GRATEFUL TO BE YOUR PASTOR

As Thanksgiving approaches, I'm mindful of how grateful I am to be your pastor and for the people I get to do ministry with here at United Methodist Ministries of Mecosta County. Our staff and volunteers put a lot of care into preparing music for worship, helping our children feel at home in church, providing exceptional welcome and hospitality, and making sure there's a place at the table for a neighbor who comes for a meal. Thank you for the time you give and for the care you show one another.

Some of you have wondered how I'm managing my time with seminary and everything else on my calendar. It's a fair question. My weeks are full. Along with preaching and tending to the day-to-day life of the church, I spend time getting to know people in our community, writing grants, and talking with potential partners about ministries we might take on together. I feel blessed that all of that is part of being your pastor.

I continue to hold Fridays sacred as my Sabbath. Keeping that day for rest is one way I take care of myself. I've been fighting some kind of crud the last couple of weeks, and I'm looking forward to surgery for carpal tunnel syndrome, either later this year or early next year. Overall, though, I feel rested, and life is good.

You've encouraged me as I work toward my Master of Divinity at Wesley Theological Seminary and pursue ordination. You're family to me, so I'm proud to share a little news with you. I'm heading into finals week with a 4.0! I'm glad the semester is wrapping up, too. I'm taking J-term off, which gives me six full weeks without classes before spring term starts toward the end of January.

I'd appreciate your prayers as I prepare for my provisional ordination interview in early 2027. Thank you for cheering me on and for all the ways you've made this a church where I feel cared for, too.

- Pastor Jeremy

FRIENDSGIVING AT PARIS

Join us at our Paris campus on Sunday, November 22, for Friendsgiving! This gathering is an opportunity to celebrate the friendships, shared ministry, and everyday acts of kindness that make our church community special. Bring a friend and come ready to enjoy fellowship with familiar faces and get to know someone new. Maybe you've been part of the Paris congregation for years or are visiting for the first time, we hope you'll join us. Your presence is part of what makes this a community worth celebrating!

HELP US PREPARE FOR ADVENT @ PARIS

Join us on Saturday, November 28, at 10:30 a.m. for Hanging the Greens as we decorate our worship space for Advent and Christmas! Come lend a hand, enjoy some conversation, and help us prepare a welcoming place for the season ahead.

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!

What's Happening

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22
9AM - Worship @ Paris (North) Campus
10AM - Worship @ First Church (Downtown) Campus
Coffee / Fellowship Immediately Following Worship

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CHURCH OFFICE IS CLOSED THE WEEK OF THANKSGIVING. YOUR STAFF TEAM IS STILL AVAILABLE AS NEEDED.

SAVE THE DATE! 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. More details are coming soon, so for now, save the date and plan to be part of the celebration!

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!

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

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

Kathy Bell - Director of Congregational Care
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Paden Clevenger - Director of Family Ministries & Community Outreach
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Linda Rinehart - Director of Choral Music
linda@ummecosta.org - (231) 631-4380

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

Week of November 22 - November 28

Family News



a little help with the words

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

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

Order of Worship - November 22, 2026

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

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

From one generation to the next, God is faithful.
God's love endures forever.

We come from different places, each with a week's worth of life to bring.
God makes room for us all.

The One who has carried us this far will be with us in the days ahead.
Let us worship God, whose love endures forever.

*** Song** - *"Forever",* led by the Praise Team

Children's Message

Scripture Reading - Isaiah 55:10–13 (NRSVUE)
May these words open our minds and deepen our understanding.
Thanks be to God!

Song - *"10,000 Reasons",* led by the Praise Team

Scripture Reading - Psalm 65:9–13 (NRSVUE)
The word of God, for the people of God.
Thanks be to God.

Message - *"A Little Help with the Words"*

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

*** Hymn** - *"Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee"* UMH 89 vss. 1, 2

*** Blessing and Sending**

*** Hymn** - *"Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee"* UMH 89 v. 4

Postlude

* 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 - NOVEMBER 22

Reader: Marlene Rodgers
Ushers: Rex & Cheryl Richardson
Greeter: Betsy Curtis
Nursery: Beth Bejcek, Char Fitch
Fellowship Host: Cheryl Richardson
Choir Director: Linda Rinehart
Accompanist: Kathy Bell
Organist: Shirley Jernstadt
Tech Team: Laurie Daniels, Gary Poole
Preacher: Rev. Jeremy Wicks

SERVING NEXT WEEK - NOVEMBER 29 (FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT)

Reader: Brenda Chaffee
Ushers: Rex & Cheryl Richardson
Greeter: Pat Little
Nursery: Paden Clevenber, Julie Tessin
Fellowship Host: Potluck & Family Christmas Tree Decorating

THINK ABOUT IT THIS WEEK: A LITTLE HELP WITH THE WORDS

In Psalm 65, the poet notices where the rain has settled in a plowed field. The ridges have softened. Grass is growing where the sheep graze. By the last verse, the poet can look out across a valley covered in grain and imagine the whole place singing.

What I love about that picture is the timing. By the time the poet finds words for what God has been doing, the music's already going. We Methodists have a name for the grace that reaches us before we're aware of it. We call it prevenient grace. One way to understand it is to think about a day you can barely remember. Maybe last Tuesday. Whatever was on your mind that day, whether you prayed or even thought about God, you were already someone God loved.

That gives us a little room as Thanksgiving approaches. Thursday may be a day you're looking forward to, or you may have other things on your mind. Sometimes gratitude comes a few days later, when you realize you're still smiling about something a friend said. By then you might know just what you want to say to them. A thank-you on Saturday counts, too. And sometimes somebody else finds words for a prayer you can barely begin.

That's part of what I love about having this psalm. Somebody looked out across a field and saw enough of God's care there to put it into words. All these years later, we can borrow those words for a while. I hope the next time you drive past a field here in Mecosta County, you'll think about those singing valleys. And if you drive past with a dozen other things on your mind, God will still be tending that ground. That's a good thing to remember about ourselves this week, too.

A FEW QUESTIONS TO SIT WITH

- Has someone ever pointed out something on a familiar drive or walk that you've looked for ever since? What did they help you see?
- When have you recognized God's care for you only after you looked back?
- Is there a line from a hymn or prayer you borrow when your own words are hard to find? Who helped you learn it?

TRY THIS WEEK

Read the last verse of Psalm 65 aloud or to yourself before heading out for the day. Pay attention to what catches your attention along a road you know well. If all you see is a November field, take a good look anyway.

PRAYER

God, you cared for this earth long before anyone found words to thank you. Be with us in the company we keep this week and in the hours we spend alone. When we have something to say, help us say it honestly. When words are hard to come by, help us hear the prayer someone else is offering for us. Amen.

Next Sunday we begin Advent at First Church with *The Weary World Rejoices*. We'll light the first candle and spend some time with Isaiah and the people who longed for light. However this week goes for you, come share that light with us.

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!