

*We Respond to God's Word***RESPONDING PRAYER Unison**

Lord Jesus, we confess that at times our faith has grown bland, and our lives have lost the distinct flavor of Your love. Forgive us for compromise and inaction. Renew our hearts, strengthen our commitment, and help us live boldly as Your disciples. May we preserve what is holy, reflect Your grace in every word and deed, and bring life, hope, and healing to those around us. 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!

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

UMH 95

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION Unison**

Gracious God, we bring these gifts with thankful hearts, acknowledging that all we have comes from You. Use our offerings to bless Your church, serve our community, and further Your kingdom. May our giving reflect our commitment to follow You wholeheartedly, just as we seek to live as faithful disciples. Multiply these gifts for Your glory and transform us into instruments of Your love. Amen.

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

Grace Greater than Our Sin

UMH 365 (vs. 1 & 4)

***BENEDICTION**

Rev. Jenny Lee

***POSTLUDE**

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



Upper St. Croix Parish United Methodist Church

The 2025 Parish Ministry Theme:

"Do Good and Share with Others" (Hebrews 13:16)

"13th 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

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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
September 7th, 2025
“13th 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

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and Mother
and from the Sovereign Jesus Christ.

**Because we have been strengthened by the grace of God
we are here to offer our sacrifices of praise.**

God will not forsake or abandon us,
but promises justice to the upright of heart.

**If God had not been our help,
our souls would have dwelt in silence.**

God is our stronghold and refuge;
the steadfast love of God upholds us.

**When the cares of our hearts are many,
the consolations of God cheer our souls. Amen.**

***DEDICATING HYMN** *I Am Thine, O Lord*
UMH 419 (vs. 1 & 2)

OPENING PRAYER Unison

Gracious Lord, as we gather at Your table, we remember the cost
of discipleship. Help us to follow You with wholehearted devotion,
laying aside all that hinders our love for You. May this bread and
cup remind us of Your sacrifice and call us to faithful living.

Strengthen our commitment, deepen our love, and empower us to
serve boldly in Your kingdom. Amen.

Sacrament of Holy Communion

INVITATION FOR COMMUNION
CONFESSION AND PARDON Unison
Merciful God,

Rev. Jenny Lee

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 your 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 THANKSGIVING UMH 13-14 (or See insert)
THE LORD’S PRAYER
SHARING 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** Luke 14:25-33

(NRSV, p. 78 in the New Testament, and p. 880 in the Living Bible)

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

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.

SEPTEMBER 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 September Atlas will be collecting funds for Moolah for Milk. This is the Salvation Army program to raise money to supply milk vouchers for the Backpack program. 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>September's Mission is Moolah for Milk!</p> <p>We will be collecting money to support the Salvation Army's milk vouchers provided in the Backpack program. Thank you for your continued support!</p> 
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ST. CROIX FALLS

Mission committee chair: Kate Murtaugh

<p>Food Shelf</p> <p>(Communion Sunday)</p> 	<p>Sailor Hat Offering:</p> <p><i>The Sailor Hat offering will go to support the SCF School Backpack Program!</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	Ad Council-Pie & ice-cream
Mowing	Dave Huff
Counter	Volunteer Needed
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson
Sunday School	Volunteer Needed
Communion	Barbara

Atlas

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

St. Croix Falls

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



THIS WEEK'S BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES



Briana & Jared Olson 9/10
Troy & Kristie Olson 9/10
Sasha Chute 9/11
Don Anderson 9/12

PLEASE NOTE:

- 1) **Live Zoom service will be at 9:00 am through the Grantsburg-Central Service.**
- 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 (if requested) and email.
- 4) Please note that we send you the weekly **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: 13th Sunday After Pentecost. May God bless you!

Worship Service Schedule

9/7:	9:00 am	Grantsburg-Central UMC
	10:00 am	Atlas UMC
	11:15 am	St. Croix Falls UMC
9/8:	1:00 pm	NW Korean Clergy & Family Gathering at Parsonage
9/10:	1:00 pm	UMW Meeting & Luncheon at V@nessa's Diner (G)
	5:30 pm -7:30pm	Youth Gathering (G)
9/11:	10:30 am-1:00 pm	Pastor Jenny volunteers at Loaves and Fishes in Luck
9/12-13:		Lay Servant Retreat at Luther Park Bible Camp in Chetek

Breakthrough Prayers:

Please pray for: Julie Branstad (those affected by the tragedy in Minneapolis), Toni Koons, (daughter's safe travel), Sharon Asp (friend, Jean's medical concerns), Kathy Gionis (Gaza and those who under the risk), and God's peace in the USA and the world

Praise the Lord with Joy and Gratitude: Sally Alderfer (improvement of husband's health and had joyful time with children), Mary Lou Wright (daughter, surgery went well and grandson loves his school), Russ Hammer (good visit high school friends), Kathleen Branstad (Grantsburg High School football team), Sue Olson (great-grandson's healthy improvement), Lynn Hanson (prayers answered), Karen Sciacca (got a new companion dog, and son found a new house).

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

Next Sunday (September 14th):

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	Cheryl Olson-Rally Sunday

St. Croix Falls

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



Upcoming Events & News

9/14:	Rally Sunday-Bible Presentation (A) Infant Baptism (Giada- Giacomo and Megan Branstad Baglio) (G)
9/22-9/26	Pastor Jenny will attend the Continuing Education Program in Tucson, AZ.
9/27	Atlas Thrift and Bake

September 7th, 2025
Luke 14:25-35

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



“Salt That Loses Its Flavor”

I want to start with something funny I found on the internet: A little boy told his mom he wanted to save up for a bike. He proudly announced, “I’ve already got three dollars and eighty-seven cents. How much more do I need?” His mom said, “About \$96 more.” The boy sighed, “Well, I guess I’ll buy a gumball instead.”

A few weeks ago, I saw the Grantsburg church sign. It read, “If you don’t climb the mountain, you can’t get the view.” That sign made me think of our faith journey. As Christians, we have already begun the journey toward the Promised Land. But if we don’t complete the journey, we can’t expect to enter it. It’s like the boy who gave up on the bike and settled for a gumball.

Our faith journey is lifelong. As the apostle Paul writes in 2 Timothy 4:7–8 (NRSV): “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day—and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

God judges our faith at the end of the journey. That’s why we must keep climbing the mountain until we reach the view.

Today, Jesus talks about discipleship. Discipleship isn’t completed by taking a class or attending a Bible study. It’s a lifelong journey, shaped by how we live.

Let’s zoom in on today’s scripture. One day, Jesus was walking along the road, followed by a huge crowd. People were excited—He healed the sick, told amazing stories, and fed thousands with just a few loaves of bread. Who wouldn’t want to follow someone like that?

I know the new generation follows superstars—athletes, singers, and movie stars. But if Jesus were here today, everyone would follow Him like a big fan. Yet being a fan is very different from being a disciple.

I’m on Facebook—how many of you use Facebook, Instagram, or some other platform? If so, you know how many *followers* you have. But followers aren’t disciples. For example, our parish Facebook page has 284 followers, but many of them don’t attend our churches—some may not even be Christian.

Jesus noticed that many of His followers were just fans, like Facebook followers checking in online. Then He stopped, turned, and shocked the crowd with these words: “Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26).

Wait—what? Isn’t this the same Jesus who said, “Love one another as I have loved you”? What does He mean? Does Jesus really want us to hate our families and our lives? Of course not. In Hebrew idiom, the word “*hate*” can mean to “*love less*” or to set a lower priority. Jesus isn’t calling us to despise our families; He’s calling us to give Him our highest loyalty—even above family and life itself. In other words, Jesus was saying: “If you want to follow Me, you must love Me more than anything else. You must carry your cross.”

Now, that must have shocked the crowd. Carrying a cross wasn't a metaphor to them—it was the ultimate punishment for criminals. It meant pain, shame, and even death.

Then Jesus gave two examples. First, He said, “Imagine you want to build a tower.” Back then, towers were costly stone projects. You wouldn't start without checking your budget. If you ran out halfway, people would laugh at the half-finished tower. Second, He said, “Think about a king going to war.” Before rushing in, the king asks: “Do I have enough soldiers to win, or should I make peace?”

Jesus was saying: “It's the same with following Me. Don't just get caught up in the excitement. Count the cost. Being My disciple means giving Me first place in your life—even above everything you own.” So, the question remains: are we just fans of Jesus, or are we His true followers?

To drive the point home, Jesus used a simple but powerful image: salt. “Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored?” (Luke 14:34).

Salt in the ancient world wasn't just for flavor. It preserved food, healed wounds, and enhanced taste. In the same way, our faith is meant to preserve God's values, bring life, and flavor the world with Christ's love.

But salt can lose its saltiness if it's diluted, contaminated, or left unused. Likewise, disciples lose their distinctiveness when they compromise values, blend into the world, or practice faith superficially. Jesus warns: “It is no longer useful and is thrown out.”

Let me give you an example. When my sister-in-law first learned to cook, she didn't know how to use salt. She would cook without seasoning and just put salt on the table. Every dish was bland. Later, she became a good cook—because she wanted to love and care for her husband well. That's love.

In our spiritual lives, salt is like obedience, love, joy, hope, and peace. Without these, life is bland and meaningless. People around us may see us, but they won't “taste” the difference of God's kingdom in us.

Think of our church's influence in the community. Are we bold in standing for justice, mercy, and truth? Or do we blend in, avoiding conflict and losing our distinctiveness?

Losing our saltiness doesn't just affect us—it diminishes God's impact in the world. Our faith must be active—through obedience, prayer, service, and love. People should taste Christ in us. Our lives should reflect integrity, compassion, courage, and hope.

Jesus calls His disciples to be salty—not bland, not neutral. To be salt is to live a faith that preserves, heals, and flavors the world with His love.

So, ask yourself: Am I salty for Christ? Or have I lost my distinctiveness? Let us live with boldness, love, and faithfulness—so that we may be true salt for the kingdom, bringing life, flavor, and hope wherever we go.

Thanks be to God. Amen.