

DECEMBER PERSONAL CARE PANTRY ITEMS

Items can be placed in the collection bin in Fellowship Hall.

This month we are collecting:

- Adult / Child winter hats and gloves
- Deodorant
- Children's Toothbrushes
- Combs and Brushes

CONNECTING THROUGH CONNECTION CARDS

Connection Cards are a simple yet meaningful way for us to stay connected as a church family. Starting this week, these cards will be available at all campuses—Paris, First, and Third Ave. Whether you're a long-time member, a regular attender, or visiting for the first time, filling out a Connection Card helps us celebrate your presence and better serve your needs.

Why Use Connection Cards?

Connection Cards allow us to:

- Keep track of who's worshipping with us, helping us stay connected as a community.
- Provide a space for prayer requests, which can remain confidential or shared with the congregation, as you choose.
- Offer an easy way to request a visit or phone call from a member of the pastoral staff, ensuring we're here to support you when you need it most.
- Gather accurate worship attendance numbers, which are a vitally important part of measuring the fruitfulness of our ministry and ensuring we remain focused on fulfilling our mission.

How Can You Help?

Each week, take a moment to fill out your Connection Card. At Paris and Third Ave, you can place it in the offering plate during the service. At First Church, drop it in the basket near the exit.

This small act makes a big impact, helping us grow closer as a community and care for one another. Thank you for being an essential part of our mission to share Christ's love and transform the world!

THANK YOU, FROM THE UMMC STAFF TEAM

"Thank you for your thoughtfulness in remembering us this Christmas. Your gifts are a reflection of the love and care that make this church such a special place to serve. Your support and encouragement mean more than words can express, and your kindness is a gift in itself. We pray that your holiday season is filled with peace, joy, and the hope of Christ's love."

- Your Staff Team

Happening This Week

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15

9AM - Worship Celebration @ Paris UMC
Coffee / Fellowship Immediately Following Worship
10AM - Worship Celebration @ First Church
Coffee / Fellowship Immediately Following Worship
11AM - Worship Celebration @ Third Ave UMC

MONDAY, DECEMBER 16

12PM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Third Ave

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17

12PM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Third Ave
7PM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Paris

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18

11:30AM - Community Lunch @ Third Ave
7PM - Choir Rehearsal @ First Church

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19

10AM - Advent Bible Study @ Third Ave
5:30PM - Community Dinner @ First Church
7PM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Paris

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20

12PM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Third Ave

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21

11AM - Alcoholics Anonymous @ Paris
11:30AM - Community Lunch @ Third Ave

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE TIMES

- 5PM @ Paris Campus
- 6PM @ Third Ave Campus
- 7PM @ First Church Campus

2025 **ALTAR FLOWER SIGNUP** IS AVAILABLE OUTSIDE THE OFFICE @ FIRST CHURCH. COST IS \$10 / WEEK, PAYABLE IN THE OFFICE.

YEAR END GIVING: ALL YEAR END GIFTS AND REGULAR OFFERINGS FOR 2024 MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE CHURCH NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 29 IN ORDER TO HAVE THEM CREDITED TO YOUR 2024 GIVING STATEMENT.

Welcome to First Church!

Welcome to Big Rapids First United Methodist, an inclusive and affirming congregation (you can read our welcome statement here: bigrapidsfirst.org/welcome) - we are so happy you're here! If this is your first visit, or you're not familiar with us, check out our "First Visit" page online @ www.bigrapidsfirst.org/firstvisit. Here you will find information about what to expect in worship, where to park, options for kids, and maybe mostly importantly - the location of the bathrooms! If you require additional assistance, please ask any of our welcome team members, and they will be happy to help!

Week of December 15 - December 21

Family News



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
Director of Administrative Services: Barbara Erb (barbara@ummecosta.org)

PARIS UMC

109 Lincoln St
Paris, MI 49338
Worship @ 9AM

FIRST CHURCH

304 Elm Street
Big Rapids, MI 49307
www.bigrapidsfirst.org
Worship @ 10AM
Fellowship @ 11AM

THIRD AVENUE UMC

226 North Third Ave
Big Rapids, MI 49307
Worship @ 11AM

EXECUTIVE PASTOR

First Church Campus
Rev. Jeremy Wicks
O (231) 796-7771
C (231) 224-6545
jeremy@ummecosta.org

ASSOCIATE PASTOR

Paris / Third Ave Campuses
Pastor Ray Setlock
O (231) 796-7771
C (231) 224-6520
ray@ummecosta.org

ASSOCIATE PASTOR

Congregational Care
Rev. Kaye Patton
O (231) 796-7771
C (765) 661-3750
kaye@ummecosta.org

Order of Worship - December 15, 2024

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Lighting the Advent Candles

Advent beckons us to rejoice. Today, we light the third candle, the candle of Joy, a light that shines even in the midst of fear and uncertainty.

Joy is rooted in God's presence and faithfulness, not in our circumstances.

The angel said to Zechariah: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth."

This light of joy reminds us that God's promises bring hope and gladness to a weary world.

May this candle remind us to be catalysts of joy, sharing the good news of God's love with all.

God of joy, help us to rejoice in Your promises and to share Your light with those around us. Amen.

* **Opening Songs** - "Hark the Herald / King of Heaven"
"Hope Was Born This Night"

Children's Christmas Presentation

Choral Specials - "On the Earth the Children Sing"
"Listen Children, Hear the Angels Sing"

Scripture Reading - Luke 1:5-20 (NRSVUE)
The word of God, for the people of God.
Thanks be to God!

* **Hymn** - "Angels We Have Heard on High", UMH #238

Message - "The Joy of God's Nearness"

The Lord's Prayer, UMH #895

* **"The Doxology"**, UMH #95

* **Hymn** - "Joy to the World", UMH #246

* **Benediction & Postlude**

*PLEASE STAND AS YOU ARE ABLE.

Pastor Jeremy will greet people in the Warren St Lobby immediately following service.

NOTES:



Check In Here

Serving Today - December 15

Reader: Marlene Rodgers
Lighting the Advent Candles: The Wheeler Family
Ushers: Mike & Jana Pisani
Greeter: Mike Gibson
Children's Sunday School: Christmas Program
Nursery: Diane Parrish & Kati Wheeler
Fellowship Host: Cheryl Richardson

Serving Next Week - December 22

Reader: Rick Hult
Lighting the Advent Candles: Rex & Cheryl Richardson
Ushers: Rex & Cheryl Richardson
Greeter: Nancy Spedowski
Children's Sunday School: Trisha Jadhav, Laurie Daniels
Peace - John 14:27
Nursery: Diane Parrish, Jana Pisani
Fellowship Host: Marlene Rodgers

THINK ABOUT IT THIS WEEK

Advent invites us to rejoice, not because life is perfect, but because God's promises are trustworthy, and God's presence is near. Zechariah's story reminds us that joy comes when we recognize God's faithfulness, even in unexpected or uncertain moments.

As You Reflect This Week:

Joy isn't just about feeling happy—it's about trusting in God's presence, no matter what. How can you look for moments of joy this week, even in the ordinary or challenging parts of life?

Questions to Reflect On:

- What are some things in your life that bring you joy?
- How does knowing God is faithful fill you with joy?
- How can you share God's joy with others, especially those who may be struggling?

Applying What We've Learned:

Make a list of three things that bring you joy and thank God for them each day this week. Then, find one way to spread joy to someone else—through an encouraging word, a small gift, or an act of kindness.

Final Thought:

Joy is not dependent on our circumstances but on God's nearness. May you find moments of joy this week that remind you of God's unshakable love and faithfulness.

EXPERIENCE ADVENT WITH US

This Advent season, join us in exploring Presence & Absence, a thoughtful guide from The Bible for Normal People. This resource invites us to reflect deeply on the themes of hope, peace, joy, and love as we prepare for the coming of Christ. Whether Advent is a long-standing tradition for you or a new experience, this study offers fresh and meaningful insights for the season.

The study began on December 2 - but it's not too late to join the conversation! Together, we're delving into Scripture, uncovering the historical and literary context of Advent, and engaging in personal reflections to inspire spiritual growth.

WAYS TO PARTICIPATE:

- *Online*: Join our private Facebook group to participate from the comfort of your home and connect with others on this journey. Use this link to join: <https://tinyurl.com/umadvent24>
- *In Person*: Thursdays at 10 AM at Third Ave, lead by Jean Huhtala.
- *Self-Study*: Hardcopies of the materials are available at all campuses for those who prefer personal study.

Let's prepare our hearts for the beauty of Advent, embracing God's presence and reflecting on the hope, peace, joy, and love that Christ brings to our lives and our world.

Your generosity makes a difference!
To avoid any confusion in our giving systems,
please make your checks out to your local campus.
Thank you for your continued support!