

## ASH WEDNESDAY: BEGIN LENT WITH US

Ash Wednesday (February 18, 2026) 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.

## ENTRY SYSTEM NOW ACTIVE @ FIRST CHURCH CAMPUS

We have installed a new secure-entry system on the exterior doors at our First Church Campus - and it is now active. This includes a magnetic locking system and video access at the Fellowship Hall / Kitchen and Warren St Lobby doors. This change is a practical step to help us better protect our building, our volunteers, our staff, and the ministries that happen here every day - while still keeping the church accessible and welcoming. *This project was approved by the Leadership Team in 2025 and funded by a portion of the earnings on our endowment.*

Entry Instructions (Warren Street Lobby + Fellowship Hall / Kitchen Door)

1. Press the ACCESS button
2. Wait to be admitted
3. You'll hear a click when the door unlocks, or you may hear someone from the office speak to you through the system.
4. Pull the door open

Exit Instructions - Warren Street Lobby Only

1. Press the EXIT HERE release button.
2. Push the door open or press the HANDICAP RELEASE.

If you are leaving through the Fellowship Hall door to the alley/parking lot behind the building, you do not need to press an exit button - simply open the door and exit as usual.

We are creating keycards for those who need regular access to the building (key volunteers, ministry leaders, staff, etc.). It's important to note that building keys WILL NOT WORK on the doors noted above.

A quick (and important) note on patience - Any time we install new technology, there are going to be a few hiccups. There will be moments where someone presses the button and nothing happens right away, or someone pulls the door before the click, or the office is helping another person when the buzzer goes off - or if you're like me, you'll repeatedly try to exit without pressing the exit button and leave a face print on the glass because you're in a hurry. So consider this a gentle reminder: we will need to practice the fruit of the Spirit - especially patience - while we all learn this new system together. We'll get the hang of it, but it will take a little time.

Thank you for your flexibility as we make this transition. If you have any questions - or if you run into any issues with the new system—please reach out to the church office.

## What's Happening

### SUNDAY, JANUARY 25

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 26

12PM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Third Ave

### TUESDAY, JANUARY 27

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

### WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28

11:30AM - Community Lunch @ Third Ave  
6:00 PM - Leadership Team Meeting @ First

### THURSDAY, JANUARY 29

5:30PM - Community Dinner @ First

### FRIDAY, JANUARY 30

12PM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Third Ave

### SATURDAY, JANUARY 31

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

## FAMILY MEETING / POTLUCK - FEBRUARY 1, 2026

11:15AM - First Church Fellowship Hall

## FSU WESLEY MISSION TRIP FUNDRAISER - FEBRUARY 8 @ 11:15AM

Join FSU Wesley for a "soup-er bowl" mission trip fundraiser. This year, the Wesley students are going to Pittsburgh, PA, during their spring break to partner with local organizations there. On February 8, right after worship, they will be auctioning off homemade baked goods and craft foods (sign up on the bulletin board or email Kim if you're willing to donate an auction item) and then hosting a soup lunch on Super Bowl Sunday! Plan to be there!

## 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.

## STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

Barbara Erb - Director of Administrative Services  
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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 25 - January 31, 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 25, 2026

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

## Welcome & Announcements

### Prelude

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

Do not be afraid—our outer selves may be wasting away,  
*but inwardly we are being renewed day by day.*

Do not be afraid—what we see is real, but it is not final.

*Our troubles are temporary, but God's promise is eternal.*

Do not be afraid—this moment may feel heavy,  
*yet God is shaping in us a glory beyond all comparison.*

Do not be afraid—because we do not lose heart.

*We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen.*

Come, people of God—let us worship with courage.

*For Christ is with us, renewing us, strengthening us,  
and leading us into hope.*

#### \* Hymn - "How Firm a Foundation" (UMH 529)

### Praises and Prayers

Prayers and Praises of the People

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

#### Hymn - "I Need Thee Every Hour" (UMH 397)

### Scripture Reading - 2 Corinthians 4:16-17 (NIV)

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

#### Message - "Do Not Be Afraid", Ray Setlock

### Offering

#### \* "The Doxology" (UMH 95)

#### \* Hymn - "My Hope Is Built" (UMH 368)

#### \* Benediction

\*PLEASE RISE IN BODY OR SPIRIT\*

### NOTES:

### THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 4:16-17 (New International Version)

<sup>16</sup> Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

### THINK ABOUT IT

Life can wear us down. Not always in big dramatic ways—sometimes it's just the steady weight of stress, grief, uncertainty, or the feeling that you're carrying more than you have strength for.

That's why Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 4:16–17 matter so much: "We do not lose heart." He doesn't deny hardship. He simply refuses to let it be the whole story. Even when we feel worn out on the outside, God can renew us on the inside—day by day.

And that renewal is what makes courage possible. Not because everything gets easier, but because we begin to see differently. We remember that what we're facing right now is real, but it isn't permanent—and it isn't stronger than God.

So this week, hear the invitation clearly: Do not be afraid. Not because nothing hurts, but because you are not alone. God is still working in you—quietly, faithfully—giving you strength for today, and hope for what's ahead.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where are you most tempted to "lose heart" right now?
2. What helps renew you from the inside out—what drains you?
3. What would courage look like for you this week (one small step)?

### PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

*God of renewal, when we are worn down, meet us with strength. When fear rises, anchor us in your peace. Renew us day by day, and help us trust that this moment is not the end of the story. Amen.*

### FINAL NOTE

You don't need to have it all together this week. You just need to keep showing up—and trust that God is still renewing you.

### 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 Paris Church. Thank you for your continued support!**



Check In Here

Welcome to Paris!

Welcome to Paris, the north campus of United Methodist Ministries of Mecosta County - we're so glad you're here! This is a place where faith feels like family, where neighbors become friends, and where we learn and grow together in Christ's love.

Whether you're visiting, returning, or looking for a church home, you are welcome here. Come as you are, bring your questions and your hopes, and make yourself at home.

If you need anything or have questions, our church family is here to help. We're blessed to have you with us today.