

UPCOMING SERMON SERIES: THE SEVENTH STORY

This summer, we will begin a new sermon series called The Seventh Story. The basic idea is simple but powerful: the stories we tell shape the lives we live. Some stories teach us to see the world through “us” and “them.” These stories are old, familiar, and deeply embedded in our families, churches, communities, politics, and culture. They can feel normal because we have heard them for so long.

But Jesus tells a different story. The Seventh Story is a story of love, reconciliation, liberation, justice, mercy, and peace. It is a story where no one has to lose in order for someone else to win, where power is used for healing instead of control, where enemies are not dehumanized, where neighbors are not treated as threats, and where Love becomes the main character. Over eight weeks, we will explore these stories together:

- June 7 — The Stories We Live By
- June 14 — Us Over Them: The Domination Story
- June 21 — Us Against Them: The Revolution Story
- June 28 — Us Apart from Them: The Isolation Story
- July 5 — The Nation-as-God Story
- July 12 — Us Without Them: The Purification Story
- July 19 — Us Above / Beneath Them: Accumulation and Victimization
- July 26 — The Seventh Story: Love Is the Protagonist

This series will invite us to pay attention to the stories shaping our hearts, our relationships, our church, and our world. Some weeks may be challenging. Some may feel deeply personal. Some may name patterns we would rather avoid. But the purpose is not shame or blame. The purpose is to listen again for the story Jesus keeps telling: a story big enough to heal what fear, violence, division, and scarcity have broken.

The world keeps teaching us “us versus them.” Jesus keeps inviting us into a better story, where there is only us.

HELP SHAPE WORSHIP THIS SUMMER

This summer at First Church, we are planning a couple of fun and meaningful ways for the congregation to help shape our worship together.

First, we would love to know your favorite hymns! Throughout the summer, we will be using hymn suggestions from the congregation as part of our worship planning. Whether it is a hymn that has carried you through a difficult season, one that reminds you of someone you love, or simply one you love to sing, we want to hear about it.

Second, Pastor Jeremy will be preaching several “Ask the Pastor” style sermons this summer. These messages will be shaped by questions, thoughts, and topics submitted by the congregation. This is a chance to ask about faith, Scripture, theology, the church, life, or anything else you would like to hear reflected on in worship.

You can submit both hymn suggestions and sermon questions on your connection card and turn it in any Sunday between May 17 and June 7.

PHOTO DIRECTORY

Photos will be taken each Sunday in May during fellowship time after worship at the Downtown Campus. There’s no need to sign up—just stop by the photo area when you’re ready. Photos can be taken for individuals, couples, or families. Gary Poole, our photographer, will have prints available for purchase directly through him—no pressure, just an option if you’re interested. Print sizes will include 8×10, 11×14, and 16×20.

What's Happening

SUNDAY, MAY 24

9:30AM - Worship @ Paris (North) Campus
10AM - Worship @ First Church (Downtown) Campus
11:15AM - Fellowship / Coffee Hour @ First Church (Downtown) Campus

WEDNESDAY, MAY 27

10AM - SOUL Circle @ Downtown Campus
5:30PM - “Purpose Driven Life” Dinner / Book Study @ North Campus

THURSDAY, MAY 28

5:30PM - Community Dinner @ Downtown Campus

PASTOR JEREMY - UNAVAILABLE MAY 26 - JUNE 6

Pastor Jeremy will be out of town and unavailable May 26 - June 6. During this time, please contact the staff member who best aligns with your needs. For administrative or general questions, or if you don't know which staff person you need to talk with, please contact Barbara Erb in the church office.

FAMILY MEETING & POTLUCK - JUNE 7

On Sunday, June 7, we'll gather for a UMMMC Family Meeting and Potluck immediately following worship at our downtown campus. This is one of the key ways we come together as a whole church—to connect, share a meal, and stay engaged in the life and direction of our ministry. You'll hear updates about what's happening across our campuses and where we're headed next. Everyone is invited, and if you're able to bring a dish to pass, it's always appreciated. Make plans to stay and be part of the conversation!

SENIOR ENRICHMENT DAY - WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24

Senior Enrichment Day will be held at Big Rapids High School on Wednesday, June 24, 2026. The seminar series offered this year includes a choice of more than 40 diverse educational sessions, providing a “one-stop shop” for vital information for seniors. Such options include fitness classes, painting, long-term care, and financial planning options, help with Medicare, Veteran's benefits, and more. The sessions are 45 minutes in length and are designed for seniors, their children, and caregivers. Registration materials for the Senior Enrichment Day may be found in the Information Center outside of the church office. You may also register online: www.seniorenrichmentday.com

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

Barbara Erb - Director of Administrative Services
barbara@ummecosta.org - (231) 796-7771

Kathy Bell - Director of Congregational Care
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Paden Clevenger - Director of Family Ministries & Community Outreach
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Rev. Jeremy Wicks - Executive Pastor
jeremy@ummecosta.org / (231) 224-6545

To schedule an appointment with Pastor Jeremy, contact Barbara Erb or schedule online @ calendly.com/jeremy-ummecosta

Week of May 24 - May 30, 2026

Family News



UNITED METHODIST MINISTRIES OF MECOSTA COUNTY

304 ELM STREET, BIG RAPIDS MI 49307 • (231) 796-7771 • WWW.UMMECOSTA.ORG

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE HOURS: TUES - FRIDAY, 9AM - 3PM
PASTOR OFFICE HOURS: TUESDAY & THURSDAY, 9AM - 12PM & 12:30PM - 3PM

NORTH CAMPUS - PARIS

109 Lincoln St
Paris, MI 49338
ummecosta.org/paris

Worship Gathering
in-person
Sundays @ 9:30AM

DOWNTOWN CAMPUS - FIRST

304 Elm Street
Big Rapids, MI 49307
bigrapidsfirst.org

Worship Gathering
in-person and online
Sundays @ 10AM

Order of Worship - May 24, 2026

PENTECOST SUNDAY

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

* Call to Worship (Reader / *People*)

The Spirit of God moves over the waters.
The breath of God gives life to the dust.

The Spirit speaks through prophets and dreamers.
The breath of God renews the people.

On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit came like rushing wind and holy fire.
God's people were filled with power, courage, and joy.

Come, Holy Spirit.
*Open our hearts. Loosen our tongues. Kindle our faith.
Let us worship the God who breathes life into the world and sends
us out to share good news with all people.*

* Hymn - "O Spirit of the Living God" UMH #539

Children's Message

Old Testament Reading - Psalm 104:24-34 (NRSVUE)

Hymn - "'Breathe on Me, Breath of God", UMH #420, vss. 1-3

New Testament Reading - Acts 2:1-21 (NRSVUE)

Reader: The word of God, for the people of God.
People: *Thanks be to God!*

Song - "Holy Spirit" led by the Praise Team

Message - "When the Spirit Won't Stay Quiet"

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

* The Doxology, UMH #95

* Hymn - "We Are the Church", UMH #558, vss 1-3

* Benediction

* Hymn - "We Are the Church", UMH #558, vss 4-5

Postlude

* PLEASE RISE IN BODY OR SPIRIT

*Pastor Jeremy will be in the Warren Street Lobby
after the service and would love to greet you.*

Welcome to First Church!

Welcome to First Church, the downtown campus of United Methodist Ministries of Mecosta County - we're so glad you're here! This is a community where every person belongs, every story matters, and every question is welcome. If you're new or exploring, we'd love to get to know you. You can learn more about who we are and find helpful information for your first visit at bigrapidsfirst.org.

Need directions? Curious about something? Our welcome team is nearby and ready to help. Truly, we're delighted to worship with you today.

NOTES:



Check In Here

SERVING TODAY - MAY 24

Reader: Barbara Ross
Ushers: Rex & Cheryl Richardson
Greeter: Betsy Curtis
Nursery: Sara DeLany
Fellowship Host: Marlene Rodgers
Organist: Shirley Jernstadt
Accompanist: Kathy Bell
Tech Team: Ken Draves, Gary Poole

SERVING NEXT WEEK - MAY 31

Reader: Pat Little
Ushers: Pat and Marion Williamson
Greeter: Barbara Ross
Nursery: Sara DeLany, Char Fitch
Fellowship Host: Brenda Chaffee

THINK ABOUT IT THIS WEEK

This Sunday is Pentecost, the day we remember the Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples with wind, fire, courage, and a message that could be heard across every language and culture. Pentecost reminds us that the Spirit does not come simply to comfort the church, but to stir us, disrupt us, renew us, and send us into the world with good news people can actually understand.

In Acts 2, the Spirit refuses to stay quiet. The disciples move from waiting in a room to speaking publicly with courage. People from many nations hear the good news in their own languages. Peter reminds the crowd of God's promise through the prophet Joel: "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh."

Pentecost invites us to ask whether we are open to the Spirit's movement today—not just in ways that feel familiar or comfortable, but in ways that stretch us, challenge us, and send us toward the people and places God already loves.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

- Where in your life have you become too settled, guarded, or resistant to change?
- What might it mean for you to listen for the Holy Spirit this week?
- Who in your life needs to hear good news in a way they can actually receive?
- Whose voice might God be speaking through that you have been tempted to overlook?
- Where do you see signs that the Spirit is already moving in our church or community?

ACTION STEPS FOR THE WEEK

- Take five quiet minutes each day to pray, "Come, Holy Spirit," and listen for what rises in you.
- Pay attention to one person whose experience, perspective, or story is different from yours.
- Look for one opportunity to speak encouragement, hope, or love in a way someone else can understand.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Come, Holy Spirit. Stir what has grown still. Open what has become closed. Give us courage to speak, humility to listen, and love enough to follow where you lead. Amen.

Pentecost is not only something that happened long ago. It is a reminder that the Spirit is still moving, still speaking, still breathing life into the church, and still sending us into the world. The question is not whether the Spirit is active. The question is whether we are willing to listen and follow.

MAY MISSION FOCUS: UMC STUDENT SUNDAY

Each May, we join United Methodist churches across the connection in supporting UMC Student Sunday, an offering that invests directly in students pursuing higher education and discerning their call in the world.

Through the work of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, every dollar given funds scholarships for undergraduate, graduate, and seminary students, helping ease financial burdens and open doors that might otherwise remain closed. This is one of the ways we live out our connectional commitment—pooling our resources to make a meaningful impact beyond our local church.

More than just financial support, this offering is a tangible reminder to students that the Church believes in them and is committed to their future. Throughout the month of May, we invite you to prayerfully consider giving, knowing that your generosity helps shape leaders who will carry forward the work of faith, justice, and service in the world.

Your generosity makes a difference! To avoid any confusion in our giving systems, please make your checks out to **First Church. Thank you for your continued support!**