

JANUARY MISSION FOCUS - HUMAN RELATIONS SUNDAY

Today (*January 18, 2026*) is Human Relations Sunday, one of six churchwide Special Sundays designated to support ministries and causes important to the United Methodist Church. Human Relations Sunday supports the Church's work in creating communities where everyone can flourish. When we give, we support church-based programs that work in local neighborhoods to build justice, offer hope, and walk alongside those who need a second chance.

HOW ARE HUMAN RELATIONS SUNDAY OFFERINGS USED?

- *Community Developers Program (57%)* - This program helps churches serve their neighborhoods—especially communities of color—by focusing on local needs like education, employment, and empowerment.
- *United Methodist Voluntary Services (33%)* - This program equips volunteers and congregations to tackle injustice through hands-on projects, community organizing, and service-learning opportunities.
- *Youth Offender Rehabilitation Programs (10%)* - These church-supported programs help young people rebuild their lives through mentoring, leadership training, and positive, faith-based community experiences.

You can support Human Relations Sunday by placing your gift in an offering envelope, noting “HRS”, and placing it in the regular offering plate or in the designated basket (First Church) at the front of the sanctuary. You can also give online at [ummecosta.org](http://ummecosta.org).

Thank you for supporting Human Relations Sunday! Your generosity strengthens communities working toward Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King’s vision of “*beloved community*,” making transformational ministries possible.

ASH WEDNESDAY: BEGIN LENT WITH US

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent—a season of reflection, prayer, and re-centering our lives around what matters most. It’s a chance to slow down, tell the truth about our need for grace, and begin again. The ashes remind us that we are human, we are finite, and we belong to God—and that even in our fragility, God is still at work making all things new.

We invite you to join us in one of three opportunities to receive ashes and worship on Ash Wednesday:

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

- 7:30–9AM @ First United Methodist Church
- 9:30-12PM @ The United Church
- 9:30–11:30AM @ St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church

WORSHIP SERVICES

- 12:00PM @ St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church
- 7:00PM @ First Church United Methodist Church

Whether you can slip through in the morning, pause at midday, or gather in the evening, this is a meaningful way to begin the Lenten journey together.

SOUL CIRCLE - SPRING 2026 GROUPS FORMING NOW!

SOUL Circle 2025 offered a meaningful and supportive experience for more than a dozen church and community members. Sharing our stories and the many ways grief is experienced along life’s journey proved to be deeply healing and comforting.

We are gathering participants for our Spring 2026 session. If you are interested in joining our next 13-week SOUL Circle, please contact Barb in the church office or reach out to Kathy Bell for more information.

What’s Happening

SUNDAY, JANUARY 18

- 9:30AM - Worship @ Paris Campus
- 10:00AM - Worship @ First Church Campus
- Please join us for coffee and fellowship immediately following worship, in the Fellowship Hall.*

MONDAY, JANUARY 19

- 12PM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Third Ave

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20

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

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21

- 11:30AM - Community Lunch @ Third Ave
- 5PM - Praise Team Rehearsal @ First
- 6PM - Euchre / Game Night @ First

THURSDAY, JANUARY 22

- 5:30PM - Community Dinner @ First

FRIDAY, JANUARY 23

- 12PM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Third Ave

SATURDAY, JANUARY 24

- 9AM - Men’s Breakfast & Coffee @ First
- 11AM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Paris
- 11:30AM - Community Lunch @ Third Ave

MEN’S BREAKFAST

Pastor Jeremy will be hosting a Men’s Breakfast on **Saturday, January 24 at 9AM at the First Church campus**. This is a great opportunity to connect, build friendships, and invite someone new to something relaxed and fun. Please RSVP by **January 20** so we can plan for food. You can register by calling or emailing Barbara Erb in the church office. We hope to see you there!

FAMILY MEETING / POTLUCK - FEBRUARY 1, 2026

- 11:15AM - First Church Fellowship Hall

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

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

Julie Setlock - Director of Family Ministry  
[julie@ummecosta.org](mailto:julie@ummecosta.org) - (231) 796-7771

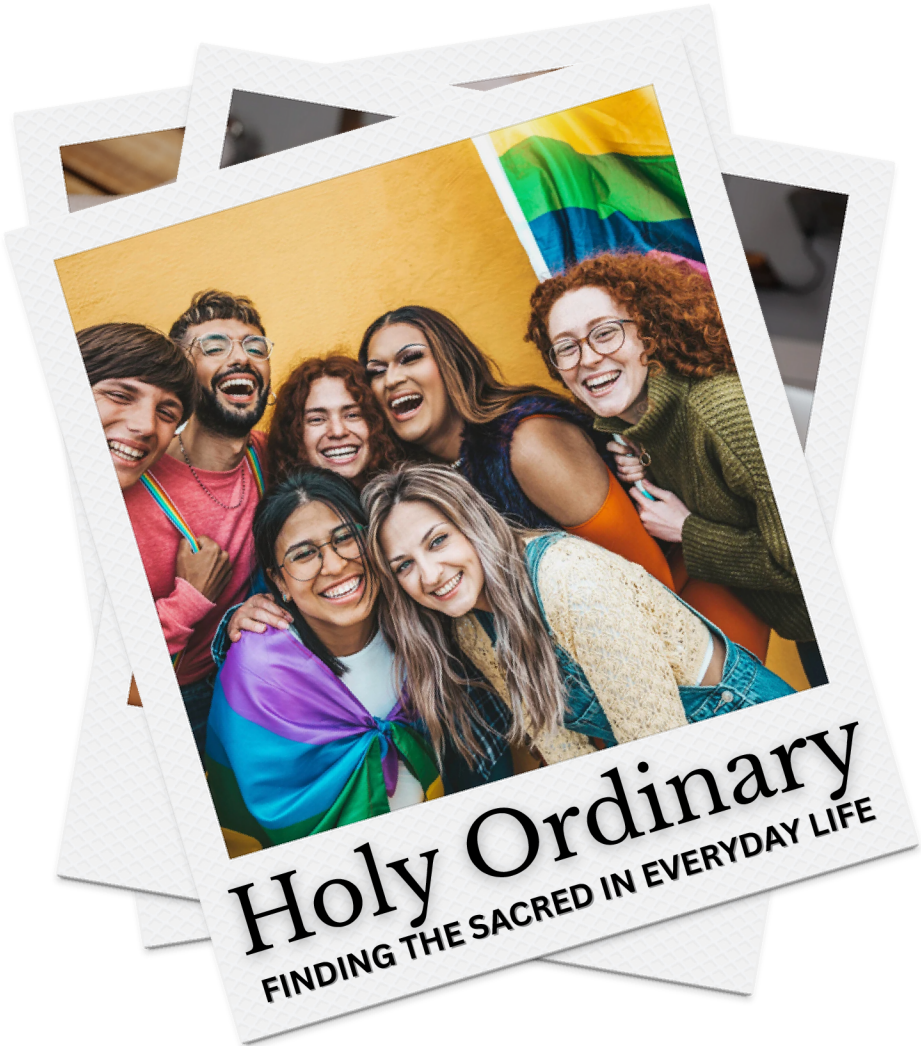
Kathy Bell - Director of Congregational Care  
[kathy@ummecosta.org](mailto:kathy@ummecosta.org) - (231) 224-6177

Rev. Jeremy Wicks - Executive Pastor  
[jeremy@ummecosta.org](mailto: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)

Week of January 18 - January 24, 2026

Family News



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 - January 18, 2026

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY  
HUMAN RELATIONS SUNDAY

## Prelude

## Welcome & Announcements

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

God has placed us here - in this church, in this community, among these neighbors.

*We gather where we are, trusting that God is already at work here.*

We come carrying the hopes and hurts of our neighborhoods, the stories of our streets and schools, the joys and struggles of those near to us.

*Teach us to see our community as Holy ground, and to see our neighbors as beloved siblings.*

Scripture calls us to seek the good of the place where we live, to be salt and light not from a distance, but right where we are.

*Shape us into people of love, justice, and care.*

Come, Spirit of God. Open our eyes to our neighbors. Open our hearts to our shared life.

*Let us worship the God who dwells among us and calls us to love our neighbors well.*

### \* Hymn - “For the Healing of the Nations”, UMH #428

## Children’s Message

### Scripture Reading - Jeremiah 29:4–7; Matthew 5:13–16 (NRSVUE)

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

People: *Thanks be to God!*

### Hymn - “Help Us Accept Each Other”, UMH #560

### Message - “Holy Ordinary: The Sacred Neighborhood”

## Pastoral Prayer

## The Lord’s Prayer

### \* Hymn - “Lord, You Give the Great Commission”, UMH #584, vss. 1-3

### \* Benediction

### \* Hymn - “Lord, You Give the Great Commission”, UMH #584, vss. 4-5

## Postlude

\* PLEASE RISE IN BODY OR SPIRIT

*Join us for coffee and conversation in Fellowship Hall immediately following worship.*

*Altar flowers are given by the Madden family.*

# 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 - JANUARY 18

Guest Preacher: Rev. Kim Bos

Reader: Marlene Rodgers

Ushers: Mike & Jana Pisani

Greeter: Kathi Parker

Nursery: Sarah Delany, Kati Wheeler

Sunday School: Kathi Parker, Brenda Chaffee

Fellowship Host: Cheryl Richardson

Organist: Shirley Jernstadt

## SERVING NEXT WEEK - JANUARY 25

Reader: Rick Hult

Ushers: Rex & Cheryl Richardson

Greeter: Betsy Curtis

Nursery: Sarah Delany, Paige Madden

Sunday School: Pam Fleming, Laurie Daniels

Fellowship Host: Marlene Rodgers

## THINK ABOUT IT – THE SACRED NEIGHBORHOOD

It’s easy to imagine that God’s work is happening somewhere else—in a different town, a different church, a different moment in history. We can find ourselves longing for a place that feels easier, safer, or more receptive, while overlooking the very community where we have been planted.

The people of Israel felt that same tension while living in exile. They wanted to go home. Instead, God instructed them to build houses, plant gardens, raise families, and seek the well-being of the city where they lived. Not someday. Not somewhere else. Right there. Their ordinary, imperfect place became the location of faithful living.

Jesus echoes that same call when he describes his followers as salt and light. Salt doesn’t work from a distance, and light only matters where there is darkness. Loving our neighbors—our actual neighbors, in real places—is not extra credit for faithful people. It is sacred work. This Human Relations Sunday reminds us that honoring the dignity of every person and seeking the good of our community are central to living our faith.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- When you think about your neighborhood or community, what feelings come up first?
- Where do you see signs of hope, struggle, or need around you?
- Who are the neighbors you interact with most often—and who do you tend to overlook?
- What does it mean to seek the good of your community, not in theory, but in practice?
- How might seeing your neighborhood as holy ground change the way you show up?

## PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK

Choose one intentional act of neighbor-love this week. It might be checking in on someone nearby, writing a note of encouragement, sharing a meal, volunteering with a local organization, or giving to a ministry that supports vulnerable neighbors. As you do, pray for your street, building, or community—by name.

## PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

*God of every place, you have placed us here, among these neighbors and this community. Open our eyes to see where love is needed and where hope is already growing. Give us courage to listen, compassion to care, and wisdom to seek the good of the place we call home. Shape us into people who live our faith through love and justice, right where we are. Amen.*

## INVITATION

This week, resist the urge to look somewhere else for meaningful faith. Instead, receive your neighborhood as holy ground. Trust that God is already at work here—and inviting you to be part of that work, one neighbor at a time.

## FEBRUARY MISSION GIVING FOCUS: CAMP SCHOLARSHIPS

Next month, our Mission Giving Focus will support Camp Scholarships, helping children and youth attend Christian summer camp—even when cost would otherwise be a barrier. Camp can be a life-shaping experience where faith is formed, friendships grow, and young people encounter God in a powerful way. Thank you for helping make camp possible for the next generation!

**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!**