

FROM PASTOR JEREMY - YOU ARE NOT ALONE

September is National Suicide Prevention Month, an important opportunity to speak honestly about something that is often surrounded by silence, fear, and stigma. Suicide affects individuals, families, congregations, and communities—and silence does not protect us. Compassionate conversation can help people know that they are seen, valued, and not alone.

Mental illness, depression, and suicidal thoughts are not signs of weak faith or spiritual failure. Faithful people can experience overwhelming pain, hopelessness, and isolation. When that happens, prayer and the support of a church community can be meaningful, but they should never be used as substitutes for professional mental-health care. *Asking for help is not a failure of faith; it is an act of courage.*

As a church, we are called to become a community where people can speak honestly about their struggles without shame. We cannot promise easy answers, but we can listen, accompany one another, and help connect people with the care they need. God’s love does not disappear in our darkest moments, and no one should have to face those moments alone.

Some warning signs that a person may be struggling include talking about wanting to die, expressing hopelessness or feeling like a burden, withdrawing from others, giving away meaningful possessions, increased use of alcohol or drugs, or significant changes in mood, sleep, and behavior. These signs are especially concerning when they are new, increasing, or connected to a painful loss or major life change. If you are worried about someone, do not be afraid to ask directly, “Are you thinking about suicide?” Listen calmly and without judgment. Do not lecture, minimize their pain, or promise to keep suicidal thoughts a secret. Stay with them, help them connect with support, and take what they say seriously. You do not need to have all the right words. Your willingness to listen and remain present can make an important difference.

If you or someone you know is experiencing emotional distress or thinking about suicide, call or text the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988**. Free and confidential support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You may also reach out any member of our team, a trusted medical or mental-health professional, or someone who can remain with you while you seek help. If there is an immediate danger, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department.

You are beloved. Your life has immeasurable value. Help is available, and you do not have to carry this alone.

BACK-TO-SCHOOL BASH: A BLESSING FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

Join us September 13, at First United Methodist Church in Big Rapids as we celebrate the beginning of a new school year!

Our 10AM worship service will include a Blessing of the Backpacks for students, teachers, school employees, and everyone beginning a new season of learning. Bring your backpack, book bag, lunchbox, or another symbol of your work and studies as we pray for God’s blessing upon the year ahead. Following worship, stay for our Sunday School Kickoff, a potluck lunch, and carnival-style games for all ages. Bring a dish to share if you are able—but most importantly, bring yourself, your family, and your neighbors.

SEPTEMBER MISSION GIVING: DISCRETIONARY FUND

Our Discretionary Fund provides quick, compassionate assistance to neighbors facing urgent needs. Through your generosity, we have helped with gasoline, food, refrigerators, beds, mattresses, and other household necessities. Every gift offers practical help with dignity and reminds someone that they are not alone. Give online at ummecosta.org/give by selecting “Discretionary Fund,” or write “Discretionary Fund” on your giving envelope or check memo line. Thank you for helping UMMC embody Christ’s compassion in our community.

What’s Happening

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13

9AM - Worship @ Paris (North) Campus
10AM - Worship @ First Church (Downtown) Campus

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

12PM - Ladies Lunch @ Panera (Big Rapids)

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

10AM - Choir Rehearsal @ Downtown Campus
12PM - Table Talk @ Downtown Campus
5:30PM - Euchre @ Downtown Campus
8PM - Leadership Team Meeting w/ DS (ZOOM)

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

5:30PM - Community Dinner @ Downtown Campus

YOUTH GROUP - SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20 @ 12PM

All students in grades 9–12 are invited to Youth Group at First Church! We meet on the first and third Sundays of each month from noon to 1:30PM.

Youth Group is a place to come as you are, enjoy snacks and games, build friendships, and discover a supportive community. It is also a space where young people are encouraged to ask honest questions, be curious, explore their faith, and know they are welcomed and valued. You do not need to have everything figured out—you simply need to show up!

Students are welcome (and encouraged) to bring a friend. For more information, contact Paden!

FINAL CHURCH DIRECTORY CHECK

We are preparing to print our new church directory! A proof copy will be available at each campus on Sunday September 13 and 20.

Please take a moment to review your name, address, phone number, email address, and other household information and clearly note any necessary corrections.

This is the final opportunity to make changes before the directory is printed, so even if you believe your information is correct, please check it one last time. We plan to send the directory to print shortly after September 20. Thank you for helping us make sure our records are accurate!

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

Barbara Erb - Director of Administrative Services
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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
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Rev. Jeremy Wicks - Executive Pastor
jeremy@ummecosta.org / (231) 796-7771 ext 2 / (231) 224-6545

To schedule an appointment with Pastor Jeremy, contact Barbara Erb or schedule online @ calendly.com/jeremy-ummecosta

Week of September 13 - September 19, 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 13, 2026

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

* Call to Worship (Reader / *People*)

God entrusts each of us with influence—in our homes, our church, our workplaces, and our community.
Teach us to use our influence in service to others.

God hears those who have been ignored and sees those who have been harmed by the powerful.
Give us courage to protect the vulnerable and speak the truth.

Christ shows us that faithful leadership is measured not by status or success, but by love.
Form us into people who share power, seek justice, and help our neighbors flourish.

Come, let us open ourselves to God’s wisdom and offer our lives in faithful service.
Let us worship God together.

* Hymn - “Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty” — UMH 64

Blessing of the Backpacks

Scripture Reading - Micah 3:1–12 (NRSVUE)
The word of God, for the people of God.
Thanks be to God!

Hymn - “Make Me a Servant” — TFWS 2176

Message - “Micah: The Responsibility of Leadership”

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord’s Prayer

* Doxology, UMH 95

* Hymn - “Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service” — UMH 581, vss. 1-3

* Blessing and Sending

* Hymn - “Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service” — UMH 581, vs 4

Postlude

Altar flowers are given in celebration of Marlene Rodgers birthday.

* 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 13

Reader: Barbara Ross
Ushers: Colin & Roberta Cline
Greeter: Pete Jensen
Sunday School: Paden Clevenger, Toinette Wicks
Nursery: Julie Tessin, Beth Bejcek
Accompanist: Kathy Bell
Organist: Shirley Jernstadt
Tech Team: Ken Draves, Gary Poole
Fellowship Host: *Back to School Bash Potluck*

SERVING NEXT WEEK - SEPTEMBER 20

Reader: Carol Hillman
Ushers: Mike & Jana Pisani
Greeter: Kathi Paraker
Sunday School: Larisa Draves, TBD
Nursery: Coleen Jaeger, TBD
Fellowship Host: Denise Cosper

THINK ABOUT IT THIS WEEK: THE RESPONSIBILITY OF LEADERSHIP

This Sunday, our journey through Micah continues with one of the prophet’s most forceful messages. By confronting rulers, priests, and prophets who have been entrusted with the well-being of the community but instead use their positions for personal advantage, Micah reminds us that leadership is not simply a position, title, or collection of accomplishments.

Leadership is a sacred trust. Its faithfulness is measured by what happens to the people affected by it—especially those with the least power to protect themselves. This message extends beyond politicians, pastors, and public officials. **Each of us possesses some measure of influence.** We exercise it in our homes, workplaces, classrooms, churches, friendships, and community organizations.

Micah invites us to consider: Does our influence equip and protects others? Do we tell the truth even when it is uncomfortable? Do we share power? Do we remain accountable for the consequences of our decisions?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Where have you been entrusted with influence, responsibility, or decision-making authority?
- When you make decisions, whose voices do you seek out—and whose experiences might be missing?
- Think of a leader you trust. What qualities or practices have earned that trust?

WAYS TO LIVE IT OUT

- Identify the places where your words, choices, or actions affect other people. Ask whether your influence is helping them flourish.
- Before making a decision that affects others, speak with the people who will experience its consequences.
- Invite someone who is usually overlooked or hesitant to contribute to a conversation or decision.
- Ask a trusted person to tell you honestly how your leadership affects others and receive their response without becoming defensive.
- Pray for those who lead. Pray for courage, humility, wisdom, and compassion.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

God of justice and wisdom, you have entrusted each of us with influence. Teach us to use it with humility and love. Give us courage to tell the truth, wisdom to listen before we act, and compassion for those affected by our decisions. Keep us accountable when we misuse power, and form us into leaders who serve, protect, share responsibility, and help others flourish. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT

Faithful leadership is not about becoming the most important person in the room. It is about helping every person in the room know that they matter.

COMING NEXT WEEK: GOD’S VISION FOR THE WORLD

Next Sunday, September 20, our journey through Micah continues with “God’s Vision for the World,” based on Micah 4:1–8 and 5:2–5a.

After confronting injustice, exploitation, and failed leadership, Micah invites us to imagine something different: weapons transformed into tools for cultivation, neighbors living without fear, scattered people gathered home, and peace emerging from a place others consider insignificant. This vision is more than a comforting promise about the distant future. God’s promised future of peace, security, restoration, and belonging begins reshaping how we live today. If this is the world God is creating, how can we begin practicing that future in our relationships, our church, and our community now?

Read Micah 4:1–8 and 5:2–5a this week, and join us next Sunday as we consider how God helps us become peacemakers in a fractured world.

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!**