

Upper St. Croix Parish
Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls
January 25th, 2026
“3rd 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 together, people of God,
out of the gloom and shadow of a troubled world.

**We come with joy to the great light
that God has given us in Jesus Christ.**

Come away, people of God,
from the jealous rivalries that mar your days.

**We come in sorrowful repentance
to confront and overcome all that divides us.**

Come to worship, people of God,
leaving behind all else that compels your attention.

**We come to refocus our priorities
and to become more alert to God’s action among us. Amen.**

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

OPENING PRAYER Unison

Gracious and loving God, you are the light that shines in our darkness. As Jesus called ordinary people by the sea, call us again this day. Turn our hearts toward your kingdom, teach us to follow, and send us to serve in love. Open our eyes to your nearness, our hands to your healing work, and our lives to your transforming grace. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

CHILDREN’S TIME UMH 191 (vs. 1)

Proclamation of God’s Word

***THE GOSPEL LESSON**

Matthew 4:12-23

(NRSV, p.3-4 in the New Testament, and p.801-802 in the Living Bible)

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

Thanks be to God. Amen!

SERMON *“Follow Me: Sent to Serve, Sent in Love”* Rev. Jenny Lee

We Respond to God’s Word

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

Faithful God, you have called us to follow and to be sent. When we cling to our nets, give us courage to let go. When the way is unclear, help us trust your voice. Send us to serve with willing hands and to love with open hearts. Use our ordinary lives for your extraordinary purposes, so that your kingdom may be seen through us. 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

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION** Unison

Generous God, all that we have comes from your loving hand. As we offer these gifts, we offer ourselves as well. Bless what is given and those who give, and use these offerings to serve, to heal, and to share your love. Send us out as faithful stewards of your grace, for the sake of Christ and his kingdom. Amen.

JANUARY 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>Atlas will be collecting funds for the Steck children who were involved in a car accident Dec 7 and lost both their parents. They will be moving in with family and the youngest child has extensive lifelong medical needs. Donations can be noted in the offering and we will coordinate with Deb Hammer to get the family the money.</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>Loving Support for the Steck Children.</p> <p>This January, our mission is to surround the Steck children with prayers, love and support in the wake of unimaginable loss.</p> <p>A devastating accident claimed the lives of both parents, Jeremiah and Erin. Their three beloved children, Eric (10), Lydia (8) and Levi (6), survived, though each suffered serious injuries. The road ahead will be long for this family. Your prayers and financial support are greatly appreciated.</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 the Steck family during this difficult time.</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	Volunteer Needed
Counter	Russ Hammer
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson
Snow Removal	Leland Snyder

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	Jim Andrews
Usher(s)	Karen Sciacca
Counter	Peter Gionis
Bell Ringer	Jim Sciacca
Flowers	Women of the church



BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES



Renee Tooze	1/26
Max Dauer	1/27
Charlie Glonek	1/28
Russ Hammer	1/29

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 After the Epiphany!**
May God bless you!

Worship Service and A Week Schedule

1/25:	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
1/27:	1:30 pm	Provisional Mentoring Meeting via Zoom
1/28:	5:30-7:30 pm	Youth Group Gathering (5th grade and up)
1/29:	1:00-2:00 pm	Reaffirmation Class (SCF)

Upcoming Events & News

February: Stewardship Month

2/1: Communion Sunday; Pastor Jenny leads worship at C.C.C.

2/3: Ad Council Meeting (G)

2/8: Dedication Sunday for the Church Leaders

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

Next Sunday (February 1st):

Central -Grantsburg

Pianist	Toni Koons
Scripture Reading	Toni Koons
Acolyte(s)	Volunteer Needed
Fellowship	Judy Lien
Counter	Russ Hammer
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson
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

Breakthrough Prayers:

Please Pray For: Julie Branstad (Sally Aldorfer's healing and recovery), Deb Hammer (Peace in the USA), Sandre Erickson (son, Mike's healing and granddaughter Willow's recovery), Toni Koons (friend, Michelle's healing), Georgeanna Koons (those suffering from addiction), Sally Aldorfer (Paul Johnson's healing), Sharon Asp (daughter's healing), Karen Sciacca (friend of the family, Wendy) Cheryl Olson (Dawn Bergstrom's healing), Kathy Gionis (protection to those who are involved in the protestant movement in the cities and the world), Lynn Hanson (daughter, Sara's recovery and A J and Harley, grandchildren's healing)

Praise the Lord with Joy and Gratitude: Pastor Jenny (thankful for the office repairs).

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



January 25th, 2026
Matthew 4:12-23

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



“Follow Me: Sent to Serve, Sent in Love”

I want to start with something funny that I found on the internet. Two guys are talking about fishing. One says to the other, “I am NEVER going to take my wife fishing with me ever again!” “Huh—was it that bad?” the other asks. “Yes!” the man replies. “She did everything wrong! She talked too much, made the boat rock constantly, tried to stand up in the boat, baited the hook wrong, used the wrong lures—and worst of all, she caught more fish than I did!”

As I often say, I am map-blind. Without GPS, I can’t drive long distances. Even with GPS, interesting things sometimes happen. A few years ago, I visited a friend’s house in Chicago. I had been there many times before, but I still depended on the GPS. As I followed the directions, the voice said, “Turn left.” Then, “Turn right.” Then suddenly, “Make a U-turn.”

At that moment, I thought, ‘Hmm, I remember this way. Why should I make a U-turn? I was going just fine!’ But I also know that I am map-blind, so I decided it was better to trust the GPS than myself. I trusted the voice and turned around—and only then did I realize I had been heading straight toward a dead end.

Sometimes, following means turning around. Sometimes it means trusting a voice we cannot fully see. And sometimes it means realizing that God calls us not after we get everything right, but right in the middle of where we already are.

That’s exactly what happens in today’s scripture. Jesus begins his public ministry after John the Baptist is arrested. John’s central message was, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near,” and he proclaimed that “One more powerful than I is coming.” When John could no longer continue his ministry, Jesus began his—starting by calling his disciples.

Jesus called people from among the poor and the powerless. He called fishermen and said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fisherman for people.” And immediately they followed him, leaving behind their fishing equipment, their families, and their coworkers. Jesus spent about three years with his disciples, training them as ministers. He taught them and showed them what his ministry was all about.

The central theme of Jesus’ ministry was the good news of the kingdom of God—revealed through healing, teaching, and preaching. This good news declared that the kingdom of God was open to everyone, including the poor, the blind, the deaf, the sick, children, widows, and all those pushed to the margins of society. Jesus healed the sick, restored the blind and the deaf, listened to widows, and joyfully welcomed children. Above all, he taught the great commandment: love God and love your neighbor—opening our minds and hearts to everyone with love. Before he ascended into heaven, he gave his disciples the Great Commission: “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). Through his ministry, we see that Jesus not only called his disciples and stayed with them, but also sent them into the world, saying, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21).

Through this, we see Jesus’ heart for his disciples. He called the poor and the powerless to show that the kingdom of God is open to everyone—at a time when religion was often reserved for the privileged and

powerful. And just as fishermen know how to fish, Jesus used their skills to teach them how to “fish for people,” inviting others into the kingdom of God. In this way, Jesus showed them how to live as people who are sent in love in their everyday lives.

Jesus begins his ministry not in a palace or a synagogue, but along the shoreline of Galilee. He finds Simon, Andrew, James, and John—not praying or studying Scripture, but working. They are casting nets and mending them, doing what they do every day. And Jesus says just two words: “Follow me.”

Not, “Go home and think about it.”

Not, “Get your life together first.”

Not, “Wait until you’re qualified.”

Just—“Follow me.”

Jesus doesn’t call them away from life; he calls them into a new way of living. “Follow me,” Jesus says, “and I will make you fish for people.” Notice this: Jesus uses what they already know. They don’t stop being fishermen. Their purpose changes, but their skills are redeemed.

This is good news for us, because most of us don’t feel extraordinary—we feel ordinary. We go to work. We cook meals. We pay bills. We show up. And yet these are exactly the places Jesus walks into and says, “Follow me.”

This is where our ministry theme comes alive. To follow Jesus is not just to walk behind him—it is to be sent by him. The Gospel of Matthew tells us that Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching, proclaiming the good news, and healing the sick. In other words, Jesus serves. Jesus loves. And then Jesus sends.

Jesus taught his disciples about the kingdom of God and sent them out two by two to teach and heal, just as he did. When Jesus healed people, he sent them back to their homes, their communities, and their society. Those who follow become those who serve. Those who are called become those who are sent—not with power or prestige, but with love.

The disciples leave their nets immediately. Those nets weren’t bad. They were necessary. They were familiar. But sometimes even good things can keep us from following fully. Our nets today might be fear of change, comfort zones, the mindset of “we’ve always done it this way,” or the belief that we are not enough—that we are too small or too weak.

Jesus doesn’t scold the disciples for having nets. He simply invites them to trust him more.

Jesus is still walking along the shoreline of our lives. He calls teachers and retirees, parents and children, volunteers and even doubters. Jesus calls our small-town churches and those of us who think we have nothing special to offer. And he still says, “Follow me.” “Serve with love.” “Be part of what I am already doing.”

This week, Jesus may not call you to leave your job or your home. But you may hear him calling you to listen more closely, love more generously, and serve more faithfully. Following Jesus does not require being extraordinary. It requires being willing. Because when we follow Jesus, we discover that ordinary people—like us—are sent to serve and sent in love.

The Apostle Paul writes, “For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18). In other words, when we believe in the cross of Jesus Christ, we receive the power of the Gospel in our lives. So, believe in that power, and invite others with confidence—because you are sent by God in the love of Jesus Christ.

Thanks be to God. Amen.