

PRIDE SUNDAY

This Sunday, June 28, we join communities across the country in recognizing Pride Sunday and celebrating the lives, gifts, and sacred worth of LGBTQIA+ people.

Pride is both celebration and witness. It honors the courage of those who have lived openly, resisted exclusion, and worked for a world where every person can live with dignity, safety, and joy. It also reminds us that the work of justice and full inclusion is not finished.

At United Methodist Ministries of Mecosta County, we believe that every person is created in the image of God and belongs fully in the life of the church. On Pride Sunday, we reaffirm our commitment to being an authentically inclusive and affirming community where all are welcomed, valued, and loved.

BEGINNING YEAR SIX TOGETHER

July 1 marks the beginning of the Reverend Jeremy Wicks's sixth year of pastoral leadership in Big Rapids. He first came to serve as Senior Pastor of Big Rapids First United Methodist Church and now continues that ministry as Executive Pastor of United Methodist Ministries of Mecosta County.

Much has changed during these years. What began as pastoral leadership within one congregation has grown into the shared ministry of UMMMC, with a common vision for inclusive worship, faithful discipleship, compassionate service, and meaningful engagement with the wider community. Pastor Jeremy has helped guide the church through seasons of change, challenge, discernment, and new possibility. His ministry has emphasized that the church is at its best when it welcomes all people, builds authentic relationships, cares for its neighbors, and has the courage to take bold steps in response to God's call.

As Pastor Jeremy begins his sixth year among us, we give thanks for his leadership, his commitment to the people and communities of Mecosta County, and the many ways our shared ministry continues to grow and evolve.

We look forward to another year of worshiping, serving, learning, and imagining together what God may yet make possible through United Methodist Ministries of Mecosta County.

TABLE TALK: FAITH, POLITICS, AND FOLLOWING JESUS

What does it mean to follow Jesus in a time when faith and politics are often deeply intertwined? Beginning Wednesday, July 1, our regular Table Talk gathering will become a five-week book discussion centered on *The Flag + The Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy* by Philip Gorski and Samuel Perry. We will meet Wednesdays at noon through July 29 at the Downtown Campus.

In *The Flag + The Cross*, the authors explore the history and influence of white Christian nationalism in the United States and examine how it differs from the teachings of Jesus. Through history, sociology, theology, and contemporary examples, they challenge readers to consider the relationship between faith, power, and public life while inviting Christians to reclaim a faith rooted in humility, justice, and love of neighbor.

If you've attended Table Talk before, the format will feel familiar. Bring your lunch, bring your book, and join the conversation. This will be an opportunity to gather around the table, share perspectives, ask questions, and learn from one another, so whether you are curious about the topic, looking to deepen your understanding, or simply enjoy thoughtful conversation, you are welcome to join us.

What's Happening

SUNDAY, JUNE 28

9AM - Worship @ Paris (North) Campus
10AM - Worship @ First Church (Downtown) Campus
12-5PM - Pride: Big Rapids Festival @ Downtown BR

WEDNESDAY, JULY 1

12PM - Table Talk: Politics & Following Jesus @ Downtown Campus

THURSDAY, JULY 2

5:30PM - Community Dinner @ Downtown Campus

WORSHIP MOVES TO THE FELLOWSHIP HALL

Beginning this Sunday, June 28, worship at our Downtown Campus will move into the fellowship hall for the summer.

We know the space may feel a little tight, but with patience, flexibility, and a spirit of hospitality, we can make it work! Please help us welcome one another, make room for guests, and embrace the opportunity to worship together in a more relaxed and connected setting.

It may be cozy—but there is room for everyone!

HOLIDAY OFFICE CLOSURE / STAFF AVAILABILITY

The UMMMC office will be closed from Monday, June 29, through Monday, July 6. Regular office hours will resume on Tuesday, July 7. During this time, please call the main office number. Calls and messages will be routed to Pastor Jeremy or the appropriate available person.

Please note the following periods of individual staff unavailability:

- Barbara Erb, Director of Administrative Services, and Gary Erb, Director of Building and Property, will be unavailable from June 30 through July 6.
- Kathy Bell, Director of Congregational Care, will be unavailable from July 2 through July 8.
- Paden Clevenger, Director of Family Ministry and Community Outreach, will be unavailable July 2 through July 5.

Thank you for your patience and understanding during this holiday week.

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 @ calendar.com/jeremy-ummecosta

Week of June 28 - July 4, 2026

Family News



UNITED METHODIST MINISTRIES OF MECOSTA COUNTY

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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 - June 28, 2026

PEACE WITH JUSTICE SUNDAY / PRIDE SUNDAY

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

* Call to Worship (Reader / *People*)

On this Pride Sunday, we gather to celebrate the truth that every person is created in the image of God.

We give thanks for the courage of LGBTQIA+ people who have refused shame, silence, and erasure.

We confess that the world—and too often the church—has divided people into “us” and “them.”

But Jesus shows us another way.

The world teaches us to answer harm with harm.

Jesus teaches us to resist hatred without becoming what we oppose.

The world tells us that peace comes when our enemies are defeated.

Jesus calls us to the harder work of justice, mercy, truth, and love.

Today, we come to worship the God who breaks down dividing walls, honors every beloved life, and leads us beyond fear.

Let us worship together—not as “us” and “them,” but as one human family, held in the love of God.

* Hymn - “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee”, UMH #89

Children’s Message

First Gospel Reading - Matthew 5:38–48 (NRSVUE)

Hymn - “Let There Be Peace on Earth”, UMH #431

Second Gospel Reading - Luke 22:47–53 (NRSVUE)

Message - “Us Against Them: The Revolution Story”

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord’s Prayer

* **The Doxology**, UMH #95

* **Hymn** - “They’ll Know We Are Christians by Our Love”, TFWS #2223, vss. 1-3

* Blessing and Sending

* **Hymn** - “They’ll Know We Are Christians by Our Love”, TFWS #2223, vs 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 - JUNE 28

Reader: Brian Bejcek

Ushers: Rex & Cheryl Richardson

Greeter: Barbara Ross

Nursery: Sarah DeLany, Julie Tessin

Fellowship Host: Marlene Rodgers

Organist: Shirley Jernstadt

Accompanist: Kathy Bell

Tech Team: Ken Draves, Gary Poole

SERVING NEXT WEEK - JULY 5

Reader: Barbara Ross

Ushers: Pat & Marion Williamson

Greeter: Nancy Spedowski

Nursery: Sarah DeLany, TBD

Fellowship Host: Cheryl Richardson

THINK ABOUT IT - US AGAINST THEM: THE REVOLUTION STORY

This week in The Seventh Story, we turn to the revolution story—the belief that the answer to domination is to defeat the people on top and take their place.

The desire for liberation is not the problem. Injustice must be confronted. Oppression must be resisted. Harmful ideologies must be named. People who are targeted by racism, homophobia, transphobia, antisemitism, or political violence do not owe celebration, access, or reconciliation to those who deny their dignity.

Jesus’ way of love is not passive, polite, or neutral.

It is a love that protects the vulnerable, tells the truth, disrupts systems of harm, and refuses to cooperate with dehumanization. It does not ask oppressed people to make themselves smaller so that those with power can remain comfortable.

That is especially important on Pride Sunday. Pride remembers the courage of LGBTQIA+ people who refused shame, silence, criminalization, violence, and erasure. Pride is not an apology for existing. It is a public declaration that queer and trans lives are worthy, beautiful, sacred, and deserving of freedom.

The revolution story doesn’t become dangerous when marginalized people resist oppression, but when any movement begins to believe that domination itself is acceptable—as long as the “right” people are doing it.

Jesus calls us beyond domination without asking us to stop resisting evil. We can oppose hatred without adopting hatred as our identity. We can confront dangerous beliefs without pretending those beliefs are harmless. We can set firm boundaries, protect one another, and work for justice without allowing cruelty to determine who we become.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- Where am I being called to speak clearly against harm?
- Whose safety and dignity need to be centered—not merely discussed?
- Have I confused being “nice” with being faithful?
- How can I stand visibly and concretely with LGBTQIA+ people?

PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK

If you find yourself in a situation where someone’s humanity is dismissed, debated, or threatened - do not remain neutral. Speak the truth. Interrupt the harmful language. Support the person being targeted. Use your influence to create safety. Refuse the story that asks vulnerable people to carry the cost of everyone else’s comfort.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

God of liberation, give us courage to resist what dehumanizes and destroys. Make us bold in protecting those who are targeted, clear in naming what is harmful, and faithful in working for justice. Keep us from confusing peace with silence or love with passivity. Lead us in the way of Jesus, where truth, dignity, freedom, and love belong together. Amen.

JUNE MISSION GIVING: PEACE WITH JUSTICE SUNDAY

Peace with Justice supports ministries that address the root causes of conflict, injustice, and oppression. Gifts help fund efforts that promote peace, advocate for justice, and equip communities to create lasting change both locally and around the world. Peace with Justice Sunday reminds us that peace and justice are deeply connected, and that our faith calls us to participate in God’s work of healing and reconciliation.

Special offering envelopes are available in worship, or you may designate your gift as “Peace with Justice.” Thank you for your generosity and for helping to make a difference in the lives of others.

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!**