

Generous and faithful God, every good gift comes from You, and with grateful hearts we offer these gifts back to You. Bless these offerings and use them to share Your love, bring hope to those in need, and strengthen the work of Your Church. Teach us to trust You more than our own plans, knowing that You are always in control. May our giving be an act of worship that honors You and blesses others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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



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

9th 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
July 26th, 2026
9th 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 before God, asking what you will,
and God will cover your needs.

**How can we ask the Ruler of the universe
to give attention to our small problems?**

God knows and values you;
nothing is too great or small for God’s attention.

**Our ancestors in the faith
experienced God’s wonderful, rescuing works.**

We, too, can know God’s care in our lives,
And the trust God appoints us to keep.

**We need the food God provides in our wilderness
And the cloud and fire to guide us.**

Draw near so the Holy Spirit may encounter you;
Hold nothing back from God’s All-knowing presence.

**We bring all that we have and are
To the throne of grace. Amen.**

***DEDICATING HYMN** *Great Is Thy Faithfulness*
UMH 140 (vs. 1 & 3)

OPENING PRAYER Unison

Gracious and loving God, we come into Your presence with
thankful hearts, seeking Your grace and guidance. Quiet our
anxious minds and open our hearts to Your Word. As we worship
You today, remind us that although we make our plans, You are

always in control. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit, strengthen our
faith, and help us trust Your perfect will in every season of life.
May our worship bring You honor and glory. In Jesus’ name we
pray. Amen.

CHILDREN’S TIME

UMH 191 (vs. 1)

Proclamation of God’s Word

***THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON**

Genesis 29:15-28

(NRSV, p. 26 in the Old Testament, G & SCF Pew Bible,
and p.25 in the Living Bible; Atlas Pew Bible)

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

SERMON “We Make Plans, but God is in Control” Rev. Jenny Lee

We Respond to God’s Word

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

Faithful and sovereign God, thank You for reminding us that
although we make our plans, You are always in control. Forgive us
when we rely on our own wisdom more than Your guidance. Help us
trust You when life takes unexpected turns, when others treat us
unfairly, and when the road ahead is uncertain. Give us faith to follow
where You lead, courage to do what is right, and confidence that Your
loving purpose will never fail. 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**

JULY 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

We will be collecting Peanut Butter & Jelly for the Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry in Luck. Please leave your donations in the basket in the front of the church. Thank you!



SCHOOL SUPPLIES

In July we will be collecting school supplies for those in need in our own community.



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".



SCHOOL SUPPLIES

In July we will be collecting financial donations and School Supplies for children in the Grantsburg community.



ST. CROIX FALLS

Mission committee chair: Kate Murtaugh

Food Shelf

(Communion Sunday)



Sailor Hat Offering:

The Sailor Hat offering will support the 2026 VBS Program.



TODAY'S SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Ministers: All God's People
Rev. Jenny Lee

Central - Grantsburg

Pianist
Scripture Reading
Acolyte(s)
Fellowship
Counter
Mowing
Cleaning

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

Atlas

Pianist
Liturgist
Usher
Cleaning
Sunday School

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

St. Croix Falls

Pianist
Liturgist
Usher(s)
Counter
Bell Ringer
Flowers

Sharon Asp
Kathy Gionis
Lynn Hanson
Peter Gionis
Jim Andrews
Women of the church

Prayers: Please Pray For: Barbara Loomis (healing); Sandra Erickson (healing for her son, Mike, her husband, Jeff, and her grandson, Dauntay); Kay Lamphere (healing); Cheryl Olson (her cousin Harley's surgery); Lois Morrison (recovery); Lynn Hanson (her grandson, A.J., and her daughters, Bekey and Sara); Karen Sciacca (her oldest son, Dereck, for safety during a 34-hour run and for his health).

Praise the Lord with Joy and Gratitude — Thank You, Lord, for: Russ and Deb Hammer (sharing zucchini), Sharon Asp (serving as the Ladies Representative of the American Legion), and Kathy Gionis (high school class reunion).



Thank you for your support!

"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.
- 4) 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: 9th Sunday After Pentecost. God bless you all!

Worship Service and A Week Schedule

7/26:	9:00 am	Grantsburg-Central UMC
	10:00 am	Atlas UMC
	11:15 am	St. Croix Falls UMC
7/29:	2:00-4:00 pm	Pool Day for Children (G)

THIS WEEK'S BIRTHDAY'S & ANNIVERSARIES

Logan Smestad 7/26

Jim Andrews 7/28

Reed Olson 8/1



Next Sunday (August 2):

Central-Grantsburg

Pianist	Toni Koons
Reading Scripture	Toni Koons
Acolyte(s)	Willow Nyland
Fellowship	Volunteer Needed
Counter	Volunteer Needed
Mowing	Volunteer Needed
Cleaning	Sandra Erickson
Communion	Volunteer Needed

Atlas

Pianist	Sharon Asp
Liturgist	Sue Olson
Usher	Colleen Adams-Schween
Cleaning	Volunteer Needed
Sunday School	Summer Break
Communion	Sue Olson

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
Communion	Kathy and Peter Gionis



Upcoming Events & News

2026 Summer Special Program for Children

- Due to low VBS registration we now have a special summer program for children instead of VBS: July 15, 22, 29, Aug. 5, 7, 16, 23 and 28.
- See separate paper for detailed schedule.
- 8/7, Family Game Night (G)-required reservation by 8/5

Bible Reading Challenge: Please pick up the Bible Reading Planner card! We encourage you to read the Bible using the reading card.



“We Make Plans, but God Is in Control.”

I want to start with something funny I found an internet site: During a rehearsal for his wedding, he came to the minister, saying, “I want to make a deal with you. If you leave the words “to bow” out, I will give you \$100.” And he slid \$100 in the minister’s hand and walked away smiling. The next day, during the wedding, the minister asked the groom, “Would you obey to your wife? Would you prepare breakfast for your wife, wash dishes, and clean the house?” The groom was bewildered and replied in a weak voice, “Yes.” After the ceremony, the groom whispered to the minister, “I thought we made a deal.” The minister said, “Yes, we did. But your wife suggested a better one to me than yours.” And the minister gave him back the \$100.

It is a funny joke. I don’t think anyone would make a deal like that at their wedding. Well maybe someone else does. In the Scripture today, we found that Jacob makes a deal with Laban for his marriage.

Jacob seemed to be a man who loved making deals. He often relied on his own clever plans, deceiving others to get what he wanted. Through Jacob's story, we discover an important truth: We make plans, but God is in control. God sometimes uses even the wrong motives of other people to accomplish His good purposes in our lives. When someone treats you unfairly or seems to succeed through dishonesty, don't lose heart. God sees everything. People are not always fair, but God is just. The story is not over yet. Our Lord is a God of justice, and in His time, He will make all things right.

Jacob, after cheating his father Isaac, ran away from his brother toward his mother’s hometown. Jacob met God in his dream in Bethel. God promised to give him lots of offspring and to give him the land of Bethel. After he woke up from the dream, he anointed the stone and called it “Bethel,” which means “the house of God.” And then he made a vow to God, saying, “If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I can return safely to my father’s house, then the Lord will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God’s house” (28:20-22).

Listen carefully. God already blessed him, saying, “I am with you, and wherever you go, I will watch over you” (28:15). God was already with Jacob. Even though Jacob cheated his father and brother, God wanted to bless him and lead him into a new life.

However, Jacob made a deal with God, “if you will be with me, and will provide me food and clothes until I come back to my father’s house, you will be my God and I will give you tithe.” (28:22). So why was Jacob blessed? Was it because of his vow, or because God had already planned to bless him?

For Jacob, God is not his God yet until he gets back his father's house. He tried to live with his deception. Remember that Jacob is a cheater. He cheated his brother to take the birthright. He cheated his father to take his father’s blessing. Even though he met God in the wilderness, he did not believe in God yet. That’s why he still tried to deal with God. Then he left the house of God. God began to recalculate Jacob’s route. God must have been busy putting Jacob in the right place for the work. Sometimes I imagine Jacob gave God more work than almost anyone did!

Let us listen, how Jacob uses his stratagem, and how God is in control. Jacob arrived at the well in the land of eastern people (29:1). He tried to figure out where he was. And he learned that it is the right place that he was looking for, where his mother’s hometown was. How did he get there? He never went out for such a long distance. He was the person who was used to staying in a tent (at home). God alone led him there. Jacob may not have known the way, but God did. God is the perfect navigator. God was in control all along.

Jacob saw Rachel, his uncle Laban’s daughter. As soon as Jacob saw Rachel, he got busy and rolled over the stone from the mouth of the well for Rachel’s sheep. He told her that he is her relative, who is Rebekah’s son. It must have been love at first sight for Jacob. Rachel brought Jacob to her father, Laban. After Jacob stayed in Laban’s house for a whole month, Laban asked Jacob for wages. Jacob says, “I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.” Their deal was made. But, after the seven years, Laban cheated Jacob. Laban gave him Leah instead of Rachel. Jacob confronted

Laban and asked, “Why did you deceive me?” Laban says, “This is not done in our country-giving the younger before the firstborn. So, you may serve me for Rachel for another seven years.” Jacob, who is a cheater, met a bigger cheater. But, because Jacob loved Rachel so much, he worked for seven more years.

Finally, Jacob worked for about twenty-one years in Laban’s employ. If we live with our stratagem like a cheater, we may meet a stronger cheater than us like Jacob did. Laban was an expert of shady deals. He put Jacob to work for a month before discussing compensation. Laban had already figured Jacob out. Jacob, who was not known for missing tricks, immediately is taken in by Laban’s plot. And then, Jacob’s labor of love begins.

Nevertheless, God keeps the promise with Jacob; “I am with you. Wherever you go, I will watch over you.” In the Song of Moses, we found how God takes care of Jacob; “God **found** him [Jacob] in the desert land, in the howling wilderness wasteland; God **encircled** Jacob, **cared** for him, **guarded** him as the apple of His eye” (Deuteronomy 32:10). No matter how difficult those twenty-one years became, God kept His promise. He found Jacob, surrounded him, cared for him, and guarded him as the apple of His eye.

Sometimes we think that if God cared about us there would be no suffering, no hard work, no struggle, and no pain. But, think of it from a different perspective; God is with us no matter what kinds of situations we face. God was with Jacob in the wilderness and in Laban’s employ. Through Laban’s cheating, Jacob has two wives. Because of the rivalry between Leah and Rachel, Jacob eventually fathered children through four women. Through them, God built the twelve tribes of Israel.

As God promised, Jacob’s offspring prospered like the dust of the earth. God never changes His promise. God is with us in steadfast love. Sometimes you feel suffering, and you may think God is not there. However, God is always there, whether you recognize or not. It is essential to pray for God’s presence. Try to sense God is with you. Invite God to your life, whether through your concerns or joys. God is in control. Sometimes God uses people who have no good purpose to bring us to our destiny, which God has planned.

No one seemed to have a more unfair or unjust life than Joseph. He had done nothing wrong. On his way to check on his brothers, they betrayed him and sold him into slavery. Joseph was taken to a foreign land and lived as a servant. Even though he had committed no crime, he was thrown into prison. Throughout his long and difficult journey, Joseph continued to do what was right. Scripture says, “The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master” (Genesis 39:2). Although people mistreated him, God remained with him because Joseph remained faithful and did what was right.

Finally, Joseph became the governor of Egypt. At that time, Israel’s land was ruined by the famine. Joseph’s brothers came to him to beg for food. Joseph had the power to take revenge on his brothers. They had fear in front of Joseph, who had the power.

Imagine how Joseph felt! Joseph could have been full of resentment and bitterness. But, Joseph says, “do not be distressed and do not be angry at yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you” (Genesis 45:5). Joseph understood this truth: We make plans, but God is in control. Joseph says, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.” (Genesis 50:20).

God may not remove the wilderness. God may not change the world right now. Instead, God watches over everything. Your time is coming. Your children’s time is coming soon. If one door is closed, the other door will be open soon. God is in control.

The Prophet Habakkuk once cried out to God for an unfair world, “How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?” (Habakkuk 1:2) Later on, he praises the Lord, saying, “Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines; though the produce of the olive fails, and the fields yield no food; though the flock is cut off from the fold, and there is no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the God of my salvation” (Habakkuk 3:17-18). He realized the principle that “The righteous will live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4). God is in control. Trust God. So, when life seems unfair, don’t give up. Continue doing what is right. Continue trusting God. Continue walking by faith. Remember, we make plans, but God is in control. His timing is perfect, His justice never fails, and His purposes always prevail. Trust Him, for He is working even when you cannot yet see it. Thanks be to God. Amen.