

MAY MISSION FOCUS: UMC STUDENT SUNDAY

Each May, we join United Methodist churches across the connection in supporting UMC Student Sunday, an offering that invests directly in students pursuing higher education and discerning their call in the world.

Through the work of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, every dollar given funds scholarships for undergraduate, graduate, and seminary students, helping ease financial burdens and open doors that might otherwise remain closed. This is one of the ways we live out our connectational commitment—pooling our resources to make a meaningful impact beyond our local church.

More than just financial support, this offering is a tangible reminder to students that the Church believes in them and is committed to their future. Throughout the month of May, we invite you to prayerfully consider giving, knowing that your generosity helps shape leaders who will carry forward the work of faith, justice, and service in the world.

GRADUATION SUNDAY

On **Sunday, May 24**, we will celebrate Graduation Sunday during worship as we recognize and bless the graduates connected to our church family. Graduation is an important milestone, not only for students and their families, but for the whole congregation. It gives us the chance to give thanks for the hard work, growth, perseverance, and many gifts of those who are beginning a new chapter.

If you or someone in your family is graduating this year from high school, college, graduate school, trade school, or another program, we would love to include them in this celebration. Please contact Barb in the church office no later than May 17 with the graduate's name, school, degree or program, and any future plans you would like to share.

As a church, we want our graduates to know that they are seen, loved, and supported. Whether they are heading into more schooling, beginning a new job, entering a season of discernment, or still figuring out what comes next, we want to surround them with prayer and encouragement. Join us on May 24 as we celebrate their accomplishments and remind them that God's grace goes with them wherever the road leads.

PHOTO DIRECTORY - HAPPENING NOW!

As we continue growing together as United Methodist Ministries of Mecosta County, we're excited to create our very first photo directory!

Photos will be taken each Sunday in May during fellowship time after worship at the downtown campus. Members from the Paris campus are encouraged to join us there, and we will also host a dedicated Saturday photo session at the Paris campus to make participation more accessible for everyone.

There's no need to sign up—just stop by the photo area when you're ready. Photos can be taken for individuals, couples, or families.

We're grateful to Gary Poole for serving as our photographer. If you'd like printed copies of your photo, Gary will have prints available for purchase directly through him—no pressure, just an option if you're interested. Print sizes will include 8x10, 11x14, and 16x20.

A few simple tips to help your photo turn out well:

- Dress neatly—no need to be formal
- Solid, medium to darker colors tend to photograph best
- Couples and families may want to coordinate colors
- Photos will be taken from the waist up

We're looking forward to creating something that helps strengthen connection across our whole church community!

What's Happening

SUNDAY, MAY 3

9:30AM - Worship @ Paris (North) Campus
10AM - Worship @ First Church (Downtown) Campus
11:15AM - Fellowship / Coffee Hour @ First Church (Downtown) Campus

TUESDAY, MAY 5

9AM - Ministry Staff Team Meeting @ Downtown Campus

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6

10AM - SOUL Circle @ Downtown Campus
11AM - *Embracing an Adverbial Faith* Discussion Group @ Downtown Campus
12PM - Table Talk @ Downtown Campus
5:30PM - "Purpose Driven Life" Dinner / Book Study @ North Campus
6PM - Praise Team Rehearsal @ Downtown Campus

THURSDAY, MAY 7

5:30PM - Community Dinner @ Downtown Campus

THIRD AVENUE BUILDING UPDATE

We are glad to share that Love INC has received the needed variance from the city and is now able to move forward with taking ownership of the Third Avenue Church building. We expect that transfer to happen within the next couple of weeks. This is an important step in a process that has been guided by our desire to be faithful, practical, and mission-focused. While this transition involves letting go of a building that has meant a great deal to many people, it also opens the door for that space to continue serving the community in meaningful ways through the work of Love INC. We are grateful for everyone who has helped bring this process to this point, and we ask you to continue praying for Love INC, for the people connected to Third Avenue, and for all who will be impacted by the ministry that continues in that neighborhood.

FAMILY MEETING & POTLUCK - JUNE 7

On Sunday, June 7, we'll gather for a UMMMC Family Meeting and Potluck immediately following worship at our downtown campus. This is one of the key ways we come together as a whole church—to connect, share a meal, and stay engaged in the life and direction of our ministry. You'll hear updates about what's happening across our campuses and where we're headed next. Everyone is invited, and if you're able to bring a dish to pass, it's always appreciated. Make plans to stay and be part of the conversation!

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
paden@ummecosta.org - (231) 796-7771

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 May 3 - May 9, 2026

Family News

LOVE
boldly

SERVE
joyfully

LEAD
courageously

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 - May 3, 2026

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

* Call to Worship (Reader / *People*)

Family of God, we gather to join our voices with all creation:
Make a joyful noise, all the earth! Serve God with gladness!

God is our Creator who loves us and cares for us.
Make a joyful noise, all the earth! Serve God with gladness!

God is our Savior who redeems us and teaches us to boldly love one another as God loves us.
Make a joyful noise, all the earth! Serve God with gladness!

God is our Advocate who sustains us and empowers us to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.
Make a joyful noise, all the earth! Serve God with gladness!

Family of God, on this journey of faith, we are not alone—God is with us!
We come to worship God by boldly loving and joyfully serving, that we may be disciples of Jesus Christ who transform the world. Amen.

* Hymn - "Rejoice, the Lord Is King", UMH #715

Children's Message

Old Testament Reading - Psalm 100 (NRSVUE)

Hymn - "God Is So Good", TFWS #2056

New Testament Reading - 1 Peter 4:8-11 (NRSVUE) Reader: The word of God, for the people of God. People: *Thanks be to God!*

Message - "Serve Joyfully"

Celebration of Holy Communion

The Lord's Prayer

* The Doxology, UMH #95

* Hymn - "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me", TFWS #2153 vss. 1-3

* Benediction

* Hymn - "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me", TFWS #2153 vss. 1 & 4

Postlude

* PLEASE RISE IN BODY OR SPIRIT

Pastor Jeremy will 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 - MAY 3

Reader: Rick Hult
Ushers: Pat & Marion Williamson, Joann Haist
Greeter: Nancy Spedowski
Communion Servers: Pat Little, Brenda Chaffee
Nursery: Sara DeLany, Char Fitch
Sunday School: Larisa Draves, Julie Tessin
Fellowship Host: Brenda Chaffee
Organist: Shirley Jernstadt
Accompanist: Kathy Bell
Tech Team: Ken Draves, Gary Poole

SERVING NEXT WEEK - MAY 10

Reader: Doug Fitzgerald
Ushers: Colin & Roberta Cline
Greeter: Pete Jensen
Nursery: Sara DeLany, Julie Tessin
Sunday School: Paden Clevenger, Pam Stirn
Fellowship Host: Denise Cospers

THINK ABOUT IT THIS WEEK - SERVE JOYFULLY

Last week, we wrestled with what it means to love boldly—to choose love even when it's difficult, even when it's risky. This week, we take the next step: What does it mean to serve... joyfully?

At first glance, that might sound simple. But if we're honest, service doesn't always feel joyful. Sometimes it feels like obligation, exhaustion, one more thing on an already full schedule. And sometimes, if we're really honest, it can even lead to resentment—especially when it feels like we're giving more than we're receiving.

So what does "serve joyfully" actually mean? It doesn't mean pretending to be happy. It doesn't mean ignoring your limits. And it certainly doesn't mean running yourself into the ground in the name of faith.

Joyful service is not about the feeling you bring into the moment. It's about the posture you carry within it. It's about recognizing that service is not just something you do for others—it's something that shapes who you are becoming. Because when service flows from guilt or pressure, it drains you, but when it flows from connection—to Christ, to others, to purpose—it begins to change you. Not instantly. Not always emotionally. But deeply.

So maybe the question this week isn't: "Do I feel joyful when I serve?" Maybe it's: "What is shaping the way I serve—and what might need to change?"

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON

- When has serving others felt meaningful or life-giving for you?
- When has it felt draining or burdensome? What made the difference?
- What motivates you when you choose to serve—obligation, expectation, compassion, something else?
- Where might you be overextending yourself or neglecting your own limits?
- How might service look different if it flowed from connection rather than pressure?

ACTION STEPS FOR THE WEEK

- Notice your posture: Pay attention to how you feel when you're serving—what's driving it?
- Choose one intentional act of service: Do something small and meaningful, not out of obligation, but out of care.
- Honor your limits: Say no where you need to, and yes where it matters most.
- Stay connected: Spend time in Psalm 100 or 1 Peter 4:8-11 and reflect on what it means to serve from a place of grace.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

God of grace, you invite us into a life of service that is shaped by love, not pressure. Help us to serve with honesty and with intention. Give us the wisdom to know our limits and the courage to show up where we are needed. Shape our hearts so that our service flows from connection to you and reflects your care for the world. Amen.

A Closing Thought

Service is not about doing more. It's about becoming someone who reflects the love of Christ in how they give. This week, don't focus on doing everything. Focus on doing one thing—with intention, with care, and with grace.

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!