



The Circuit Writer

Newsletter of Eastern Parkway United Methodist Church

“We are a faith community striving to be, to nurture, and to send forth disciples of Jesus Christ.”

A Placement Test

We’ve had a recent conversation within our church family about the profound implications of this two part question: “Is something right because Jesus said it, or did Jesus say it because he thought it was right?” The conversation is worthy of our attention. If we set aside the scholarly debate about the words that Jesus actually spoke, and sat down with my grandmother’s King James red-letter edition of the New Testament, the one with that beautifully bright red color of all the words purportedly spoken by Jesus, we could read all of those words in about an hour’s time. And we are two thousand years away from those words. A few things have happened since then.

Now don’t get me wrong, the words we have among those curly and curved red letters are life changing and have turned people towards God Beloved Community for the two thousand years we’ve had them. But no matter how hard I look, I cannot find a single word about climate change, for example, or a “named” form of government, democracy, socialism, communism, that suggests that one is better than the other. I can’t find where Jesus waves a flag for any particular sexuality. My best guess is that he was single, but even that’s a guess, and it’s a guess that has nothing to do with his sexuality.

Here’s my point. Jesus wasn’t a depository of all knowledge since the beginning of time for all time. He was a seeker of God’s truths, and he calls for each of us to be the same. Jesus certainly found himself in a place of power among his followers from which he could

make pronouncements about what is “right,” but he didn’t. He lived with and fed the poor and then talked about poverty. He held the sick in his arms and then talked about nurture and care. Jesus stepped into harms way, stood before the powerful, then said, “Don’t hurt people.” The list is long, but in short order, let’s simply say, Jesus passed the “placement test.” He placed himself into and lived in every moral quandary of his day, and discovered through personal experience what he believed to be the best way to address an issue from the perspective of God’s love. What Jesus asks us to do is to prayerfully live within our moral dilemmas and not make myopic pronouncements from the periphery of lived experience.

Of course, not everyone is capable of placing her or his body within the context of the moral issues that we know to exist. Not everyone can live with the poor and the homeless, or be at the front lines of discussions and actions about issues of race, sexuality, and domestic and/or sexual abuse. Health and age, mobility and disability are certainly limiting factors. But here is what we all can do when we speak about the important issues of our day. The true mark of compassionate living is the ability to hold two or more conflicting ideas in our hearts and minds at one time. This has little to do with being conservative or liberal and everything to do with being compassionate. We can have our opinions, speak and act responsibly and at the same time

“As a Reconciling Congregation, EPUMC 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.”

admit that there are opinions other than our own. That's where conversation begins; that's community at its best, and that's where we begin our journey to God' will for our lives.

I may change my mind. I have before, many times. But I believe that Jesus said things he believed to be right because they were things that he had rightly lived. And I think that he calls us to do the same. In fact, I think Jesus wasn't that worried about being right or wrong at all. Such notions are the least of our worries when we are obsessively devoted to revealing God's love and compassion in the lives and places where others need us.

Hope to see you soon,
mark

Monthly News from the SPPRC Team

The SPPRC Committee is in the process of completing the EPUMC Church Profile and Pastor/SPPRC Covenant. Both of these documents are submitted to The Upper New York United Methodist Conference annually. The purpose of this is to allow the conference to see a view of what we look like as a congregation and what our goals and vision are.

HOSTS WANTED FOR HOME/FOCUS MEETINGS: We are hoping to bring back the EPUMC practice of Home Meetings or Focus Group Meetings. This is an initiative of the SPPRC Team. We are in the planning stages of this and hope to have it come together as groups are formed. The idea is to have groups form based on needs and interest. For example, a group may form based on retirees, parents of college students, knitters, parents of teens, runners, parents of pre-school age children and the list goes on. The group would be open to all who would like to be a part of the group and share experiences and learn and grow together.

Since we are in the beginning planning stages of this we do need volunteers to host and begin to form groups. Groups could meet in individual homes, restaurants, church, parks etc. The idea would be to meet the needs of the group, form a small welcoming group and get to know each other better.

If you are willing to be a host for one of these meetings please let Pastor Ledbetter know and we can begin this learning process together. There is a sign-up sheet at the entrance of the education wing for interested participants and hosts.

Your EPUMC SPPRC Committee members are: Pastor Ledbetter, Brenda Morrow, Bob Bour, Judy Lott, Paul Ryan, Steve Handy, Marilyn Esmann, Carolyn Canova, Joanne Veglia

Our September 2017 Gifts

- Total gifts received (not including dedicated funds): \$11,479.51
 - Sock Project: Bethesda House: \$116.45
 - SICM Food Pantry: \$142.56
 - Bethesda House Mission: \$10.00
 - SICM Mission: \$10.00
 - Things of My Very Own: \$92.02
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For November

Liturgists:

05: Bob Bour
13: Tymesia Nabors
20: Cheryl Gerstler
27: Chuck Schmitt

Teller Team:

Marilyn Esmann and Carol Haack

Chancel Committee:

Dan and Linda Shannon

OUR PRESENCE

--10-01 54
--10-08 51
--10-15 61
--10-22 56
--10-29 56

Faith United Methodist Church and First United Methodist Church, Schenectady, are working to form a group gathering to deal with grief over the loss of a loved one. They have invited EPUMC to participate. If you are dealing with grief over the death of a family member or a friend, please let Mark know (mark.epumc@gmail.com), and when the program begins, he will give you information for participation.

Church Council Report

The Church Council met on October 17, 2017, with 10 members and two guests in attendance. The Council took the following actions:

1. Approved a "Trunk or Treat" event in the church parking lot on October 31. This outreach to neighborhood children was initiated last year and received good reviews from those in the congregation who participated.
2. Endorsed a midweek renewal service. Pastor Mark will organize this simple, brief time of prayer and reflection to take place on Wednesday mornings beginning in November and running at least through Advent. It could be extended depending on the initial response. Thank you, Mark, for providing this additional opportunity to engage in communal devotion.
3. Approved the publication of financial information in the Sunday bulletins and monthly newsletters. This idea grew out of the October 8 budget forum and is intended to provide the congregation with information on how well our income is keeping up with our expenses. The bulletin will show the income raised in the previous week compared with our average weekly budgeted expenses. The newsletter will provide year-to-date income versus budgeted expenses. Thanks to our Financial Secretary, Diana Carter, for furnishing this information.
4. Agreed to redirect the collections from the three holiday offerings (Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter) to the current expense budget. In recent years, the Church Council has designated these offerings for various mission causes outside of the church budget. In light of the church's tightening finances, however, the council voted to revert to the prior practice of using these funds to support the budget.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Council will take place on November 21, 2017, at 7:00 P.M. Council meetings are open to all.

Randy Roeser

Trustees Update

The trustees continue to be very busy. We work towards meeting code in order to have the T-Time/TSL Adventures come in as an after school program. We have set up carbon monoxide monitors in the Fellowship Hall and Circle B, scraped and painted the Ladies Room exterior wall, had the outside fascia scraped and painted (including the louvers on the bell tower). On the Oct. 21 Fall Cleanup Day, a great team of workers removed boxes too close to the ceiling from the Circle B room and cleared out the boiler room, mostly into a dumpster we ordered. Combustibles were stored.

The parsonage needs chimney work. This is being contracted out and, if the weather holds out, should be completed soon. We will also have railings installed on both stairways (to upstairs and basement). Once these are complete, we are ready to rent it out. We are eyeing the beginning of 2018 for this.

After-Worship Events

- Nov 05 Markan study
 - Nov 12 Charge conference
 - Nov 19 Harvest dinner
 - Nov 26 Stone Soup Sandwiches

 - Dec 03 Markan study
 - Dec 10 Markan study
 - Dec 17 Markan study
 - Dec 24 Stone soup sandwiches
 - Dec 31 EPUMC mission forum
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November Events

- 02: Finance, 7 p.m.
- 07: Election Day (hospitality)
- 09: Trustees, 7 p.m.
- 14: SPPRC, 7 p.m.
- 19: Harvest Dinner, 11:30
- 20: Newsletter deadline
- 21: Church Council, 7 p.m.
- 23: Thanksgiving