

# THE NEW BRANCH



Mountain Rise United Church of Christ  
2 Mountain Rise  
Fairport, NY 14450  
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## In this Issue:

- Council Updates
- Hearing Loop Info
- On-line Directory
- Prayer List

## Calendar

Knitting, Tuesdays at 10:00AM  
ROMEOS, Fridays, 12:00PM  
JULIETs, First Friday of this month 12:00PM

- Game Night, January 13, 6:30-8:30PM
- Council Meeting, January 8, 4:00PM
- Service & Advocacy Meeting, January 10, 3:00PM
- Book Group January 15, 7:15PM Zoom
- Spiritual Growth Group I, January 22, 7:15PM
- Spiritual Growth Group II, January 9, 7:15PM

## Thank you



*Dear Mountain Rise People,  
We are sincerely grateful for your generosity in giving to the Christmas Purse. We are blessed to serve and be part of this wonderful community of faith!  
With Warm Blessings for 2024,  
Kelly Sprinkle, Elisabeth Hammer, Barbara Jackson,  
James McDonald*

## SATURDAY FUN NIGHT!

**Regardless of age, come join us for...**



## GAME NIGHT

Saturday, **January 13**  
Second Saturdays of the Month  
6:30-8:30 pm, Lower Fellowship Hall

Please bring a snack or drink to share as well as games to play.

No Sign-up is necessary.  
Questions? Contact Rob Stevens at 314-1938 or [robertstevens11@gmail.com](mailto:robertstevens11@gmail.com)



Looking to become a Member of Mountain Rise United Church of Christ? We will be hosting a series of church information sessions on **January 21 and 28**. We welcome guests who are considering membership or

who are simply interested in learning more about our church and its mission. Existing members wishing to learn a little more about the church are invited as well. There are two sessions and each session lasts approximately 45 minutes. We hold our sessions on Sundays immediately after worship. A light brunch and child care are provided, if requested. If you know of people interested in attending, please have them contact the church office at 585-223-2433 or [office@mtriseucc.org](mailto:office@mtriseucc.org), or either Dave Ackroyd or the Rev. Dr. Kelly Sprinkle. Newcomers are invited to join Mountain Rise as new members during worship on Sunday, February 11.



# Children & Youth

Greetings during this Winter season!

So many good things are happening. The Reverse Advent Calendar was again a success and an amazing amount of food was given to the Perinton Food Shelf. Thanks so much for the generosity and thanks to the youth and Fran and Sheila for helping me and the church in supporting such an important activity which helps people who are struggling to have enough food for themselves and their families.

The collection jar(coins/bills) that is taken in each Sunday by the children, will now be given to The Heifer Project. The children decided to contribute towards purchasing a flock of chickens, some honey bees, a sheep, a cow, a pig- all going to aid in helping fight poverty, support sustainability and to further help in training and education for individuals and families around the world. The total amount was \$236.72, but with Heifer x4 match now will contribute \$996.88!

The Advent-ture at Powers was again a wonderful event. Simple supper( thanks to all who brought food to share) at church was followed by gathering at Powers, walking thru woods, blue lights shining up to the sky, enjoying the Christmas story, and singing carols, followed by fireside cider, donuts and cookies. A beautiful way to help celebrate the season.

Thanks to Paul Tavolette and some of the youth for putting together the Pageant for the Christmas Eve service: a gift that comes from coming together this special time of year.

In January we will be introducing children to a curriculum called The Joyful Path. This will be used along with other contributions to make the Sunday school experience a rich, meaningful and enjoyable time for the children/ youth. One activity will be creating Kindness Bags for the children/family to give to those they know in need. Some other activities are coming down the pike, so watch for notices so you can save the dates.

Winter is often a time when the world seems to become quiet, under snow and ice, keeping people inside, isolated, alone and generally, it's harder to get out and be with others. Life changes, losses of all sorts...life can be a challenge.

Call your friends, offer to do a sleep-over, bring over a meal/treat, help a neighbor who might need it... lighten the burdens of those you know.

The gift of offering a bit of kindness can mean all the difference to someone. Sometimes we don't even know the impact we make, and sometimes there is even a ripple effect.

My office is a place where plants will greet you, and there is a comfortable couch....stop by as you like, or feel free to leave a note. May the Christmas Season of Joy and Light and Love extend long into January and beyond.

N'Joy and Grace to each of you!

Elisabeth

Her/she/

CYMC

ehammer@mtriseucc.org

585-244-9690 (cell)

thank you

A THANK YOU to all who participated and helped make the Advent-ture a success again this year. A tradition that has been carried on for over 30 years!!!



January 15



We are placing in the spotlight various groups and activities that bring fellowship, joy and creativity to Mountain Rise. If you would like your group or committee to be highlighted in

the Spotlight, please contact Rick Watkins.

## First Monday Dining and Discussion

Rod Walters, Coordinator

The Men's dinner group is a longstanding and popular activity at Mountain Rise. Good fellowship, good food and interesting speakers have assured its popularity, and over time has led to increasing participation by members and friends of Mountain Rise, including women.

Consequently, the group has decided to change its name to First Monday Dining and Discussion, or more succinctly, **First Monday**. Everyone in the congregation is invited to attend **First Monday** and to bring a friend or neighbor if you wish. We meet downstairs on the **First Monday** of the month at 6:00 pm. We have refreshments and socialize until 6:30 when dinner is served. Around 7:15 we move to the sanctuary to hear our speaker and discuss the topic until 8:30 or 8:45 pm.

Our successful operation depends on help from all our participants. The cost of the meal is \$10/person. Meals are prepared by volunteers from our group. If no one volunteers pizza and salad is our default meal. Set-up of tables and clean up after the meal is done quickly and efficiently happens through the effort of many hands. Our drinks and snacks are provided by John Amrine. Responsibility for arranging speakers is handled by Jim Mietz. All of our speakers are volunteers. We invite you to give suggestions for topics or speakers to Jim.

Mark your calendars for the **First Monday** of the month and join us for dinner, fellowship and an interesting speaker and discussion. You will be glad

## Book Group

Get ready for the big read in January when the Book Group will tackle *The Covenant of Water* by Abraham Verghese at its January 15 meeting at 7: 15pm on Zoom. The book has captivated all those who have read it, so plan your reading and join us for what promises to be a great discussion.

Please RSVP to Rick Watkins at (585) 203-1629 or at [rwatkins12@rochester.rr.com](mailto:rwatkins12@rochester.rr.com) and he will send you a link to the meeting. Meanwhile, read and enjoy.



## Property Committee at Work!

The following are a few more of the projects and tasks managed by the Property Committee during the past month with assistance from volunteers.

- Preparing for new signage on Rt. 31
- Reviewed electrical and window closures issues with PNS
- Scheduled replacement of door lock for office
- Purchased and put up 2 Xmas trees
- Installed Narcan box
- Restripped upper parking area
- Scheduled freezer repair
- Had deer remains removed from street level
- Replaced all the electric plugs in the nursery school
- Resupplied Etz Chaim with keys
- Scheduled second leaf clean-up

# Church Council

## Happy New Year Mountain Rise Family!

Merriam-Webster defines a New Year's resolution as "a promise to do something differently in the new year". In the spirit of the New Year, I thought I would offer up a few sample resolutions for any Mountain Risers who wish to either add to their list or who have yet to make any...

- Attend a ministry committee meeting (there are several to choose from) that you have never attended before... they are all open meetings!
- Review the on-line church calendar of activities; our church is very busy.
- Visit the UCC.org website and familiarize yourself with the amazing amount of resources the UCC provides.
- Attend a Council meeting.
- Invite a friend to one of Mountain Rise's activities.
- Change your worship service seat to a section you don't usually sit in.
- Volunteer to work with our children on a Sunday.
- Subscribe to The Trumpet, the Genesee Valley UCC Association newsletter, to keep up to date with the happenings in our association.
- Read the Mountain Rise By-Laws (this one makes the church Council very happy 😊)
- Sign up for a Sunday after worship "lock up" session for the Safety and Security Team.
- Read one of the books on the Mountain Rise Book Club list for this year and join the meeting to discuss the book.
- Play a game at the Mountain Rise Game Night...held one Saturday a month.
- Plan to participate in the outdoor spring clean-up (yes, spring is on its way!).

Best wishes for a healthy and happy 2024!

Faye Eaton  
Council Chair

Here is a link to the local UCC Genesee Valley Association newsletter. Please take a look. There are several local Martin Luther King events [UCC GVA January newsletter click](#).



### The Annual Congregational Finance Meeting will be on Sunday, February 4 after worship.

Printed documents will be available in the welcome area January 21.

### Your Council Members:

Faye Eaton, Chair  
Position Vacant, Vice-Chair  
Gail McClain, Council Secretary  
Jennifer Leger, At-Large  
Len Leger, At-Large  
Nancy Stark, At-Large  
Kathy Nixon, Communications Committee Chair

### Council Monthly Meetings

You are welcome to attend Council meetings. At present they are scheduled to be held on the second **Monday** of each month at **4:00 pm** at church; next scheduled meeting is **January 8**.

### Ministry Committee Chairs:

Faith Formation - Steven Grace  
Fellowship - Dave Ackroyd  
Caring Connections - Sherry Shaffer and Cheryl Pipkin (co-chairs)  
Spiritual Life and Worship - Ted Nixon  
Service and Advocacy - Jack Heister

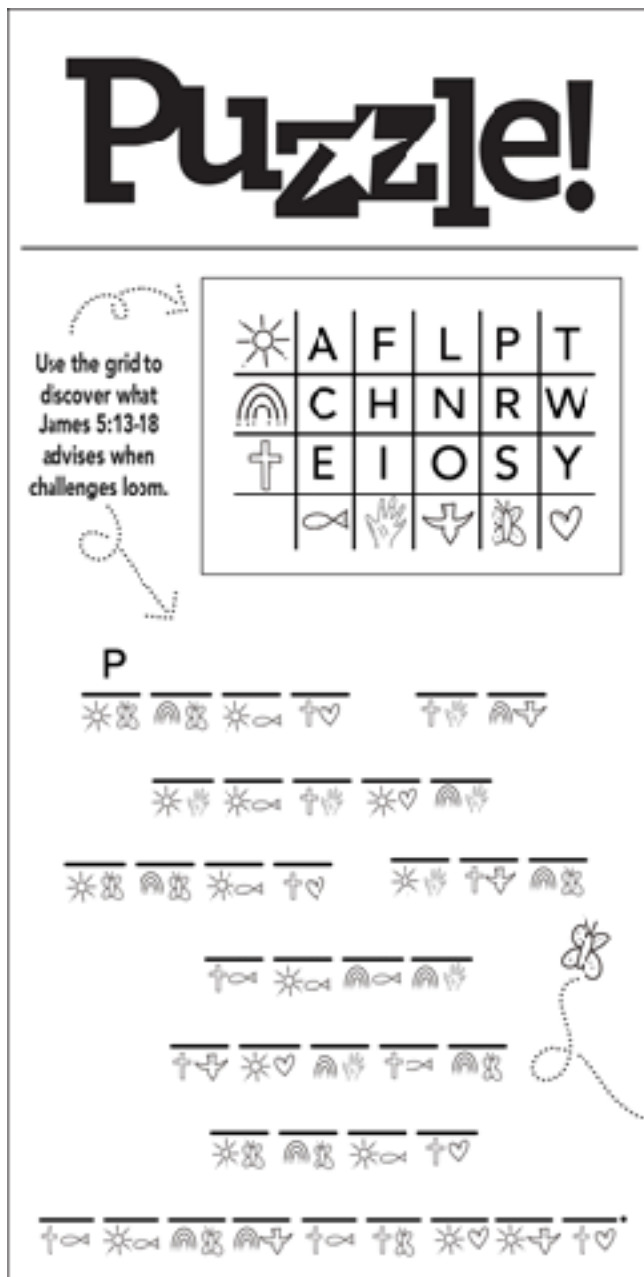


**From the MRUCC Safety and Security Team:**

In December, I stepped into the role of point person for Mountain Rise's initiative to improve security and safety. Over the past month, Rod Walters and I have been building on the work started by the team. We've been focusing on identifying small, impactful investments. While we've only just begun this process, I can tell you that we plan a staged, multi-faceted approach to address safety in and around the building during times when the building is occupied and unoccupied. We recognized fairly quickly that we need better controls to manage building access, technology to monitor the building, and the merits of working with Etz Chaim and Perinton Nursery School to ensure their needs are also addressed. The following is a list of actions under consideration:

- Applying window film to limit interior visibility through first floor windows
- Assessing the number and needs of building key-holders, as well as the merits of transitioning to a key card system
- Installing brighter, energy-efficient lighting around the building exterior
- Installing video doorbells to reduce disruption and allow timely responses to those needing building access after worship services and nursery school programs have started
- Installing CCTV cameras with remote monitoring capability
- Identifying and setting up locations within the building where people can shelter in place if an unsafe situation arises while the building is occupied
- Establishing updated guidance regarding activities that impact our tenants safety and security
- Providing security and safety training to the congregation

I welcome your suggestions and encourage you to share your security and safety concerns with Rod and I. Most weeks, you can catch up with me during the coffee hour after church. Please also feel free to contact me via email, text, or by phone (preferably evenings and weekends).  
 Trisch Axsmith Tavolette  
 trisch14564@gmail.com  
 Cell: 585-749-4235



**Perinton Food Shelf Needs**

**An Emergency Food Relief Organization**

Needed: tea, bottled juice, juice boxes, oatmeal, frosting, baking mixes (not cake or brownies), stuffing, gravy, pasta sides, spaghetti sauce, mustard, dried potatoes, canned beef stew, chili, hash and sloppy joes, tomato soup, large soups.

Thank you so much for your support. You can always check the website to find the current Food Shelf needs. It is [www.perintonfoodshelf.org](http://www.perintonfoodshelf.org).



### Update from Viviendo en Amor y Fe

Mountain Rise and Viviendo en Amor y Fe have been sister churches for over ten years. The following update comes from Mark and Lynn Baker. They have been involved with Viviendo en Amor y Fe Church in Honduras for many years as Mennonite Missionaries.

"In Tegucigalpa, we note with joy that Viviendo en Amor y Fe Church has just celebrated their 33rd anniversary. We have walked with them for 31 of those years. Currently our primary involvement is through sharing Vida en Shalom funds which cover half of the salary of their pastor, Arely Cantor, and through supporting them in prayer and regular conversations with Arely. In a collection of photos and descriptions of the anniversary service, we noted the church's ongoing witness to the community of the light and love of God through their involvement in the barrio, through a low-income counseling center and through church activities which deepen people's lives of faith, hope and love in dark times.



Honduran churches commonly celebrate each year the anniversary of their beginning and usually invite people from other churches to the special service. Viviendo en Amor y Fe flipped the script. Starting a month before the anniversary, leaders from the church visited families who live near the church and do not attend any church to invite them to the special church service. Pastor Arely wrote, "We met to discuss the love of Jesus, justice, and truth. All the families requested specific prayers." Many attended the anniversary celebration!

Pastor Arely reported that the majority of the church members are unemployed and requested prayer for sources of income for them. Please pray with us for Honduras and these dear people seeking to survive without having to immigrate to the United States or other countries for work.

Arely is a licensed therapist and sets aside some time to provide counseling to people in the neighborhood. She charges a reduced amount. Even so, most cannot pay the whole amount. We have given Vida en Shalom funds to cover the remaining amount. We share below the story of one person Arely has counseled.

"I have been a Christian since my adolescence. I have received counseling from Arely at Viviendo en Amor y Fe. I have discovered some aspects of myself that prevented me from feeling understood within my family and this was causing a deep breakdown in my soul. In these months I have suffered separation from my husband as a result of migration. We had no sources of income, so he made the decision to go to the US. This has hurt me deeply. I hope our marriage will not dissolve.

Through counseling I have discovered a new concept of what God thinks of me and how much God loves me. Feelings of guilt, fear and emotional dependence had been limiting me from discovering truly new life. I realized that rather than trusting my family to God's love in Christ I was trying to make them good. I sought to stop behaviors that, from my interpretation, were incorrect in the eyes of God. I corrected and disciplined them so much that my children distanced themselves from me. They even told me that I am a bad mother. I discovered that my childhood wounds were leading me to wound my children, but that I have the opportunity to be healed. In counseling I have learned of Jesus' desire to heal the wounds from my past. I have come to realize that Jesus expressed his feelings and some of them are similar to mine. This brought me calm because I no longer accuse myself as much as before. In Jesus there is not condemnation, but forgiveness. I am trying to live in my family situation with more calmness, which enables me to be more involved in the ministry God has given me."

Submitted by Nicky McClain as part of our connection with Viviendo en Amor a Fe.

### An update from Perinton Churches Housing

Mountain Rise is a member of PCH. Here is a progress report of Midvale Commons, the new housing being built on Baird Road. They have created a video about the project that describes the project and shows the community-wide support. The video is on the PCH website at <https://perintonchurcheshousing.org/?q=housing/midvale-commons>

## Service and Advocacy Meeting Scheduled

Next meeting is January 10, 3:00pm.

### Committee for Universal Justice

We have never felt more strongly about our commitment to Palestine's liberation than we do now. The facts regarding the war in Gaza speak volumes and need no qualification. On December 12 USA Today reported the loss of 17,700 lives in Gaza, two-thirds of them women and children, and as of this month, the number of Palestinians killed exceeds 21,000. 90% of Gaza's people have been displaced. Images of tired and dangerously thin children are lining up to refill plastic water bottles at local taps. People are starving. We cannot look away, and we certainly cannot keep silent. Speculations abound regarding what motivates Netanyahu to make the choices he makes, but his motives are not ours, of course. Ours are best expressed by the UCC declaration of "Why It Matters":

"It was in this place that Jesus walked, and that shepherds responded to the angelic vision of peace on earth and good will to all. It matters because the occupation ignores human rights, violates international law, and denies the sacredness of every person. American tax dollars support the occupation; we have a right and duty to speak up."

Peace in the coming year...

...Team for Universal Justice

Jack Heister - [jsheister@gmail.com](mailto:jsheister@gmail.com)

Linda Boesl - [lboesl@yahoo.com](mailto:lboesl@yahoo.com)

Kathy Simpson - [kthysmpsn@gmail.com](mailto:kthysmpsn@gmail.com)

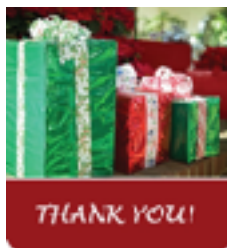
Jim Mietz - [jdmietz@gmail.com](mailto:jdmietz@gmail.com)

Gary Shaffer - [garystravel@yahoo.com](mailto:garystravel@yahoo.com)

Joanne Guarnera - [jeguarnere@yahoo.com](mailto:jeguarnere@yahoo.com)

Bacon, John and Jorge L. Ortiz. "Israel Blames UN for Gaza Aid Delays. USA Today 12 December 2023, Rochester Democrat & Chronicle ed, sec, 4A. Print./UCC PIN

<https://www.uccpin.org/> United Church of Christ Palestine Israel Network/UCC PIN History and Timeline/ "Why It Matters."



MANY, MANY THANKS to the Mountain Rise congregation for its very generous support of the children living in Rochester's Habitat for Humanity homes! Again this year, we were able to provide lovingly wrapped presents for 50 babies, children and teens who might otherwise not have received any Christmas gifts.

The care taken to purchase the most appropriate gifts speaks to the heartfelt love our church has for each and every community member. And the energy at our wrapping event made it a very fun, albeit sometimes hectic, party.

Kathy Nixon, event organizer





**Available**

Pronoun stickers are available and are a great way to raise awareness about gender inclusiveness. Wear these in support of inclusivity: a simple act toward a just world.



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).

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

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

- Fred Thorne, health concerns
- Mary Hershey, on the passing of her sister
- James McDonald, on the passing of his mother
- Jennifer Smith, on the passing of her father
- Charles Willard, health concerns
- John Meyer, health concerns
- Liz Webb, health concerns
- Sandi Riley and family, on the passing of her Mom
- Joe Lebda and family, on the passing of Nancy Lebda
- Barb Ackroyd, health concerns
- Rob Eaton and family, health concerns
- HOPE and people of Borgne, Haiti
- Cal Dickerson, on the passing of his sister Carol Willer
- Bill Shaffer, health concerns & Sherry as caregiver
- Deb Sponable, health concerns
- Pam Miller, health concerns
- Dorie Starks, health concerns
- Lisa Lydum, health concerns
- Phoebe Coats, health concerns
- Kersting's daughter, health concerns
- Matt O.
- John Meyer
- Gary Bresnahan
- Wilan Uthman
- Kay Uthman

**Pastoral Care**

If you feel a need for pastoral care or know of someone who does, and would like to meet with the on-call pastor, please contact the office 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.

## 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?*