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EPUMC Newsletter January 2018

1 message

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Circuit Rider

January 2018

Eastern Parkway United Methodist Church

Mark's Musings

Looking Both Ways

As I sit at my desk and write for the January issue of *The Circuit Writer*, I cannot help but feel a bit like Janus, the Roman god of beginnings. No, I don't think that I have divine powers, but like Janus, I find myself looking in two directions. Janus had two faces, one that looked to the past, and one that looked to the future.

My eyes look to the past and see in our programs and activities, a church family committed to the wellbeing of all peoples in God's good creation, that celebrates difference and sameness as reflections of human dignity, and a church family that believes that others' best interest in its best interest. Hasn't that always been the message at the heart of the Jesus story?

Our Advent season was the culmination of my eyes "to the past." We celebrated the coming of the Christ Child in song, prayer, word, and silence, firmly convinced that when we live the Jesus teachings, God's Beloved Community moves from the impossible, through the improbable, and reveals itself to us in certainty.

My other eyes, at the same time, look to the future. God is with us as we move into the New Year. With hopeful vigor, informed in every way by the teachings of Jesus, our missions to those who need us, will not only continue to make a difference, a positive difference, in their lives and ours, but will also inspire others, who see what godness can achieve, to do the same—not because Jesus says so, but rather because love says so. That, too, is at the heart of the Jesus message.

This church family, with eyes to the past and to the future, believes that it is not Pollyannaish to know that no one needs to be hungry or cold, no one needs to experience violence of any kind at the hand of another, and no one needs to be exploited by privilege and power. This church family, with eyes to the past and to the future, will celebrate the sexuality, ethnicity, race, body-ability, and religions of all peoples everywhere. This is not our promise or pledge, it is, simply and profoundly our lifestyle, guided by God's promise and the Jesus story. Oh my, what a past and a future you have!

I hope to see you soon.

Much love,
mark

Church Council Update

The Church Council met on December 19, 2017, with 12 members in attendance. The Council took the following actions:

- Approved a motion from the Staff Pastor Parish Relations Committee to change the church secretary to a 12-hour per week position.
- Approved the 2018 current expense budget. For the first time in years, the budget is essentially balanced. In the past, the church has been able to rely on reserves to cover budget gaps, but the reserves have been exhausted. Balancing the budget was possible through a combination of increased pledge income, anticipated new income from the T-Time after-school program and rental of the parsonage, and further trimming of expenses.
- Directed the Trustees to do a comprehensive review of outside organizations that meet in our building to ensure that the church's building-use policies are consistently applied.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Council will take place on January 16, 2018, at 7:00 p.m. Council meetings are open to all.

Randy Roeser

Five Things to Know about Mark Ledbetter

The Rev. Mark Ledbetter arrived as our new pastor at Eastern Parkway United Methodist Church in July, succeeding the Rev. Alan Kinney, who retired after six years with our parish and about 30 years in United Methodist ministry. If you've had a chance to chat with Mark and hear his sermons, you probably already know a bit about him. But as we begin a new year, this seems like a good occasion to learn more.

Here are five things you might not yet know about our new pastor.

1. His first name actually is "Tony."

While growing up in rural Alabama, Mark was better known to his family and friends as "Butch," and he is known as "Mark," his middle name, in the context of his professional life. Either handle is fine with him. His birth certificate, however, says "Tony." It's not a common name in the south, and Mark's not really sure why he wound up with it.

He knows his mother and his older sister, then 17, chose it. But, after his father's original proposal of "Tom" didn't make the cut, the women of the household selected "Tony" and "Mark."

Mark's father had a solid backup strategy at the ready.

"Y'all can have 'Tony Mark,'" he said. "I'm gonna call him 'Butch'"

2. He's written a memoir.

"Ledbetter's Quarters" is a collection of stories about Mark's childhood growing up in Carrville, Alabama. The title refers to a group of properties built by his father on a 7-acre parcel of land. The renters were African-American families and businesses, including a barber shop and a lively "juke joint," a gathering place where folks danced, drank, ate and socialized. Mark remembers spending much of his boyhood in the homes and businesses of Ledbetter's Quarters, playing with the children who became his best friends.

"It was home," he says.

The memoir is a departure for Mark, who has a long list of scholarly writing credits that includes journal articles, books and chapters for books. The next step will be finding the right publisher.

3. He spent the year before coming to Eastern Parkway as a Fulbright Scholar in Norway.

Mark's ecclesiastical work has included extended pastoral stints at churches in Macon, Ga., and Bethlehem, N.Y., as well as on college campuses in Alabama and Georgia. His pastoral work, however, has usually occurred alongside his academic career, which, most recently, took him to the University of Bergen on a Fulbright Scholarship. While in Norway, he taught classes on American culture and literature and on religion and literature in the U.S. South.

Before that, Mark spent eight years teaching at the College of Saint Rose, where he was an associate professor of philosophy, religion and ethics. That was his first position in New York state. His previous academic posts have included faculty positions at Auburn University, where he earned his bachelor's degree; Huntingdon College in Alabama; North Carolina Wesleyan College; Wesleyan College in Georgia, and the University of South Carolina.

His PhD in Philosophy, Ethics and Culture is from Emory University and his Master of Divinity degree is from Duke University.

4. If you see him stumble, don't think he's tipsy—at least in the way you might think.

Mark has an inherited neurological condition that messes with his sense of balance and can cause him to be unsteady on his feet. That means he stumbles sometimes. As a result, he has had to let go of some of the

favorite outdoor activities he enjoyed for many years—hunting, fishing and hiking, among them.

"I am tipsy all day," he says.

Luckily, Mark has a bunch of other interests—including music, art and literature—that he's still able to enjoy without hindrance.

5. **Mark lives in Delmar with his wife and teenage daughter**

Mark's tenured faculty position at St. Rose ended when the college eliminated its undergraduate Religious Studies degree program, but his wife, Susan Cumings, continues to work locally in higher education.

She has been a full-time lecturer since 2013 with the University at Albany's relatively new Writing and Critical Inquiry Program.

Susan's fulfilling work is one of several reasons Mark and Susan decided to stay in upstate New York, even though they originally arrived in 2008 expecting this to be a short-term departure from their academic positions in Georgia.

Susan received her PhD in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies from Emory University. Her research and teaching interests are wide-ranging and include women's and transgender autobiography, multicultural American literature, and 20th Century Canadian and American literature.

Their daughter, Annie Grace, is a sophomore at Bethlehem High School and has a passion for theater that runs in the family. Mark's older daughter, Ruth Weldon Ledbetter, lives in Atlanta and works in theater as an artistic director.

—By Cathy Woodruff, EPUMC communications chair

Volunteer Opportunity: Regional Food Bank

On Saturday, January 27 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., there will be a group of EPUMC friends working at the Northeastern Regional Food Bank near Albany Airport. We have been working there as a "top rate" volunteer team for the past five or six years.

We invite you to join us and to invite your friends!

This is a chance to help sort and/or repack donations to the Food Bank from individuals and businesses. You never know what you will be sorting! Make sure to wear shoes that protect your feet (no sandals). All school age children are invited with an adult.

Please sign up at church or contact Trish if you are able to help out. First come, first served!

Contact Trish Roeser for more information (951-5553 or patriciaroeser2@gmail.com).

Al Tabari Court #28 Youth Group Theater/Shopping Fundraiser Trip: Lancaster, Pennsylvania

"Jesus" is the musical stage adventure about the most famous person to ever walk the earth and the everyday people whose lives He changed forever. Sight & Sound Theater brings the Bible to life on stage.

Shopping: Rockvale Outlet Mall and Tanger Outlet Mall.

There will be an Amish village tour.

Cost:

- \$240 per person, double occupancy
- \$260 per person, single occupancy
- \$100 children under 12

First payment: \$50 deposit, due January 31, 2018

Second payment: \$95 double, \$105 single, due February 28, 2018

Final payment: \$95 double, \$105 single, due March 31, 2018

Deposit nonrefundable after 2018-03-31

Leaving from and returning to: EPUMC or Latham Farms (Dick's Sporting Goods—Yankee Trails bus sign area)

Contact:

- Desire Mason-Chaires; [518 377 6571](tel:5183776571) (H) or [518 466 6345](tel:5184666345) (C); chairesr@aol.com
- Natasha Allen; [518 410 2353](tel:5184102353); allen.natasha32@yahoo.com

Please make checks payable to Al Tabari Ct #28 Youth Group, memo theater trip.
Mail to: Desiree M. Chaires 1719 Avenue B Schenectady, NY 12308

Job Posting: Secretary

Posting for Eastern Parkway United Methodist Church Secretary.
943 Palmer Ave. Schenectady NY

[518-374-4306](tel:518-374-4306)

easternparkwayumc.com

The Eastern Parkway United Methodist Church is currently in search of a candidate to fill the role of Church Secretary. This is a part-time position. The position is for 12 hours per week: 50 weeks of the year with 2 weeks paid vacation.

The annual salary is \$10,000.00.

There is a targeted start date of January 22, 2018 or earlier if available.

Interested individuals should contact Brenda Morrow at bmorrow001@nycap.rr.com starting 12/20/17.

Stewardship Members Needed for the Finance Committee

We are asking that two or three people serve on the Finance Committee as Stewardship members. your role is to be in conversation with the Finance Committee about the ways in which EPUMC can be at responsible stewards of the money we receive from our church family. The role is advisory only. All conversations are taken to the Church Council for a final discussion and a vote if necessary. If you would like to serve on the Stewardship Team, please contact Mark at mark.epumc@gmail.com

Prayer Chain

Thanks to the leadership of Mildred Mason, we are forming the EPUMC Prayer Chain. We will contact people by email using our "News and Notes" and *Circuit Writer* email lists. If you do not have access to email and wish to be contacted, please put your name on the "Prayer Chain" signup sheet in the hall, and someone will contact you by telephone.