

Upper St. Croix Parish
Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls
March 22nd, 2026
“Membership Caring Month”
“5th Sunday in Lent”

*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, people of God, to know again who you are.

Return to the One who gives you life.

We come as children of God,

longing for a closer walk with our Creator.

Gather together, all who feel spent and discouraged,
all who are weighed down, in bondage, and disheartened.

Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost.

We feel death and decay in the midst of our days.

God’s Spirit enters our “valley of dry bones”

to call us to a time of revitalizing worship.

How can we sing songs of joy and praise

when there is no life in us?

The breath of God cleanses, and hope is renewed:

life is restored to God’s children.

We welcome the winds of God among us,

the Spirit who offers life in all its fullness. Amen.

***DEDICATING HYMN** *He Lives* **UMH 310 (vs. 1 & 2)**

OPENING PRAYER Unison

Gracious and loving God, we gather in your presence with hearts seeking hope and life. In this Lenten season, draw us closer to you. When we feel burdened by grief or uncertainty, remind us that you are the resurrection and the life. Open our hearts to your word, and

bind us together in love and care. Meet us here, O Lord, and renew us by your grace. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

CHILDREN’S TIME

UMH 191 (vs. 1)

Proclamation of God’s Word

***THE GOSPEL LESSON**

John 11:1-45

(NRSV, p. 104-105 in the Old Testament,
and p. 911-912 in the Living Bible)

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

Thanks be to God. Amen!

SERMON “Unbind Him: A Community That Cares”

(Membership Caring Month #4)

Rev. Jenny Lee

We Respond to God’s Word

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

Gracious Lord, you are the resurrection and the life. When our hearts are heavy with grief and our hopes feel delayed, draw near to us. Help us trust your presence even when we do not understand. Bind us together as your people, that we may care for one another, weep with those who weep, and walk together in love. Unbind us from fear and despair, and lead us into the new life you promise; through Jesus Christ our Lord. 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

MARCH 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>March mission at Atlas is Garden Seeds for Jackson Area Ministries Gardening Project.</p> <p>Suggested seeds are: beans (pole and bush), beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, corn, cucumbers, lettuce, pumpkins, radishes, spinach, squash, turnips, watermelon.</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>Central UMC's March mission will be collecting financial donations to help cover the funeral expenses for the Shellito family.</p> <p>Three members of the Shellito family tragically passed away in a house fire on Feb. 3rd. We would like to show our love and support by helping the family during this difficult time.</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 toward helping the homeless through the SCF Police Department with vouchers.</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	Colleen Adams-Schween
Cleaning	Volunteer Needed
Sunday School	Josie Grimes

St. Croix Falls

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

Breakthrough Prayers:

Please Pray For: Dawn Bergstrom (Passed away, 3/15), Sharon Asp (son-in-law and daughter), Karen Sciacca (Wendy is on hospice), Sue Olson (son Troy's therapy and recovery), Toni Koons (friend Michelle and her husband Chris), Jim Andrews (brother Joe's recovery), Kathy and Peter Gionis (safe trip), Charles Wright (for the Leaders in the world), and Barbara Loomis (healing).

Praise the Lord with Joy and Gratitude: Thank you, Lord
"This kind can come out only by prayer." (Mark 9:29)



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: Membership Caring Month/5th Sunday in Lent
May God bless you!

Worship Service and A Week Schedule

3/22:	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
3/23:	10:30 am -1:00 pm	Harmony Choir Rehearsal at Rice Lake UMC
3/24:	9:00 am -noon	District Committee of Ordained Ministry meeting
	1:30 pm	Provisional Elder mentoring meeting via zoom
	6:30 pm	Ad Council meeting (G)
3/25	4:30-6:30 pm	Youth Group Gathering
3/26	5:30-6:00 pm	Lenten Soup Supper (SCF)
	6:00-7:30 pm	Lenten Bible Study at SCF and via Zoom
3/28	9:00 am -1:00 pm	Spring Bake and Craft Sale (A)
	1:00 pm	Shelito Family Visitation at Grace Baptist Church-Grantsburg
	2:00 pm	Shelito Family Celebration of Life Service at Grace Baptist Church-Grantsburg

THIS WEEK'S BIRTHDAY'S

Kayleen Branstad 3/23
Chase Steffen 3/23
Meryl Walsten 3/25

Mike Dennison 3/26
Majesty Rehbein 3/27



Next Sunday (March 29th):

Central -Grantsburg

Pianist	Toni Koons
Scripture Reading	Toni Koons
Acolyte(s)	Willow Nyland
Fellowship	Volunteer Needed
Counter	Volunteer Needed
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)	Jim Andrews
Counter	Peter Gionis
Bell Ringer	Jim Sciacca
Flowers	Women of the church



Upcoming Events & News

March is Membership Caring Month: Please check in on one another!

Bible Reading Challenge: Please pick the Bible Reading Planner card!

2026 Lenten Bible Study: *Seven Words: Listening to Christ from the Cross* by Susan Robb, Thursdays beginning at 5:30 pm with Soup Supper (3/19, 3/26 and 4/2) at St. Croix Falls UMC and via Zoom. Register with Pastor Jenny.

3/29: Palm/ Passion Sunday

4/2: Maundy Thursday Service at St. Croix falls UMC (at 7:00pm)

4/3: Good Friday Service at Grantsburg-Central UMC (at 5:30pm)



“Unbind Him: A Community That Cares” (Membership Caring Month #4)

I want to start with something funny that I found an internet site: A ninety-five year old woman at a nursing home received a visit from one of her church members.

“How are you feeling, Mary?” the visitor asked. “Oh, I’m just worried sick!” said the lady.

“What are you worried about, dear?” the visitor asked, “You look like you’re in good health. They are taking care of you, aren’t they?”

“Yes, they are taking very good care of me.”

“Are you in any pain?” she asked. “No, I have never had a pain in my life.”

“Well, what are you worried about?” the visitor asked again.

The lady leaned back in her rocking chair and slowly explained her major worry. “Every close friend I ever had has already died and gone on to heaven. I’m afraid they’re all wondering where I went.”

In today’s scripture, we meet two sisters walking through one of the hardest journeys of life. Martha and Mary experience the fear of death, the grief of loss, anger, disappointment, disconnection, and the long, uncertain waiting. Their beloved brother Lazarus is dying.

These are not strangers to Jesus. According to the Gospels, Jesus often stayed in their home. He shared meals with them. He rested there. He loved them. Martha and Mary trusted that love. They believed that when crisis came, Jesus would be there.

So, when Lazarus became ill, they sent a simple message: “Lord, he whom you love is ill.”

It is a message of faith—and also a quiet expectation: “Come quickly. Help us.” But Jesus does not come right away. Instead, he stays where he is for two more days, and Lazarus dies.

How strange this feels. The Gospel tells us clearly: Jesus loved them, yet he delayed.

Have you ever felt that tension—when you believe in God’s love, but God seems late?
When prayers feel unanswered and hope feels delayed?

In my own experience, when I hear that someone has entered hospice, I try to visit them as soon as possible. But if something urgent comes up, I may arrive too late—after they have already passed. In those moments, I feel deep sorrow and grief, and I feel sorry for the family who may have been waiting for me. I know that even if I had been there on time, I couldn’t have fixed anything.

But this is Jesus. How much more must it have seemed that way for them—Mary and Martha?

When Jesus finally arrives, both Martha and Mary say the same words: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” These are not just statements; they are filled with grief, disappointment, and longing.

Martha, ever practical and active, goes out to meet Jesus. She speaks with faith: “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” She knows the doctrine. She believes the teaching. However, the reality feels far away.

A few days ago, one of my close friends—a pastor here—lost her mother in Korea. Because of visa restrictions, she was unable to travel home or attend her mother’s funeral. I could feel how deeply painful that was, because I had a similar experience in 2020. When my older sister passed away, I could not visit my family due to COVID-19. So, I tried to comfort her, saying, “You will meet her again in the resurrection.” And she replied, “I know that in my mind, but my

heart still aches and longs for my mom.” It’s true. When we are grieving a loss, it is hard for anything to fully comfort us—even when we believe in the hope of the resurrection.

But here, Jesus invites Martha deeper. He says, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Here is the point—we often miss it. Resurrection is not just a future event. It is not only a doctrine to believe; it is a person to trust.

Life stands before her. And then Jesus asks her a deeply personal question: “Do you believe this?” Faith, here, is not simply knowing the right answer. It is trusting the presence of Christ—even in the face of death. Then Mary comes. She is weeping. The crowd is weeping. And something remarkable happens.

Jesus weeps. He is not distant. He is not unmoved. He stands at the tomb—and he shares in their grief. This is where we begin to understand something essential about our life together as the church. We are not simply people who share beliefs. We are a community that shares life. To belong to Christ is also to belong to one another.

Like Mary and Martha, we will face moments of loss, confusion, and waiting. And in those moments, we are not meant to stand alone. Membership in the body of Christ is not just a name on a list. It is a commitment to *be present* with one another—to weep together, to pray together, to wait together, and to hope together.

When Jesus comes to the tomb, he says something surprising: “Take away the stone.” Martha hesitates. “Lord, already there is a stench...” Even in her faith, she is still focused on the reality of death. And aren’t we often the same?

We believe, and yet we hesitate. We trust, and yet we hold back. The stone represents not only death—but also fear, doubt, and the limits we place on God. And here is where the community becomes essential. Jesus does not remove the stone alone. He calls others to do it. Faith is not only personal—it is communal. Sometimes, we need others to help us move the stones in our lives:

stones of grief, stones of isolation, stones of fear. And sometimes, *we* are the ones called to help remove the stone for someone else.

Then Jesus cries out with a loud voice: “Lazarus, come out!” And the dead man comes out.

But the story does not end there. Jesus says, “Unbind him, and let him go.” Jesus gives life. But the community participates in the freeing. Lazarus is alive—but he is still bound. And it is the people around him who help remove the grave clothes. This is a powerful image of membership care.

As a church, we are called not only to celebrate new life—but to help one another live freely in that life. We unbind one another through love, through forgiveness, through encouragement, through presence. We help one another step out of what still holds us back.

During this Lenten season, we are invited to reflect deeply on our lives. We remember the days of uncertainty during COVID—how fragile life felt, how precious simple things became: a conversation, a shared meal, a familiar routine, a person sitting next to us.

We learned how much we need one another. And perhaps that lesson still calls to us today.

What does it mean for us to be a church that truly cares?

- Who is waiting, like Martha and Mary, for someone to show up?
- Who is standing at a tomb, grieving in silence?
- Who is still bound, even after hearing words of hope?

And how is God calling *us* to respond?

Jesus may not always come in the timing we expect. He may not always prevent suffering.

But he is always present. He weeps with us. He calls us by name. He brings life where there was death. And he gives us one another—to walk together as a community of resurrection.

So, in this season of Lent, may we hear the voice of Christ calling us: “Take away the stone.” “Come out.” “Unbind him. Let him go.” May we not only believe in resurrection—but live it, together. Thanks be to God. Amen.