

We Respond to God's Word

NO. 2026-05
February 1st, 2026

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

Gracious God, we thank You for Your boundless love and the gift of Jesus Christ, broken and given for us. As we have received Your grace at this table, open our hearts to live generously. Teach us to steward our time, talents, and treasures with joy, not obligation. May our giving reflect Your love and draw others closer to You. Fill us with gratitude, guide our steps, and strengthen our faith, now and always. Amen.

SHARING OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS

*After each prayer request:
Pastor: Lord, in your mercy,
All: Hear our Prayer.*

PRAYER SONG

UMH 523 (vs. 1 & 2)

Let's pray for refugees and immigrants in the USA.

INVITATION/PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

*DOXOLOGY

UMH 95

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION Unison

Generous God, we thank You for the blessings You have poured into our lives. As we present these gifts, we offer not only our resources but our hearts and lives. May these offerings be used to extend Your love, hope, and grace to those in need. Teach us to give freely, trust Your abundance, and live as faithful stewards of all You have entrusted to us. In Christ's name, we pray. 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)

Upper St. Croix Parish United Methodist Church

The 2026 Parish Ministry Theme:
“*Sent to Serve, Sent in Love*” (Micah 6:8)

“4th Sunday After the Epiphany”



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

Upper St. Croix Parish
Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls
February 1st, 2026
“4th Sunday After the Epiphany”

*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

Come, all who are haughty and proud,
who boast of your own wisdom and virtue.

**Come, all who ignore the saving acts of God
and use religious ritual to exalt yourselves.**

Come, all who live by deceit and lies,
whose wrongdoing has no inner corrective.

**Come, all who are weak, lowly, and despised,
who dare not challenge the powerful.**

All of us are summoned to this hour of worship.

Come, as you are, to meet your God.

**We come to the Source of Life to plead our case
and to find truth by which to live. Amen.**

***DEDICATING HYMN** *Spirit of the Living God* UMH 393 (2 X)

OPENING PRAYER Unison

Gracious and loving God, we gather in Your presence with open hearts, seeking Your guidance and grace. As we come to this table and prepare to hear Your Word, remind us that all we have and all we are comes from You. Bless our worship, that our songs, prayers, and offerings may reflect gratitude and faithfulness. Fill us with Your Spirit, renew our vision, and help us live as stewards of Your abundant grace and love. 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 NEW TESTAMENT LESSON**

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

(NRSV, p.173 in the New Testament, and p. 992 in the Living Bible)

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

Thanks be to God. Amen!

SERMON “Stewards of God’s Grace # 1: Receiving Before Giving”

Rev. Jenny Lee

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.**

FEBRUARY 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>Suggested donation items: Spaghetti sauce, macaroni, peanut butter, pasta and rice. Please leave them in the basket at the front of the church!</p> 	<p>SOUPER BOWL OF CARING</p> <p>The idea is simple but powerful: SMALL GIFTS, BIG IMPACT. We will be collecting cans of soup and financial donations in February to support our local food shelf.</p>  <p>Thank you for your kindness and generosity!</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>Souper Bowl of Caring will take place on February 8th, coinciding with Super Bowl Sunday, and aims to support local food charities through community involvement.</p> <p>We will be collecting cans of soup and financial donations that will go to our local food shelf in February. 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>The Sailor Hat offering will go to help a local church family with medical expenses.</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)	Volunteer Needed
Fellowship	Judy Lien
Counter	Volunteer Needed
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson
Snow Removal	Leland Snyder
Communion	Barbara Loomis

Atlas

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

St. Croix Falls

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



BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

Joseph Murtaugh
2/2



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: **Fourth Sunday After the Epiphany!**
May God bless you!

Worship Service and A Week Schedule

2/1:	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	Worship at Continuing Care Center in the Burnett Medical Center
2/3:	6:30 pm	Ad Council Meeting (G)
2/4:	4:00-5:00 pm	Go Fish (G)
2/5	1:00-2:00 pm	Reaffirmation Class (SCF)

Upcoming Events & News

February: Stewardship Month

2/8: Dedication Sunday for the Church Leaders

2/9: Bishop Clergy Days Apart at Wausau, WI

Next Sunday (February 8th):

Central -Grantsburg

Pianist	Toni Koons
Scripture Reading	Toni Koons
Acolyte(s)	<i>Volunteer Needed</i>
Fellowship	<i>Volunteer Needed</i>
Counter	Russ Hammer
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson
Snow Removal	<i>Volunteer Needed</i>

Atlas

Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Sue Olson
Usher	Colleen Adams-Schween
Cleaning	<i>Volunteer Needed</i>
Sunday School	Cheryl Olson

St. Croix Falls

Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Karen Sciacca
Usher(s)	Jim Andrews
Counter	Peter Gionis
Bell Ringer	Jim Sciacca
Flowers	Lynn Hanson

Breakthrough Prayers:

Please Pray For: Sharon Asp (loss of her brother, Dan Zabel), Kathy Gionis (for a peaceful resolution for the Protestant movement in the cities), Karen Sciacca (for Wendy's healing and recovery), Kay Lamphere (healing and recovery), Sally Aldorfer (Paul Johnson passed away), Julie Branstad (Sally Aldorfer's healing and recovery).

Praise the Lord with Joy and Gratitude: Kayleen Branstad (had a safe and good trip), Pastor Jenny (thankful for Crystal Schwerin joining our worship).



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

February 1st, 2026

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

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



“Stewards of God’s Grace #1: “Receiving Before Giving”

I want to start with something funny that I found on an internet site: It was Sunday, and the preacher had just finished an inspiring worship service when Rick, the wealthiest man in town, stood up and asked to address the congregation. The preacher sighed and said, “Please keep it short, Rick.” Rick cleared his throat and said, “I still remember the day I earned my very first dollar. That evening, I came to church and heard a speaker talk about a humanitarian mission. I had only one dollar to my name, and I had to decide—should I give it, or keep it?”

I decided to give it all. And I truly believe God blessed that decision, because today, I am a millionaire.” He sat down, a tear in his eye. Just then, an elderly woman stood up in the back and said, “That’s wonderful, dear. I dare you to do it again.”

This story makes us laugh—but it also reminds us of something important. God’s grace is not a lottery system. We do not give in order to get rich. We give because we have already received more than we could ever earn.

We observe every February as Stewardship Month. This year, I plan for us to study the theme “**We Are Stewards of God’s Grace**” over four weeks in February. *Stewards of God’s Grace* is a four-week stewardship journey that invites us to rediscover stewardship not as obligation, but as discipleship. Beginning at Christ’s table, moving through calling and vision, and entering the season of Lent, we learn that stewardship is a response to grace, a way of living, and a lifelong journey of faithfulness.

Every February, the word *stewardship* enters the life of the church, and for some people, that word comes with baggage. They may hear pressure. They may hear obligation. They may hear numbers, budgets, or guilt. But today, on Communion Sunday, I want to say this clearly from the very beginning: **Christian stewardship does not begin with what we give; it begins with what we receive.**

Let us remember the very beginning of the story of stewardship. God created the Garden of Eden, provided everything humans needed to live, and placed human beings there, entrusting everything to them. This is the first story of stewardship. God provides first, and we respond by giving back with grateful hearts.

Before we talk about money, time, service, or commitment, we come first to the table as Jesus invited his disciples to the table, where he shared an abundant meal with them at the Last Supper in the upper room.

On the night Jesus was betrayed, he did something surprising. He did not give a lecture. He did not present a plan. He did not ask for anything. Instead, he gave himself. He took bread. He gave thanks. He broke it. And he said, “*Take and eat. This is my body, given for you.*” At this table, we are not donors. We are not volunteers. We are not consumers. **We are receivers of grace.** Jesus invites you all, regardless of age, gender, race, or ethnicity—whether you are a baptized member or not. He invites you all as you are!

In the United Methodist Church, we believe Holy Communion is more than a symbol and more than a ritual. It is what we call a **means of grace**. That means Communion is one of the ways

God actively works in our lives—forgiving us, nourishing us, strengthening us, and drawing us closer to Christ and to one another.

We believe Christ is truly present at the table—not physically confined to the bread and cup, but spiritually real and powerfully active among us. And this table is open. The Discipline reminds us that Communion is not a reward for the righteous, but a gift for those who hunger for grace. You do not need to be perfect. You do not need to have everything figured out. You do not need to give first. You come simply and receive first, because Christ invites you.

Not long ago, I was reflecting on winter—how the land looks so still, so lifeless. The ground is frozen. The trees are bare. Nothing appears to be growing. And yet, beneath the frozen soil, something is happening. Seeds that were planted long ago are not producing anything right now. They are not giving anything. They are simply waiting... receiving moisture, resting in the darkness, trusting that warmth will come. If a seed tried to give before it received, it would fail.

Growth always begins with receiving.

Faith works the same way. Before we can give generously, we must allow ourselves to receive deeply—from God’s grace, God’s love, and God’s presence. This is why stewardship must always begin at the table. If stewardship begins with fear, it will exhaust us. If stewardship begins with obligation, it will eventually feel heavy. But if stewardship begins with grace, it grows strong roots. One reason we keep the first Sunday of each month as Holy Communion Sunday is this: we begin our faith journey at the table of Christ, as a meal-community with Jesus Christ and with one another.

The Apostle Paul tells us that every time we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. Communion tells a story. It tells the story of a God who gives first. A God who loves before being loved back. A God who pours out grace before asking for response. In the United Methodist tradition, we also believe Communion sends us back into the world. We are fed not just for ourselves, but for the sake of the world God loves. Our giving is not a transaction. It is a testimony.

Let me share a very honest truth. There have been seasons in my own life when I tried to give before I was ready—serving when I was empty, offering when I was exhausted, doing more without first being renewed. And generosity felt heavy. But whenever I returned to the table—to prayer, to Scripture, to Communion—I was reminded that I am not the source. God is. That reminder shows me that I can be here today because many people helped me, guided me, and provided for me. They were those who had received God’s grace and love before me.

Think about your own life. We have many blessings—such as safe shelter, enough food, and warm church pews—because someone before us shared their abundance through God’s grace. Now it is our turn. As those who have already received, we are called to support others in times of financial need and to care for those who seek food and shelter. Stewardship is not about draining ourselves for God. It is about letting God fill us, so that love can overflow.

Before you ever gave anything to God, God gave you life, breath, forgiveness, family, community, ability, and hope. Stewardship, then, is not about how much we give. It is about how we live as people who know they have received everything from God.

As we begin this stewardship month, I invite you not to ask first, “What should I give?” Instead, ask: “What have I received?”

Today, we come to the table together because Christ gives himself to us again and again. And from this table, we are sent out—not burdened, but grateful; not anxious, but free. Free to live as stewards of God’s grace. Free to share the grace and love of God that we have already received. Thanks be to God! Amen.