

## MARCH MISSION GIVING FOCUS: UMCOR

This month we turn our hearts and hands toward one of The United Methodist Church's most trusted and impactful mission partners: the United Methodist Committee on Relief, known widely as UMCOR. At its core, UMCOR answers Jesus' call to love our neighbors and bear one another's burdens by bringing help and hope where suffering is greatest.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief is the global humanitarian relief and development organization of The United Methodist Church. UMCOR serves as the Church's principal response to human suffering around the world—whether caused by natural disasters, war and conflict, famine, or other overwhelming crises. It is a nonprofit ministry operating under the General Board of Global Ministries and engages in relief efforts in more than 70 countries, including here in the United States.

One defining strength of UMCOR is that 100% of every dollar designated for a specific disaster or relief project goes directly to that work—not to administrative costs. That's because the "costs of doing business" for UMCOR are funded through a separate annual offering that underwrites administrative expenses so gifts to specific projects can go entirely to those in need. Here are the kinds of work your giving supports:

- **Immediate Disaster Relief** - When hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, wildfires or other disasters strike, UMCOR mobilizes quickly to provide essentials like food, clean water, temporary shelter, hygiene items, and debris removal to overwhelmed communities.
- **Long-Term Recovery and Reconstruction** - UMCOR doesn't only respond in the first days after a crisis. It also helps families and communities rebuild their lives—from repairing homes and restoring livelihoods to case management and ongoing support for recovery.
- **Global Health, Hunger, and Poverty Initiatives** - In partnership with local organizations around the world, UMCOR addresses hunger, poverty, disease, and lack of access to clean water or healthcare—seeking sustainable solutions to complex, long-term needs.
- **Refugee and Migration Support** - UMCOR ministers to displaced people, refugees, and migrants by partnering with agencies to provide essential services, shelter, and welcoming care wherever displacement has occurred.

Because of this wide ministry impact, giving to UMCOR is not only a response to crisis—it is a faithful testament to our shared call to live out Christ's love in tangible, life-changing ways. When we give to UMCOR this month, we extend help, hope and healing to our neighbors near and far.

## PANTRY ITEMS NEEDED

Our Personal Care Pantries are in immediate need of donations to help support individuals and families in our community. Your generosity makes a real difference, and right now the following items are especially needed:

- Shampoo & conditioner
- Deodorant
- Toothpaste & toothbrushes
- Pasta & rice
- Boxed meals
- Cereal & oatmeal
- Hats, gloves, and mittens

Thank you so much for your continued generosity and care for our neighbors in need!

Donation Drop-Off Locations:

- Downtown (First) Campus: Fellowship Hall, near the bulletin board
- North (Paris) Campus: Sanctuary, table near the main door

## What's Happening

### SUNDAY, MARCH 1

9:30AM - Worship @ Paris Campus  
10:00AM - Worship @ First Church Campus  
11:15AM - Fellowship / Coffee Hour @ First

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4

11AM - Lenten Book Study "Knowing Who We Are" @ First  
12PM - Table Talk (BYO Lunch!) @ First  
5:00PM - Praise Team Rehearsal

### THURSDAY, MARCH 5

5:30PM - Community Dinner @ First

### CRAFTING WITH A CAUSE

Join us for **Crafting with a Cause** on **Saturday, March 28 @ 10AM (Downtown Campus)** for a morning of creativity, connection, and compassion. This isn't just about making something — it's about *making a difference*. Together, we'll create simple handmade items that will be shared with members of our community who could use a reminder that they are seen, valued, and loved. You don't have to be "crafty" to participate. Whether you're experienced with glue guns and paintbrushes or you simply want to show up and help, there's a place for you. Supplies will be provided, and all ages are welcome. Come create. Come connect. Come be part of something that extends hope beyond our walls.

### WE'RE HIRING!

**Choir Director** - Provide musical leadership, rehearse and direct our choir, and help shape meaningful worship experiences through choral music.

**Director of Family Ministry & Community Outreach** - Lead initiatives that engage families, build community partnerships, and connect our church with the needs of our neighbors.

If you have questions or would like to apply, please contact the main office and speak with Barb or Pastor Jeremy.

### 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](https://calendly.com/jeremy-ummecosta)

**Pastor Jeremy will be unavailable and out of the office March 1 - 5. If you have a pastoral care need, please contact Kathy Bell. For all other needs or questions, contact Barbara Erb.**

Week of March 1, 2026 - March 7, 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](http://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](http://ummecosta.org/paris)

Worship Gathering  
in-person  
Sundays @ 9:30AM

#### DOWNTOWN CAMPUS - FIRST

304 Elm Street  
Big Rapids, MI 49307  
[bigrapidsfirst.org](http://bigrapidsfirst.org)

Worship Gathering  
in-person and online  
Sundays @ 10AM

# Order of Worship - March 1, 2026

## Prelude

## Welcome & Announcements

### \* Call to Worship (Reader / *People*)

We come seeking renewal.  
*We come knowing we cannot grow alone.*

From the beginning, the Spirit has called us into community to pray together, to learn together, to bear one another's burdens.  
*We are shaped in belonging.*

In this place, hearts are strengthened, and lives are shaped.  
*We belong to one another in Christ.*

Let us open our hearts to God and to one another.  
*Let us worship the God who forms us in grace.*

### \* Hymn - "And Are We Yet Alive", UMH #553

### Mission Moment - United Methodist Committee on Relief

## Children's Message

**Scripture Reading** - Acts 2:42-47 & Hebrews 10:23-25 (NRSVUE)  
Reader: The word of God, for the people of God.  
People: *Thanks be to God!*

### Hymn - "One Bread, One Body", UMH #620

### Message - "Knowing Who We Are: Formed Together"

## Celebration of Communion

## The Lord's Prayer

### \* The Doxology, UMH #95

### \* Hymn - "Blest Be The Tie That Binds", UMH #557, vss. 1-3

## \* Benediction

### \* Hymn - "Blest Be The Tie That Binds", UMH #557, vs. 4

## 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](http://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 1

Reader: Emmanuel Jadhav  
Ushers: Pat & Marion Williamson, Joann Haist  
Greeter: Cheryl Richardson  
Communion: Cheryl Richardson, Marlene Rodgers  
Nursery: Sarah Delany, Donna Drake  
Sunday School: Larisa Draves, Liberty Beam  
Fellowship Host: Denise Cosper  
Organist: Shirley Jernstadt

## SERVING NEXT WEEK - MARCH 8

Reader: Brian Bejcek  
Ushers: Colin & Roberta Cline  
Greeter: Pete Jensen  
Nursery: Sarah Delany, Char Fitch  
Sunday School: Thomas Wheeler, Frankie Supanich  
Fellowship Host: Brenda Chaffee

## THINK ABOUT IT: FORMED TOGETHER

The earliest followers of Jesus did not grow in isolation. Acts tells us they devoted themselves to teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer. They shared what they had. They worshiped together. They learned together. They carried one another's burdens. And something remarkable happened: grace became visible. Hebrews adds another layer: "Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together... but encouraging one another."

From the very beginning, Christian faith has never been private. Grace forms us most deeply in community. Small gatherings in homes, around tables, in classrooms, or in circles of prayer have always been central to Methodist renewal. John Wesley understood that transformation happens best when people know one another well enough to encourage, challenge, and support one another in love. *We do not grow alone.*

## Questions to Think About This Week

1. Who currently knows the real state of my soul — my fears, my hopes, my struggles, my questions?
2. Do I approach church primarily as a place I attend, or as a community I belong to?
3. What practices (prayer, Scripture, conversation, shared service) help me grow when I engage them with others?
4. Is there a place in my life where isolation has slowly replaced connection?
5. Where might God be inviting me into deeper, more honest community?

**Action Steps** - Renewal spreads through shared practice. Community deepens when participation becomes intentional.

- *Reach Out Intentionally.* Contact one person this week simply to check in — not to fix, not to advise, but to listen.
- *Practice Shared Prayer.* Invite someone to pray with you — in person or over the phone. Even a brief prayer can deepen connection.
- *Show Up.* If you are part of a small group, attend intentionally this week. If you are not, consider taking one step toward joining one.
- *Encourage Actively.* Offer a specific word of encouragement to someone whose faith you admire.

## Prayer for the Week

*Faithful God, you gather us into community. You call us not only to believe, but to belong. Form us through shared prayer and honest conversation. Give us courage to be known and grace to know others well. Teach us to encourage one another toward love and good deeds. Where isolation has taken root, plant connection. Where hesitation has kept us distant, draw us closer. Make our shared life a witness to your renewing love. Through Christ our Lord, AMEN.*

## Final Thought

The early church did not grow because individuals became spiritually impressive. It grew because grace shaped a community. As we continue this Lenten journey, remember: faith matures in fellowship. Love becomes visible when shared. Renewal takes root when we walk together. Let grace form us — together.

## READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

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. We will be welcoming new members into the life of the church on Easter Sunday at our First Church campus, and this is a beautiful day to say "yes" to deeper connection, shared mission, and growing together in faith. 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.

*Membership isn't about putting your name on a list. It's about committing to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ, together, for the transformation of 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!**