

PHOTO DIRECTORY COMING SOON

As we continue growing together as United Methodist Ministries of Mecosta County, we're excited to create our very first photo directory—an opportunity to help us better connect names and faces across our two campuses.

Photos will be taken each Sunday in May during fellowship time after worship at the downtown campus. Members from the Paris campus are encouraged to join us there, and we will also host a dedicated Saturday photo session at the Paris campus to make participation more accessible for everyone.

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.

We're grateful to Gary Poole for serving as our photographer for this project. If you'd like printed copies of your photo, Gary 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.

A few simple tips to help your photo turn out well:

- Dress neatly—no need to be formal
- Solid, medium to darker colors tend to photograph best
- Couples and families may want to coordinate colors
- Photos will be taken from the waist up

We're looking forward to creating something that helps strengthen connection across our whole church community!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We have a few opportunities for those looking to get more involved in the life of our church:

- **Landscape Coordinator** – We're looking for someone to organize and lead a team that cares for the flower beds, landscaping, including the Memorial Garden, at our Downtown Campus. This role is about coordination and team building, not doing all the work yourself—and no, mowing the lawn is not required, unless you really want it to be!
- **Community Meal Cook** – We're looking to add at least one more cook to the team that prepares meals for our neighbors on Thursdays. This is a hands-on way to make a direct impact and help extend hospitality to our neighbors.

If you're interested in any of these opportunities, or just want to learn more, please reach out to Pastor Jeremy. There's a place for you to connect and make a difference.

BOOK STUDY: THE PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE

You're invited to join a six-week book study on *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren, on Wednesdays, May 6 - June 10. This study will explore questions of meaning, calling, and how we live out our faith in everyday life. The evening will begin with dinner at 5:30PM, followed by the study from 6:00–7:30PM. If you'd like to participate, please contact Barbara Erb in the church office to register by May 1.

KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN...

We're already looking ahead to one of the sweetest events of the summer—our Ice Cream Social, coming soon to the Paris campus. Last year was a wonderful success, filled with great conversation, lots of laughter, and (of course) plenty of delicious ice cream. More details are coming soon, but for now... keep your eyes open. You won't want to miss it!

What's Happening

SUNDAY, APRIL 26

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

TUESDAY, APRIL 28

9AM - Ministry Staff Team Meeting @ Downtown Campus

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29

10AM - SOUL Circle @ Downtown Campus
11AM - *Embracing an Adverbial Faith* Discussion Group @ Downtown Campus
12PM - Table Talk @ Downtown Campus

THURSDAY, APRIL 30

5:30PM - Community Dinner @ Downtown Campus

WILD WEDNESDAY PLANNING MEETING – APRIL 26

This is our first call for volunteers for Wild Wednesday—our signature summer children's ministry experience—and we'd love to have you involved. Join us for a planning meeting on April 26, immediately following worship at First Church. Whether you've served before or are stepping in for the first time, your voice and presence matter as we begin shaping this summer's ministry. If you have questions or want to learn more, please connect with Paden Clevenger, our Director of Family Ministries and Community Outreach.

MIDWEEK CONVERSATION: EMBRACING AN ADVERBIAL FAITH

Join us on Wednesdays at 11AM beginning April 15 at our Downtown Campus for a weekly gathering centered on the themes we're exploring in worship—what it means to be formed as disciples who love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously. There's no book to purchase and no prep required—just show up and be part of the conversation. (*Table Talk is immediately following, so bring your lunch if you'd like to stay and participate!*)

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!

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

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

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

Paden Clevenger - Director of Family Ministries & Community Outreach
paden@ummecosta.org - (231) 796-7771

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 April 26 - May 2, 2026

Family News

LOVE
boldly

SERVE
joyfully

LEAD
courageously

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 - April 26, 2026

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

* Call to Worship (Reader / People)

Family of God, who are you?

We are disciples formed in the image of Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Family of God, how does Jesus form you?

By loving us and showing us how to love.

Family of God, how does the Holy Spirit empower you?

By loving us and inspiring us to love others as Christ loves us.

Family of God, on this journey of faith, we are not alone—God is with us!

We come to worship God, who shows us how to love and calls us to boldly love God and neighbor, that we may be disciples of Jesus Christ who transform the world. Amen.

* Hymn - "The Gift of Love", UMH #408

Children's Message

Old Testament Reading - Leviticus 19:9-18 (NRSVUE)

Song - "Oceans", led by the Praise Team

New Testament Reading - Mark 12:28-34 & John 13:34-35 (NRSVUE)

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

People: *Thanks be to God!*

Song - "Reckless Love", led by the Praise Team

Message - "Love Boldly"

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

* The Doxology, UMH #95

* Hymn - "They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love", TFWS #2223, vss 1-3

* Benediction

* Hymn - "They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love", TFWS #2223, vs 4

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 - APRIL 26

Reader: Denise Cospers

Ushers: Rex & Cheryl Richardson

Greeter: Barbara Ross

Nursery: Sara DeLany, Donna Drake

Sunday School: Kathi Parker, Pam Stirn

Fellowship Host: Marlene Rodgers

Organist: Shirley Jernstadt

Accompanist: Kathy Bell

Tech Team: Ken Draves, Gary Poole

SERVING NEXT WEEK - MAY 3

Reader: Rick Hult

Ushers: Pat & Marion Williamson

Greeter: Nancy Spedowski

Communion Servers: Pat Little, Brenda Chaffee

Nursery: Sara DeLany, TBD

Sunday School: TBD

Fellowship Host: Brenda Chaffee

THINK ABOUT IT THIS WEEK - LOVE BOLDLY

This week, we step into one of the most familiar teachings of Jesus—and one of the most misunderstood: "Love God. Love your neighbor." We know the words. We've heard them before. We can probably recite them without thinking. But the question isn't whether we know them. The question is: *Have we really wrestled with what they ask of us?*

Jesus doesn't describe love as something that just happens to us. He describes it as something we are commanded to do—and that shifts everything. Love is not just a feeling. It's not just a reaction. It's not something we wait to experience. It's a choice, a posture, a way of being in the world.

Love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, all your strength. That kind of love is not easy. In a world shaped by fear, division, and self-protection, choosing to love like this is not safe. It can feel costly. It can feel risky. Which is why one of the most honest ways to describe this call is this: Love is an act of resistance. It resists fear. It resists indifference. It resists the instinct to protect ourselves at the expense of others.

Questions to Reflect On

- When have you experienced love as a choice rather than a feeling?
- Where in your life are you tempted to hold something back instead of loving with your whole self?
- Who is hardest for you to love right now? Why?
- What fears tend to shape how you respond to others?
- What would it look like to love not out of reaction, but out of intention?

Action Steps for the Week

- Notice your reactions: Pay attention to moments where your first instinct is to withdraw, judge, or protect yourself.
- Choose one intentional act of love: Reach out, show kindness, or extend grace—especially where it doesn't come naturally.
- Practice "all": In one area of your life this week, give your full attention, presence, or care instead of holding back.
- Stay grounded: Spend time with Mark 12:28-34 or John 13:34-35 and reflect on what it means to love as a way of life.

Prayer for the Week

God of love, You call us to something deeper than comfort and something more courageous than convenience. Help us to love not just in words, but in the choices we make each day. Give us the courage to love fully, even when it feels risky, and the wisdom to see others as you see them. Shape our hearts, that we might reflect your love in the world. Amen.

A Closing Thought

Love is not just something we feel. It is something we choose. And in a world shaped by fear, that choice has the power to change more than we realize. This week, don't wait for the feeling. Choose love—and see what happens.

MAY MISSION FOCUS:

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!