GATHER AROUND THE TABLE—AND THE TREE!

Join us at First Church on Sunday, November 29, immediately after worship for a family meeting, potluck, and Christmas tree decorating! Bring a dish to share and an ornament that symbolizes your family to add to our church Christmas tree. Your ornament might reflect a favorite memory, a meaningful tradition, or something you enjoy together.

Sharing a meal gives us time to catch up, meet someone new, and strengthen the relationships that make us a church family. As we gather for conversation and decorate the tree, we'll celebrate the many people and stories that belong within the Body of Christ. Whether you've been part of this congregation for decades or have only recently joined us, we hope you'll stay and participate. There's a place for you at the table!

THE TEAM BEHIND THE SOUND & SCREEN

A lot happens behind the scenes to help worship come together each week. The music, prayers, scripture, and message all matter, and so does the work that helps everyone hear, see, and take part. Our tech team gives their time and attention so worship can be shared clearly with people in the sanctuary and with those watching online.

Ken Draves is at the sound booth each week, helping make sure the service can be heard and managing the PowerPoint that guides us through the worship. Gary Poole works at the video station, keeping the service on screen for those gathered in the room. Their work takes focus throughout worship, even when most of us barely notice it—which is often a sign that everything is going smoothly. Brenda Chaffee's work happens after the service. Each week, she uploads the worship video to YouTube so people who follow us there can watch. That gives folks another way to connect with our congregation and take part in worship, even when they can't be with us in person.

We're grateful to Ken, Gary, and Brenda for the care and consistency they bring to this ministry. Their work helps make worship welcoming and accessible, week after week. Thank you for sharing your time and gifts with our church.

CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS: ADOPT A FAMILY

This Christmas, our church is participating in Christmas Blessings: Adopt A Family. We'll be helping two local families with six children between them. In one household, a parent cares for a child with special needs and takes part in the child's regular therapy appointments. Both families have little room in their budgets for gifts this year. Together, we can ease that worry and give the parents the joy of watching their children unwrap something picked just for them.

Information is posted on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall. Please consider choosing one requested item and returning it unwrapped by mid-December. If you'd enjoy shopping with someone, invite a friend or bring the kids and let them help choose a gift.

Once the gifts are in, we'll check both families' lists, fill in any gaps, and gather for a wrapping day. We want all six children to have something they'll be excited to open on Christmas morning. Thank you for helping make that happen!

What's Happening

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29
9AM - Worship @ Paris (North) Campus
10AM - Worship @ First Church (Downtown) Campus
11AM - UMMMC Family Meeting & Potluck @ Downtown Campus

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1
9AM - Director's Meeting @ Downtown Campus

WEDNESDAY,DECEMBER 2
10AM - Choir Rehearsal
11AM - Planning Meeting @ North Campus
11:30AM - Good Company @ Big Rapids Public Library
12PM - Table Talk @ Downtown Campus

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3
5:30PM - Community Dinner @ Downtown Campus

ADULT CHRISTMAS PARTY – DECEMBER 12

Mark your calendars! Our Adult Christmas Party is coming up on Saturday, December 12, and we hope you'll plan to join us! The Christmas season is a wonderful opportunity to gather with friends, enjoy some fellowship, share a few laughs, and celebrate the joy of the season together. RSVP by signing up in the Fellowship Hall at the Downtown Campus or contacting Barb in the office.

CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS EVE WITH US

Join us on Christmas Eve as we gather to celebrate the birth of Christ. Both services will include candlelight, offering a quiet and meaningful way to share the light of the season together. The service at our North Campus begins at 5PM, and the service at our downtown campus begins at 7PM. The downtown service will also include a celebration of communion. We hope you'll join us and bring family and friends. All are welcome.

DECEMBER SPECIAL GIVING: COMMUNITY DINNER

This December, our Special Giving focus is the Community Dinner Ministry @ our First Church Campus. A shared meal can do more than fill a plate. It gives people a chance to sit together, enjoy good food, and experience the welcome of a caring community. The Community Dinner Ministry helps create that welcome at First Church. Every meal offers an opportunity to make room for connection and to remind our neighbors that they are valued. It's a practical way to live out our call to care for one another. Your December gift will support this ministry and the work of bringing people together around the table. Thank you for giving generously and helping make this ministry possible.

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

Barbara Erb - Director of Administrative Services
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Paden Clevenger - Director of Family Ministries & Community Outreach
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Linda Rinehart - Director of Choral Music
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Rev. Jeremy Wicks - Executive Pastor
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Week of November 29 - December 5

Family News



the weary world rejoices



UNITED METHODIST MINISTRIES OF MECOSTA COUNTY
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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

Services Archived Weekly:
www.youtube.com/@brfumc

Order of Worship - November 29, 2026

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

*** Unison Prayer**

God of hope, we come carrying the weariness of the world and the longings of our own hearts. Meet us as we are. In this season of waiting, help us notice the light already breaking through. Quiet the voices of fear, awaken us to Your presence, and prepare us to become signs of hope for one another. Gather us into worship and renew us for the work of love. Amen.

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

Children's Message

Lighting the Advent Candles - *"Hope Is a Star"*

Responsive Litany *(Reader / People)*

In this season of Advent, we remember that Christ is coming to bring us hope. For those of us bound by bitterness and anger,
Christ is coming to bring us hope.

For those of us feeling trapped and misunderstood,
Christ is coming to bring us hope.

For those of us burdened with ceaseless worry,
Christ is coming to bring us hope.

For those of us whose lives feel out of control,
Christ is coming to bring us hope.

Scripture Reading - Isaiah 9:2–7 (NRSVUE)
The word of God, for the people of God.
Thanks be to God!

Hymn - *"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"* UMH 211, vs 1

Message - *"The Weary World Rejoices: Longing for Light"*

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

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

*** Blessing and Sending**

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

Postlude

* PLEASE RISE IN BODY OR SPIRIT

Altar Flowers are given by Rev. Meredith Rupe in memory of Pauline Rupe

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 - NOVEMBER 29

Reader: Brenda Chaffee
Ushers: Rex & Cheryl Richardson
Greeter: Pat Little
Nursery: Paden Clevenber, Julie Tessin
Fellowship Host: Potluck & Family Christmas Tree Decorating
Choir Director: Linda Rinehart
Accompanist: Kathy Bell
Organist: Shirley Jernstadt
Tech Team: Ken Draves, Gary Poole, Brenda Chaffee
Preacher: Rev. Jeremy Wicks

SERVING NEXT WEEK - DECEMBER 6

Reader: Carol Hillman
Ushers: Pat & Marion Williamson
Greeter: Nancy Spedowski
Communion Assistants: Pat Little, Karen Leiter
Nursery: Catherine Kloack, Coleen Jaeger
Fellowship Host: Denise Cosper

THINK ABOUT IT THIS WEEK: LONGING FOR LIGHT | ISAIAH 9:2-7

Advent begins by telling the truth: the world is not yet as it should be. Isaiah spoke to people living with fear, political instability, and the weight of oppression. When the prophet announced that light was coming, it was not an invitation to ignore their circumstances or "look on the bright side." Hope began with naming what was wrong. Christian hope is not the belief that everything will soon become easier. It is the trust that our present circumstances are not the whole story and that God has not abandoned us.

The first Advent candle does not flood the room with light. It simply gives us enough light to see one another, remember God's promises, and take the next faithful step.

Some of us enter this season carrying bitterness, worry, or circumstances that feel beyond our control. Advent does not ask us to pretend those burdens are gone. It reminds us that Christ meets us within them. It also reminds us that we are God's instruments of hope. We can listen to someone who feels misunderstood, offer practical help, speak against harm, or remind another person that they are not alone.

Where are you longing for light right now? What small act of hope can you offer someone else this week?

QUESTIONS FOR THE WEEK

- Where are you longing for light right now?
- What burden makes hope difficult for you?
- When have you experienced hope through another person's words or actions?
- Who might need you to become an instrument of hope this week?

ACTION STEPS

- Name one situation you are worried about and bring it honestly to God in prayer.
- Contact someone who may be feeling alone, overwhelmed, or misunderstood.
- Do one practical thing that makes life easier for another person.
- Pay attention each evening to one sign of hope you noticed during the day.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

God of hope, meet me in the places where I am weary or afraid. Help me trust that my present circumstances are not the whole story. Open my eyes to the signs of your presence around me. Show me where someone needs encouragement, companionship, or practical help. Use my words and actions to make your hope visible this week. Amen.

COMING NEXT WEEK: PEACE LIKE NO OTHER

The world often treats peace as the absence of conflict, but Jesus offers a peace that can remain with us even when life is unsettled. Next Sunday, we will light the candle of peace and consider how God guides our feet into the way of peace.

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!