

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, December 14 & 28, 10AM .
- Council meeting, December 14, 7PM.
- Stephen Ministry Group I, December 14 & 28, 4PM
- Stephen Ministry Group II, December 2 & 16, 7PM
- Service & Advocacy meeting, December 8, 3PM.
- Spiritual Life & Worship, December 15, 4PM
- Book Group, January 18, 7:30PM virtual meeting; contact Rick Watkins for Zoom link.
- Spiritual Growth Group I, December 27, 7:15PM
- Newsletter Info needed, week of December 27

Christmas Tree decorating, Saturday, December 4, 1 PM

Need at least three people who are able to climb a ladder and four more who can help hand up the garland and two or three to trim the smaller tree. Please contact Linda Marzano.



Christmas Poinsettias



All who are interested in contributing donations to the Christmas Poinsettia Fund, please complete this sheet and your donation (cash or checks payable to Mountain Rise) in the offering basket or mail to the church office.

Dedications may be made in memory of, in honor of, in celebration of loved ones or friends, or any dedication that you feel is appropriate.

This dedication is given by:
(Please Print Clearly)

Please circle one: in **memory** of/ in **honor** of/ in **celebration** of/ or **other**: (Please Print Clearly)

Amount of Donation \$ _____

Deadline: Sunday, December 12

*A list of dedications will be available Christmas Eve.
Flowers may be taken home after
Christmas Eve Lessons & Carols.*



From Our Pastor

Questions For Christmas - again!

What good is it to me for the Creator to give birth to the Son if I do not also give birth to him in my time and in my culture?

We are all meant to be mothers of God.

*God is always needing to be born.**

– Meister Eckhart, 13th century



It is good practice to question ourselves about how we will celebrate Christ's birth. This questioning about Christmas is not new, but may be just as culturally heretical now as it was nearly 700 years ago. Meister Eckhart, the mystic Christian philosopher pondering the Advent season, challenges himself with questions. Do we dare challenge ourselves in yet another strange and fearful time?

Join me in taking a few moments to look at your plans for the next few weeks through Christmas. Ask yourself, "Have I built in time for what my heart and soul know is most important? Will our plans emphasize time with people, or with things? Will our celebrations include ways to ponder the mystery of God coming among us as a helpless peasant child? Will our giving include those in need, and who cannot exchange gifts? How obligatory are the things we 'always' do, really?"

Answering these questions honestly, maybe prayerfully, could suggest ways of adjusting your Advent and Christmas plans to resonate with life's deepest joys. Questioning our 'always done' ways might just open us to a new birth of Divine Presence in our own lives and world.

May you have the most joyous and meaningful Christmas ever!

Blessings and peace,

The Rev. Dr. Greg Osterberg, Senior Minister

*Adapted for pronouns.

Scripture Readings

December 5

Communion Sunday

Malachi 3:1-4

Luke 1:68-79

Philippians 1:3-11

Luke 3:1-6

December 12

House Band Sunday

Zephaniah 3:14-20

Isaiah 12;2-6

Philippians 4:4-7

Luke 3:7-18

December 19

Micah 5:2-5a

Luke 1:46b-55

Hebrews 10:5-10

Luke 1:39-45, (46-55)

December 26

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26

Psalms 148

Colossians 3:12-18

Luke 2:41-52



Worship each Sunday 10am to light the Advent Candles of Hope, Peace, Joy, Love & Light on Christmas Eve at 5pm for lessons and carols.

Reverse Advent Calendar is available to share with family and friends during this advent season.

Join Mountain Rise families for our Christmas Adventure. We'll meet at Powers Farm Market at **6:30pm on Sunday, December 19**. There will not be a dinner beforehand and we're keeping it simple with no costumes this year. We hope to see you there!

Questions? Contact Lis Hammer (elisabeth156@yahoo.com) or Cheryl True (chtr2608@gmail.com)

Church Council

Digital Drift

I've been thinking a lot lately about what it means to be connected, to be engaged in the world and in the life of the church. Covid certainly has caused us to reimagine how best to stay connected and engaged. During the past year and continuing now, Nick and I have been spending an hour or so every week or two on a Zoom session with long-time college friends from across the U.S. that we call "Laughs & Libations!" We join in much laughter while sipping our wine, but also share our anxieties and sorrows. We openly confess how much we miss each other. There has been no shame in this.

When Covid lifted at the start of the summer, our friend group decided to try to get together in person. We began making plans to have everyone join the McClain clan at the cottage we rent each summer in August in the Adirondacks. There was a craving to actually sit opposite our friends while sipping wine and snacking. We wanted to hear their voices in real time as they shared a story or told about a book they had just read. We wanted to reach over and touch an arm and really needed to hug and be hugged. Most of all we needed to be present with each other – around the table, around the campfire.

Many of us feel that way about returning for worship at Mountain Rise. We are drawn to this place to be present with our friends. We crave hearing each other speak, even through our masks, and seeing each other face to face. It is almost visceral, this need. We have truly missed each other and we have missed worshiping together in reality.

For others it may not be such a strong pull. Some people may be drifting toward *only* experiencing worship digitally. But, the reality is that Mountain Rise is experiencing digital drifting as we look around the sanctuary each Sunday. We understand that Covid is still very much a driving factor in this drift. However, I hope that each person out there in virtual space knows in their bones just how much you are missed and beloved. That's my confession.....with no shame.



Peace,
Gail McClain



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.

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.

- A. Repaired more patches on outside siding due to woodpecker damage.
- B. Refurbished the area around the outside signs and installed new solar lighting.
- C. Renewed contract for the office copier.
- D. Performed maintenance on the equipment in the sanctuary.
- E. Replaced heater in lower entrance way.
- F. Upgraded the walkway to the outdoor sanctuary.
- G. Performed maintenance in the Perinton Nursery School.
- H. Further reorganization of the Storage Room.
- I. Repaired potholes in driveway and parking lots.

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 He will send you a Zoom link to the meeting a day or so before January 18.

Men's Group - December 6, 6:00pm. The program is Fairport Green. Fairport Green is a non-government group that focuses on sustaining our citizens' lives locally and globally. They concentrate on things all of us can do. Sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board. Chefs are Tom Prins and Ted Nixon. Contact Rod Walters for more information.

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 **United Church Directory** and download the FREE app to begin.

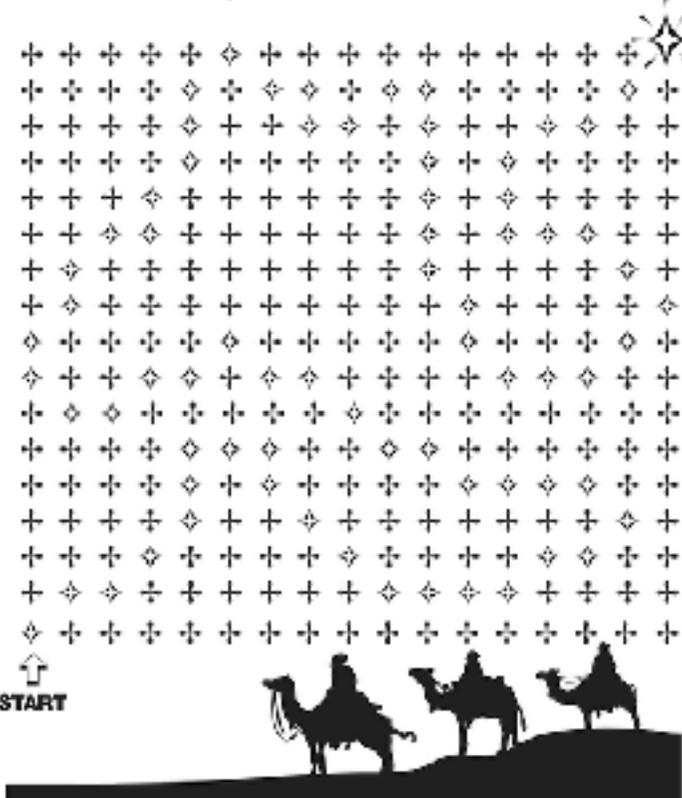
You will use your email address listed in the directory to **CREATE A LOGIN** the first time you use the directory app.

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



Puzzle!

Starting in the lower-left corner, help the wise men follow the ✨ path that leads to baby Jesus.



Now unscramble these words to discover what gifts the wise men brought Jesus.

LD OG NCAKNRIENFSE RYHMR

Answer: gold, frankincense, myrror



For Justice and Peace**Habitat for Humanity****Christmas Angel Gifts for Children**

Wrapping Party for Angel Tree gifts **CANCELLED!**

Due to the continuing rise of Covid cases in Monroe

County along with the emergence of a new variant, the December 12 congregation-wide gift wrapping party scheduled has been cancelled. Women's Group, the sponsor of this party, is focused on the safety of our entire church community and plans to host the event in 2022.

With the change of plans, gifts now need to be returned wrapped and in a cardboard box, sturdy garbage bag, reusable bag or basket to the church by Sunday, December 12. The children will only see the gifts, not the bag or box, so please do not worry about the aesthetics. Please securely attach the yellow form with your child's name and family number to the box/bag.

There is a large amount of WRAPPING PAPER available in the front gathering area (lobby) of the church. Please take all you need when you're there this next week. You are more than welcome to take more than one roll if you want a variety of wrap on your gifts.

Thank you again for helping to make Christmas a whole lot merrier for these children.

Any questions, please contact Kathy Nixon (586-7742 or knixon326@gmail.com) or Cheryl True (732-1462 or chtr2608@gmail.com)

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 December 8.

Mountain Rise New Branch

**From the Green CAT
(a.k.a. Climate Action Team)**Suggestions for a Greener Christmas

As Mountain Rise UCC's Climate Action Team, we offer some possible things that we, as people concerned about the Environment, can do to keep Christmas just a little greener. Some of these you may already be doing and some of these may not be appropriate for you and yours. Please view these as possibilities. We are sure many of you will have some other great ideas that have not occurred to us. Please send your suggestions to Pam Cooper-Vince, Bill Bross or Lis Hammer, the authors of this article, and we'll include them in next year's article. Enjoy a green Christmas this year!

*Let's try to limit decorations to ones we already possess, ones we can make, and ones we can reuse year after year before deciding whether we really need to purchase new ones this year. Switching out old lights for LED lights would be an exception.

*If you don't have a tree, perhaps purchase a potted tree and plant it after Christmas.

*Let's try to avoid purchasing disposable table ware.

*Keeping in mind both our own time, talents and financial resources and our knowledge of the people to whom we wish to give gifts, let's try to be creative in deciding on gifts that will give pleasure to the recipients without using unnecessary natural resources or creating unnecessary wrapping clutter.

*Some gifts which do not need to be wrapped or placed in a box or bag include:

1. An offer to paint, do carpentry, home repair or yard work or to teach the recipient a skill.
2. Purchase of lessons, or an experience or travel for the recipient
3. Membership in a fitness center or cultural center
4. Magazine subscription
5. Gift certificate or gift card to a restaurant, a brick & mortar store or an on-line store
6. Gift to a charity in honor of the recipient
7. Money

*Some gifts which can be placed in a bag or a box but which are still Earth friendly include:

1. Homemade baked goods, preserves, wine or beer
2. Hand knitted or crocheted items

3. Artwork, including paintings, photography, ceramics etc.
4. Family photos
5. Anything made by a child for a parent, grandparent or other friend or family member
6. Like-new second-hand items
7. New good quality clothing that will be used for years

*While we are probably used to dressing our physical gifts in festive wrapping, perhaps we can use our creativity to make them attractive while reducing the amount of wrapping paper.

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.

Attached is the December update on Israel/Palestine. It will provide you with the names of over 25 long and short films now provided the people who subscribe to Netflix. Watch some of them!.

<https://www.palestinechronicle.com/netflix-launches-new-palestinian-film-collection-check-out-full-list/>

Thank You,
Jack Heister

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.

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

Please advise the church office of any changes.

Troy & Lisa Rice	Bill & Betty
Peggy	Kay Uthman
Kathy Nixon	Dorie Starks
Pam Miller	
Courtney & Joe Germain	Challenges
Julie	Jackie Barker
Jean	Rick & Julie Peet
Sue	Erik
Tim Tyler	Jonathan True
Madi	Matt O.
Tristan	
Conor	
Lisa, Sharon & Jack	
Ted	
Michelle	
Kelly	
Jessica	



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?