

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

Gracious God, You come to us in unexpected ways and through unexpected people. Open our eyes to recognize Your presence at the doorway of our daily lives. Forgive us when we fail to welcome others with the love and hospitality You have shown us. Strengthen our faith to move beyond words into action, beyond comfort into compassion, and beyond doubt into trust. Make us instruments of Your grace, that all who enter our lives may encounter Your love. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

REPORT OF 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Pastor Jenny Lee, Sharon Asp and Sue Olson

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!

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. With gratitude, we bring these gifts before You, offering not only our resources but also our lives in service to Your kingdom. Bless these offerings and use them to share Your love, bring hope to those in need, and strengthen the ministry of Your Church. Multiply their impact beyond what we can imagine, and teach us to be faithful stewards of all You have entrusted to us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

We Go Forth to Love God and Serve One Another

***CLOSING HYMN**

Hymn of Promise

UMH 707 (vs. 1 & 3)

***BENEDICTION**

Rev. Jenny Lee

***POSTLUDE**

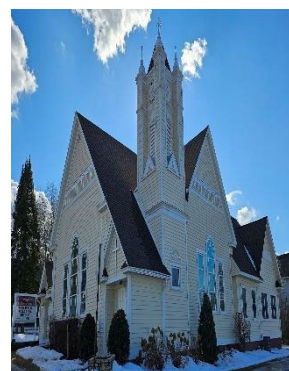
Toni Koons (G)/ Sharon Asp (A & SCF)

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)

"3rd Sunday After Pentecost"



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

(Sunday School)-summer break

11:15 AM at St. Croix Falls

CONTACT INFORMATION

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www.upperstcroixparish.org

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

Upper St. Croix Parish
Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls
June 14th, 2026
“3rd Sunday After Pentecost”

*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, behold the works of the Living God!
Listen for what God would say to us.

**We await God’s word for our church
and for the times in which we live.**

God beckons us to remember
the support and promptings of the Spirit.

**We have received comfort and assurance,
and our eyes have been opened to God’s challenges.**

God does not let us escape the world’s pain
when we come to this place apart.

**Some of the pain is our own, and we seek relief.
Much is borne by others, whom we want to help.**

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.

**We open ourselves to God’s healing
and offer ourselves for further service. Amen.**

***DEDICATING HYMN** *Wonderful Words of Life* **UMH 600**

OPENING PRAYER Unison
Loving and gracious God, we gather in Your presence with grateful hearts. In a world filled with noise and distractions, call us again to hear Your voice and follow Your ways. Open our minds to Your truth, our hearts to Your love, and our hands to serve our neighbors with compassion. Renew our faith, strengthen our hope, and guide us by Your Holy Spirit. As we worship You today, draw us closer to Christ and to one another. We pray in Jesus’ name. 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 OLD TESTAMENT LESSON**

Genesis 18:1-15

(NRSV, p. 14 in the Old Testament, and p.18 in the Living Bible)

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

Thanks be to God. Amen!

SERMON

“Practicing Faith”

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.**

JUNE CHURCH MISSIONS

ATLAS

Mission committee chair: Ashleigh Olson

INK JET RECYCLING PROGRAM:

Atlas collects and recycles ink jet cartridges and cell phones year-round.



June Mission: Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry

In June we will be collecting laundry detergent, spaghetti and macaroni for the food pantry in Luck. Donations can be left in the basket by the mission board at church.



Thank you for your continued generosity in supporting our many missions!



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".



June Mission: Supporting Vacation Bible School (VBS)

Our June mission will be to provide support to our VBS program. You can help by shopping for items requested or giving financial donations. There is a list of needed items at each church for you to reference.

ST. CROIX FALLS

Mission committee chair: Kate Murtaugh

Food Shelf



(Communion Sunday)

Sailor Hat Offering:



The Sailor Hat offering will go support the Polk County Drug Court.

Thank you for your support!

TODAY'S SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Ministers: All God's People
Rev. Jenny Lee

Central - Grantsburg

Pianist
Scripture Reading
Acolyte(s)
Fellowship
Counter
Mowing
Cleaning
Communion

Toni Koons
Toni Koons
Willow Nyland
Volunteer Needed
Dave Huff
Dave Huff
Sandra Erickson
Barbara Loomis



Atlas

Pianist
Liturgist
Usher
Cleaning
Sunday School
Communion

Sharon Asp
Sue Olson
Colleen Adams-Schween
Volunteer Needed
Summer Break
Sue Olson

St. Croix Falls

Pianist
Liturgist
Usher(s)
Counter
Bell Ringer
Flowers
Communion

Sharon Asp
Jim Andrews
Lynn Hanson
Peter Gionis
Jim Sciacca
Women of the church
Jim and Karen Sciacca

Prayers: (Updated 5/31)

Please Pray For: Lynn Hanson (grandson, Isaiah), Sharon Asp (son-in-law's trip to China), Sandy Heinz (lost Driver's ID), Cheryl Olson (cousins' healing), Pastor Jenny (God's peace for the world).



Praise the Lord with Joy and Gratitude-Thank you, Lord For: Barbara Loomis (diagnosis of no infection), Betty Doolittle (good to worship together with the parish), Karen Sciacca (good to see grandsons growing in good health).

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

PLEASE NOTE:

- 1) **There is a Zoom Live Service at 9:00 am 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: 3rd Sunday After Pentecost! God bless you all!

Worship Service and A Week Schedule

6/14:	9:00 am	Grantsburg-Central UMC
	10:00 am	Atlas UMC
	11:15 am	St. Croix Falls UMC
6/15:	4:30 pm	NW Clergy Farewell Party in Eau Claire
6/16:	6:30 pm	Ad Council Meeting (G)
6/17:	5:00 pm	Seed Farm Excursion at Crex Meadow
6/18:	5:00-7:00 pm	VBS Volunteer Training Day 1
6/19:	1:00-3:00 pm	Pool Day for the kids at Grantsburg Community Pool
6/21:	12:15 pm	Ad Council Meeting (SCF)

THIS WEEK'S BIRTHDAY'S & ANNIVERSARIES

Jamie & Mike Steffen 6/16

Sally Aldorfer 6/17

Leland Snyder 6/18

Shane Tooze 6/19

Judith McCann 6/20



Next Sunday (June 21):

Central-Grantsburg

Pianist
Reading Scripture
Acolyte(s)
Fellowship
Counter
Cleaning

Toni Koons
Toni Koons
Willow Nyland
Volunteer Needed
Dave Huff
Sandra Erickson



Atlas

Pianist
Liturgist
Usher
Cleaning
Sunday School

Sharon Asp
Colleen Adams-Schween
Sue Olson
Volunteer Needed
Summer Break

St. Croix Falls

Pianist
Liturgist
Usher(s)
Counter
Bell Ringer
Flowers

Sharon Asp
Jim Andrews
Lynn Hanson
Peter Gionis
Jim Sciacca
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 sheets are available at each church.

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

Congratulations: Sue Olson recipient of the BeUMC Award and Sharon Asp, recipient of the Perry Saito Award from the Conference.

June 14th, 2025
Genesis 18:1-15

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



“Practicing Faith”

I want to start with something funny that I found on an internet site: A young woman brings home her fiancé to meet her parents. After dinner, her mother tells her father to find out about the young man. The father invites the fiancé to his study for a drink.

“So what are your plans?” the father asks.

“I am a Torah scholar,” he replies.

“A Torah scholar. Hmm,” the father says. “Admirable, but what will you do to provide a nice house for my daughter to live in, as she’s accustomed to?”

“I will study,” the young man replies, “and God will provide for us.”

“And how will you buy her a beautiful engagement ring, such as she deserves?” asks the father.

“I will concentrate on my studies,” the young man replies, “God will provide for us.”

“And children?” asks the father. “How will you support children?”

“Don’t worry, sir, God will provide,” replies the fiancé.

The conversation continues like this, and each time the father questions him, the young idealist insists that God will provide. Later, the mother asks, “How did it go, honey?” The father answers, “He has no job and no plans, but the good news is he thinks I’m God.”

What do you think of the young man in the story? Do you think he is a strong believer, or an irresponsible person?

We believe that we are saved through faith in Jesus Christ by the grace of God, not by our works. Yes, that is true. But it does not mean that we do nothing. Some Christians misunderstand “salvation by faith alone in Jesus Christ.” Faith in Jesus means that we believe in Him and follow Him—what He did and what He taught us.

The Letter of James says, “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.” (James 2:19). Demons also believe in God, but they do not follow Jesus.

Today, I want to talk about “Practicing Faith.” In today’s Scripture reading, we see Abraham and his wife Sarah. Let us reflect on their faith journey and learn how to practice faith in everyday life.

The story begins with Abraham “sitting at the entrance of his tent.” It is a simple detail, but it matters deeply. Abraham is not on a mountain. He is not in a temple. He is not in a moment of great achievement or spiritual intensity. He is at the doorway of everyday life.

Faith begins at the doorway of ordinary life. It was perhaps a hot day, and he was resting in the shade under the tree, as if it were just another normal day. And it is there that God appears. Three visitors come, and Abraham does not ignore them. He does not wait to confirm who they are. He does not delay hospitality until he has certainty. Instead, he runs. He bows. He welcomes. He prepares food.

You know, the Israelites' practice of hospitality included offering water to drink and washing guests' feet, because of the heat and scarcity of water, and also because travel was done on foot. Abraham offered them not only water but also a great meal and a place of rest. Perhaps this reflects Abraham's normal practice of loving God and loving neighbor in everyday life.

Yes, God may come into our ordinary days, and we may respond as if it is normal. Faith, in this moment, is not merely a belief statement. It is movement. It is attention. It is openness. It is life itself.

Sometimes we imagine faith as something we think or feel only in extraordinary moments. But Genesis 18 suggests something much more grounded: faith is practiced in the doorway of daily life—when we are interrupted, when we are tired, when life feels routine.

Where is your doorway? Where is the place where God might be showing up in the ordinary?

There is a story often told in churches—told in different ways, but carrying the same painful truth:

A poor man came to a church one Sunday morning to attend worship. He was dressed simply, with worn clothes that showed his hardship. He quietly entered the sanctuary, hoping to join the service. But as he walked in, he noticed the stares. People were uncomfortable. Some moved away. Others whispered. He was not greeted with warmth, but with suspicion. Eventually, he was told—directly or indirectly—that perhaps this was not the right place for him. And so, quietly and without resistance, he left the church.

Anyway, the service continued as usual. Hymns were sung. Prayers were offered. Scripture was read. But afterward, the congregation was told something that stopped them cold: the man they had turned away was, in fact, Christ Himself—coming to them in disguise.

Of course, the story is not meant to be taken literally. It is a parable of the heart. It echoes Jesus' words: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40)

The question this story leaves hanging in the air is simple but piercing: What if Christ came to our doorway, and we did not recognize Him? Who knows? Jesus may come to our doorway in the form of the sick, the poor, or the ordinary people. So perhaps the real question for us today is this: Where is your doorway—and who might already be standing there?

Hospitality is very important because it shapes the first impression of a guest. Faith is also practiced through hospitality. Abraham's response is striking. He does not simply greet the visitors—he runs toward them. He offers water, rest, bread, and care. He insists on serving them.

What is remarkable is that Abraham does all of this before he fully knows who they are. This is one of the quiet mysteries of the text: sometimes God arrives in disguise. The writer of Hebrews reflects this when it says, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so some have entertained angels without knowing it."

Hospitality, then, is not just social courtesy. It becomes spiritual practice. It becomes a way of recognizing that God may be present in unexpected people, unexpected interruptions, and unexpected needs.

\Practicing faith means acting with love before certainty arrives. It means serving before we fully understand. It means opening space before we have proof. And this challenges us deeply, because we often want clarity

before action, certainty before generosity, assurance before we open the door. But Abraham shows us a different way: faith runs toward love first.

In the middle of the story, the promise is spoken again: Sarah will have a son. But Sarah hears it from inside the tent—and she laughs. Her laughter is not loud or public. It is private, almost hidden—a quiet internal reaction to something that feels unbelievable.

We should not rush past Sarah’s laughter, because it is deeply human.

How many of us have laughed inwardly at God’s promises? Not because we mock God, but because life has taught us limits. Sarah’s body has aged. The promise has been delayed. The expectation has faded.

Actually, this is not the first time God promised Abraham a son. Fifteen years earlier, God promised him descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky (Genesis 15:5). However, even after ten years, there was no child, and Abraham had a son through Hagar, his servant, thinking that this might be God’s way.

So now, again, the word comes: “Your wife Sarah will bear a son.” No more joking. It feels impossible. It feels too far gone. But then comes the question that changes everything: “Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?” This is not a rebuke; it is an invitation—God gently expanding the space of possibility. God makes things happen that we cannot.

Practicing faith, then, is not pretending we do not laugh. It is learning to bring even our laughter—our doubt, skepticism, and weariness—into God’s presence. Faith is not the absence of doubt; faith is a life centered on God even within doubt.

At the center of this story is not Abraham’s generosity or Sarah’s doubt, but God who comes near. God is not distant in this passage. God is walking, speaking, eating, promising, and listening. This is a God who visits and stays with us. If we truly believe that, our faith changes everything.

Faith is not primarily our effort to reach God. Faith is our response to a God who comes to us. God meets Abraham in the heat of the day. God meets Sarah in her hidden laughter. God meets them in the ordinary space of a tent. And God still meets us there.

So what does it mean to practice faith? It means opening the door when life feels ordinary. It means acting in love before certainty arrives. It means waiting when promises feel delayed. It means telling the truth about our doubts. And it means trusting that God is already near—already speaking, already present, already working in ways we cannot yet see.

Faith is not a single decision. It is a daily practice. And the question that echoes through this passage is the same question that echoes through our lives. “Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?” May we learn, day by day, to answer that question not only with our words—but with our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.