

HELP US FILL BACKPACKS AND HEARTS!

Beginning this Sunday, July 12, we're collecting school supplies for an exciting new outreach opportunity! As part of this year's Ice Cream Social at our Paris campus on **August 9**, we'll be opening our doors to the wider community and providing free school supplies to local students as they prepare for a new school year. It's a simple but meaningful way to support families, encourage children, and remind our neighbors that they are loved.

Getting involved is easy! Visit the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall Downtown or the display at the North Campus and pick up a tag—or several. Each tag lists a specific school supply item and the quantity needed. Simply take the tags, purchase the items, and return them to the church by **Sunday, August 2**. Thank you for your generosity and for helping us share Christ's love in such a practical way!

HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF UMMMC

United Methodist Ministries of Mecosta County is seeking individuals from both the First Campus and the Paris Campus to serve on our Leadership Team. The Leadership Team is the governing body of UMMMC. They care for the church's resources, discern long-term priorities, ask important questions about the future, and ensure that our ministries and finances remain aligned with our mission, vision, and values.

Working alongside the Executive Pastor, the Leadership Team helps set the congregation's priorities, oversees the stewardship of our buildings, finances, and other tangible assets, and anticipates the changing needs of both the church and the wider community. The team establishes policies and standards for the governance of UMMMC, while the Executive Pastor remains responsible for the management and oversight of the church's day-to-day operations and ministries.

Leadership Team members serve a three-year term and meet every other month. They are professing members of UMMMC who are actively engaged in the life of at least one campus, are committed to nurturing their own spiritual growth, regularly participate in worship, and serve in another area of ministry beyond the Leadership Team. Team members are expected to faithfully attend and participate in meetings, support the ministry of the church, and demonstrate integrity and sound character in both their personal and public lives. Previous board experience is not required. What matters most is a willingness to pray, listen, learn, ask thoughtful questions, and help discern where God is leading our church next.

If you believe this may be a meaningful way for you to serve—or if you would simply like to learn more—please contact Pastor Jeremy to schedule a conversation. This is an opportunity to ask questions, explore the responsibilities of the role, and prayerfully consider whether serving on the Leadership Team may be your next step in ministry.

UMMMC ICE CREAM SOCIAL - DATE CHANGE!!!

Mark your calendars for the 2nd Annual UMMMC Ice Cream Social, happening Sunday, August 9, at 1PM at our Paris Campus! This is an opportunity to gather as one church, welcome our neighbors, strengthen community connections, help local students begin the new school year with confidence - and eat ice cream!

This year, we are partnering with Angels of Action to offer a school supply giveaway during the event. We may need to supplement the supplies provided, so watch for more information about specific items that may be needed and additional ways you can support this important outreach.

Volunteers will be needed to help with preparation, setup, serving, welcoming guests, the school supply giveaway, cleanup, and all the little details that make an event feel special. Whether you can help before the event, during the afternoon, or afterward, your participation will make a difference. To volunteer, please contact Jane Pedelty (Paris) or Paden Clevenger, Director of Family Ministry and Community Outreach.

What's Happening

SUNDAY, JULY 12

9AM - Worship @ Paris (North) Campus
10AM - Worship @ First Church (Downtown) Campus

TUESDAY, JULY 14

9AM - Director's Meeting @ Downtown Campus
3PM - 6PM - Good Company @ Hemlock Park

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15

12PM - Table Talk: Politics & Following Jesus @ Downtown Campus

THURSDAY, JULY 16

5:30PM - Community Dinner @ Downtown Campus

TABLE TALK: FAITH, POLITICS, AND FOLLOWING JESUS

What does it mean to follow Jesus in a time when faith and politics are often deeply intertwined? Beginning Wednesday, July 1, our regular Table Talk gathering will become a five-week book discussion centered on *The Flag + The Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy* by Philip Gorski and Samuel Perry. We will meet Wednesdays at noon through July 29 at the Downtown Campus.

In *The Flag + The Cross*, the authors explore the history and influence of white Christian nationalism in the United States and examine how it differs from the teachings of Jesus. Through history, sociology, theology, and contemporary examples, they challenge readers to consider the relationship between faith, power, and public life while inviting Christians to reclaim a faith rooted in humility, justice, and love of neighbor.

If you've attended Table Talk before, the format will feel familiar. Bring your lunch, bring your book, and join the conversation. This will be an opportunity to gather around the table, share perspectives, ask questions, and learn from one another, so whether you are curious about the topic, looking to deepen your understanding, or simply enjoy thoughtful conversation, you are welcome to join us.

WORSHIPPING IN THE FELLOWSHIP HALL @ FIRST CHURCH

We know the space may feel a little tight, but with patience, flexibility, and a spirit of hospitality, we can make it work! Please help us welcome one another, make room for guests, and embrace the opportunity to worship together in a more relaxed and connected setting. It may be cozy—but there is room for everyone!

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
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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 July 12 - July 18, 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 - July 12, 2026

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

* Call to Worship (Reader / *People*)

We gather not because we are pure enough, good enough, or right enough.
We gather because God's grace is wide enough.

The world teaches us to draw lines, guard boundaries, and decide who belongs.

But Jesus keeps making the circle wider.

When we are tempted to label others as unworthy, unclean, or outside God's love,

God reminds us: what God has called beloved, we must not reject.

So come with open hearts.

Come ready to be challenged, changed, and made new.

Let us worship the God who welcomes, heals, restores, and makes room.

Let us worship together in grace, humility, and love.

* Hymn - "How Great Thou Art", UMH #77

Children's Message

First Reading - John 8:1-11 (NRSVUE)

Hymn - "This Is My Father's World", UMH #144

Second Reading - Acts 10:9-16, 34-35 (NRSVUE)

Message - "Us Without Them: The Purification Story"

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

* Doxology, UMH #95

* Hymn - "Go, Make of All Disciples", UMH #571 vss. 1-3

* Blessing and Sending

* Hymn - "Go, Make of All Disciples", UMH #571 vs. 4

Postlude

Altar flowers are given by the Clevengers in memory of Daisy.

* 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 - JULY 12

Reader: Pat Little

Ushers: Colin & Roberta Cline

Greeter: Pete Jensen

Nursery: Sarah DeLany, Char Fitch

Fellowship Host: Pat Little

Organist: Shirley Jernstadt

Accompanist: Kathy Bell

Tech Team: Ken Draves, Gary Poole

SERVING NEXT WEEK - JULY 19

Reader: Doug Fitzgerald

Ushers: Mike & Jana Pisani

Greeter: Kathi Parker

Nursery: Sarah DeLany, Julie Tessin

Fellowship Host: Brenda Chaffee

THINK ABOUT IT - THE PURIFICATION STORY

This week in The Seventh Story, we turn to the purification story—the story that says the world would be better if “those people” were removed, corrected, silenced, or kept outside the circle.

The purification story often begins with a desire for faithfulness. We want to protect what is good. We want to honor what is holy. We want to take sin and harm seriously.

But this story becomes dangerous when it teaches us to see other people as threats to purity rather than beloved children of God. It tells us that some people are too messy, too different, too sinful, too political, too poor, too queer, too doubtful, too wounded, or too hard to include.

Jesus tells a better story.

Again and again, Jesus moves toward the people others push away. He touches the untouchable, eats with the excluded, protects the condemned, and challenges religious systems that confuse holiness with separation.

In Acts 10, Peter hears a voice say, “What God has made clean, you must not call profane.” That word is not only about food. It is about people. It is about learning that God's grace is often wider than the boundaries we were taught to defend.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- Who was I taught to see as “outside” God's circle?
- Where am I tempted to confuse holiness with exclusion?
- Who might God be asking me to see differently?
- What would it mean for our church to practice belonging without pretending everyone has to be the same?

PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK

This week, notice when you are tempted to label someone as “one of those people.” Pause and ask: What if God is already at work in the person I have been taught to reject? Then take one step toward grace: listen before judging, question an assumption, welcome someone more fully, or refuse language that treats another person as disposable.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

God of widening grace, forgive us for the times we have mistaken exclusion for faithfulness. Open our eyes to the people we have been taught to fear, dismiss, or reject. Teach us to follow Jesus, who moves toward the wounded, welcomes the outsider, and makes room at the table. Help us become a people who do not call profane what you have called beloved. Amen.

JULY MISSION GIVING: OUR BROTHERS KEEPER

Throughout July, our mission giving will support Our Brother's Keeper, Big Rapids' shelter for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. OBK offers more than a safe place to sleep. Guests receive meals, showers, clean clothing, compassionate support, and assistance as they work toward stable housing and greater self-sufficiency. At a time when the need for emergency housing continues to grow—including among families with children and older adults—this ministry provides safety, dignity, and hope to some of our most vulnerable neighbors.

Thank you for giving generously and helping Our Brother's Keeper remind every guest that they are not alone.

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!**