

PROPERTY UPDATE & UPCOMING CHARGE CONFERENCE

Over the past several months, the Leadership Team of United Methodist Ministries of Mecosta County has been engaged in a thoughtful and prayerful process regarding the future of the East Campus (3rd Avenue) property. This discernment has included internal conversations, consultation with district leadership, and ongoing dialogue with community partners—particularly Love INC of Mecosta County.

Through that process, the Leadership Team has come to believe that the most faithful and strategic use of this property is to transfer it to Love INC. Their ability to mobilize churches, coordinate volunteers, and respond directly to community needs positions them to utilize the building in ways that will have a meaningful and lasting impact on the surrounding neighborhood—impact that we, as UMMMC, are not currently resourced to provide on our own.

This decision reflects both a missional and practical reality. The East Campus building is not a space we have the capacity to maintain or redevelop for active ministry. Rather than allowing it to remain underutilized, this partnership creates the opportunity for the property to become a hub of connection, care, and support within the community.

We are grateful to share that the District Committee on Building & Location has reviewed and approved this proposal. This is an important step in the process and affirms the direction our Leadership Team has taken.

What happens next? The next step is to hold a Charge Conference, which is required in the United Methodist Church for matters related to the sale of church property.

CHARGE CONFERENCE - APRIL 1 @ 6:30 PM
FELLOWSHIP HALL (FIRST CHURCH)

At this Charge Conference, eligible members will be asked to vote on the proposed sale of the East Campus property to Love INC of Mecosta County. While anyone is welcome to attend, voting will be limited to those who are members of the Charge Conference, as outlined by our structure.

We believe this step represents an opportunity to align our resources more fully with our mission—to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world—while also strengthening our partnership with an organization that is deeply committed to serving our local community.

We invite you to be in prayer for this process, for the upcoming Charge Conference, and for the future of this property as it continues to serve the people of Mecosta County in new and meaningful ways.

VOLUNTEER DRIVERS NEEDED ON SUNDAY MORNINGS

Do you have a heart for helping others stay connected to our church family? We are looking for volunteers who would be willing to drive individuals to worship services at our First Church campus. If you feel called to help in this way, or if you would like to learn more about becoming a volunteer driver, please contact Kathy Bell, Director of Congregational Care. Thank you for helping our church remain a welcoming and connected community.

UMMMC DINNER SCRAMBLE – A SIMPLE WAY TO CONNECT

This April, connect beyond Sunday morning through the UMMMC Dinner Scramble by signing up as an individual, couple, or family to be randomly grouped for a shared meal during the last two weeks of April; each group will decide the details (restaurant, home, or casual gathering), with the goal of simple, meaningful connection. Sign up beginning Sunday, March 8, either in person at First Church (Fellowship Hall) or the Paris Campus (back of the sanctuary), or by emailing register@ummecosta.org with your name, phone number, number attending, and whether you're signing up as an individual, couple, or family; registration closes March 31, and groups will be assigned shortly after.

What's Happening

SUNDAY, MARCH 22

9:00AM - Praise Team Rehearsal @ First Church (Downtown) Campus
9:30AM - Worship @ Paris (North) Campus
10:00AM - Worship @ First Church (Downtown) Campus
11:15AM - Fellowship / Coffee Hour @ First Church (Downtown) Campus

TUESDAY, MARCH 24

9AM - Ministry Staff Team Meeting @ Downtown Campus

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25

11AM - Lenten Book Study "Knowing Who We Are" @ Downtown Campus
12PM - Table Talk (BYO Lunch!) @ Downtown Campus

THURSDAY, MARCH 26

5:30PM - Community Dinner @ Downtown Campus

SATURDAY, MARCH 28

10AM - Crafting With A Cause @ Downtown Campus

CRAFTING WITH A CAUSE - SATURDAY @ 10AM (DOWNTOWN)

Crafting with a Cause will be gathering to make Easter cards for shut-ins, then go to Gypsy Nickel for lunch at noon. They will have lots of paper, stickers, etc. but please bring scissors and double-sided tape or a tape runner if you have one.

MEMBERSHIP OPPORTUNITY - SPRING 2026

If you've been worshipping with us and are sensing that it might be time to make this your church home, we would love to walk that step with you. If you're interested in joining, check the "I'm interested in membership" box on your Connection Card, or reach out to the church office and let us know. If you have questions about what membership means, please contact Barbara Erb or Pastor Jeremy.

WE'RE HIRING!

Choir Director - Provide musical leadership, rehearse and direct our choir, and help shape meaningful worship experiences through choral music. If you have questions or would like to apply, please contact the main office and speak with Barb or Pastor Jeremy.

MARCH MISSION FOCUS: UMCOR

This month, we're supporting the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), the denomination's global humanitarian ministry responding to disasters, conflict, and poverty in more than 70 countries, including the U.S., bringing help and hope where it's needed most; one of UMCOR's unique strengths is that 100% of donations designated for specific relief efforts go directly to those causes, with administrative costs funded separately. You can give through our regular offering by noting "UMCOR" on your check or envelope, or by noting UMCOR when giving online.

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

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

Julie Setlock - Director of Family Ministry
julie@ummecosta.org - (231) 796-7771

Kathy Bell - Director of Congregational Care
kathy@ummecosta.org - (231) 224-6177

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 March 22, 2026 - March 28, 2026

Family News



KNOWING WHO
WE ARE

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 - March 22, 2026

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

* Call to Worship (Reader / *People*)

Come, let us gather in the presence of the One who is still speaking.
We come carrying stories—stories we have been told, stories we tell ourselves, stories that shape how we see the world.

But today, we turn again to a deeper story.
A story of grace that meets us on the road, a story of hope that refuses to end in despair, a story that is still unfolding among us.

Open our eyes, O God, *that we might recognize your presence.*

Open our hearts, *that we might be shaped by your love.*

Open our lives, *that we might live as people formed by your story. Amen.*

* **Song** - "Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)", led by the Praise Team

Children's Message

Scripture Reading - Deuteronomy 6:4-9 & 2 Timothy 3:14-17 (NRSVUE)

Reader: The word of God, for the people of God.

People: *Thanks be to God!*

Hymn - "Oceans", led by the Praise Team

Message - "Knowing Who We Are: Texts That Shape Us"

Hymn - "Thy Word Is a Lamp", UMH #601

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

* **The Doxology**, UMH #95

* **Hymn** - "The Summons", TFWS #2130, vss. 1-4

* Benediction

* **Hymn** - "The Summons", TFWS #2130, vs. 5

Postlude

* PLEASE RISE IN BODY OR SPIRIT

Join us for coffee and conversation in Fellowship Hall immediately following worship. Pastor Jeremy will also 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 - MARCH 22

Reader: Beth Bejcek

Ushers: Rex & Cheryl Richardson

Greeter: Betsy Curtis

Nursery: Sarah DeLany, Paige Madden

Sunday School: Julie Setlock, Brenda Chaffee

Fellowship Host: Marlene Rodgers

Organist: Shirley Jernstadt

Accompanist: Kathy Bell

Tech Team: Ken Draves, Gary Poole

SERVING NEXT WEEK - MARCH 29 (PALM SUNDAY)

Reader: Pat Little

Ushers: Rex & Cheryl Richardson

Greeter: Barbara Ross

Nursery: Julie Setlock, Grace Supanich

Sunday School: Pam Fleming, TBD

Fellowship Host: Jeremy & Toinette Wicks

STAFF UPDATE: WELCOMING PADEN CLEVINGER

We're excited to share that we have hired **Paden Clevenger** as our new **Director of Family Ministries & Community Outreach**. This role reflects an important step forward for UMMMC as we continue to invest in both the life of our families and our connection to the broader community. Paden will be helping us strengthen relationships with children, youth, and families, while also building meaningful partnerships and outreach opportunities beyond our walls. Paden will begin working with Julie for a short season before she steps into her new role, and we look forward to introducing her more fully in the coming weeks. *Please join us in welcoming Paden to the team!*

FOR THE WEEK AHEAD: TEXTS THAT SHAPE US

We are shaped by the stories we return to.

Every day, we are surrounded by voices telling us what matters, who belongs, what success looks like, and how to respond to the world around us. Some of those stories come from the news, social media, or cultural expectations. Others come from our own experiences and assumptions. Whether we realize it or not, those stories are forming us—shaping how we think, how we see others, and how we live.

In Deuteronomy, the people of God are invited into something different. They are told to carry the story of God with them—to speak it, remember it, and weave it into the rhythms of daily life. Scripture is not presented as something to reference occasionally, but as something that shapes identity over time. It becomes part of who they are.

In 2 Timothy, we hear that Scripture forms us for a purpose—not simply to know more, but to live differently. While this passage has sometimes been used to treat Scripture like a rulebook or a tool for proving a point, its deeper invitation is about transformation. Scripture is meant to shape our lives in ways that lead to goodness, compassion, and faithful action.

The question for us this week is not just whether we read Scripture, but how it is shaping us.

Questions to Reflect On

- What stories or voices have been shaping the way you see the world lately?
- When you engage Scripture, do you approach it as information to understand, or as a story to live within?
- What might it look like to carry the story of God with you throughout your day?

Action Steps

- Choose a short passage of Scripture this week and return to it each day.
- Read it slowly, paying attention to what it reveals about God's character.
- Ask: How might this shape the way I see others or respond today?
- Consider sharing what you're noticing with a friend or family member.

Prayer for the Week

God of story and grace, help us to be shaped by your presence and your truth. As we return to Scripture, form our hearts and guide our lives, so that we may reflect your love in all we do. Amen.

Closing

We are always living inside a story. This week, be intentional about the one you return to. As you engage Scripture, trust that God is not only speaking—but shaping you, gently and persistently, into a life of love and grace.

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!