the window for Mom or Dad to return from a trip, or a family preparing the table for a long-lost friend. This kind of watchfulness flows from love, not fear.

Here's the heart of the passage—the most shocking part: “He will have them recline at the table, and he will come and serve them.” (v. 37) Let that sink in: The Master becomes the Servant. The King becomes the Host. This is a glimpse of Jesus Himself: The One we wait for is the One who washed feet. The One who will return in glory is the same One who gave His life on the cross. The Lord of the household is the One who sets the table and serves the bread.

In the Kingdom of God, leadership looks like servanthood. And readiness looks like being shaped by that kind of love.

Jesus ends with this call in verse 40, “You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.” We don't know the day or the hour. But we do know the One we're waiting for. We know His heart. We've seen His mercy. We've heard His promise. No wonder Jesus tells us to let go of earthly treasures—there's a far greater reward awaiting us. One not stored in barns but in heaven. One not marked by status, but by self-giving love.

So how do we live ready?

We may make space in our hearts and homes for others. We can serve now, just as Jesus served. We let go of fear and control, trusting the One who serves us with grace.

Last week, we offered Vacation Bible School with the theme “True North.” True North is not a false direction—it means a point that never, ever changes. So, who or what never changes?

Yes, our Lord Jesus Christ is the only one who never changes. He never changes His promises to us. He never changes His love for us. At VBS, we learned that we can always trust Jesus. With younger kids, youth helpers, and adult volunteers, we made joyful noise—full of laughter, shouting, and the divine Spirit moving in the church. That is the Kingdom of God.

Regardless of age, gender, or church membership, we simply enjoyed the moment together.

Through that joyful time, not only the children and youth, but all of the adult volunteers experienced something special: When we wonder—we trust Jesus. When we feel powerless—we trust Jesus. When we feel alone—we trust Jesus. When we need hope—we trust Jesus.

With the children, I truly felt that the Kingdom of God must be like this. The reason so many kids joyfully learned about Jesus is because of your donations, support, service, and prayers—offered with the hope that our church's ministry will continue through these young ones, and that they will grow into faithful Christian leaders. It was a place where adults served the kids. Where those who had more gave to those who had less—whether in materials, talents, abilities, wisdom, or even age.

The Kingdom of God is not far off—it is breaking in, here and now. Every time we love generously, forgive freely, or serve humbly, we join the rhythm of God's Kingdom.

One day, Christ will return. And for those who have lived in readiness—not out of fear, but out of love—there will be joy. There will be a table. And we will sit. And Jesus, the risen Lord, will serve. The Servant will become the Host. Thanks be to God. Amen.