

Upper St. Croix Parish
Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls
May 31st, 2026
Trinity Sunday: Peace with Justice Sunday

*Please stand if you are able.

***PRELUDE**

Sharon Asp

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**

God’s Spirit is moving through our gathering,
creating and recreating, judging and empowering.

**Let God’s light break forth to illumine us
and the shadows be dispelled.**

The earth brings forth life-giving food,
and our need for nourishment is supplied.

**We give thanks for the sustenance God provides
and seek to share it with all humankind.**

God grants us dominion over the planet’s resources
and calls us to be stewards of the earth.

**We seek insight and willpower
to use God’s gifts with prudence and imagination.**

God pronounces all creation good
and joins us for a day of renewal.

**We rejoice in our sabbath opportunities
as we celebrate this resurrection day. Amen.**

DEDICATING HYMN *Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty

UMH 64

OPENING PRAYER Unison

**Creator of all worlds, who has made us in your own image, help us
to see your goodness in all things and in all people. May confidence
that you live in us develop our capacity to listen to one another,**

**live in peace, and welcome opportunities to minister in your world.
In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.**

Proclamation of God’s Word

***THE GOSPEL LESSON**

Matthew 28:16-20

(NRSV, p. 34 in the New Testament,
and p.831 in the Living Bible)

*This is the word of God for the people of God.
Thanks be to God. Amen!*

SERMON

“Back to Galilee”

Rev. Jenny Lee

We Respond to God’s Word

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

**Risen Lord Jesus Christ, we thank You for calling us back to
Galilee—back to faith, hope, and new beginnings. When we are
weary or discouraged, remind us that You are with us always. When
we look at the past with longing, help us to trust Your present grace.
Renew our hearts, restore our faith, and lead us forward in Your
love. We place our church and our future in Your hands, trusting
Your promise that You are always with 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

MAY CHURCH MISSIONS



ATLAS

Mission committee chair: Ashleigh Olson

<p>INK JET RECYCLING PROGRAM:</p> <p>Atlas collects and recycles ink jet cartridges and cell phones year-round.</p> 	<p>LOAVES & FISHES NEEDS OUR ONGOING SUPPORT</p> <p>Suggested</p>  <p>donation items: Spaghetti sauce, macaroni, peanut butter, pasta and rice. Please leave them in the basket at the front of the church!</p>	<p>Heifer International</p> <p>Heifer International's mission is to end hunger and poverty while caring for the Earth. For 80 years, Heifer has been working to empower impoverished families by providing them with the tools and resources they need to thrive. Your donation will help us provide small-scale farmers and communities worldwide with livestock, training, and related services to create sustainable solutions to poverty and hunger. ALL DONATIONS WILL BE MATCHED. Please see the May newsletter or Mission bulletin board for more details. 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! Supporting the Salvation Army's "Happy Kids Back-Pack Program".</p> 	<p>We will be collecting supplies and or financial donations for CRA. Community Referral Agency (CRA) provides safe shelter, advocacy, and support to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and their children, helping them rebuild their lives. Current needs: Shelf stable milk, juice, coffee sugar, pickles, ketchup, hot dogs, Hamburger Helper or one box meals, size 6 & 7 diapers, Tampons, sanitary pads, bath towels, sweat pants L & XL, bleach, Lysol Wipes, Lysol spray, liquid laundry soap, deodorant (Men & Women's), dish soap, kitchen garbage bags, Mr. Erasers, postage stamps, 9-volt batteries.</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 support the St. Croix Falls Food Shelf.</p> 
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Thank you for your support!

TODAY'S SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Ministers: All God's People
Rev. Jenny Lee



Joint Service at St. Croix Falls UMC at 10:30 AM

** Door prizes and lunch will be provided after the service!*

St. Croix Falls

Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Karen Sciacca
Usher(s)	Lynn Hanson, Kathy Gionis
Counter	Peter Gionis, Dave Huff, and Sue Olson
Bell Ringer	Jim Andrews
Flowers	Women of the church

Prayers:

Please Pray For: Sharon Asp (son-in-law's trip to China), Sandy Heinz (healing and recovery), Lynn Hanson (grandchildren), Pastor Jenny (all veterans and their families, and God's peace for the world).



Praise the Lord with Joy and Gratitude-Thank you, Lord For: Georgeanne Koons (met a good person), Dave and Sharon Huff (attended worship), Colleen Adams-Schween (wonderful trip and Darlyne's 90th birthday), Maxine Hauble (4 generations' gathering), and Kathy Gionis (Middle School Chamber Choir).

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

PLEASE NOTE:

- 1) There will be **NO** live ZOOM Service this Sunday.
- 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: Trinity Sunday and Peace with Justice Sunday! God bless you all!

Worship Service and A Week Schedule

- 5/31: 10:30 am St. Croix Falls UMC
- 6/4-6/7: Wisconsin Annual Conference in Madison
- 6/4: 4:30-6:30 pm Last Church Night for the Kids (G)
- 6/6: Big Gust Days
10:00 am -noon Outing Carnival Game & VBS Registration
Open at Central UMC Parking Lot
- 6/14: Communion Sunday

THIS WEEK'S BIRTHDAY'S & ANNIVERSARIES

Barry & Colleen Norenberg 5/31 



Jared Olson 6/5
Troy Olson 6/5

Next Sunday (June 7):

Central - Grantsburg

Preach	Barbara Loomis
Pianist	Toni Koons
Acolyte(s)	Willow Nyland
Fellowship	Volunteer Needed
Counter	Dave Huff
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson



Atlas

Preach	Kathy Gionis
Pianist	Toni Koons
Liturgist	Colleen Adams-Schween
Usher	Cheryl Olson
Cleaning	Volunteer Needed
Sunday School	Summer Break

St. Croix Falls

Preach	Kathy Gionis
Pianist	Toni Koons
Liturgist	Karen Sciacca
Usher(s)	Lynn Hanson
Counter	Peter Gionis
Bell Ringer	Jim Andrews
Flowers	Women of the church

Upcoming Events & News

2026 Vacation Bible School: Theme is "Pool Party"

Registration: Opens June 6th

VBS Dates: Five Wednesdays from July 15th to August 12th

Pool Party: August 16th

Donation and volunteer signup sheet is available at each church.

May 31st: Joint Worship Service & Lunch at St. Croix Falls UMC

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

2026 Wisconsin Annual Conference: June 4- 7 at Madison Marriott West in Madison, WI (Parish Delegates: Sue Olson and Sharon Asp)

May 31, 2026
Matthew 28:16-20

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



“Back to Galilee”

I want to start with something funny that I found on an internet site: After a long illness, a woman died and arrived at the Gates of Heaven. While she was waiting for St. Peter to greet her, she peeked through the Gates. She saw a beautiful banquet table. Sitting all around were her parents and all the other people she had loved and who had died before her.

They saw her and began calling greetings to her—“Hello” “How are you? We’ve been waiting for you!” “Good to see you.” When St. Peter came by, the woman said to him, “This is such a wonderful place! How do I get in?” “You have to spell a word,” St. Peter told her. “Which word?”, the woman asked. “Love.” The woman correctly spelled “love” and St. Peter welcomed her into Heaven.

About two years later, St. Peter came to the woman and asked her to watch the Gates of Heaven for him that day. While the woman was guarding the Gates of Heaven, her husband arrived. “I’m surprised to see you,” the woman said, “How have you been?” “Oh, I’ve been doing pretty well since you died,” her husband told her. “I married the beautiful young nurse who took care of you while you were ill. And then I won the lottery. I sold the little house you and I lived in and bought a big mansion. My wife and I traveled all around the world. We were on vacation and I went water skiing today. I fell, the ski hit my head, and here I am. So, how do I get in?” “You have to spell a word,” the woman told him. “Which word?”, her husband asked. “Czechoslovakia.”

Do you remember how many years I have been here? Recently, many people have asked me how long I have lived here. When I first came to Wisconsin, I was a little surprised because it was so far from Chicago, where I used to live. As you know, during my spring vacation each year, I visited Chicago to see my friends. So nowadays, it no longer feels far away because I have become used to it.

Since 2019, this place has become familiar to me. Now, whenever I visit Chicago, I feel tired because of the traffic and noise. I miss Wisconsin so much, and when I return home, I feel very comfortable. Yes, it has become my home.

“Home” or “hometown” is a very lovely word. It gives us rest, peace, safety, and courage to begin something new. It is like a mother’s arms.

Everyone has a home and a hometown. It may be a birthplace, a place where you grew up, or a place where you and your parents used to live. In many cases, people leave their hometown—especially if it is a small town in the countryside—whether by choice or not, whether for their dreams, jobs, or education. And then, after they achieve their goals or even if they do not, they begin to miss their hometown.

Today, I would like to share a message titled “*Back to Galilee.*” In today’s scripture, we find eleven disciples who left their hometown in response to their dreams and calling. However, they seemed to have failed. When Jesus, the miracle-working Master, called them, they dreamed of a wonderful future, leaving behind their homes, families, and hometown of Galilee. They were poor, uneducated, and looked down upon by society. Yet through Jesus, they found dignity, purpose, and hope for a new future. They were present at the center where Jesus performed miracles and seemed to gain confidence and authority, as if they were at the center of the world.

However, after Jesus died on the cross, they lost everything—such as their dreams, confidence, courage, and hope. They felt as if they had failed. They scattered again, outside of society. After Jesus rose from the dead, He

gave His disciples a message: “Go to Galilee. There you will see me.” This is interesting because Jesus did not first call them to Jerusalem, the great and holy city. Instead, He called them back to Galilee.

Why Galilee? Galilee was their hometown, where they grew up and lived, and the place where they first met Jesus. It was where Jesus first called the disciples. It was where they left their nets and followed Him. It was where they first witnessed miracles. It was where their faith first began to grow. Galilee was the place of their first calling, their first love, and their first faith.

And now, after failure, fear, and disappointment, Jesus calls them back there again: “Go back to Galilee.” But if you have left your hometown and then experienced failure, of course you may miss it—but it is not easy to return to your hometown with empty hands, right?

Dear beloved family in Jesus Christ,

I believe Jesus still calls His people back to Galilee today. What about us and our churches? Our churches have a long history. There may have been years when the sanctuary was fuller, when the church was a center of community events, when programs were more active, and when the future seemed stronger and clearer.

But now things may feel smaller than before. Some churches feel tired. Some members feel discouraged. Some wonder what the future will look like. Sometimes we think a church is dying when it is simply being invited to trust God more deeply.

I have often heard people say that our church may only survive for two or three more years because we have downsized financially and numerically. Whenever I hear that, it breaks my heart, even though it may be true.

A few years ago, we experienced the pandemic, and we lost many members who did not return to the church. And Atlas Church deeply struggled financially, even considering whether it might need to close. But with the support of our entire parish, they overcame that difficult season. Church ministry does not depend on financial resources, but on faith in Jesus Christ.

The good News is here: Jesus is not finished with His church. The disciples themselves were not strong when Jesus met them after the resurrection. They were afraid. They were uncertain. They had failed Jesus. And still, Jesus entrusted His mission to them. Not to powerful people. Not to perfect people. But to ordinary, struggling disciples. That gives us hope.

Because the future of the church does not depend only on numbers, buildings, or human strength.

The hope of the church is the living Christ who is still with us.

In verse 20, Jesus says: “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

This is the true foundation of the church. Our hope is not in the past, but in the presence of Jesus today. Even a small church can become a powerful witness when Christ is present. Even a tired congregation can discover new life when Christ walks among them. Even after disappointment, God can begin something new.

Nowadays, I often meditate in my garden. I usually feel that time runs so fast, but when I am in my garden, I notice that time moves so slowly. I planted seeds a few weeks ago, and I water them every morning and evening, observing whether new plants have come out. Not yet. The next day—still not yet. I feel that God is teaching me patience. I am learning patience through my garden. Even though I plant the seeds, I cannot make them grow; I can only water them and watch.

The Apostle Paul says, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow” (1 Corinthians 3:6). It is similar in church ministry. We do Bible study, worship, meetings, and programs, but

sometimes it seems small, and we cannot yet see the fruits. It is like planting seeds and waiting for them to grow. However, God is still at work.

Yes, God still calls His people back to Galilee. Back to faith. Back to love. Back to mission. Back to Jesus. And notice what Jesus says after meeting them in Galilee: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...” Jesus did not tell them to wait until they became bigger, stronger, or more successful. He simply told them to go. Because the mission of the church does not end when the church becomes smaller. In fact, sometimes smaller churches become places of deeper love, stronger prayer, and more faithful community.

We may not be able to do everything. But we can still love people. We can still pray. We can still welcome strangers. We can still share hope through monthly mission work. We can still be the body of Christ in this community. And that matters deeply to God.

So today, Jesus invites us: “Come back to Galilee.” Come back to your first love. Come back to your first calling. Come back to the simple faith that first led you to follow Jesus.

And as we return, we will discover that Christ has already been waiting for us there.

The risen Lord still walks with His church. And He is not finished yet.

We may not know what our churches will look like in ten or fifteen years. Some of us may no longer be here. But the Church of Jesus Christ will continue as long as God’s people remain faithful and God continues to work among them. So let us return to our first faith and continue the ministry God has entrusted to us, one day at a time. Because God is not finished with His church yet. Remember, God sent us to serve this church and this parish in love.

Thanks be to God. Amen.