

FROM PASTOR JEREMY - STAFFING UPDATES

Choir Director - First Church Campus: United Methodist Ministries of Mecosta County is seeking a part-time, paid Choir Director for the First Church (Downtown) Campus. We are looking for someone who is passionate about sacred music and eager to collaborate with volunteers to support and enrich our worship life. For more information or to express interest, please contact Pastor Jeremy or Barb in the UMMMC office.

Family Ministries Transition: After a period of prayerful discernment, Julie Setlock has decided that this is the right time to conclude her ministry with United Methodist Ministries of Mecosta County. Her final Sunday on staff will be no later than Easter Sunday. As we look ahead, this position will be posted soon. This role will be combined with a newly configured position that will continue to support family ministries while also strengthening our capacity for community outreach and engagement. If you feel drawn to this area of ministry, or know someone who may be, reach out to Pastor Jeremy directly.

LENTEN SERMON SERIES

Beginning Sunday, February 22, and continuing through Palm Sunday, we will journey together through a new series titled Knowing Who We Are, inspired by our congregation-wide book study on the Wesleyan way of grace.

In a time when churches face uncertainty and cultural shifts, it is easy to forget our core identity. This series will return us to the heart of Methodism — a movement grounded in God's grace, shaped by Scripture, formed in community, and sent into the world with holy tenacity.

Each week we will explore what has always made Methodism distinctive:

- Grace that finds us before we are ready
- Community that forms us in love
- Connection that strengthens our shared mission
- Scripture that shapes our imagination
- A faith that refuses to stay small

This is not a nostalgic look backward. It is a prayerful, honest, and hopeful reflection on who we are — and who God is still calling us to be.

Join us as we rediscover the love of God "shed abroad in our hearts" and ask what it means to live that love faithfully in our time.

We hope you'll be with us each Sunday through Palm Sunday as we seek, accept, grow in, and share God's grace together.

URGENT: 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, FEBRUARY 22

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

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23

12PM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Third Ave

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24

9AM - Ministry Staff Team Meeting @ First
12PM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Third Ave
7PM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Paris

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25

11AM - Lenten Book Study "Knowing Who We Are" @ First
11:30AM - Community Lunch @ Third Ave
12PM - Table Talk (BYO Lunch!) @ First
5:30PM - Euchre / Game Night @ First

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26

5:30PM - Community Dinner @ First

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27

12PM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Third Ave

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28

11AM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Paris
11:30AM - Community Lunch @ Third Ave

TABLE TALK - WEDNESDAYS AT NOON

You're invited to join Pastor Jeremy for Table Talk at the First Church campus. Bring your lunch and gather around the table for open, relaxed conversation and connection. This is a space to talk about whatever is on your mind — current events, questions of faith, or life in general. There's no formal agenda, just time to listen, share, and be in community together. Come every week or drop in when you're able — all are welcome! No registration or RSVP necessary. *(From Pastor Jeremy: This isn't a gripe session, church business meeting, or a place to troubleshoot programs and policies. The goal is connection, dialogue, and shared reflection in a relaxed and welcoming space.)*

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 at calendly.com/jeremy-ummecosta

Week of February 22, 2026 - February 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.UMMECTA.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 - February 22, 2026

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

* Call to Worship (Reader / *People*)

Before we called out to God,
God was already calling to us.

Before we knew the way,
grace was already at work.

We don't gather to prove ourselves, we come to be renewed.
We come to receive the love that has been poured into our hearts.

We are a people shaped by grace, a community formed in love,
a church sent by the Spirit.
Let us worship the God whose grace finds us, forms us, and sends us.

* Hymn - "A Charge to Keep I Have", UMH #413

Children's Message

Scripture Reading - James 3:1-12 (NRSVUE)

Reader: The word of God, for the people of God.
People: *Thanks be to God!*

Hymn - "There's Something About That Name", UMH #171

Message - "Knowing Who We Are: Finding Grace"

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

* The Doxology, UMH #95

* Hymn - "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling", UMH #384, vss. 1-3

* Benediction

* Hymn - "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling", UMH #384, vs. 4

Postlude

* PLEASE RISE IN BODY OR SPIRIT

Altar flowers are given by Sue Malzahn in memory of her husband.

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 - FEBRUARY 22

Reader: Barbara Ross
Ushers: Rex & Cheryl Richardson
Greeter: Barbara Ross
Nursery: Sarah Delany, Beth Bejcek
Sunday School: Pam Fleming, Laurie Daniels
Fellowship Host: Marlene Rodgers
Organist: Shirley Jernstadt

SERVING NEXT WEEK - 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: Brenda Chaffee

THINK ABOUT IT: FINDING GRACE

Early Methodism did not begin as a protest movement. It began as a renewal movement — a group of people who believed that God's grace was not distant, not fragile, and not reserved for a spiritual elite, but alive and active in ordinary human hearts. When John Wesley was asked, "Who is a Methodist?" he did not point to governance, theology exams, or denominational loyalty. He answered simply: a Methodist is one who has "the love of God shed abroad in the heart." That image matters. Love shed abroad. Diffused. Poured out. Circulating.

Questions to Think About This Week

1. When I think about my relationship with God, what emotions surface first — pressure, gratitude, fatigue, trust, anxiety, hope? What might that reveal?
2. Do I tend to approach faith as something I must maintain and manage, or as a gift I am invited to receive and participate in?
3. If love is the defining mark of a Methodist, what has been marking my speech, tone, and reactions lately — especially when I feel stressed or uncertain?

Action Steps for the Week

Renewal rarely begins with dramatic gestures. It begins with steady attention.

- Practice Noticing Grace: Each day this week, pause and name one place where you see God's love at work — in your own life, in another person, or in the wider community. Write it down if you are able. The more we practice seeing grace, the more attuned we become to its presence.
- Create a Moment of Stillness: Set aside five uninterrupted minutes this week. Sit quietly and pray simply: "God, help me live from your love." Resist the urge to fill the silence. Let yourself be held there.
- Let Love Set the Tone.: Before entering a difficult conversation, sending an email, or responding online, ask: Does this reflect the love that has been poured into my heart? This is not about perfection. It is about alignment.

Prayer for the Week

Gracious and Generous God, you move toward us before we are ready. You steady us before we are certain. You love us before we know how to respond. Pour your love into our hearts again. Quiet the anxious places within us. Free us from striving and from fear. Renew our imagination so that we may see your grace at work. Shape our words so that love becomes our mark. Send us into this week grounded in your steady presence. Through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

To know who we are is to remember that we are a people formed by grace, not a community defined by argument or anxiety, but one renewed again and again by the love of God poured into human hearts. As this Lenten season begins, may we slow down enough to receive what has already been given. May we notice where grace is moving. And may that grace shape how we speak, serve, and live.

Let love be the mark.

FEBRUARY MISSION GIVING FOCUS: CAMP SCHOLARSHIPS

Our February Mission Giving Focus will support Camp Scholarships, helping children and youth attend Christian summer camp — even when cost might otherwise be a barrier. All funds received through the February Mission Giving will be directed to the *Karen Poole Camp Scholarship Fund*. Karen's passion for camping ministry was evident not only during her time at First Church but throughout her entire ministry. Supporting this fund is a meaningful way to honor her legacy while investing in the faith of the next generation.

Thank you for helping make camp possible for our children and youth!

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!