

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

## INVITATION/PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

## \*DOXOLOGY

UMH 95

## \*PRAYER OF DEDICATION Unison

Gracious God, as the early believers devoted themselves to teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer, we bring our offerings with grateful hearts. Unite us in generosity, deepen our faith, and make us a community that shares freely with those in need. Let our gifts reflect Your love, multiply for Your purposes, and bear witness to Your goodness. May our lives, like theirs, overflow with joy, sincerity, and praise, drawing others into Your saving grace. Bless every giver and need. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

*We Go Forth to Love God and Serve One Another*

## \*CLOSING HYMN

*I Know Whom I Have Believed*

UMH 714 (vs. 1 &amp; 2)

## \*COMMISSION AND BLESSING Responsive

In growing obedience to the One whom faith reveals, take your part in the ministry of Christ Jesus.

**We join with the whole church in prayer,  
attention to the Word, and acts of charity.**

Listen for the prompting of the Holy Spirit, who offers you wisdom and understanding.

**We rejoice in God's gift of the law,  
praying for insight and courage to live by it.**

May the Spirit grant you life so abundant that you will experience new energy for every task.

**In covenant with the Creator of all worlds,  
we devote ourselves to the best interests  
of all people in this world, in Jesus' name. Amen!**

## \*POSTLUDE

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

Worship resource "Fresh Winds of the Spirit" by Lavon Bayler



# Upper St. Croix Parish United Methodist Church

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

Church Appreciation Month  
"4th Sunday of Easter"



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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Parish Office: 715-463-2624 St. Croix Falls Office: 715-483-9494

[www.upperstcroixparish.org](http://www.upperstcroixparish.org)

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

**Upper St. Croix Parish**  
**Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls**  
**April 26th, 2026**  
**“Church Appreciation Month”**  
**“4th Sunday of Easter”**

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\*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

Our shepherd invites us to this time of worship;  
our God leads us by refreshing waters.

**As we share our lives with one another  
our souls are restored.**

God leads us in paths of righteousness  
and adds to our company day by day.

**We would devote ourselves to the gospel  
And remember one another in our prayers.**

God supplies our daily bread  
for both body and soul.

**We will partake of physical and spiritual food  
with glad and generous hearts.**

Remember the One in whose name we worship,  
Jesus Christ, who died amidst the world’s suffering.

**Christ came that all might have an abundant life;  
we acknowledge and rejoice in this gift. Amen.**

**\*DEDICATING HYMN** *Blessed Assurance* UMH 369 (vs. 1 & 3)

**OPENING PRAYER** Unison

**Risen Lord, on this fourth Sunday of Easter, we gather in the light of Your victory over death. Open our hearts to recognize You in Word and sacrament, as Your disciples did. Rekindle our faith, renew our hope, and fill us with resurrection joy. As we worship,**

**draw us into deeper fellowship with You and one another. Send us forth as witnesses of Your love and life, to serve the world in Your name. Amen.**

**CHILDREN’S TIME**

UMH 191 (vs. 1)

**Proclamation of God’s Word**

**\*THE GOSPEL LESSON**

**Matthew 5:1-12 (G)**

(NRSV, p. 4 in the New Testament)

**Acts 2:42-47 (A & SCF)**

(NRSV, p. 120 in the New Testament,  
and p.928 in the Living Bible)

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

*Thanks be to God. Amen!*

**SERMON** *“The Beatitudes: Sermon on the Mount”* (G)

**Sharon Asp (Lay Servant)**

*“Life Among the Believers”* (A & SCF)

**Kathy Gionis (Lay Servant)**

**We Respond to God’s Word**

**RESPONDING PRAYER** Unison

**Merciful God, You bless the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, and the peacemakers. Shape us into such people as we gather in devotion, fellowship, and prayer. Like the early church, unite us in love, sharing what we have and caring for every need. Form in us pure hearts, hunger for righteousness, and joy in Your presence. May our life together witness to Your kingdom, drawing others into Your grace and peace. Amen.**

**SHARING OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS**

*After each prayer request:*

*Pastor: Lord, in your mercy,*

*All: Hear our Prayer.*

## APRIL CHURCH MISSIONS

### ATLAS

Mission committee chair: Ashleigh Olson

**INK JET RECYCLING PROGRAM:**  
Atlas collects and recycles ink jet cartridges and cell phones year-round.



**LOAVES & FISHES NEEDS OUR ONGOING SUPPORT**



Suggested donation items: Spaghetti sauce, macaroni, peanut butter, pasta and rice. Please leave them in the basket at the front of the church!



Atlas' April Mission will be April Showers

We will shower the church with supplies!

- Suggested items:
- Styrofoam coffee cups
- Plastic drink cups
- Small luncheon paper plates
- Gallon plastic bags with twist ties
- Furnace filters 20x16
- Tall kitchen garbage bags
- Paper towels

### GRANTSBURG

Mission committee chair: Deb Hammer

**BE A "BACK-PACK BACKER"!**

REMEMBER ... Every Sunday is MAC 'N CHEESE SUNDAY!  
Supporting the Salvation Army's "Happy Kids Back-Pack Program".



**APRIL SHOWERS**

We are collecting supplies for the church in April. Please check the Mission Board at church for a list of needed supplies.

### ST. CROIX FALLS

Mission committee chair: Kate Murtaugh

**Food Shelf**



**(Communion Sunday)**

**Sailor Hat Offering:**



The Sailor Hat offering will go support UMCOR & Harbor House.

**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	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
Counter	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson

### Atlas

Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Mariah Gaffey
Usher	Colleen Adams-Schween
Cleaning	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
Sunday School	Cheryl Olson

### 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

### Prayers: (From 4/12)



**Please Pray For:** Deb Hammer (Peace over the world), Kayleen Branstad (Giacomo's father Steve's health), Barbara Loomis (strength), Sandra Erickson (Husband Jeff and son Mike), Sally Aldorfer (continuing care), Karen Sciacca (Wendy passed away), Peter and Kathy Gionis (safe trip), Cheryl Olson (friend LuAnn lost loved one), Lynn Hanson (grandson A J and great-granddaughter Eliana), Betty Doolittle (three cousins passed away), Sharon Asp (friend Jen), Jim Andrews (brothers Joe and Jared).

### Praise the Lord with Joy and Gratitude: Thank you, Lord!

Cheryl Olson (Darlyne Jorgensen's thank you card to Sunday School), Sharon Asp (new grandchildren).

*"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: Church Appreciation Month/Fourth Sunday of Easter  
Happy Easter!

**Worship Service and A Week Schedule**

4/26:	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
4/29:	4:00-5:00 pm	Go Fish Youth (G)
5/1:		May Day

**THIS WEEK’S BIRTHDAY’S & ANNIVERSARIES**

Dustin Kunze

4/26



**Next Sunday (May 3rd):**

**Central -Grantsburg**

Pianist	Toni Koons
Scripture Reading	Toni Koons
Acolyte(s)	Willow Nyland
Fellowship	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
Counter	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson



**Atlas**

Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Sue Olson
Usher	Colleen Adams-Schween
Cleaning	<b>Volunteer Needed</b>
Sunday School	Josie Grimes

**St. Croix Falls**

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

**Upcoming Events & News**

**4/26: SPECIAL OFFERING: We encourage you to give a special offering for a safety doorbell for the pastor’s parsonage and office. (Hardware: \$168.71; annual plan: \$105.48.)**

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

**Pastor Jenny’s Vacation:** 4/19- 5/2

**Pulpit Supplies:** April 26-Sharon Asp (G), Kathy Gionis (A & SCF)

**5/4-5/5:** Spring Provisional Elder workshop at Pine Lake Camp

**May 10<sup>th</sup>:** Mother’s Day Sunday

**May 31<sup>st</sup>:** Joint Worship Service & Lunch at St. Croix Falls UMC

Thank you for your ministry!

## LIFE AMONG THE BELIEVERS

Does anyone know the name of John Wesley's horse?

Actually, we don't know that. I'm sure he had many horses during his years as a circuit rider and preacher. When I was thinking about today's scripture reading, it occurred to me that John Wesley and the early Christians' lives and actions were very similar, even though they lived almost 1700 years apart.

The text today is from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, verses 42-47 and is a passage that gives us one of the clearest pictures of the early Christian community.

This description comes right after Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit presented itself and transformed lives. What happens next is a new way of living together.

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." The "they" being referred to are the crowd of fellow Israelites that Peter is addressing in Jerusalem right after Pentecost. So here you have the four pillars of the early church:

- Teaching
- Fellowship
- Breaking bread
- and Prayer

This scripture teaches us what is the foundation of a life shaped by Christ. The early Christians were devoted to these principles, and they devoted their lives to the four pillars and let their faith form them.

First, there is a learning community. "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching." The people listened to the story of Jesus, thinking about what that story meant, and then letting it shape their lives. The community is growing in faith and beginning to have roots. Today, in our time, it's convenient to treat faith as something we already understand. This passage reminds us that growing in discipleship is a process, and we are always learning.

Next, "They devoted themselves.....to fellowship." The word used here is the Greek "koinonia" which means an intimate fellowship, joint participation, sharing and communion among believers and with God. It's a commitment to one another's well-being and not just a coffee hour chat or friendly conversation. These early Christians felt that they belonged to each other, in addition to believing the same things. The Christian community can be powerful in a world than can seem isolating with all sorts of worrisome things happening.

The scripture goes on, "They devoted themselves.....to the breaking of bread and the prayers." The breaking of bread can be what we call Communion or it can be a soup

supper or potluck or church brunch, where people are fed together, centered around Jesus. And they prayed together. Prayer applied to their decisions, their relationships and purpose.

The early Christian community is described as a generous community. "All who believed were together and had all things in common---they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need." It is really impressive that their faith affected how they handled money and possessions. They saw a need and took action to address that need. The lesson is this verse is that peoples' needs mattered more to the early Christians than the accumulation of things. They demonstrated what generosity means. The scripture goes on to say that other people noticed their generosity and this created good will from the people.

There certainly are parallels to be drawn between the early Christians and John Wesley. Wesley was born in 1703, over 300 years ago. He was one of nineteen children, of whom six lived into adulthood. He was well educated and in 1726, exactly 300 years ago, he became a fellow at Lincoln College in Oxford and two years later he was ordained an Anglican priest. At Oxford he led "The Holy Club" and along the way joined the Moravian Christians. (You remember the story about Wesley crossing the Atlantic Ocean and a big storm broke the ship's mast. While the English panicked, the Moravians calmly sang hymns and prayed. This event led Wesley to believe that the Moravians possessed an inner strength that he lacked. This influenced him to reflect on such a deeply personal religion and is reflected in his theology of Methodism.)

In 1738 he experienced an evangelical conversion and began his own ministry. At the beginning, the Holy Club was a small group that met 3-4 nights a week. They studied classic literature and studied Greek, Hebrew and Latin. They visited the poor and imprisoned, daily examined their lives, took weekly communion and fasted every Wednesday and Friday. They were committed to personal holiness.

Wesley spent his entire life raising money for the poor and caring for those who would often be overlooked by the church. He took a public stance against slavery and invited both men and women to join him in ministry. Other facts about Wesley:

- He coined the term, "Agree to Disagree". He was able to remain in connection with those whom he had theological differences while holding on to his convictions.
- Wesley rode far enough on horseback to circle the earth 10 times. He rode 250,000 miles. He was convinced that it was important to personally spread the gospel through relationships and continue to grow closer to God in those relationships.
- Wesley had doubts about his faith and though he struggled with his doubts, he followed the advice of a mentor who told him "to preach faith til you have it, and then because you have it, you will preach faith".
- Although the term "methodist" was originally used by outsiders to mock John Wesley, he ended up accepting the term as a positive description of the movement he founded.

- Wesley believed you could not be a Christian on your own. He believed we could only grow as Christians in community.

So, what can we take from these two stories?

- Are we devoted—or just affiliated?
- Are we learning?
- Are we truly connected to others?
- Does our faith shape how we use what we have?
- Do others see something in us that reflects Christ?

In John Wesley's lifetime Methodism grew from four to 132,000 members, 72,000 in the British Isles and 60,000 in America. The Acts of the Apostles show us how the early church grew grounded in teaching, love, worship and generosity. John Wesley applied the same spirit to more modern times and it still applies today.

Amen