

MANY WAYS TO CONNECT WITH OUR CHURCH

Church is about gathering together—but gathering does not always look the same for everyone. Some people connect with us in the sanctuary each Sunday, while others join online because of illness, travel, work schedules, caregiving responsibilities, mobility challenges, or other circumstances. We want everyone to know that there are several ways to worship, stay connected, and share in the life of our congregation. Join Us in Person

We offer two opportunities for in-person worship each Sunday - 9AM (North Campus) and 10AM (Downtown Campus). Whether you have worshiped with us for years or are visiting for the first time, you are welcome at either service.

Our 10:00 a.m. Downtown Campus service is streamed live each Sunday on our Facebook page: facebook.com/BRFUMC . The livestream allows people to worship with us in real time, hear the Scripture and sermon, pray with the congregation, and remain connected even when they cannot be physically present.

Sermons are also uploaded to our YouTube channel, where they can be watched and shared at any time: youtube.com/@BRFUMC . This is especially helpful for those who miss a Sunday, want to revisit a message, or would like to share a sermon with a friend or family member.

Social media is not simply a tool for advertising church events. It is one of the places where people form relationships, ask questions, seek encouragement, and explore their faith. Many people will visit a church’s Facebook page or YouTube channel before they ever walk through its doors. Our online presence gives them an opportunity to learn who we are, hear what we believe, and discover that there is a place where they will be welcomed.

Digital ministry also helps us remain connected with members who are homebound, recovering from illness, traveling, away at school, or living outside the community. It allows the ministry of our congregation to extend beyond a particular building or a single hour on Sunday morning. When we share worship, prayers, sermons, stories, and opportunities to serve online, we are meeting people where they already are.

In the coming months, we hope to expand our presence into additional online spaces, including Instagram. Instagram will give us another way to share photographs, short videos, Scripture, prayers, ministry updates, and stories from the life of our congregation. We will also explore shorter videos for Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts. These could include brief devotional thoughts, sermon highlights, invitations to upcoming events, and glimpses of the ministries happening throughout the week.

Our goal is not to be present on every social media platform simply because it exists. Our goal is to use these tools intentionally—to build relationships, communicate clearly, offer hope, and invite people into a community of faith.

One of the easiest ways you can support our digital ministry is by following our pages, reacting to posts, leaving encouraging comments, and sharing worship services, sermons, and church announcements.

We also encourage you to check in online whenever you attend Sunday worship, a church event, a class, a community meal, or another ministry activity. A simple Facebook check-in lets your friends know that something meaningful is happening here and helps introduce our church to people who may never have encountered us otherwise. You do not need to write a long post. A quick check-in, photograph, or sentence about what you appreciated can help extend our welcome beyond the walls of the church.

Every interaction helps more people discover our church and the ministries we offer. Whether you join us in person, worship through the livestream, watch a sermon later in the week, or connect through social media, you are an important part of our church community. There are many ways to access the life and ministry of our church—and there is always a place for you.

What's Happening

SUNDAY, JULY 19

9AM - Worship @ Paris (North) Campus
Fellowship and Coffee immediately following the worship service
10AM - Worship @ First Church (Downtown) Campus
Fellowship and Coffee immediately following the worship service

TUESDAY, JULY 21

9AM - Director's Meeting @ Downtown Campus
3PM - 6PM - Good Company @ Hemlock Park

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

12PM - Table Talk: Politics & Following Jesus @ Downtown Campus
(Chapter Three: Freedom, Violence, Order)

THURSDAY, JULY 23

5:30PM - Community Dinner @ Downtown Campus

HELP US FILL BACKPACKS AND HEARTS!

We are collecting school supplies for an exciting new outreach opportunity! As part of this year's Ice Cream Social at our Paris campus on August 9, we'll be opening our doors to the wider community and providing free school supplies to local students as they prepare for a new school year. It's a simple but meaningful way to support families, encourage children, and remind our neighbors that they are loved.

Getting involved is easy! Visit the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall Downtown or the display at the North Campus and pick up a tag—or several. Each tag lists a specific school supply item and the quantity needed. Simply take the tags, purchase the items, and return them to the church by Sunday, August 2. Thank you for your generosity and for helping us share Christ's love in such a practical way!

UMMMC ICE CREAM SOCIAL - DATE CHANGE!!!

Mark your calendars for the 2nd Annual UMMC Ice Cream Social, happening Sunday, August 9, at 1PM at our Paris Campus! This is an opportunity to gather as one church, welcome our neighbors, strengthen community connections, help local students begin the new school year with confidence - and eat ice cream!

This year, we are partnering with Angels of Action to offer a school supply giveaway during the event. We may need to supplement the supplies provided, so watch for more information about specific items that may be needed and additional ways you can support this important outreach.

Volunteers will be needed to help with preparation, setup, serving, welcoming guests, the school supply giveaway, cleanup, and all the little details that make an event feel special. Whether you can help before the event, during the afternoon, or afterward, your participation will make a difference. To volunteer, please contact Jane Pedelty (Paris) or Paden Clevenger, Director of Family Ministry and Community Outreach.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR: Family Meeting & Potluck, August 30 @ 11:15AM

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

Barbara Erb - Director of Administrative Services
barbara@ummecosta.org - (231) 796-7771 ext. 1

Kathy Bell - Director of Congregational Care
kathy@ummecosta.org - (231) 224-6177 ext. 3

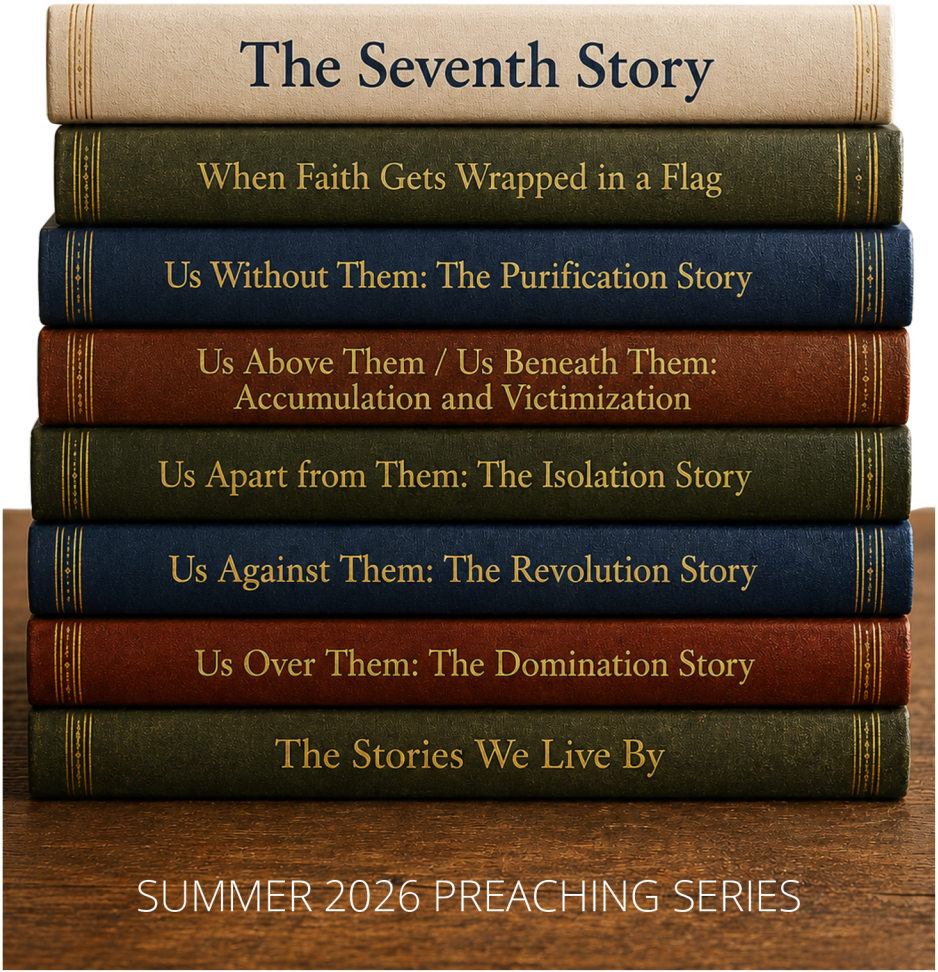
Paden Clevenger - Director of Family Ministries & Community Outreach
paden@ummecosta.org - (231) 796-7771 ext 4

Rev. Jeremy Wicks - Executive Pastor
jeremy@ummecosta.org / (231) 796-7771 ext 2 / (231) 224-6545

To schedule an appointment with Pastor Jeremy, contact Barbara Erb or schedule online @ calendly.com/jeremy-ummecosta

Week of July 19 - July 25, 2026

Family News



SUMMER 2026 PREACHING SERIES

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 AND MINISTRY STAFF AVAILABLE BY APPOINTMENT

NORTH CAMPUS - PARIS

109 Lincoln St
Paris, MI 49338
ummecosta.org/paris

Worship Gathering in-person
Sundays @ 9:00AM

DOWNTOWN CAMPUS - FIRST

304 Elm Street
Big Rapids, MI 49307
bigrapidsfirst.org

Worship Gathering in-person and
live online, Sundays @ 10AM
www.facebook.com/brfumc

Check out our Youtube page -
www.youtube.com/@brfumc

Order of Worship - July 19, 2026

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

* Call to Worship (Reader / *People*)

We gather before the God whose mercy crosses every boundary.
God's compassion reaches farther than our comfort.

The world teaches us to keep our distance from those we fear, resent, misunderstand, or blame.
But Jesus tells a better story.

A story where the neighbor is not always the person closest to us, but the one we are tempted to pass by. A story where mercy does not stop at the edge of our group, our nation, our religion, our politics, or our comfort.

When we would rather withdraw,
God calls us toward compassion.

When we would rather decide who deserves mercy,
God reminds us that grace is not ours to control.

So let us worship the God who refuses the story of “us apart from them”
and calls us into the wider way of love.

*** Hymn** - “To God Be the Glory,” UMH #98

Children’s Message

First Reading - Jonah 4:1–11 (NRSVUE)

Hymn - “Blessed Assurance,” UMH #369

Second Reading - Luke 10:25–37 (NRSVUE)

Message - “Us Apart from Them: The Isolation Story”

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord’s Prayer

*** Doxology**, UMH #95

*** Hymn** - “Standing on the Promises,” UMH #374, vss 1-3 (adapted)

* Blessing and Sending

*** Hymn** - “Standing on the Promises,” UMH #374, vs 4

Postlude

Altar flowers are given in celebration of Joe DeLany’s birthday.

* PLEASE RISE IN BODY OR SPIRIT

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 - JULY 19

Reader: Doug Fitzgerald
Ushers: Mike & Jana Pisani
Greeter: Kathi Parker
Nursery: Paden Clevenger, Julie Tessin
Fellowship Host: Brenda Chaffee
Organist: Shirley Jernstadt
Accompanist: Kathy Bell
Tech Team: Ken Draves, Gary Poole

SERVING NEXT WEEK - JULY 26

Reader: Denise Cospér
Ushers: Rex & Cheryl Richardson
Greeter: Betsy Curtis
Nursery: Paden Clevenger, Julie Tessin
Fellowship Host: Marlene Rodgers

THINK ABOUT IT - THE ISOLATION STORY

This week in The Seventh Story, we are thinking about the isolation story: us apart from them. The isolation story tells us that we can stay faithful, safe, or comfortable by keeping our distance from people we fear, resent, misunderstand, or blame. It teaches us to draw the circle small and to believe our compassion only has to reach the people closest to us.

But God’s mercy keeps crossing the lines we draw.

Jonah wanted distance from Nineveh. He wanted God’s mercy to stop where his resentment began. But God kept asking Jonah to care about people he would rather avoid. Jesus does something similar in the parable of the Good Samaritan. When someone asks, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus tells a story where mercy comes from the person least expected, and neighbor-love requires crossing the road toward someone in need.

Questions for Reflection

- Who am I tempted to keep at a distance?
- Where has resentment made my compassion smaller?
- Who have I decided is not my responsibility?
- What would it mean to cross the road toward mercy this week?

Practice for the Week

Pay attention to one person or group you usually avoid, dismiss, or keep at a distance. Then ask: What would compassion require of me if I stopped seeing them as “them”? Take one small step toward connection: listen longer, pray honestly, reach out, offer help, question an assumption, or refuse to let resentment decide the limits of your love.

Prayer for the Week

God of mercy, widen our compassion beyond the boundaries of comfort, resentment, and fear. Teach us to see the neighbor we are tempted to avoid. Give us courage to cross the road, humility to receive mercy from unexpected places, and grace to live your better story—where there is no “us apart from them,” because there is only us. Amen.

HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF UMMMC

United Methodist Ministries of Mecosta County is seeking individuals from both the First Campus and the Paris Campus to serve on our Leadership Team. The Leadership Team is the governing body of UMMMC. They care for the church’s resources, discern long-term priorities, ask important questions about the future, and ensure that our ministries and finances remain aligned with our mission, vision, and values. If you believe this may be a meaningful way for you to serve—or if you would simply like to learn more—please contact Pastor Jeremy to schedule a conversation.

JULY MISSION GIVING: OUR BROTHERS KEEPER

Throughout July, our mission giving will support Our Brother’s Keeper, Big Rapids’ shelter for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. OBK offers more than a safe place to sleep. Guests receive meals, showers, clean clothing, compassionate support, and assistance as they work toward stable housing and greater self-sufficiency. At a time when the need for emergency housing continues to grow—including among families with children and older adults—this ministry provides safety, dignity, and hope to some of our most vulnerable neighbors.

Thank you for giving generously and helping Our Brother’s Keeper remind every guest that they are not alone.

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!**