

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, February 8 & 22, 10AM .
- Council meeting, February 8, 7PM.
- Stephen Ministry Group I, February 8 & 22, 4PM
- Stephen Ministry Group II, February 3 & 17 7PM
- Service & Advocacy meeting, February 9, 3PM.
- Spiritual Life & Worship, February 16, 4PM
- Book Group, January 18, 7:30PM virtual meeting; contact Rick Watkins for Zoom link.
- Spiritual Growth Group I, February 28, 7:15PM
- Newsletter Info needed, week of February 21



Needed: Warm clothing for Afghan Refugees and Pines of Perinton residents. Details below

MRUCC members can help to meet the urgent need for clothing and bedding items for both Afghan refugees and residents of Pines of Perinton who lost everything in the recent catastrophic fire.

This effort depends upon a small team of sorters. Please sign up on the bulletin board by the office if you will help.

Items in most demand for men, women, and children:

Warm washable outerwear
Boots and shoes
Sweatpants and sweatshirts
Warm hats, gloves, mittens, and scarves
New socks and underwear
Blankets, sheets and towels

All donated items must be clean and in very good condition. The collection area is in the hall by the door to the storage room on the lower level.

Questions: Fran Stiles or Kathy Nixon

Many thanks, and blessings!

Men's Group - Monday, February 7, at 7:00. There will be a program only. Women are invited. Program is Ganondagan - a Native American historic site in Ontario County.

No sign-up will be needed!

From Our Pastor

Abundantly

And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.

-- 2 Corinthians 9:8

Abundance of heart is a value encouraged by leaders of the ancient church in Corinth millennia ago. It is also at work in this church as part of its spiritual DNA.

That is to say, one of the enduring attributes of Mountain Rise continuing to inspire me is people's readiness to give of themselves. I frequently witness, behind the scenes and at moments of shared decision, people who give from what I call an "abundant heart." I see them as giving out of compassion, gratitude, and hope - believing we can make a difference. They sense a Divine Source for our abundance.

Though the pandemic has ruled out much of our in-person opportunities to serve, still many of you persist in finding ways to help. You quietly give of yourselves to change the world: one child, one family-in-need, one just cause at a time. Yes, abundant hearts!

As we prepare for the "annual financial meeting," I know people are thinking together to plan good ministry. Woven into the financial calculations are plans meant to express the core values of Mountain Rise as we envision future ministry. Trust in the abundance of divine grace is our sure foundation.

So, whether it is time, talent, funding, leadership, or prayers, Mountain Rise church needs your abundant heart to share in creating "a community for good in God's world."

(Mountain Rise Vision Statement)

Blessings & peace, health & justice -



The Rev. Dr. Greg Osterberg, Senior Minister

Scripture Readings

February 6

Communion Sunday

Isiah 6:1-8

Psalm 138

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Luke 5:1-11

February 13

House Band Sunday

Jeremiah 17:5-10

Psalm 1

1 Corinthians 15:12-20

Luke 6:17-26

February 20

Genesis 45:3-11, 15

Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40

1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50

Luke 6:27-38

February 27

Exodus 34:29-35

Psalm 99

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

Luke 9:28-36



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.

Church Council

We Are Who We Are Becoming *

So, recently a former Council chairperson came up to me and said it was good that I already have gray hair (!) because it seemed that of all the previous chairs, he thought I had drawn the short straw! He was viewing all of the changes in our Mountain Rise transition as challenges. But, from my perspective change is the only constant and God is very much in the midst of what tomorrow demands.

Does this mean that it will be easy; that there are no concerns or there is little work to be done? No, but with an understanding that Mountain Rise is guided by a living God—not finished but becoming—we can forge ahead and persevere in our work. Your Mountain Rise Church Council endeavors to do just that.

I'm sure you realize by now that in addition to all of the other responsibilities on Council's plate, this year we will be preparing for the retirement of our beloved pastor, Greg Osterberg, who will be greatly missed. This preparation will include much behind-the-scenes transition work as Mountain Rise moves into its interim period.

As well, Council will be overseeing two searches this year for new staff members: a Children & Youth Ministry Coordinator and an Intentional Interim Pastor. The acceptance of the 2022 budget on February 6th will set in motion the Coordinator search with a newly-formed search team comprised of Mountain Rise parents.

The Intentional Interim Pastor search team is currently finishing up its documents and has drafted its base salary/benefit package. That search will begin in earnest shortly and proceed with the assistance of the NY UCC Conference staff as they are already identifying qualified candidates to present to our search team.

In addition to these active staff searches, Council is planning to engage the whole congregation early this Spring in an interactive visioning activity. The hope is to involve as many folks as possible in brainstorming around a few key questions about Mountain Rise Church and how God is moving in our midst. With this input Council will develop a couple of overarching themes that each committee, team and group at Mountain Rise will be encouraged to incorporate into their own ministry work area.

Mountain Rise Church—this is all exciting stuff! Yes, some change will be sad. But, as a congregation we are on the path of who we are becoming. It will require faith and patience, and above all remembering that God is our guide.

With you on the journey,
Gail McClain, Council Chair

* Thanks to Donna Schaper and her Jan. 18th Daily Devotional, "Becoming," for inspiration.



Dear Mountain Rise,

Deborah and I are overwhelmed by your generous Christmas gift! Your gift will allow us in our time away to do some things for rest and recreation that we would not be able to do otherwise. Thank you so much!

I am grateful to serve this church of so many people who find ways to be kind, to serve, and to courageously change the world for good. You are a blessing.

With gratitude and love,

Greg



Dear Mountain Rise Family,
Thank you so very much for the kind and very generous Christmas gift!
Blessings and peace for a Happy, Healthy New Year!,
Barbara



Thank you so much Mountain Rise for the generous gift. God bless you this coming New Year and years to come.

Thank you,
James

Book Group

Anxious People: A Novel, by Fredrik Bachman, is February Book Group Choice

The Mountain Rise book group will meet on Zoom on Tuesday, February 15 at 7:30 to discuss the latest Frederick Bachman novel that is both humorous, serious and quirky, the kind of writing readers enjoyed in his novel **The Man Called Ove**. Imagine eight strangers taken hostage in an apartment. In this setting nothing and no one turns out to be as they seem to be.

Come join us and enjoy discussing the ways in which Bachman uses both the story's setting and the tension the characters feel to draw the hostages closer together as they reveal their true selves to each other. Please RSVP to Rick Watkins at rwatkins12@rochester.rr.com or (585)203-1629. You will receive a Zoom link just before the meeting date.



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.

- Negotiated new 3-year lease with Etz Chaim
- Signed new contracts for security coverage
- Installed new connectors for outside banners to allow for easier exchange of banners
- Found source for specialized light bulbs and purchased replacements
- Arranged for locking of lower entrance during worship services
- Purchased and installed a WiFi booster to improve internet signal in sanctuary
- Escorted the security inspector while all the alarms were checked
- Made repairs to lower entrance door mechanisms
- Repaired the bench in gathering area

Service and Advocacy



For Justice and Peace

Mountain Rise in the Community

Service and Advocacy thanks you, the Mountain Rise congregation, for your support of the Christmas offering. Because of you the Christmas Offering raised over Five Thousand Seven Hundred Dollars. That money will be donated to the following three organizations in support of their important work. Please click on the links to visit their websites and learn more about them. Thank you

Teen Empowerment <https://teenempowerment.org/rochester/> Located in the City of Rochester, Teen Empowerment each year employs youth organizers to engage their peers and adults in working for strong, healthy communities embedded in equity, justice and peace.

RCSD School # 2 <https://www.rcsdk12.org/2> Mountain Rise supports Rochester City School # 2 through grants to teachers and staff. This is used for classroom supplies and field trips. Along with the donation of books for a Book Fair, our volunteers helping in classrooms and at special events work to support the educational needs of children in the city.

Learning Links of Fairport <https://www.learninglinksfairport.org> Learning Links is a tutoring program located at the Pines of Perinton Apartments and serving students K-12 of Fairport schools who are in need of extra support to succeed in their studies. Learning Links also offers an ESOL class for adults.



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



A new year of reading should begin, perhaps, with recognizing new and hopeful global perspectives that celebrate progress. Such is the case with what can be learned from Marda Dunsky's book, *Stories from Palestine: Narratives of Resilience*. Dunsky is a journalism scholar who has taught global journalism at Northwestern University and has worked for the *Chicago Tribune* and *Jerusalem Post*.

How is this portrait of the Occupation

different? It is different insofar as the author makes a point of identifying a certain quality of personal resourcefulness that needs to be nurtured if hope is to be kept alive in the hearts of the Palestinians. This is not a sentimental overview that denies the horrors of the Occupation, but a testament to how the humanity of an oppressed people can prevail and certainly transcend despair. The author's intention was "to go beyond the sound bite, rendering [the Palestinians'] humanity fuller and deeper."

To that end, she organizes her chapters into two parts. Each chapter begins with a personal profile that introduces the reader to a narrative of resilience, a story that features an actual Palestinian whose creative impulses resulted in tangible gains for his or her people. The author bases these profiles on personal interviews, most of which were conducted in the field. The second half of each chapter features the results of Dunsky's initial research, the data and historical context that prompted the creation of such resourcefulness. Dense with statistics and scholarly theory, the second part offers a powerful introduction to the history of Israel/Palestine. It also clarifies several popular misconceptions. Most importantly, the profiles, data, history, and analyses are written in the spirit of "samud".

Samud refers to steadfastness or perseverance, and the samid is the one who demonstrates these particular virtues. According to two scholars, Alesandra Rijke and Toine van Teeffelen, "samud is relevant to the daily life of Palestians who actively wish to maintain their identity and dignity through small acts of what is sometimes called 'everyday heroism'." It is a practice, not a philosophy, and an ongoing attitude that does not seek a particular outcome. It is a way of being in the world.

Mountain Rise New Branch

Over the next few weeks, we would like to introduce you to Adnan Massad (a farmer), Hanan Hroub (a teacher), Abdelfattah Abusrour (an artist), Imad Khatib (a worshiper), and Areej Al-Madhoun (a fourteen-year-old mathematician). We hope that you will enjoy "meeting" these folks and that this reading encounter will help to promote our collective curiosity about recognizing the samids in our lives.



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 monthly installment updating you on current events taking place in Israel/Palestine.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/16/opinion/israel-palestine-idf-mission-hebron.html?referringSource=articleShare>

Thank You,
Jack Heister



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 February 9.

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

Please advise the church office of any changes.



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|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Family of Jim Fishbaugh | Conor |
| Fred Thorne | Lisa, Sharon & Jack |
| Julie Francis | Ted |
| Gary Bresnahan | Michelle |
| Wilan Uthman | Kelly |
| The family of Troy Rice | Jessica |
| Harold Stock | Kay Uthman |
| Hilary T. | Dorie Starks |
| Peggy | Challenges |
| Kathy Nixon | Jackie Barker |
| Pam Miller | Rick & Julie Peet |
| Courtney & Joe Germain | Erik |
| Julie | Jonathan True |
| Jean | Matt O. |
| Sue | |
| 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.

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.

- 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?