

Upper St. Croix Parish
Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls
December 14th, 2025
“3rd Sunday of Advent”

*Please stand if you are able.

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

***ADVANT SONG** TFWS 2090 (vs. 3)

***LIGHTING THE THIRD CANDLE**

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

Rejoice with great joy and singing,
for you shall see the glory of God.

**How shall we see the Sovereign One,
and where is joy to be found?**

God has promised to come to us,
with saving grace to meet our needs.

**We are weighed down with limitations
and oppressed by many fears.**

God breaks into the deserts of our despair
with springs of water to quench our thirst.

Grant us strength and patience

to await God’s coming and receive the good news. Amen.

***DEDICATING HYMN** *Joy to the World* UMH 246 (vs. 1 & 2)

OPENING PRAYER Unison

Loving God, we gather in this holy season of Advent to seek Your light, Your hope, and Your joy. Open our hearts to welcome Christ anew. Calm our worries, awaken our gratitude, and draw us together as one people in Your love. As we worship, speak to us

through Your Spirit, and prepare us to share the joy of Jesus with the world. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

CHILDREN’S TIME

UMH 191 (vs. 1)

Proclamation of God’s Word

***THE GOSPEL LESSON**

Matthew 11:2-11

(NRSV, p.11 in the New Testament, and
P.809 in the Living Bible)

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

SERMON

“Joy to the World”

Rev. Jenny Lee

We Respond to God’s Word

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

Gracious Lord, we thank You for the joy of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Open our eyes to see Your work among us and give us courage to share the good news with our loved ones. Help us serve You by serving the least of these. Strengthen our faith when we struggle with doubt, and fill our homes, communities, and hearts with Your saving joy. Let “Joy to the World” begin in us today. 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

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>We will be collecting Thanksgiving food items in November. Please leave them in the basket at the front of the church</p> 	<p>Mitten Tree Day</p>  <p>The Mitten Tree and will be on Sunday, Dec. 7th. We will be collecting new or gently used hats, scarves, mittens or gloves for our neighbors in need throughout December.</p> <p>Thank you!</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!</p> <p>Supporting the Salvation Army's "Happy Kids Back-Pack Program"</p> 	<p>In December we will have two missions. We will continue collecting financial donations for Interfaith Caregivers of Burnett County for Christmas for Kids.</p>  <p>We are also bringing back the Socks Box. Donations of socks, gloves, hats & coats, new are gently used. Donations will be given to the food shelf.</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>The Sailor Hat offering will go to support families in need with Christmas food 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
Scripture Reading	Toni Koons
Acolyte(s)	Willow Nyland
Fellowship	Volunteer Needed
Counter	Russ Hammer
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson

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 Andrews
Flowers	Women of the church



BIRTHDAY'S & ANNIVERSARIES

Stan Chute	12/15
Ruth Blackburn	12/16
Tom Fedje	12/16
Mage Harmon	12/17
Kim Wheeler	12/18
Patrick Grimes	12/18
Brody Woltz	12/19



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.
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: **3rd Sunday of Advent**

May God bring you joy as you need!

Worship Service and A Week Schedule

12/14:	9:00 am	Central UMC - Grantsburg (With Live Zoom)
	10:00 am	Atlas UMC (10:15 am, Sunday School)
	11:15 am	St. Croix Falls UMC
	2:00 pm	Continuing Care Center at Burnett Medical Center
12/16:	6:30 pm	AD Council Meeting (G)
12/17:	10:00 am	Korean Caucus Board Meeting via Zoom
	5:00 -7:00 pm	Youth Group Gathering (G)
12/18:	3:30 pm	Ministry Task Force Team Meeting (SCF)
	5:30-7:30 pm	Advent Bible Study with soup supper at SCF & via Zoom
12/20:	10:00 am-noon	Christmas Party with Kids (G)
12/21:	10:30 am	Joint Service & Potluck Luncheon at Atlas UMC (<i>with Sunday School Christmas Program</i>)

Upcoming Events & News

12/21: Joint Service at 10:30 AM at Atlas UMC
(*Sunday School Christmas Program and Potluck*)

12/18 and 12/22:
Advent Bible Study with Soup Supper at St. Croix Falls UMC and Via Zoom
(*The Women of Christmas* by Liz Higgs)

Next Sunday (December 21st):

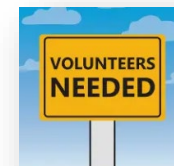


JOINT SERVICE at Atlas UMC at 10:30 A.M.

Atlas

Pianist
Liturgist
Usher
Cleaning
Sunday School

Sharon Asp
Sue Olson
Colleen Adams-Schween
Volunteer Needed
Christmas Program



Breakthrough Prayers:

Please Pray For: Barbara Loomis (husband Jim-biopsy on Thursday), Toni Koons (friend, Donna's comfort and God's presence), Sandra Erickson (son, Mike's surgery on 12/8, husband Jeff's recovery, and granddaughter, Willow's recovery), Colleen Adams-Schween (Sheryl Simon in a lock down assisted living facility) and Bob Determan (Passed away), Jim Andrews (sister-in-law, Nancy on hospice care).



Praise the Lord with Joy and Gratitude: Sally Alderfer (husband Ron, cancer free).

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



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

December 14th, 2025
Matthew 11:2-11

“Joy to the World”

I want to begin with something funny I found on an internet site. It was the Sunday after Christmas. Father John was looking at the nativity scene before packing away the figures when he noticed that the baby Jesus was missing. Immediately, Father John turned toward the parsonage to call the police. But just as he was about to do so, he saw little Harry with a red wagon—and the infant Jesus was sitting in the wagon.

Father John walked up to Harry and asked, “Well, Harry, where did you get the little infant?” Harry replied honestly, “I took him from the church, Father John.” “But why did you take him?” With a sheepish smile, Harry said, “Well, about a week before Christmas, I prayed to little Lord Jesus. I told him that if he would bring me a red wagon for Christmas, I would give him a ride around the block in it.”

What a sweet story of a faithful little boy! He prayed to Jesus with a promise—and he kept it. He enjoyed his Christmas present with little Jesus. I wonder what you are expecting this Christmas. Perhaps you are looking forward to family gatherings, exchanging gifts, meeting loved ones, and enjoying meals together. Every Advent season, we wait for the coming Christ who brings hope, peace, joy, and love to the world. But still, Christ has not yet come again, even though we pray and expect him year after year.

The coming Christ we expect, according to Scripture, is “the same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). As believers, we wait for the return of Christ. No one knows exactly what that will look like, but we certainly do not expect baby Jesus to be born again and again every Christmas, right?

We celebrate Jesus’ birth with the joy of salvation, singing, “*Joy to the world! The Lord is come!*” Advent is the season of preparation for Christ’s coming, and Christmas is the day we celebrate his coming into our world and our lives. We gather with family, share meals, and worship together.

The word “Christmas” is a combination of “Christ” and “Mass.” “Mass” means “worship service,” as used especially in the Catholic Church. Therefore, Christmas means “*the day we worship Christ.*” Hopefully, we can make Christmas truly about serving Christ.

As we wait for Jesus’ return, there are many “Jesuses” around us—people near and far whom we may serve. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these—the powerless, the poor, the prisoner, the sick—you did for me. And whatever you did not do for them, you did not do for me” (Matthew 25:40, 45). I hope we do not miss the opportunities to serve “little Jesus” in our world. I also believe that the spiritually poor are those who do not know Jesus yet, or have never heard the good news. If you have family members who do not yet believe, you can tell them, “He is coming to save all people.”

Let me share a story I once read. A man was driving late at night through the countryside near Los Angeles a few years ago. He suddenly felt an earthquake. He pulled over and waited until everything became calm again. After a few minutes, he continued to drive and crossed a bridge. But halfway across, the car in front of him suddenly disappeared. Alarmed, he stopped and got out to see what had happened. He discovered that the earthquake had destroyed the bridge. The car ahead had driven straight into the gap and fallen to the ground below.

As he stood there, more cars approached the destroyed bridge. He waved his arms desperately to stop

them, but in the darkness, a man waving on the road in the middle of the night looked crazy. No one stopped. One by one, the cars drove into the gap and fell to their deaths.

Then he saw a bus approaching. He knew he had to stop it—even if it meant he might be killed. He stood in the middle of the road, waving his arms. The bus honked and drove toward him, but he didn't move. Finally, the bus stopped. The driver got out and saw the dangerous situation. Together, the man and the driver used the bus and his car to block the road and save others. (Source: J. D. Greear, *Gospel: Recovering the Power that Made Christianity Revolutionary*)

If you were in his shoes, what would you have done? I believe you would have done the same. Remember this: many people are racing toward death without knowing the way of salvation in Jesus Christ. Among them are our loved ones. If you see your family members who do not yet believe, please speak to them of the salvation—before it is too late. If your loved ones were dying without knowing Christ, what would you do? As you gather with family this holiday season, it may be your chance to speak about Jesus.

Someone once asked Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892), the great Baptist preacher, whether a person who has never heard about Jesus could be saved. He answered, “Well, I don't think so. But there is a better question: if someone who *does* know Jesus refuses to speak of the joy of salvation to those who have never heard—is *that person* saved in Jesus?” I encourage you to reflect on how often you speak about Jesus with the people you love. The kingdom of God begins with those who know Jesus. If you rejoice in Christ, the joy of salvation must overflow from you to your family, friends, relatives, and neighbors.

John the Baptist was imprisoned for doing what was right. While in prison, he heard about what Jesus was doing and wondered if Jesus truly was the Christ. When he baptized Jesus, he had been sure—because he heard a voice from heaven: “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). John expected the Messiah to come as a judge, saying, “His winnowing fork is in his hand... he will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:12).

But instead of judging, Jesus healed the sick, fed the poor, and ate with sinners. That was not what John expected. So, he sent his disciples to Jesus asking, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we wait for another?” (Matthew 11:3). At the end of his life, John wanted to know whether he had truly met the one he had spent his whole life waiting for.

Jesus replied, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news proclaimed to them.” This is the good news Isaiah foretold centuries before: “He will come to save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped; the lame will leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy” (Isaiah 35:4–6).

Our Lord Jesus is the Savior, the healer, the provider, and the Lord of life and death. He is coming to save you and your loved ones. Jesus is love. God is a God who loves everyone. He waits for all people to be saved.

Today we light the third Advent candle, praying that Christ will bring joy to the world. But “joy to the world” must begin in **you**, because you know the salvation of Jesus. God has called you and sent you to your homes, your communities, and your workplaces—for the sake of your loved ones. So let us proclaim together: **“Joy to the world! The Lord is come!”**

Thanks be to God. Amen.