

We Respond to God’s Word

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

Gracious God, we turn our hearts toward Your light and prepare the way for Your coming. Cleanse us with Your mercy, guide us with Your peace, and help us bear the fruit of repentance in our daily lives. As we offer these mittens, use our hands to bring warmth, comfort, and hope to others. Make us a people ready to receive You and ready to share Your love. Come, Lord Jesus—renew us and shine through 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**

Generous God, You have given us every good gift—light for our path, peace for our hearts, and hope for our journey. As we bring our tithes, offerings, and the work of our hands, receive them as signs of our gratitude and devotion. Use these gifts to warm, bless, and renew the lives of others, just as Your love has renewed ours. Make us faithful stewards of Your grace and instruments of Your peace. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

We Go Forth to Love God and Serve One Another

***CLOSING HYMN**

Marching to Zion UMH 733 (vs. 1 & 2)

***BENEDICTION**

Rev. Jenny Lee

***POSTLUDE**

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

Worship resource “Refreshing Rains of the Living Word” by Lavon Bayler

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

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

**“Mitten Tree Sunday(A)”
“2nd Sunday of Advent”**



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

(10:15 AM, Sunday School)

11:15 AM at St. Croix Falls

CONTACT INFORMATION

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www.upperstcroixparish.org

<https://www.facebook.com/UpperStCroixParishUMC>

Upper St. Croix Parish
Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls
December 7th, 2025
“Mitten Tree Sunday (A)”
“2nd Sunday of Advent”

*Please stand if you are able.

*PRELUDE Toni Koons (G)/Sharon Asp (A & SCF)
*ADVANT SONG TFWS 2090 (vs. 2)
*LIGHTING THE SECOND 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
Welcome to this service of prayer and praise.
Rejoice together, people of God.

**We anticipate the coming of God’s chosen one,
who brings hope to the meek of the earth.**

The promises of God are for all humankind,
Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, slave and free.

**We are called to live in harmony,
even with those who appear to be enemies.**

We shall be judged, not by our connections,
but by our commitment to God’s purposes.

**We draw near for instruction and encouragement,
to be girded with righteousness and faithfulness. Amen.**

*DEDICATING HYMN *Jesu, Jesu* UMH 432 (vs. 1 & 2)

BLESINGS TO MITTEN TREE (A)

*(Children may come to the front to hang all the mittens on the tree,
and we will bless both the mittens and all who give and receive them.)*

OPENING PRAYER Unison

**Holy and gracious God, we gather in this Advent season with
hearts longing for Your light and Your peace. As we prepare the
way for Christ, open our spirits to Your presence and quiet our**

**minds from all distractions. Turn us toward Your truth, renew us
with Your forgiveness, and fill this worship with the hope of Your
coming kingdom. Meet us here, O Lord, and make us ready to
receive Your love with joy. In Jesus’ name, 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 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

Matthew 3:1-12

(NRSV, p. 2-3 in the New Testament, and p. 800-801 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.**

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, December 7th.</p> <p>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
Communion	Barbara Loomis

Atlas

Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Sue Olson
Usher	Colleen Adams-Schween
Cleaning	Volunteer Needed
Sunday School	Christmas Program Practice
Communion	Sue Olson

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
Communion	Karen and Jim Sciacca



BIRTHDAY'S & ANNIVERSARIES

Mikala Hammer 12/7
Sharon Asp 12/9
Tina Duerkop 12/12
Adalyn Snyder 12/12
Copelan Grimes 12/13



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: **2nd Sunday of Advent/Mitten Tree Sunday (A)**
May God bring you peace as you need!

Worship Service and A Week Schedule

12/7:	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
12/8:	9:00-11:00 am	Special DCOM Meeting at Chippewa Falls UMC
12/10:	1:00 pm	UMW Meeting and Christmas Luncheon
	4:00-5:00 pm	Go Fish (G)
	6:00 pm	Pastor Jenny leads the Charge Conference at Holy Trinity UMC, Centuria
	6:00-8:30 pm	Youth Worship Night at Wood Lake Camp
12/11:	10:30 am-1:00 pm	Pastor Jenny Volunteers at Loaves and Fishes in Luck
	5:30-7:30 pm	Advent Bible Study at St. Croix Falls UMC & via Zoom
12/13:	8:00 am	UMM Meeting (G)

Upcoming Events & News

- 12/20: Christmas Party for kids (G)
12/21: Joint Service at 10:30 AM at Atlas UMC
(Sunday School Christmas Program and Potluck)
12/4, 12/11, 12/18 and 12/22:
Advent Bible Study at St. Croix Falls UMC and Via Zoom
(The Women of Christmas by Liz Higgs)

Next Sunday (December 14th):

Central-Grantsburg

Pianist	Toni Koons
Scripture Reading	Toni Koons
Acolyte(s)	Willow Nyland
Fellowship	Volunteer Needed
Counter	Russ Hammer
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson
Snow Removal	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 Andrews
Flowers	Women of the church

Breakthrough Prayers:

Please Pray For: Toni Koons (friend, Michelle's healing), 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 on hospice care), Georgeanne (granddaughter, Rachel's safe moving), Jim Andrews (sister-in-law, Nancy who's on hospice) and Karen Sciacca grandson, Bodie's good sleep at night).

Praise the Lord with Joy and Gratitude: Paulie Kratchmer (grandchild got their license), Deb Hammer (thanks to those who removed snow on the church pathway), Kathy Gionis (Thanksgiving family gathering), Betty Doolittle (Thanksgiving family gathering), Jim Andrews (Thanksgiving family gathering) and Pastor Jenny (good Thanksgiving dinner with the Hammer family).

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



December 7th, 2025
Matthew 3:1-12

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



“A Baptism of Repentance: Turning Toward the Light”

I want to start with something funny that I found on a website: Fred is 32 years old, and he is still single. One day a friend asked, “Why aren’t you married? Can’t you find a woman who would be a good wife?” Fred replied, “Actually, I’ve found many women I wanted to marry, but when I brought them home to meet my parents, my mother didn’t like them.” His friend thought for a moment and said, “I’ve got the perfect solution. Just find a girl who’s just like your mother.”

A few months later, they met again. His friend asked, “Did you find the perfect girl? Did your mother like her?” With a frown, Fred replied, “Yes, I found the perfect girl. She was just like my mother. You were right. My mother liked her very much.” His friend said, “Then what’s the problem?” Fred answered, “My father doesn’t like her.”

Hearing this, I wonder if there is a perfect person in the world. You may think, “My spouse is perfect to me,” or “My significant other is perfect to me.” That may be true. I don’t think you’d be lying. But if you feel they are perfect, it’s because you love them. There is a saying, “If you fall in love, it makes you blind.” In other words, “love is blind,” or “you see someone through rose-colored glasses.” The disciple Peter says, “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8).

My dear family in Jesus Christ, as we gather on this Second Sunday of Advent, we light the candle of Peace—a soft, steady flame that reminds us that God’s peace is not the absence of conflict, but the presence of Christ in the midst of our lives.

Today’s Gospel does not bring us to a peaceful manger scene but to the wilderness, where John the Baptist cries out, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near!” Advent often invites images of warm lights, soft music, and gentle expectation—but today John’s voice disrupts the calm. His message is urgent, sharp, and direct. And yet, this fierce call is a message of peace, because repentance is God’s gift that brings us back to wholeness.

Advent is a season of preparation. We prepare our homes, our streets, our worship spaces with beautiful and bright Christmas trees and decorations—but John reminds us that the most important preparation happens in our hearts. John the Baptist shouted, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

The Greek word for repentance is *metanoia*. It literally means “a change of mind” or “a transformation of heart.” Repentance is more than feeling sorry for our sins—it is turning our whole life toward God, a complete reorientation of our thoughts, desires, and actions. When John calls us to repent, he is inviting us to *metanoia*: to change our direction, to turn from what harms us toward the light of Christ.

Again, repentance is turning—turning from darkness toward light, turning from what harms us toward what heals us, turning from fear toward trust, from self-focus toward God. Yes, repentance means changing our direction from the world toward God. Repentance is like a prodigal son returning home (Luke 15:12–32).

John calls us to “prepare the way of the Lord,” which means clearing the obstacles that keep Christ’s peace from reaching us. What are those obstacles? They may be habits that drain our spirit, words we regret, unforgiven wounds, hidden resentments, busyness that squeezes out time with God, or a negative mindset.

We had heavy snow last week. Some of you missed Sunday service. I was stuck at home because snow

piled up against my garage doors until my neighbor plowed my driveway. Just as Wisconsin roads must be cleared after a heavy snowfall, our hearts sometimes need clearing so Christ's hope can come through. Repentance is the spiritual snowplow that prepares the way for Jesus.

John the Baptist points us toward the approaching Light—the One who is coming, the One who brings peace not as the world gives but as God gives. Repentance opens our lives to that Light. We turn toward the Light so that when Christ comes, we are ready to receive Him.

John warns the religious leaders not to rely on their titles or traditions. He says, “Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.” In other words, being Christian is not about outward appearance but inner transformation. Being a Christian is not about attending church services, not because we were raised in a Christian family, and not simply because we were baptized. To be Christian is to live visibly changed by Christ—to let Christ's light reshape our character, our words, our choices, our relationships—and to bear fruit: kindness, mercy, generosity, forgiveness, justice, humility.

Nobody is perfect, but we are growing toward the perfection of Christ. Let our lives show that we have turned toward God. Just as a tree is known by its fruit, disciples of Jesus are known not by what we say but by how we live.

Let me share a story Jesus told (Matthew 18:21–35) to help us understand how to remove the obstacles on Christ's way. There was a man who owed his master ten million dollars. Unable to repay, the master ordered that he, his wife, his children, and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. The man fell on his knees, begging, “Be patient with me. I will pay you back everything.” His master took pity on him, canceled the debt, and let him go.

But when he went out, freed of this debt, he found a friend who owed him a hundred dollars. He grabbed him and began to choke him, demanding, “Pay back what you owe me now!” His friend begged, kneeling, “Be patient with me. I will pay you back.” But he refused and imprisoned him until he could repay. Others saw this and told the master. Then the master called him in and said, “You wicked servant! I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your friend just as I had on you?” In anger, his master handed him over to be punished until he could pay back all he owed.

The love of Christ is the love of forgiveness. Loving others as Jesus loves us means forgiving others—even seventy-seven times—those who trespass against us. Every Sunday we pray the Lord's Prayer: “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” It is not just liturgy; we should practice it daily. As we remember that God forgave our sins, we should forgive others who have sinned against us, made things difficult, or hurt us—and then love them as Jesus loves us. Jesus canceled our debt of one million dollars; we can forgive others' debts of one hundred dollars. That is the Christian life. If you carry unforgiven wounds or hidden resentments, repent in Jesus Christ and forgive those who wounded you. This is how we prepare for the coming Christ.

John says, “One who is more powerful than I is coming.” John points to the Light, but Jesus **is** the Light. Jesus comes not only to forgive our sins but to transform us, to clothe us with the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the warmth in our cold places. Jesus is the peace that covers our anxious hearts. Jesus is the Light that guides our turning.

May Christ find in us a people ready—ready to receive His peace, ready to share His love, ready to turn again toward His Light.

Thanks be to God. Amen.