

THE COURAGE TO BE UNFINISHED

There is something about autumn that reminds us that change is a natural part of life. The leaves begin to turn, the days grow shorter, and the world around us prepares for a new season. Yet, even as the trees let go of what once made them beautiful, we know that life continues beneath the surface.

Our spiritual lives are much the same.

Sometimes we convince ourselves that we should have everything figured out by now. We should have all the answers, overcome our struggles, and become the people we believe God wants us to be.

But faith is not about arriving at some final destination where we have nothing left to learn. It is about the ongoing work of becoming.

Just as the trees do not resist the changing seasons, perhaps we can learn to embrace the changes taking place within us. We can let go of old assumptions, make room for new understandings, and trust that even in seasons when growth is difficult to see, God is still at work.

We do not have to be finished to be faithful.

As we enter this beautiful season of change, may we find the courage to release what no longer serves us, the grace to accept ourselves as we are, and the openness to co-operate with the Holy Spirit in becoming who God is calling us to be.

Peace+Grace,
Pastor Jeremy

WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY: ONE TABLE, ONE FAMILY

On Sunday, October 4, United Methodists will join Christians around the world in celebrating World Communion Sunday. This special day reminds us that, despite our differences in language, culture, nationality, and tradition, we are united as one family through the love of Jesus Christ.

As we gather around Christ's table, we remember that God's love knows no borders and that there is room for everyone in the kin-dom of God. The table is not ours to divide; it is Christ's invitation to a world in need of love, reconciliation, and hope.

World Communion Sunday is also our October Missions Giving Focus! Through this special offering, we help provide scholarships, mentoring, and leadership development opportunities for students from historically underrepresented racial and ethnic communities in the United States and around the world. Our gifts help remove financial barriers to education and equip emerging leaders to serve their churches and communities.

Your generosity makes a difference! When we give to World Communion Sunday, we invest in a more inclusive and diverse church, helping prepare leaders who will carry Christ's love into the world for generations to come.

Throughout October, we invite you to make a special gift to our Missions Giving Focus: World Communion Sunday. Together, we can help build a world where everyone has a place at the table and an opportunity to answer God's call.

To contribute, please designate your gift for World Communion Sunday. You can give in person or online at www.ummecosta.org/give.

What's Happening

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

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

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

9AM - Director's Meeting @ Downtown Campus

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

12PM - Table Talk @ Downtown Campus
6PM - Leadership Team Meeting @ Downtown Campus

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1

5:30PM - Community Dinner @ Downtown Campus

GOOD COMPANY @ THE LIBRARY

Sometimes it really does take a village! Beginning Wednesday, October 7, adults with young children are invited to join us for Good Company @ the Library at the Big Rapids Community Library.

Come for Mr. Howard's Storytime from 11–11:45 AM, then stick around for Good Company from 11:45 AM–12:15 PM. While the kids play, adults can enjoy an iced coffee, a sweet treat, and some relaxed conversation with other parents, grandparents, caregivers, and community members. No program, no pressure—just a chance to meet people, enjoy some good company, and build a little more community together.

For more information, or to volunteer to serve, contact Paden at paden@ummecosta.org.

ANNUAL CHURCH CONFERENCE—EVERYONE IS WELCOME

If you have ever wondered what a Church Conference actually is, think of it as the annual business and ministry meeting of our congregation within the United Methodist connection. It is one of the ways we pause each year to look at where we have been, tend to the practical work of the church, and prepare for the year ahead.

Everyone is welcome to attend, whether or not you are a church member. Professing members of the church have both voice and vote, meaning they may participate in the conversation and vote on matters that come before the Church Conference.

Church Conference may not sound like the most exciting item on the church calendar, but it is an important part of our shared life. It gives us an opportunity to participate in the decisions and commitments that shape our ministry and to celebrate the work God is doing among and through us.

Our Church Conference is Sunday, October 4, at 2:30 PM and will be hosted by Reed City United Methodist Church. We hope you will join us!

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

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Week of September 27 - October 3, 2026

Family News



MICAH

Faithful Living in a Fractured World

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 - September 27, 2026

Prelude

Choral Introit

Welcome & Announcements

* Call to Worship (Reader / *People*)

Come, not to prove your goodness, not to bargain for God's favor, but because grace has already made room for you.

We come to receive God's love and to offer our lives in response.

God has shown us what is good: to do justice, to love steadfastly, and to walk humbly with our God.

Shape our choices, our relationships, and the way we live together.

When worship becomes only words, God calls us back to lives of compassion and courage.

May our prayers become action, our faith become love, and our worship become faithful living.

Come, beloved of God. Let us worship the One who walks with us.

We come with open hearts, ready to listen and willing to follow.

* Hymn - "Christ Is Alive" — UMH 318

Children's Message

FSU Wesley Leadership Commissioning

Song - "Lean on Me"

Scripture Reading - Micah 6:1-8 (NRSVUE)

The word of God, for the people of God.

Thanks be to God!

Song - "Give Me Jesus"

Message - "Micah: What Does God Really Want?"

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

* Doxology, UMH 95

* Hymn - "Sent Forth by God's Blessing" — UMH 664, v 1

* Blessing and Sending

* Hymn - "Sent Forth by God's Blessing" — UMH 664, v 2

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 - SEPTEMBER 27

Reader: Denise Cosper

Ushers: Pat & Marion Williamson

Greeter: Betsy Curtis

Sunday School: Thomas Wheeler, Larisa Draves

Nursery: Julie Tessin, Char Fitch

Fellowship Host: Brenda Chafee

Accompanist: Kathy Bell

Organist: Shirley Jernstadt

Tech Team: Ken Draves, Gary Poole

SERVING NEXT WEEK - OCTOBER 4 (WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY)

Reader: Pat Little

Communion Servers: Toinette Wicks, Denise Cosper, Shirley Jernstadt

Ushers: Rex & Cheryl Richardson

Greeter: Nancy Spedowski

Sunday School: TBD

Nursery: TBD

Fellowship Host: Marlene Rodgers

THINK ABOUT IT THIS WEEK: WHAT DOES GOD REALLY WANT?

What does God want from us? People have asked that question for centuries, and Micah's audience was no exception. They wondered whether God wanted increasingly extravagant religious offerings: burnt offerings, thousands of rams, or rivers of oil. Beneath their questions was an assumption many of us still carry—that if we say the right prayers, give enough, or perform our religion correctly, we might earn God's approval.

Micah cuts through all of it: "*God has told you, O mortal, what is good.*" God's desire is not mysterious. We are called to do justice, love steadfastly, and walk humbly with God.

These words do not mean that worship, prayer, or generosity are unimportant. They mean our religious practices cannot be separated from the way we live. Worship becomes hollow when we praise God on Sunday but ignore injustice on Monday. Prayer becomes incomplete when we ask God to help our neighbors but refuse to participate in that help. Faithfulness is not measured by what happens inside the church; it is revealed in how we use our influence, treat other people, respond to suffering, and move through the world.

To ***do justice*** is more than believing in fairness. It means helping to repair what is wrong and changing conditions that cause harm.

To ***love steadfastly*** is more than occasionally being kind. It means making mercy, loyalty, and compassion part of who we are.

To ***walk humbly*** with God is to recognize that we do not possess all the truth, control every outcome, or travel alone. We remain teachable, depend upon grace, and allow God to guide our next faithful step.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Is there a difference between practicing religion and living faithfully? Where do you see that distinction in your own life?
- Where do you see injustice that has become so familiar that people have stopped noticing or questioning it?
- Is mercy something you offer freely, or mainly when you believe someone deserves it?
- What would it mean for you to walk more humbly with God this week—to listen more carefully, release some control, admit you may be wrong, or remain open to change?

WAYS TO LIVE IT OUT

- Speak when someone is being dismissed, support an organization addressing a harmful condition, or use your influence to make a space fairer and safer.
- Extend patience, compassion, or mercy in a relationship where irritation or resentment has begun shaping your response.
- Enter one conversation determined to learn rather than win. Ask a sincere question and listen without preparing your defense.
- Consider one prayer, hymn, or Scripture from Sunday and ask how it should become visible in your choices during the week.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Gracious God, you have already shown us what is good. Free us from the need to impress You and from the temptation to substitute religious words for faithful living. By Your grace, give us courage to do justice, hearts that delight in steadfast love, and humility to walk beside You without pretending that we know everything or can do everything alone. Help us co-operate with the Holy Spirit so that our worship becomes compassion, our prayers become action, and our lives reflect Your love. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT

God does not ask us to perform our faith perfectly. God invites us to embody the grace we have already received—by doing justice, loving steadfastly, and walking humbly, one faithful step at a time.

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!**