

UPCOMING SERMON SERIES: THE SEVENTH STORY

This summer at our First Church Campus, we will begin a new sermon series called The Seventh Story. The basic idea is simple but powerful: the stories we tell shape the lives we live. Some stories teach us to see the world through “us” and “them.” These stories are old, familiar, and deeply embedded in our families, churches, communities, politics, and culture. They can feel normal because we have heard them for so long.

But Jesus tells a different story. The Seventh Story is a story of love, reconciliation, liberation, justice, mercy, and peace. It is a story where no one has to lose in order for someone else to win, where power is used for healing instead of control, where enemies are not dehumanized, where neighbors are not treated as threats, and where Love becomes the main character. Over eight weeks, we will explore these stories together:

- June 7 — The Stories We Live By
- June 14 — Us Over Them: The Domination Story
- June 21 — Us Against Them: The Revolution Story
- June 28 — Us Apart from Them: The Isolation Story
- July 5 — The Nation-as-God Story
- July 12 — Us Without Them: The Purification Story
- July 19 — Us Above / Beneath Them: Accumulation and Victimization
- July 26 — The Seventh Story: Love Is the Protagonist

This series will invite us to pay attention to the stories shaping our hearts, our relationships, our church, and our world. Some weeks may be challenging. Some may feel deeply personal. Some may name patterns we would rather avoid. But the purpose is not shame or blame. The purpose is to listen again for the story Jesus keeps telling: a story big enough to heal what fear, violence, division, and scarcity have broken.

The world keeps teaching us “us versus them.” Jesus keeps inviting us into a better story, where there is only us.

HELP SHAPE WORSHIP THIS SUMMER

This summer at First Church, we are planning a couple of fun and meaningful ways for the congregation to help shape our worship together.

First, we would love to know your favorite hymns! Throughout the summer, we will be using hymn suggestions from the congregation as part of our worship planning. Whether it is a hymn that has carried you through a difficult season, one that reminds you of someone you love, or simply one you love to sing, we want to hear about it.

Second, Pastor Jeremy will be preaching several “Ask the Pastor” style sermons this summer. These messages will be shaped by questions, thoughts, and topics submitted by the congregation. This is a chance to ask about faith, Scripture, theology, the church, life, or anything else you would like to hear reflected on in worship.

You can submit both hymn suggestions and sermon questions on your connection card and turn it in any Sunday between May 17 and June 7.

PHOTO DIRECTORY

Photos will be taken each Sunday in May during fellowship time after worship at the Downtown Campus. 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. Gary Poole, our photographer, will have prints available for purchase directly through him—no pressure, just an option if you’re interested. Print sizes will include 8×10, 11×14, and 16×20.

What's Happening

SUNDAY, MAY 24

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

WEDNESDAY, MAY 27

10AM - SOUL Circle @ Downtown Campus
5:30PM - “Purpose Driven Life” Dinner / Book Study @ North Campus

THURSDAY, MAY 28

5:30PM - Community Dinner @ Downtown Campus

PASTOR JEREMY UNAVAILABLE MAY 26 - JUNE 6

Pastor Jeremy will be out of town and unavailable May 26 - June 6. During this time, please contact the staff member who best aligns with your needs. For administrative or general questions, or if you don't know which staff person you need to talk with, please contact Barbara Erb in the church office.

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!

SENIOR ENRICHMENT DAY - WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24

Senior Enrichment Day will be held at Big Rapids High School on Wednesday, June 24, 2026. The seminar series offered this year includes a choice of more than 40 diverse educational sessions, providing a “one-stop shop” for vital information for seniors. Such options include fitness classes, painting, long-term care, and financial planning options, help with Medicare, Veteran's benefits, and more. The sessions are 45 minutes in length and are designed for seniors, their children, and caregivers. Registration materials for the Senior Enrichment Day may be found in the Information Center outside of the church office. You may also register online: www.seniorenrichmentday.com

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

Barbara Erb - Director of Administrative Services
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Rev. Jeremy Wicks - Executive Pastor
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To schedule an appointment with Pastor Jeremy, contact Barbara Erb or schedule online @ calendly.com/jeremy-ummecosta

Week of May 24 - May 30, 2026

Family News

“Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy...”



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 24, 2026

"This is the Day" Call and Response - Gordon Mallett

Welcome & Announcements

Musical Meditation - Ed Mallett

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

Come, people of God, with memories of what God has done and hope for what God will do again.

We come remembering seasons when laughter returned, joy surprised us, and our mouths were filled with praise.

Come, all who have carried tears, all who have planted seeds in sorrow, all who are waiting for joy to rise again.

We come trusting that God is still at work, even in dry places, even in hard seasons, even when happiness feels like a decision before it feels like a gift.

The Lord has done great things for us.

And the Lord is not finished yet. Let us worship our God, the one who restores, renews, and teaches us to rejoice again.

*** Hymn**

Praises and Prayers

Prayers and Praises of the People

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Scripture Reading - Psalm 126

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

People: *Thanks be to God!*

*** Hymn**

Message - "Deciding to Be Happy" - Ray Setlock

Silent Prayer of Reflection

Offering

*** The Doxology**, UMH #95

*** Hymn**

*** Benediction**

Postlude

* PLEASE RISE IN BODY OR SPIRIT

NOTES:



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.

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE READING - PSALM 126 NRSVUE

¹ When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. ² Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." ³ The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced. ⁴ Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the watercourses in the Negeb. ⁵ May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. ⁶ Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

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 connectional 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.

Your generosity makes a difference! To avoid any confusion in our giving systems, please make your checks out to Paris UMC or UMMMC. Thank you for your continued support!