

ADOPT-A-FAMILY CHRISTMAS OUTREACH

This year, UMMMC is sponsoring two local families who could use a little extra care and support during the Christmas season. Together, we have the opportunity to surround them with love, generosity, and the joy of knowing they’re not alone.

- Family One: A single mother raising two young daughters.
- Family Two: A single father caring for his son who has special needs.

You'll find detailed gift information posted on the *Adopt-A-Family* bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall at the Downtown Campus (First Church). If you feel led to participate, simply choose an item, write your name beside it, and return the UNWRAPPED gift to First Church no later than Sunday, December 14.

If you worship at the Paris Campus—or if mobility or transportation makes participation difficult—there are still several ways to join in! You can sign up by calling Larisa, Jackie, or Barb in the church office (who can check the board for you), shop online and have items shipped directly to the church, drop off gifts at the Paris Campus for volunteer pickup, or give financially so that volunteers can shop on your behalf. **However you participate, we are grateful.**

We will wrap all gifts together on Tuesday, December 16, from 2–4PM in the Fellowship Hall at the Downtown Campus (First Church). Whether you’re a seasoned gift-wrapper or someone who simply enjoys being part of something meaningful, join us!

If you have any questions, please contact Larisa Draves (231-598-1911) or Jackie Fitzgerald (231-250-6681).

Thank you for helping us make Christmas brighter for these families. Your kindness truly makes a difference.

ADULT CHRISTMAS PARTY - DECEMBER 13 @ 5:30PM

Everyone from all UMMMC campuses is invited to our Adult Christmas Party on Saturday, December 13, at 5:30PM at the First Church Campus. This event is designed for adults to relax and enjoy an evening together; childcare will be provided on-site.

We’ll share a lasagna dinner (beef, seafood, and vegetable options). Please bring a salad or dessert to add to the meal, if you are able.

We’ll also have a White Elephant Gift Exchange - just bring one wrapped gift (new, used, or regifted). If bringing a gift is a burden for any reason, please let Pastor Jeremy know and we will have a wrapped gift ready for you so that everyone can participate. *If you need a ride to the event, please let us know. We want everyone to be able to join us.*

Please RSVP by Sunday, December 7 by emailing or calling Barb in the church office or by signing up on the Fellowship Hall bulletin board. Volunteers are also needed for set-up on December 12.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES FOR 2026

- As we prepare for the new year, we’re building teams to help create a warm, welcoming Sunday experience at UMMMC.
- Fellowship Hosts – Provide simple refreshments after worship at First Church. Individuals, families, or groups welcome.
 - Communion Stewards – Prepare the bread and cup before worship (about one hour, once a month).
 - Greeters – Offer a warm welcome and help people feel at home when they arrive.
 - Ushers – Distribute bulletins, assist with seating, and help keep our worship space ready.

If you’re interested or want to learn more, please contact Barb Erb in the church office or Pastor Jeremy. Thank you for helping us build a welcoming, vibrant community!

Happening This Week

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7

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, DECEMBER 8

12PM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Third Ave
4PM - Wonderment Group

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9

9AM - Ministry Staff Meeting @ First
10AM - Worship Design Team @ First
10AM - Gift Wrapping @ Angels of Action
12PM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Third Ave
6:30PM - SOUL Circle @ First
7PM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Paris

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10

10AM - SOUL Circle @ First
11:30AM - Community Lunch @ Third Ave
4PM - Christmas Choir Rehearsal

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11

5:30PM - Community Dinner @ First
7PM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Paris

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12

12PM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Third Ave
10AM - Gift Wrapping @ Angels of Action

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13

11AM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Paris
11:30AM - Community Lunch @ Third Ave
5:30PM - Adult Christmas Party @ First

FAMILY MEETING / POTLUCK

A new date will be announced soon for the family meeting and potluck that was scheduled for Sunday, November 30 - be on the lookout!

DECEMBER EUCHRE NIGHT

Please note that Euchre will not meet in December. We'll resume our regular schedule on the third Wednesday in January. We look forward to gathering again after the holidays!

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 December 7 - December 13, 2025

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 - December 7, 2025

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

*** Call to Worship & Lighting of the Advent Candles** (Reader / *People*)
We gather again in this season of longing—bringing our weariness, our questions, and our hope that God is still shaping the world toward wholeness.
We come seeking peace, trusting that God meets us in our longing and leads us forward in love.

This morning, we've already lit the candle of Hope, remembering that hope is more than optimism—it is the courage to stay awake to God's dream.
We carry that hope with us today, watching for light in unexpected places.

Today, we light the second candle—the candle of Peace. But not peace as the world often defines it: not quietness that ignores injustice, not comfort that comes at someone else's expense, not the silence of avoidance or fear.
We long for the peace of Christ—justice-rooted, Spirit-led, a peace that prepares the way for healing and renewal.

We light the candle of Peace...trusting that God's way leads us toward mercy, justice, and transformation.
As these candles burn, may hope steady our hearts and peace guide our steps. May we prepare the way for Christ in our homes, our community, and our world.

*** Hymn** - "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus", UMH #196

Children's Message

Scripture Reading - Matthew 3:1–12 & Malachi 3:1–6 (NRSVUE)
Reader: The word of God, for the people of God.
People: *Thanks be to God!*

Choral Anthem - "Who Would Send a Baby?"

Message - "Dare to Dream: Prophetic Peace"

Pastoral Prayer

Hymn - "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel", UMH #211

Celebration of Holy Communion

*** Hymn** - "I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light", UMH #206, vss. 1-2

* Benediction

*** Hymn** - "I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light", UMH #206, vs. 3

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 - DECEMBER 7

Reader: Doug Fitzgerald
Ushers: Pat and Marion Williamson, Joann Haist
Greeter: Nancy Spedowski
Nursery: Sarah Delany, Jana Pisani
Sunday School: Julie Setlock, Julie Tessin
Fellowship Host: Marlene Rodgers

SERVING NEXT WEEK - DECEMBER

Reader: Marlene Rodgers
Ushers: Colin & Roberta Cline
Greeter: Pete Jensen
Nursery: Sarah Delany, Paige Madden
Sunday School: Thomas Wheeler, Brenda Chaffee
Fellowship Host: Cheryl Richardson

THINK ABOUT IT – WEEK TWO: PROPHETIC PEACE

Peace is a beautiful word, but in Scripture it's rarely a comfortable one. Biblical peace isn't about keeping things calm or avoiding conflict. It's not a spiritual "quiet down" so everyone can feel better. The peace John the Baptist announces is rooted in transformation—clearing space for God to do something new, healing what has been broken, and aligning our lives with the deeper rhythms of God's justice.

In this week's texts, John cries out from the wilderness, calling people to prepare the way for the One who brings true peace. Malachi echoes that call with the image of a refiner's fire and a fuller's soap—images that sound harsh at first, until we remember that refining and cleansing are always for the sake of restoration. The fire removes what distorts. The cleansing restores what is beautiful. Both make room for peace to take root.

This kind of peace is active. It asks something of us. It invites us to participate rather than spectate—to become people who help straighten the crooked paths and clear away the debris in our own hearts and communities. As we continue through Advent, we're reminded that peace isn't the absence of struggle but the presence of God's transforming love right in the middle of it.

Reflection Questions

- What is one place in your life where you're craving peace—but avoiding the work that might allow that peace to grow?
- John prepares the way by telling the truth with courage. Where might God be inviting you to speak truthfully (with compassion) this week?
- Are there habits, assumptions, or patterns in your life that might need refining in order to make room for deeper peace?
- How can our church embody prophetic peace—peace that heals, restores, and stands with the vulnerable?

Prayer for the Week

Merciful God, prepare my heart for your peace. Where I have avoided hard truths, give me courage. Where I have held onto what harms, refine me in your love. Where my spirit feels cluttered or crowded, clear away what keeps me from you. Make my life a place where your peace can take root—for my sake, for the sake of others, and for the healing of the world you love. Amen.

Putting It Into Practice

- This week, choose one simple way to "prepare the way" for peace in your daily life. It might be:
- Practicing a moment of honest self-reflection each day
 - Reaching out to someone with whom reconciliation feels possible
 - Choosing to speak truth with kindness in a difficult situation
 - Creating a small space in your home or routine that invites quiet and prayer
 - Letting go of one thing—large or small—that you know isn't serving you

Whatever you choose, let it be a step toward the peace God is shaping in you, in us, and in the world God loves.

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SERVICES

We will offer two Christmas Eve services this year as we celebrate the wonder of Christ's birth and the light that breaks into our world.

- 5:00PM - Paris Campus, Candlelight Service
- 7:00PM - First Church Campus, Candlelight with Communion

If you'd like to volunteer to serve on Christmas Eve at either campus, please contact Pastor Jeremy or Barb in the church office

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!

ALL FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS INTENDED FOR 2025 GIVING MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28. GIFTS RECEIVED AFTER THAT DATE WILL BE RECORDED IN THE 2026 GIVING YEAR.