

CELEBRATING LAITY SUNDAY – OCTOBER 18

On Sunday, October 18, we will celebrate Laity Sunday, a special opportunity to recognize and give thanks for the many ways laypeople live out their faith through service, leadership, and ministry.

In the United Methodist tradition, we believe that ministry belongs to all of us—not just pastors and church staff! Every person has unique gifts and a calling to participate in God's transforming work in the world. Whether through leading worship, serving meals, caring for neighbors, teaching, volunteering, or simply extending kindness and compassion, our laity are the heart of our shared ministry.

Join us for worship on October 18 as we celebrate the gifts of our congregation, give thanks for those who faithfully serve, and renew our commitment to being the hands and feet of Christ in our community and beyond.

Together, we are the church, and together, we make a difference!

ALL SAINTS SUNDAY – NOVEMBER 1

On Sunday, November 1, we will observe All Saints Day, a sacred time in the life of the church when we pause to remember and give thanks for the lives of those who have gone before us. During worship, we will honor the saints whose love, faith, and presence have shaped our lives and continue to inspire us.

As part of our service, we will share a special time of remembrance, reading aloud the names of loved ones who have died. If you have someone you would like remembered during worship, please call or email Barbara Erb in the church office to have their name included.

Together, we will celebrate the gift of their lives, give thanks for the love that endures beyond death, and remember that we remain connected as one communion of saints through the grace and love of God.

CAREGIVERS SUPPORT GROUP - WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM

Are you caring for a spouse, parent, child, family member, or friend? Whether you provide care for an aging loved one, someone with an illness or disability, or a person facing a season of need, you don't have to do it alone. We are exploring the possibility of starting a **Caregivers Support Group** - a welcoming place to share experiences, encourage one another, pray together, and find support along the caregiving journey. All types of caregiving are welcome. Would you be interested in participating? We'd love to hear from you as we gauge interest and determine what would be most helpful. If you are interested, please contact Kathy Bell or Barbara Erb in the church office.

TAKE A "BOO BREAK" THIS HALLOWEEN!

Halloween can be wonderfully chaotic, and sometimes everyone needs a little break! Join us for Boo Break on Saturday, October 31, from 11 AM–2 PM at First Church (304 Elm Street, Big Rapids). Stop by The Boo Cauldron for free hot cocoa, coffee, and apple cider! Enjoy a spooky craft, snap a picture at our Halloween photo backdrop, and take a break from the festivities. Everything is free, and everyone is welcome!

Volunteers are needed! Sign up in the Fellowship Hall at First Church or contact Barb in the church office by phone or email. Boo Break is a fun way to share hospitality, connect with our neighbors, and make Halloween a little sweeter. Come join the fun!

What's Happening

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11

9AM - Worship @ Paris (North) Campus
10AM - Worship @ First Church (Downtown) Campus
Coffee / Fellowship Immediately Following Worship

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13

9AM - Director's Meeting @ Downtown Campus
10AM - Worship Design Team @ Downtown Campus
12PM - Ladies Lunch @ Panera Bread (Big Rapids)

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14

10AM - Choir Rehearsal
11:30AM - Good Company @ Big Rapids Public Library
12PM - Table Talk @ Downtown Campus

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15

5:30PM - Community Dinner @ Downtown Campus

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17

10AM - Crafting With A Cause @ Downtown Campus

GOOD COMPANY @ THE LIBRARY

Sometimes it really does take a village! Beginning Wednesday, October 7, adults with young children are invited to join us for Good Company @ the Library at the Big Rapids Community Library.

Come for Mr. Howard's Storytime from 11–11:45 AM, then stick around for Good Company from 11:45 AM–12:15 PM. While the kids play, adults can enjoy an iced coffee, a sweet treat, and some relaxed conversation with other parents, grandparents, caregivers, and community members. No program, no pressure—just a chance to meet people, enjoy some good company, and build a little more community together.

For more information, or to volunteer to serve, contact Paden at paden@ummecosta.org.

CRAFTING WITH A CAUSE

Crafting With A Cause will be meeting on Saturday, October 17th from 10:00 a.m. to noon in Fellowship Hall, followed by going out for lunch from noon to 1 pm. They will be assembling door hanger decorations for our church shut-ins and for the residents of Evergreen Terrace. All are welcome to attend. Please bring a pair of scissors and a glue gun if you have them. Thank you!

OCTOBER IS PASTOR APPRECIATION MONTH

October is Pastor Appreciation Month, offering a simple opportunity to pause and express gratitude for the pastors who help lead, care for, and walk alongside their congregations. Here at UMMC, we invite you to take a moment this month to share a note, card, email, or word of encouragement with Pastor Jeremy. Ministry includes far more than what happens on Sunday mornings, and a few thoughtful words of appreciation can go a long way.

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

Barbara Erb - Director of Administrative Services
barbara@ummecosta.org - (231) 796-7771 ext. 1

Kathy Bell - Director of Congregational Care
kathy@ummecosta.org - (231) 224-6177 / (231) 796-7771 ext. 3

Paden Clevenger - Director of Family Ministries & Community Outreach
paden@ummecosta.org - (231) 796-7771 ext. 4

Linda Rinehart - Director of Choral Music
linda@ummecosta.org - (231) 631-4380

Rev. Jeremy Wicks - Executive Pastor
jeremy@ummecosta.org / (231) 796-7771 ext 2 / (231) 224-6545

Week of October 11 - October 17, 2026



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 AND MINISTRY STAFF AVAILABLE BY APPOINTMENT

NORTH CAMPUS - PARIS

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

Worship Gathering in-person
Sundays @ 9:00AM

DOWNTOWN CAMPUS - FIRST

304 Elm Street
Big Rapids, MI 49307
bigrapidsfirst.org

Worship Gathering in-person and
live online, Sundays @ 10AM
www.facebook.com/brfumc

Services Archived Weekly:
www.youtube.com/@brfumc

Order of Worship - October 11, 2026

Prelude

Choral Introit

Welcome & Announcements

* Call to Worship (Reader / *People*)

We come carrying questions, assumptions, and stories we have learned.
Come, Holy Spirit, open our minds and hearts.

Jesus asks us not only what is written, but how we read.
Teach us to listen with humility and courage.

We are called to love God with all that we are,
and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

May Scripture not simply confirm what we already believe.
May it challenge us, transform us, and lead us toward mercy.

Come, let us worship the One who still meets us in the questions.
And let us learn again the way of Jesus: justice, compassion, and love.

* Hymn - “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” — UMH 139

Children’s Message

Choral Anthem “God’s Peace” arr. C.J. Adams

Old Testament Reading - Nehemiah 8:1-8 (NRSVUE)
May these words open our hearts and deepen our understanding.
Thanks be to God.

Hymn - “Open My Eyes, That I May See” — UMH 454

New Testament Reading - Luke 10:25–37 (NRSVUE)
The Word of God, for the people of God.
Thanks be to God!

Message - “Ask Me Anything: Who Is My Neighbor?”

* Doxology, UMH 95

* Hymn - “Praise the Source of Faith and Learning” — TFWS 2004 vss 1-3

* Blessing and Sending

* Hymn - “Praise the Source of Faith and Learning” — TFWS 2004 vs 4

Postlude

*Altar flowers are given by Rex & Cheryl Richardson in honor of their fathers;
Bob Richardson & Lyle Larson*

* PLEASE RISE IN BODY OR SPIRIT

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 - OCTOBER 11

Reader: Beth Bejcek
Ushers: Colin & Roberta Cline
Greeter: Pete Jensen
Sunday School: Activity Boxes Available
Nursery: Coleen Jaeger, Julie Tessin
Fellowship Host: Denise Cospers
Choir Director: Linda Rinehart
Accompanist: Kathy Bell
Organist: Shirley Jernstadt
Tech Team: Ken Draves, Gary Poole

SERVING NEXT WEEK - OCTOBER 18

Reader: Marlene Rodgers
Ushers: Mike & Jana Pisani
Greeter: Kati Parker
Sunday School: Larisa Draves, Kathi Parker
Nursery: Kristi Supanich, Paden Clevenger
Fellowship Host: Pat Little

THINK ABOUT IT THIS WEEK

This Sunday, we begin Ask Me Anything: The Jesus Edition with the familiar story of the Good Samaritan. But before the lawyer ever asks Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus asks him another question: “How do you read?”

That question matters. Some things in Scripture are remarkably clear: love God, love your neighbor, care for the vulnerable, practice justice, show mercy. Other questions require deeper interpretation, historical context, careful study, and humility. Every time we read Scripture, we bring assumptions, experiences, traditions, and expectations with us.

Scripture is for us, but it was not originally written to us. These texts came from particular communities, cultures, conflicts, languages, and historical moments. Taking the Bible seriously means taking that distance seriously. It means asking not only, “What do these words say?” but also, “What was happening here? What kind of writing is this? What did these words mean in their original setting? And what might faithful living look like now?”

The danger is not interpretation itself. We cannot read without interpreting. The danger comes when we use Scripture primarily to confirm what we already believe, defend our comfort, or prove that somebody else is wrong. A Bible verse can be quoted accurately and still be used destructively. The deeper question is what kind of life our interpretation produces.

Luke tells us that the lawyer asks about his neighbor because he wants to “justify himself.” Jesus responds not with another rule, but with a story about mercy. He moves the conversation away from defining the limits of love and toward the kind of person we become when Scripture truly takes root in us.

That gives us an important question this week: Does the way we read Scripture make us more like Jesus? Does it move us toward compassion, justice, humility, courage, mercy, and deeper love of neighbor? Or does it simply leave us more certain that everyone else is the problem?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- When you read Scripture, are you more often looking to be challenged or confirmed?
- What beliefs about the Bible have changed as you have learned more about its historical and literary context?
- Are there passages you were once taught to read one way that you now understand differently?
- Does your interpretation of Scripture lead you toward greater compassion and justice?
- Where might God be inviting you to read with more humility?

WAYS TO LIVE IT OUT

- Read in context. Before focusing on one verse, read what comes before and after it.
- Ask better questions. Instead of only asking, “What does this say?” ask, “Who was this written to, and what was happening in their world?”
- Notice your assumptions. Pay attention when a passage seems to confirm exactly what you already believed.
- Stay curious. Be willing to learn from scholarship, history, other traditions, and people whose experiences are different from your own.
- Look for life. Ask whether your reading moves you toward the way of Jesus and the well-being of your neighbor.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

God of wisdom, teach us to read Scripture with curiosity, humility, and courage. Free us from using your sacred story to justify ourselves or diminish others. Help us honor the history, complexity, and beauty of the text while listening for the voice of Christ within it. Give us the humility to admit when we may have read too quickly, too narrowly, or too comfortably. May our reading lead us toward mercy, justice, compassion, and love, and may your Spirit continue forming us into people who not only know the words, but live the way of Jesus. Amen.

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!**