

FAIRPORT COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH

Many of Perinton's pioneers settled in the hamlet of Egypt, and one of the first institutions they created was a church. In 1840, a group of nineteen people met to form a Free Baptist Church and they called D.G. Holmes as their first pastor. They probably met in either the Methodist meeting house, or the Egypt schoolhouse, both on Pittsford-Palmyra Road.

In 1848, after changing its name to Fairport Free Will Baptist Church, the congregation decided to move into the village of Fairport. After holding their first meetings in a house on Church Street just east of number

38, they erected a Greek Revival building on the present site. It cost \$3,000, which was paid in full upon completion. Like many churches of the period, yearly income for the church was raised through the use of pew rents. A church history piques interest by stating that "Nothing of great importance shows on the records of the next few years although the covenant meetings were held very regularly. The language used and disposition of certain cases would certainly bring a smile to the faces of the present day folks."

The 1880's and '90's were significant decades in the life of this congregation. The name was again changed, to First Free Baptist Church of Fairport; the first mention was made of an organist when Mrs. Bilby was voted in as church organist; and the Rev. L.W. Raymond was called to the church as pastor. In 1889, on a lot just west of the church, ground was broken for a new parsonage, which was dedicated the following year when the keys were transferred from C.L. Peacock, chairman of the trustees, to Deacon O.C. Adams, and finally to Pastor Raymond and his family, who were then welcomed to their new home.

A subscription committee was formed in the early 1890's to consider construction of a new church building. Members O.C. Adams, J.C. Spear, Mrs. W.B. Bly, and Mrs. W.A. Trescott, and the trustees agreed that the sum of \$5,500 had to be on hand before work could begin. Among other significant gifts, Mrs. Maria Wood gave \$1,000 for the purchase of Warsaw Blue Stone for the wall facings. On May 20, 1892, a resolution was adopted which stated in part: "Resolved that we accept the offer of Mr. O.C. Adams of \$50.00 for the old building. The same to be removed by him without delay. ... Also resolved that subscriptions and pledges are sufficient and available to warrant the trustees to proceed with the building." Mr. Adams moved the building to 154-156 South Main Street where it remains today, serving as apartments; however, due to the impossibility of turning the building around, the rear of the building faces on the street.

Three days after the passing of the above resolution, ground was broken for the new church building. The first shovelfuls of dirt were removed by Pastor Raymond, Mrs. Wood (the oldest church member), and Clarence Ellsworth (the youngest member), among others. Frank Longley contracted with the church to build the walls for \$1,220, and an Elmira contractor was awarded the contract for the slate roof at a cost of \$7 per square. The Warsaw Blue stone for the wall facing was shipped in by boat and unloaded on East Church Street. Church members also contributed their time and talent: among them Charles Knapp who hauled in a load of stone for the walls each time he came to town and Mr. Bly who offered to put up a roof ready for the laying of the slate tiles. No mention is made of the



*Interior of the original Community Baptist Church
on East Church Street*

cost of any lumber for the building, and no help was employed that cost more than \$2.00 per day. In August of 1892, the cornerstone was laid, which contained, among other items, a Bible, denominational papers and periodicals, the Free Baptist Treatise, village papers, and the names of the pastor, officers of the church and Sunday school, and those who had donated. Shortly after the installation of a furnace, which cost \$109.68, the completed church was finally dedicated on February 7, 1895.

In 1903, Fairport Free Baptist Church bade goodbye to the Rev. Raymond and welcomed the Rev. W.R. Wood. During the Rev. Wood's tenure, the church accepted a gift from Andrew Carnegie that paid half the cost of a new pipe organ, and a number of repairs were done on both the church and the parsonage, including the installation of electric lights and new furnaces in both the church and the parsonage. In 1915, the church again changed its name, this time to Raymond Baptist, in honor of the pastor who had overseen the extensive building program of the 1880's and 90's. In 1918, committees were formed at both of Fairport's Baptist churches, First Baptist and Raymond Baptist, to look into the possibility of unification; however, the move was not successful and the committees disbanded.

Throughout its history, the congregation of this church has had active Sunday school classes and youth and adult groups of various kinds. No written records have been found regarding the establishment of a Sunday school, but it would seem from recollections that the Sunday school is probably one of the oldest of the church's organizations. For most of the early part of this century, the practice was to give the various classes names like the "Golden Rule", "Sunshine Class", "Willing Workers", and "Pioneers." For the women there were the Women's Missionary Society, who supported missions, both domestic and foreign, as well as the Fairport Baptist Home, and the Ladies Guild, who provided social activities such as regular monthly suppers and financial support for the purchase of items like pew cushions and carpeting. From the 1880's to the early twentieth century, the young people's group called themselves the "Advocates of Christian Fidelity," holding socials and raising money for the needs of their church as well as for missions. The group also was part of the Monroe County Christian Endeavor Union, and in the 1930's was known as the Baptist Young People's Union.

Newspaper records from the 1920's and 1930's indicate a very active church with numerous groups meeting for Bible study throughout the week. Prayer meetings were held every Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. The Spear Bible Class met regularly at homes of parishioners, as did several other study groups. Social gatherings were also popular. One excerpt notes that "About 50 members of the Spear class and members of the families held a most enjoyable social in the church Friday evening. A bountiful picnic supper was served at six...." Obviously members of the church studied, but they also enjoyed themselves - they referred to themselves as the "cheerful church."

Sometime between 1940 and the 1970's, the church changed its name once again. Apparently, the name Raymond Baptist led many to think that the church was located in a place called Raymond, New York. In order to avoid confusion, the name was changed to Raymond Memorial Baptist.

In 1992, Raymond Memorial celebrated its centennial anniversary in its stone church. Among other activities, they opened the cornerstone that had been buried in 1892 and added items from 1992 before reburying for, it is hoped, another 100 years. Under the leadership of Pastor William Kerr, who was pastor from 1975-97, the church continued its activity in the community, being instrumental in the creation of the successful and necessary Perinton Food Shelf.

In 1998, after the retirement of William Kerr, John Tuff arrived to take over the job of pastor. Under his leadership, the church saw strong growth in its ministry to young people with its "Kid's Club," as well as in its music program. A mid-week Bible study has proved to be quite popular as are the monthly community pancake breakfasts. In 2005, the church changed its name to Fairport Community Baptist Church and in 2009 called the Rev. Brian Warner as its pastor.

As many of the other local churches, the Fairport Community Baptist Church is involved in support for Advent House, the Perinton Food Shelf, and the Perinton Clergy-Lay Council. Clearly, this active village congregation is very much a part of the community.