

## VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION SUNDAY

This Sunday, April 19th, we're taking a moment to recognize those who work behind the scenes and make *everything* we do possible—our volunteers.

Across each campus, in ways both visible and unseen, volunteers are the ones who show up. They greet at the doors, prepare spaces, lead ministries, care for others, organize details, and step in wherever there's a need. Quite simply, the life of our church is sustained by people who are willing to give their time, energy, and heart to this shared work.

Volunteer Appreciation Sunday is our opportunity to say thank you—not just in words, but in community. After worship t our First Church Campus, we invite to enjoy a special Fellowship / Coffee Hour. This will be a relaxed time to connect, enjoy some good food, and celebrate the people who help make this ministry what it is.

Whether you're currently serving, have served in the past, or are just beginning to find your place, we hope you'll stick around. This is a moment for all of us to recognize that what we're building together only happens because people choose to be part of it.

We're grateful—and we're better because of you.

## 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!

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We have a few opportunities for those looking to get more involved in the life of our church:

- **Landscape Coordinator** – We're looking for someone to organize and lead a team that cares for the flower beds, landscaping, including the Memorial Garden, at our Downtown Campus. This role is about coordination and team building, not doing all the work yourself—and no, mowing the lawn is not required, unless you really want it to be!
- **Worship Video Editor** – This role involves taking our weekly worship recording, doing some light editing, and uploading it to YouTube so we can stay connected with those who join us online.
- **Community Meal Cook** – We're looking to add at least one more cook to the team that prepares meals for our neighbors on Thursdays. This is a hands-on way to make a direct impact and help extend hospitality to our neighbors.

If you're interested in any of these opportunities, or just want to learn more, please reach out to Pastor Jeremy. There's a place for you to connect and make a difference.

## BOOK STUDY: THE PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE

You're invited to join a six-week book study on *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren, on Wednesdays, May 6 - June 10. This study will explore questions of meaning, calling, and how we live out our faith in everyday life. The evening with begin with dinner at 5:30PM, followed by the study from 6:00-7:30PM. If you'd like to participate, please contact Barbara Erb in the church office to register by May 1.

## KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN...

We're already looking ahead to one of the sweetest events of the summer—our Ice Cream Social, coming soon to the Paris campus. Last year was a wonderful success, filled with great conversation, lots of laughter, and (of course) plenty of delicious ice cream. More details are coming soon, but for now... keep your eyes open. You won't want to miss it!

## What's Happening

### SUNDAY, APRIL 19

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

### MONDAY, APRIL 20

12PM - Red Cross Blood Drive @ Downtown Campus

### TUESDAY, APRIL 21

9AM - Ministry Staff Team Meeting @ Downtown Campus

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22

10AM - SOUL Circle @ Downtown Campus  
11AM - *Embracing an Adverbial Faith* Discussion Group @ Downtown Campus  
12PM - Table Talk @ Downtown Campus  
6PM - Praise Team Rehearsal @ Downtown Campus

### THURSDAY, APRIL 23

5:30PM - Community Dinner @ Downtown Campus

### SATURDAY, APRIL 25

10AM-12Pm - Crafting with a Cause @ Downtown Campus, Basement

## WILD WEDNESDAY PLANNING MEETING - APRIL 26

This is our first call for volunteers for Wild Wednesday—our signature summer children's ministry experience—and we'd love to have you involved. Join us for a planning meeting on April 26, immediately following worship at First Church. Whether you've served before or are stepping in for the first time, your voice and presence matter as we begin shaping this summer's ministry. If you have questions or want to learn more, please connect with Paden Clevenger, our Director of Family Ministries and Community Outreach.

## MIDWEEK CONVERSATION: EMBRACING AN ADVERBIAL FAITH

Join us on Wednesdays at 11AM beginning April 15 at our Downtown Campus for a weekly gathering centered on the themes we're exploring in worship—what it means to be formed as disciples who love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously. There's no book to purchase and no prep required—just show up and be part of the conversation. (*Table Talk is immediately following, so bring your lunch if you'd like to stay and participate!*)

## CRAFTING WITH A CAUSE - APRIL GATHERING

Crafting with a Cause will meet on Saturday, April 25th, from 10:00 a.m. to noon in the basement at our First Church campus. This month, participants will be creating May Day decorations and cards for residents at Evergreen Terrace and for members of our church community living at the Brook. Larissa Draves and Cheryl Richardson are organizing this month's gathering.

All are welcome to join in this meaningful and creative time together. Please Note: We are no longer collecting plastic grocery bags at the church. We invite you to take them to Meijer or the county recycling center for proper recycling rather than leaving them at the church.

## 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](https://calendly.com/jeremy-ummecosta)

Week of April 19 - April 25, 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 - April 19, 2026

## Prelude

## Welcome & Announcements

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

Family of God, when we feel afraid and pressed in on every side...  
*The Spirit protects and advocates for us.*

When the world's problems seem too big to solve, and we don't know how to do the next right thing...  
*The Spirit comforts and strengthens us.*

When we need wisdom to know what is ours to do and the courage to act...  
*The Spirit counsels and empowers us.*

Family of God, on this journey of faith, we are not alone—God is with us!  
*Today, we call once again on the Holy Spirit to empower us to live as disciples of Jesus Christ who transform the world. Amen.*

\* **Hymn** - "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee", UMH #89

## Children's Message

**Old Testament Reading** - Psalm 16 (NRSVUE)

**Hymn** - "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing", UMH #400

**New Testament Reading** - Colossians 2:6-10 (NRSVUE)  
Reader: The word of God, for the people of God.  
People: *Thanks be to God!*

**Message** - "Disciples Empowered by the Holy Spirit"

## Pastoral Prayer

## The Lord's Prayer

\* **The Doxology**, UMH #95

\* **Hymn** - "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling", UMH #384, vss 1-3

## \* Benediction

\* **Hymn** - "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling", UMH #384, vs 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](http://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 - APRIL 19

Reader: Barbara Ross  
Ushers: Jana Pisani, Cheryl Richardson  
Greeter: Kathi Parker  
Nursery: Sara DeLany, Paige Madden  
Sunday School: Kathi Parker, Laurie Daniels  
Fellowship Host: Paden Clevenger - Volunteer Appreciation  
Organist: Shirley Jernstadt  
Accompanist: Kathy Bell  
Tech Team: Ken Draves, Gary Poole

## SERVING NEXT WEEK - APRIL 26

Reader: Denise Cospers  
Ushers: Rex & Cheryl Richardson  
Greeter: Barbara Ross  
Nursery: Sara DeLany, Donna Drake  
Sunday School: Kathi Parker, Pam Stirn  
Fellowship Host: Marlene Rodgers

## THINK ABOUT IT THIS WEEK

Last week, we started with formation—recognizing that discipleship is about being shaped by Christ over time. But that raises an important question: How does that actually happen? Because if we're honest, trying to change ourselves by sheer willpower doesn't usually work. We get tired. We fall back into old patterns. We lose momentum. That's where this week's focus comes in: We are not left to figure this out on our own. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit is not an abstract idea or something distant. The Spirit is God's presence with us—guiding, nudging, strengthening, and transforming us from the inside out. Not through pressure or guilt, but through presence. Jesus describes this as abundant life—not a life without challenges, but a life rooted in something deeper than fear, stress, or scarcity. So maybe the question this week isn't, "What do I need to do?" Maybe it's: "Where is the Spirit already at work in me—and am I paying attention?"

## Questions to Reflect On

- When have you experienced a moment where your faith felt alive, real, or deeply meaningful?
- What does "abundant life" look like to you—not in theory, but in your actual day-to-day life?
- Where do you feel most grounded, at peace, or connected to something deeper?
- What tends to drain your joy or pull you away from that sense of fullness?
- When have you sensed a nudge—an inner prompting toward trust, kindness, courage, or change?
- What might it look like to trust that nudge this week?

## Action Steps for the Week

- Create awareness: Take a few moments each day to pause and ask, "Where did I notice God's presence today?"
- Practice gratitude: Name one thing each day that brought you joy or reminded you of God's goodness.
- Follow a nudge: When you feel prompted to act with kindness, courage, or compassion—respond instead of overthinking it.
- Stay rooted: Spend time with Psalm 16 or John 10:10 this week, reading slowly and reflecting on what "fullness of life" means for you.

## Prayer for the Week

*Holy Spirit, you are already at work within us, even when we don't recognize it. Open our eyes to your presence. Quiet the noise around us so we can hear your voice. Give us the courage to trust your leading and the awareness to notice where you are guiding us toward life, joy, and wholeness. Shape us from the inside out, and lead us into the fullness of life you promise. Amen.*

## A Closing Thought

You don't have to force transformation. You don't have to manufacture faith. The Spirit is already at work. This week, don't try harder—pay attention, stay open, and trust that you are not walking this path alone.

## APRIL MISSION FOCUS: NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRIES SUNDAY

In April, we join The United Methodist Church in observing Native American Ministries Sunday. This special offering supports the development of Native American clergy and leaders, provides scholarships for Native students, and strengthens ministries serving Native communities. We invite you to give generously, knowing your gift helps nurture leaders and strengthen communities across the connection. Gifts can be given in person or online. Please mark your checks or your envelopes with "NAMS" so that your gift is credited to the correct account.

**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!**