

Eastern Parkway United Methodist Church

Visitor's Guide

Updated October 1, 2018

Where is the church located?

At the corner of Palmer Avenue and Eastern Parkway, 1 block off Union Street, in Schenectady, NY.

When are Sunday services?

The service begins at 10:00 a.m. and lasts about an hour.

Where do I park?

The entrance to the church parking lot is on Eastern Parkway; this lot includes access to the ramp and elevator. You may also park in the medical building parking lot across Palmer Avenue or on the street.

Where do I enter the church?

There are four entrances. The main entrance (under the bell tower) faces Eastern Parkway. There are two entrances off the church parking lot: a ramp and elevator entrance and a smaller door leading to a short set of stairs. There is also an entrance facing Palmer Avenue if you park on that side of the building. If you use the elevator, you will enter at the front of the sanctuary; otherwise, you will enter through the narthex at the back of the sanctuary.

An usher will greet you and offer you a bulletin. You are welcome to sit wherever you like.

What should I wear?

Wear whatever you are comfortable in. On any given Sunday, a range of dress styles will be on display in our congregation, from blue jeans and shorts to khakis and skirts to dresses and an occasional tie.

Do you have hearing assists?

We use microphones for the service and all announcements, which are linked to small portable handsets. When you enter the sanctuary please let an usher know you'd like one. EPUMC does not have an induction loop.

What will happen during the service?

During the service, the order of worship printed in the bulletin, as well as the words to the hymns and Bible readings, will be projected on the walls at the front of the sanctuary. At no time will you be expected to know or recite anything from memory.

The pastor will begin the service by welcoming everyone, including visitors, but you will not be asked to stand or otherwise identify yourself publicly. Attendance pads will be passed down the pews; you are invited to enter your name and other information, if you wish.

While there might be some variations from week to week, the service typically includes the following components.

Music: The congregation will be invited to sing several hymns. You may wish to use the hymnals in the pew racks (especially if you read music) or follow the words that are projected on the wall. Hymns with three-digit numbers are in the hardcover hymnal, and four-digit hymns are in the softcover, spiral-bound hymnal. The hymns will be accompanied by organ or piano or occasionally by our “house band.” In addition, the Chancel Choir usually performs an anthem and, from time to time, members of the congregation share their musical talents with an instrumental or vocal solo. The choir and musicians have respectfully asked that the congregation not applaud after their performances.

Prayer: There is a time of prayer early in the service, led by the Lay Reader, consisting of a congregational prayer that is spoken in unison (words are in the bulletin and projected on the front wall), a time of silent prayer, and then the Lord’s Prayer also spoken in unison. Later in the service, the pastor will offer a prayer. There are prayer cards in the pew racks. If you have a prayer request, you are invited to fill out a card and place it in the offering plate. Your request can be anonymous. If you so designate on the card, the pastor will read your request aloud during the pastoral prayer.

Offering: A monetary offering to support the operations and ministries of the church is taken up every Sunday. An usher will come by your pew with a collection plate. As a visitor and our guest, your presence is your gift. Contributions of any amount are welcome and appreciated, but do not feel any obligation. Also, as mentioned above, if you have a prayer request, place the card in the offering plate at this time.

Time with Young People: About mid-way through the service, the pastor will invite the youngsters in the congregation to come sit on the steps of the altar. There is no hard-and-fast age limit, but typically pre-school through middle-school children participate. Participation is voluntary, and parents are welcome to accompany younger children. The pastor or a member of the congregation will conduct a short, interactive lesson with the children, ending with a prayer. On most Sundays, the children will then be asked to help

take up a special collection for one of the local organizations we are partners with ([Things of My Very Own](#), [Bethesda House](#), [SCM](#), [Circle B](#)). The children are given colorful plastic buckets and asked to carry them up and down the aisles to collect donations of loose change. After the Time with Young People, children and youth are invited to participate in the church school program for about half an hour. Children from age 3 through grade 2 may attend Children in Worship where they will experience the wonder and mystery of God through a unique Bible story-telling format and multi-sensory materials; Children in Worship meets in a classroom in the education wing. Children in grades 3-12 may participate in the Young People's Music and Education time, which combines singing and teaching; they meet downstairs in the Circle B room. The teachers will lead the children from the sanctuary to the classrooms. Parents may pick them up immediately following the service.

Bible readings: There are usually two readings, one from the Old Testament, read by the Lay Reader, and one from the New Testament, read by the pastor.

Sermon: The pastor will deliver a message based on one or both of the Bible readings. Audio recordings of past messages can be found [here](#).

Communion: On the first Sunday of the month, the sacrament of Holy Communion is offered. The elements of bread and grape juice (standing for wine) remind us of Jesus's last meal with his closest friends and of our wish to be in community with each other in his name. With direction from the ushers, people in the congregation who wish to partake in communion file down the center aisle, beginning from the pews at the front and working to the back. You will be given a piece of bread. If you prefer a gluten-free option, please ask the server. You will then dip the bread in a cup of grape juice, if you wish to, and eat it as you return to your seat via the side aisle. Communion in the United Methodist Church is open to anyone who wishes to participate; you do not need to be a United Methodist or a member of the EPUMC congregation. If you wish to be served the elements at your seat in the pew, please let an usher know. If you choose not to participate in communion, that's perfectly okay, too.

Benediction and Postlude: The service closes with a blessing from the pastor and a musical postlude, usually played by our Music Director/Organist. You are asked to enjoy the music in an attitude of quiet meditation. When the postlude concludes, you may greet the pastor at the back of the sanctuary, and join us for refreshments if you wish, in the narthex, behind the sanctuary.

Is there nursery care?

Yes. Our nursery is staffed by a high school student and an adult member of our congregation. The nursery is located in the education wing; an usher can give you directions. Of course, you are welcome to keep your infant or young child with you in the sanctuary during the service, if you prefer.

Are there restrooms available?

Yes. The restrooms are at the beginning of the education wing hallway, very near the sanctuary. Feel free to use the restroom during the service. There are additional restrooms on the lower level, accessible by elevator or by stairs. Lower-level restrooms are fully wheelchair accessible. Main floor restrooms have grab-bars but do not have wide doors.

What will happen after worship?

Please consider joining us for light refreshments and conversation in the narthex right after the service; we would love to have the opportunity to get to know you better.

For adults (and older youth who may be interested), there is a Sunday forum on the first, second, and third Sundays in the Hearth Room starting at 11:15 a.m. The Hearth Room is at the end of the hallway that runs parallel to the sanctuary. Topics will range from Bible study to discussions of faith-related literature or contemporary issues. Some of the topics will extend over several weeks, but each session will be self-contained so that people who have not attended the previous sessions can still participate and have a meaningful experience.

On the fourth Sunday of the month, our community works together in the narthex to make 200 sandwiches for the guests of Bethesda House. Bread, sandwich fixings, disposal gloves, and sandwich bags are all provided. If you're a visitor, this is a fun way to get to know some of the folks in our community.

We dedicate fifth Sundays to having a community dialogue about a specific ministry at EPUMC. Visitors are welcome to join in this conversation, which takes place in the Hearth Room, to better understand the life of our church community and perhaps offer some fresh perspectives.

EPUMC is a proud member of the [Reconciling Ministries Network](#) of the United Methodist Church. Our community affirms the sacred worth of persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities and welcomes them into full participation in the fellowship, membership, ministries, and leadership of the congregation.

We hope you will come see us!