



January/February, 2026

THE IN-SPIRE

The Rutland United Methodist Church Newsletter

“Mark Your Calendar”

Sundays at 11:15 am: **Worship** (in person and live on Facebook).

Sundays at 9:45 am: **Joy Choir** rehearsal.

Monday, January 12 at 6 pm: **Leadership Team** Meeting via Zoom.

Wednesdays at 7 pm: **Bible Study** via Zoom. Contact the office or Pastor Tom for the link.

Rutland Neighbors, Inc. Day Center: Open Monday-Thursday from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm.



Message from Pastor Tom



I don't really do New Year's resolutions. If I did, I'd be like most of America - where over 70% of resolutions have failed within two weeks, and over 90% have failed by six weeks. I don't think I am that different than most Americans, so I don't set myself up for failure by making bold declarations of how I am going to transform myself like some short order cook making breakfast - fast and furious.

I don't do resolutions, but I do take time to look back at what I've done over the past year, and where I would like to go in this next year. And with that in front of me every day, I go about life, not in a rush, not trying to meet deadlines, just quietly doing the work when I can. And I am always amazed how much change can happen that way.

I have been here 18 months now. The first six months I hardly changed a thing. I wanted to learn how we did things, why we did things, where the sacred cows lived, and what was important to us and what wasn't. That first six months people here, maybe some of you, kept telling me to change, change, change. Six months in and I began. And you probably didn't even notice. But stop and look at things and there has been a lot of change. Our altar area has changed. Use of music and new prayers are part of our service that were not there. I'm told we are more efficient doing the business of the church. Way more people come to me now with their personal issues. Some new people are in new places, bringing new energy to committees and the work we do. We have begun to look ahead in a way we had not before. I'm really proud of all of you as you adjusted and jumped in and encouraged each other.

It is tempting, as a new pastor, to walk into a church like a tornado and try to change everything during the honeymoon phase, the first few months. But I like to use the apostles as my guide to change.

Most of the apostles traveled into the world of Rome after the resurrection. But they didn't leap out and become missionaries. And when they did become missionaries, most did not walk into a town with zeal and try to change everything. They built small gatherings, tiny home churches, and let them work, and moved on to the next town. And so Christianity grew, but not like a wildfire. No, it grew slow and steady and always concerned that the members of these churches were deeply grounded in the truth of Christ. They traveled, spoke their faith, shared their faith and allowed God to change hearts. They did not feel compelled to browbeat people into faith. They loved them into faith.

I like to think that that is where we are as a church. Like it or not, we are missionaries. We are in the least churched state in the Union. But that does not mean people don't need church. They do. Church helps us learn more deeply, worship more meaningfully, helps us navigate an angry world, help others more effectively, reduce our anxieties, support each other when things get hard, and rejoice with each other when times are good. You know people who need those things in their lives, and those things come through a relationship with God. They come with accepting the Grace and love of Jesus. You who are reading this know all these things. You've lived them. And when we talk about them, we become missionaries.

So we are missionaries. Our church has grown by a little over 10% since I have been here. That's good. But that's not enough. We have something important to share. A love and acceptance of each other that I do not find at many churches. Over and over I talk to people wounded by the church. I talk to people who felt far more judgment than grace. But want our church to be different. "Love. No exceptions." is not a motto. It is a challenge.

Don't worry about the timetables of growth in a new year. Love people, and they will come. Share your faith story and they will come. Live your faith, and they will come, just like what happened in the early church. I see a lot of changes coming over the next couple of years. Some of them logistical or practical. But more of them coming by your enthusiasm for the God we worship, for the church we choose to worship in. We don't have to evangelize. We do it with our lives and words of faith. Then letting God work.

So keep up your good work. Keep living your faith. Speak your faith and what God has done for you. When we do, growth happens. Ours, and those around us. Because God is at work, but often, only if we are.

Happy New Year! I am blessed by you!

Pastor Tom



We began Sunday School on November 1st. We have been discussing Advent and Christmas and how we can be kind like Jesus to make everyone's holidays special. The children were really interested with the Christmas story and how each of the shepherds and wise men found out about the Savior's birth.

We have had between 2 to 4 children each week and hopefully we will have more in the future.

Judy Blair, Sunday School Coordinator



The Christmas Eve candlelight service was beautiful. Pastor Tom's lessons focused on the various figurines contained in the Crèche and how they tie into the birth of our Savior Jesus.

The Nativity Set on the Altar was given to Rutland UMC in loving memory of Frances C. Sharp and William Sharp by their Family.

Annual Conference

Annual Conference was a success. Thanks to all who attended in person and by Zoom. We were pleased to meet the new Green Mountain District Superintendent, Rev. Dr. Songbok "Bob" Jon, who presided over the meeting.

The following team reports were presented and accepted: Trustee Report; Accessibility Audit; Safer Sanctuaries Policy; Pastoral Compensation Report; Fund Balance Audit Report; Finance Team Report; 2026 Budget. Leadership positions for various teams were approved. RUMC's six Lay Servants were approved for another year. (New Certified Lay Servants: Paul Dunbar and Barb Flint).

Membership Report was presented, and we acknowledged those we lost in 2025: Betty Corey and Gary Archer.

Care and Connect

Care and Connect coordinated our annual Christmas cookie exchange on December 21. Congregational members baked cookies and delivered them to our shut-ins. As always, these goodies and visits were greatly appreciated. We are hopeful that visits to these RUMC members will spark interest in a visitation program, which Barb Flint, Lori McVeigh and Pastor Tom have been working on.

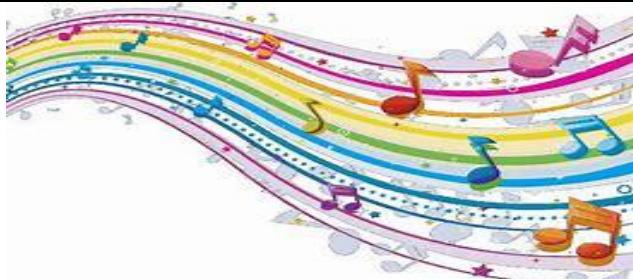
We welcome others to join us. Just contact us to talk about it or volunteer.

We have no events planned for January but will resume after-worship potlucks in February. Happy New Year!

The Care and Connect Committee

Financial FYI

For 2025, we received \$79,151 in identified and loose plate tithes and offerings, averaging \$6,596 monthly. This was only \$349 short of what was budgeted for the year! For 2026, however, we will need an average of \$7,417 monthly to keep up with expenses and remain on target. We honor the Lord by helping RUMC sustain its good work in serving. Thank you for your generosity and continued faithfulness!



Music Notes and Worship Team Update

The months of November and December were very busy for our Music Ministry. The Joy Choir was part of the Interfaith Community Thanksgiving service which took place on November 25 at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. We had a variety of musicians including the Klezmer band from the Rutland Jewish Center. The choir also prepared music for the Advent season and for Christmas Eve.

The Bells of Joy changed their venue for their annual Christmas Concert this year. The concert took place on Wednesday, December 17 at the St. Bridget Catholic Church in West Rutland. This was a beautiful space to perform, and Olivia Broughton, soprano, was featured. The concert is available for viewing on YouTube and PegTV.

Thank you to both choirs, Karen James, Ellen Wener, Sharon Teer, Allyson Packard-Stoodley and all the other musicians for your hard work during this Advent/Christmas season.

The Bells of Joy will take a break during the winter and will resume practice in the spring. The Joy Choir will continue to meet at 9:30 to practice before church. If you are interested in joining the Joy Choir, contact Ann Reed. This is a good time to join, as several of our snowbirds will be in the south for a couple of months.

The closing songs for January and February will be *Go Tell It on the Mountain* and *On Eagle's Wings*.

Ann Reed, Music Director



“NOURISHING LIVES”

Here is a thank-you letter that RUMC received from Rutland Neighbors. Let us continue the good work of supporting this outreach:

Date: November 16, 2025

Rutland United Methodist Church
60 Strong's Avenue
Rutland, VT 05701

Dear Friends at Rutland United Methodist Church,

On behalf of Rutland Neighbors, I want to extend my deepest gratitude for your continued support - both financially and through the many members who faithfully volunteer their time, share their gifts, and offer their compassionate presence to our neighbors with no doors. As the weather turns colder and the snow and freezing temperatures settle in, your care becomes even more critical and deeply felt.

Your generosity truly reflects the mission of Jesus Christ, lived out in practical, loving action. Each piece of clothing we distribute - boots, warm coats, socks, gloves, hats, scarves - makes a profound difference for someone trying to survive the harsh realities of winter. Through your kindness, our neighbors know they are not forgotten. They know they matter.

I am especially grateful for your partnership with Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in the early days, and for being instrumental in starting this ministry that has grown into Rutland Neighbors. The seeds you planted years ago have blossomed into a life-changing, life-saving place of hospitality and hope. Over the years, we have heard countless stories of lives literally saved because our doors were open and because this congregation chose to say “yes” to caring for the most vulnerable among us.

Please know that your congregation has made - and continues to make - a meaningful, lasting difference in the Rutland community. We could not do this work without you.

With heartfelt appreciation,

Eloise “Ellie” McGarry
Executive Director
rutlandneighborsinc@gmail.com or 802-236-3136

January & February Birthdays & Anniversaries

JANUARY		FEBRUARY	
3	Steve Dotson	8	Judy Pidgeon
9	Joyce Robarge	9	Paul Whitney
13	Roberta Hemmer	9	Russell Perry
18	Amy Mackin Mills	10	Arlene O'Connor
28	Stephanie McMahon	11	Norman Desjardins
		17	Linda & Mark Allen ♥
		18	Toban Crosby
FEBRUARY		19	Alison Gauthier
1	Craig Cota	28	Jane Jepson
3	Linda Mackin	28	Matt Fillioe

Did we forget anyone? Please email the office if you wish to add someone to the list!

Rutland United Methodist Church

60 Strong Avenue ~ Rutland, Vermont 05701
802.773.2460 ~ Fax: 802.773.8491 ~ Email: rutlandumc@aol.com
Pastor: Rev. Dr. Tom Atkins ~ 802.645.0499 ~ tom@quarryhouse.us

Love - No Exceptions

RUTLAND NEIGHBORS IN ACTION



Kitchen Manager &
Head Cook **Kelly Major**
and volunteers having
fun preparing
Thanksgiving dinners.

Volunteers lovingly served
150 bounteous
Thanksgiving meals for
grateful guests.



RUMC's **Linda Allen** braving the cold at Main Street Park to promote Rutland Neighbors, and displaying the "Coatbags" that are being given to those who are braving the elements. These coats conveniently convert into sleeping bags. Thank you for the many donations toward their purchase.



150 bags were put together with necessities and food, and given to guests to help them through the long Christmas "weekend" – as the day center was closed from Christmas Eve through Monday. This gave the hard-working and dedicated volunteers some welcome relief and time off to rest and be with family and friends.