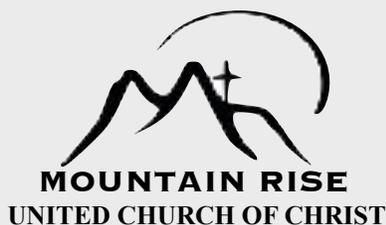


# THE NEW BRANCH



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## In this Issue:

- Note from the Pastor
- Calendar Events either in-person, virtual or suspended for now
- Council Updates

## Calendar

Knitting, Tuesdays at 10 AM  
ROMEOS, Fridays, 11:30 AM at Underpass Bar & Grill

- Bibles & Books, January 11 & 25, 10AM .
- Council meeting, January 11, 7PM.
- Stephen Ministry Group I, January 11 & 25, 4PM
- Stephen Ministry Group II, January 6 & 20 7PM
- Service & Advocacy meeting, January 12, 3PM.
- Spiritual Life & Worship, January 19, 4PM
- Book Group, January 18, 7:30PM virtual meeting; contact Rick Watkins for Zoom link.
- Spiritual Growth Group I, January 24, 7:15PM
- Newsletter Info needed, week of January 24



We'll be removing and storing the holiday decorations following worship on Sunday, January 2. Many hands (and willing ladder climbers) makes this task manageable and not too burdensome for anybody.

**Men's Group** - January 3, 6:00pm. The program speaker is Joe Morelle, House of Representatives, 25th District. Everyone is welcome to this month's program. Please sign-up on the sheet out side the office. Chefs are Jim Mietz and Jack Heister. Contact Rod Walters for more information.

## From Our Pastor

### Light Shines!



What has come into being in him was life, and that life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." [John 1: 3-5]

I wonder if the writer of John's gospel penned these words of his gospel prologue near this darker time of year. John presents the life of Christ as the "light of all people," the radiant energy that cannot be snuffed out by the darkness. The light symbolism was all too clear to him: even as sunlight transforms the natural world around us, so does Spirit-light transform our personal worlds, and potentially even the human world.

Here in the darkest, coldest time of year we need some reminders of light. The afterglow of Christmas begins to wane as sparkling lights are stored away while needles begin to sprinkle the carpet. Still, through long dark nights we crave more light, and are drawn to where it is found: firelight, candle light, street lights, even headlights or house lights can bring some degree of comfort. Yet, what we crave above all these is more sun-light. Winter Solstice is past, and a new year begins marching toward a new season for our part of the Earth, pulling us through winter's sleep cycle with ever-so-slightly more daylight. Eventually, near Easter-time we find ourselves with more light than darkness.

Shrouded by personal shadows, or by the gloom of global events, many of us face what can seem like the "dark night of the soul" -- a spiritual winter. Unlike the inevitable seasonal pull toward Spring, changing the season of our soul requires both personal will and a transforming power from beyond ourselves. Maybe this is some of what, "The light shines in the darkness," means. As we strive in community to follow the way of Christ we are illumined and warmed by a spiritual "light." This "light" begins to transform our very selves. It is not instant, any more than Spring is instant -- but change occurs. Entering the light of a spiritual community is our choice: we each must choose it, or not. This year, step more into the Light!

Blessings & peace, health & justice -

The Rev. Dr. Greg Osterberg, Senior Minister

## Scripture Readings

January 2

Communion Sunday  
Jeremiah 31:7-14  
Psalm 147:12-20  
Ephesians 1:3-14  
John 1:1-9, 10-18

January 9

House Band Sunday  
Isaiah 43:1-7  
Psalm 29  
Acts 8:14-17  
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

January 16

Isaiah 62:1-5  
Psalm 36:5-10  
1 Corinthians 12:1-11  
John 2:1-11

January 23

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10  
Psalm 19  
1 Corinthians 12:12-31  
Luke 4:14-21

January 23

Jeremiah 1:4-10  
Psalm 71:1-6  
1 Corinthians 13:1-13  
Luke 4:21-30



All are respectfully required to wear a mask while in the church building, regardless of vaccination status.

CDC Recommendation



Mountain Rise has two updated assisted listening opportunities. One is a loop system to connect with individual hearing aids, the second is new headsets (located on the bench outside the sanctuary).

Anyone interested in learning how to connect hearing aids to the loop can contact Sherry Shaffer at [sherks@rochester.rr.com](mailto:sherks@rochester.rr.com).

# Church Council

If it's one thing we've learned in the past two years, it's that change is constant. We live in an ever-changing world; some of us need only look to our families to see this. Children grow taller, grandparents grow older, new people arrive in our families, and other family members present us with different perspectives.

At Christmas just past, the McClain household had prepared to welcome a relative of our son-in-law, Juan, and her two children who recently crossed the southern U.S. border seeking asylum. (Unfortunately, change of plans thanks to Covid meant that we were not able to be physically together to celebrate the holiday.) But, this family of three are living with Juan and our daughter Kim until the mom appears before immigration court in September 2022. Kim and Juan reached out to provide a safe, loving home for them while they wait.

Meanwhile, our trans son Tyler and his spouse, Kimberly, will be trying to start a family this year using IVF (in vitro fertilization) so that Kimberly can carry the baby. This is a wonderful, amazing way to bring new life into the world but definitely a change from the traditional way. Nonetheless, our family is looking forward to welcoming, caring for and loving this precious baby who will be such a blessing for this queer couple.

I share all of this with you because I want you to see that our family is a little microcosm of this ever-changing world, and very likely your family is as well.

Mountain Rise Church is its own microcosm, ever-changing within our continually-changing world. So, at the start of this New Year with all the anticipated changes in front of us, I wonder if we might ponder a couple of questions and just sit with them. Perhaps they will lead us into an unexpected future.....

Why are we doing what we're doing? Is it reflecting God's Love?

What new ways can Mountain Rise Church reach out to the wider community, promoting justice and peace, while at the same time being a place of belonging and care?

On the journey with you,  
Gail McClain Council Chair

## Lower entrance doors to be locked during church service

The Mountain Rise Church Council has reinstated locking of the lower level church entrance doors 15 minutes after the beginning of our Sunday service. Signage will instruct those arriving at that entrance after 10:15 to ring the doorbell which will notify a designated person to open the door.

## New Policies approved by Council

At its December 14 meeting, Council approved two policies. The Child Abuse Prevention Policy was lightly edited to align with the new bylaws and then approved. This policy will need to be more carefully reviewed by the Faith Formation Ministry Committee once that committee has been formed. Print copies of this policy are available near the church office.

A new Fundraising Policy has also been approved by Council. This policy outlines what constitutes a fundraiser at Mountain Rise, why fundraising can be important and how a committee or group can operate one. Print copies of this policy are available near the church office.

VIEW OUR  
CHURCH  
DIRECTORY  
ON YOUR MOBILE  
DEVICE

FREE App for iPhone, iPad  
& Android

Our church directory is a great resource tool that allows you to get to know our church family better!

Simply go to the App Store, search for Mountain Church Directory and download the FREE app to begin.

You will use your email address listed in the directory to CREATE A LOGIN the first time you use the directory app.

If you're not listed in the directory, OR if you have trouble logging into the app, please contact the church office.

Available on the App Store | GET IT ON Google play

## Book Group

### Mountain Rise Book Group Plans January Meeting

The Mountain Rise Book Group will not meet in December and plans its next meeting for 7:30pm January 18, 2022 on Zoom. Our book for discussion will be **See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love** by Valarie Kaur. Kaur describes revolutionary love as our ability to learn to recognize that everyone we see and meet is a part of ourselves that we must come to know and understand, even when our ideas and actions appear to be in conflict with those of the other person. In the book she describes her own journey as a Sikh activist, filmmaker and civil rights lawyer and documents love's revolutionary healing power through her own experiences of violence and discord.

Please RSVP to Rick Watkins at 585-203-1629 or [rwatkins12@rochester.rr.com](mailto:rwatkins12@rochester.rr.com) He will send you a Zoom link to the meeting a day or so before January 18.



A simple thank you to all to came to the Advent-ure this year! The ringing of the bells added to the joy and singing! Special thanks to Gary and Cheryl for helping me help make it happen. Looking forward to next year.....another walk under the stars, singing the carols, the warmth of the fireplace, and all the expressions which are part of such a special season of the year.

Elisabeth Hammer



## PROPERTY COMMITTEE AT WORK!

The following are a few more of the projects and tasks managed by the Property Committee during the past few months with assistance from volunteers. Other tasks were identified in last month's Newsletter.

- Clean up a gazillion leaves on the property
- Submit expense budget for 2022
- Cut up and remove large fallen tree branches
- Replace bulbs in large ceiling light
- Test batteries in all emergency lights
- Review cost of gas and electricity over past 4 years
- Replace top of outdoor handicap switch
- Purchase and transport Christmas trees
- Contracted for the removal of damaged trees
- Obtain quotes for resealing the parking areas
- Procure routine and winter maintenance supplies

Mountain Rise New Branch

# Service and Advocacy

## For Justice and Peace



### Mountain Rise in the Community

Each year Mountain Rise supports many organizations locally, regionally, and internationally in their efforts to make the world a better place.

These organizations cover a wide range of areas including Poverty, Racism, Health, Climate, Refugees, Children and Youth, Criminal Justice, along with International Missions.

Below are two organization, Service and Advocacy would like to highlight that Mountain Rise supports in the area of Poverty and Housing. Please take the time to explore their websites.



DIMITRI HOUSE

Dimitri House <https://www.dimitri-house.org>

Known mostly as an emergency overnight shelter for homeless men in the winter time they also offer an evening meal and breakfast for their guests.



Reach Advocacy <https://reachadvocacy.org>

Reach Advocacy collaborates to create safe, financially sustainable housing options to meet the needs of chronically homeless individuals by ensuring services needed and encouraging mutual care.

## Next Service and Advocacy Meeting

Service & Advocacy committee meetings are held on the **second** Wednesday each month at 3:00 pm.

Meetings generally run until 4:30 pm. Anyone is welcome to attend all or part of the meeting.

Our next meeting is January 12.

**From the Green CAT  
(a.k.a. Climate Action Team)**

The Green CATs will begin 2022 focusing on the American diet.

I wonder if you can guess what contributes to 14.5% of the total greenhouse gas emissions in the world? You might be surprised to find that the cows on your friendly neighborhood farm are the culprits. The energy required to grow and transport all the food needed to feed all the cattle in the world requires a lot of fossil fuel. But the real problem with cattle is that they burp methane all day long. Methane is a major cause of climate change. If cattle were a country, they would come in as the third highest greenhouse gas emitting country after China and India, moving the US to fourth place.

We are aware of just how much our beef consumption is a part of our daily diet, as we ourselves all eat differing amounts of beef. But, some of us have begun to curtail our meat consumption. It is actually not as difficult as you might imagine, as there are now a multitude of tasty vegetable-based protein sources available at your local super market.

So, over the winter months we will be suggesting some easy recipes that you can use. You may also have a favorite meatless meal you would like to share. if so, send them my way. [Wilperrycca@gmail.com](mailto:Wilperrycca@gmail.com).

Submitted by Bill Bross

Anyone interested in helping out with settling an Afghanistan family please contact Jack Heister [jsheister@gmail.com](mailto:jsheister@gmail.com). In order to do this we need enough folks to share the responsibility.



**Habitat for Humanity**

**Christmas Angel Gifts and Support**

The bountiful generosity of Mountain Rise UCC was on display this year as we provided gifts for 40 children living in Flower City Habitat for Humanity homes in Rochester. Our gifts filled the Habitat conference room, once again making us the largest donor to this effort. Our church's relationship with Habitat for Humanity is expansive and includes the active participation of Mountain Risers in building homes in Rochester, monetary contributions from the congregation through our Service and Advocacy Committee and the Christmas gift project.

Thank you for your big-hearted support!



## From the Mountain Rise Team for Just Peace in the Holy Land

Each month the Mountain Rise Peace in the Holy Land Team will be posting information for you to learn more about Israel/Palestine.

Here is the second monthly installment updating you on current events taking place in Israel/Palestine. It is a statement on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people from the Global Mission of the UCC Church in conjunction with Palestinian groups.

<https://www.globalministries.org/jai-statement-on-the-international-day-of-solidarity-with-the-palestinian-people/>

Thank You,  
Jack Heister

*We pray especially for these members, friends, and loved ones of Mountain Rise:*

**Please advise the church office of any changes.**

Julie Francis	Conor
Ros & Jim Fishbaugh	Lisa, Sharon & Jack
Gary Bresnahan	Ted
Wilan Uthman	Michelle
The family of Troy Rice	Kelly
Harold Stock	Jessica
Hilary T.	Kay Uthman
Peggy	Dorie Starks
Kathy Nixon	<b>Challenges</b>
Pam Miller	Jackie Barker
Courtney & Joe Germain	Rick & Julie Peet
Julie	Erik
Jean	Jonathan True
Sue	Matt O.
Tim Tyler	
Madi	
Tristan	



### Pastoral Care

If you feel a need for pastoral care or know of someone who does, and would like to meet with the pastor, please contact him directly by phone or e-mail. Respecting your need for privacy, our pastoral care team will not automatically call, or may not be aware of your need. Please let us know how we can help. Call 223-2433 or email Pastor Greg at [revgreg@mtriseucc.org](mailto:revgreg@mtriseucc.org).

## MOUNTAIN RISE

The UCC was founded in 1957 as the union of several different Christian traditions: from the beginning of our history, we were a church that affirmed the ideal that Christians did not always have to agree in order to live together in communion. The United Church of Christ is one of the most diverse Christian churches in the United States. To read stories about our history and future visit [ucc.org](http://ucc.org).

- The United Church of Christ Seeks to...
- Be Inclusive, not Exclusive
  - Celebrate diverse membership & Christian belief
  - Be united and uniting, yet...
  - Affirm each congregation's autonomy
  - Be Committed to Justice & Peace

*God is still speaking... life evolves. we evolve. faith must evolve...are we still listening?*