

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
6PM - Leadership Team @ 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
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 @ 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

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 - January 25, 2026

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

* Call to Worship (Reader / *People*)

We come into this space carrying many voices—expectations, worries, responsibilities, and noise.

We come longing to remember who we are.

In the midst of busyness and pressure, God invites us not to escape, but to pause and be re-centered.

We pause to listen for what matters most.

"Be still, and know"—not as an end in itself, but as a way of remembering whose we are and who we follow.

Reset our hearts in Your love.

Come, Spirit of God. Quiet what distracts us. Restore what has drifted. Renew our trust.

Let us worship the God who meets us in stillness and calls us back to who we are.

* Song - "Blessed Be Your Name"

Children's Message

Scripture Reading - Psalm 46:1-11 & Mark 6:30-32 (NRSVUE)

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

People: *Thanks be to God!*

Song - "Open the Eyes of My Heart, Lord"

Message - "Holy Ordinary: The Sacred Reset"

Remembering Our Baptism

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

* Hymn - "Be Thou My Vision", UMH #451, vss. 1-3

* Benediction

* Hymn - "Be Thou My Vision", UMH #451, vs. 4

Postlude

* PLEASE RISE IN BODY OR SPIRIT

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

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 - 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
Organist: Shirley Jernstadt

SERVING NEXT WEEK - FEBRUARY 1

Reader: Pat Little
Ushers: Pat & Marion Williamson, Joann Haist
Greeter: Nancy Spedowski
Communion Stewards: Karen Leiter, Brenda Chaffee
Nursery: Sarah Delany, Julie Tessin
Sunday School: Karen Leiter, Brenda Chaffee
Fellowship Host: Family Meeting

THINK ABOUT IT - THE SACRED RESET

By the time we reach the end of a busy season—or even the end of a week—it's easy to feel scattered. Life pulls us in many directions, and without realizing it, our sense of who we are can slowly drift. We become defined by what we produce, what we manage, or what demands our attention, rather than by who we are called to be.

Scripture offers a different invitation. "Be still, and know" is not a command to shut down or check out of life. It is an invitation to remember. Stillness creates space to re-center—to recall whose we are and who we follow. In the Gospels, Jesus regularly invites the disciples to pause, not because the work is finished, but because they need to be reminded of their identity before continuing on.

The Sacred Reset is about intentional pause, not escape. Rest becomes a spiritual practice that clears the noise, re-centers our hearts, and helps us remember what matters most. When we slow down, even briefly, we make room to hear again the truth that grounds us: we are loved, we belong, and we are called to follow Jesus in the world.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Where do you notice signs of exhaustion, distraction, or drift in your life?
- What tends to shape your sense of identity during busy or stressful seasons?
- When have moments of stillness helped you regain clarity or perspective?
- What does it mean for you to remember who you are as a follower of Jesus?
- How might intentional pause help realign your life with what matters most?

PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK

Practice a **daily** Sacred Reset. Set aside five minutes each day to pause. Take three slow breaths. Repeat a grounding truth such as: "*I am God's beloved*," or "*I follow Jesus*." Sit quietly and allow your heart and mind to re-center before returning to the day.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

God of rest and renewal, I come to you weary and distracted. Quiet the noise that pulls me off center. Help me remember who I am and who I follow. Restore my trust, renew my focus, and realign my life with your love. Meet me in stillness and send me forward with clarity and peace. Amen.

INVITATION

As this series comes to a close, resist the urge to rush ahead. Instead, receive this pause as a gift. Let the Sacred Reset remind you of who you are, whose you are, and how you are called to live—grounded, centered, and rooted in love.

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!