

PERINTON'S NEWER CHURCHES

As the town of Perinton grew as a suburb starting in the 1950's, existing churches grew and new ones organized to meet the demand. The first to organize after the end of World War II was the Evangel Church. This group was followed by the Jehovah's Witnesses, Perinton Community Church, the Latter Day Saints, and United Church of Christ's Mountain Rise Church in the 1960's, and the Presbyterian Church in the 1980's. During this time as well, two more Roman Catholic parishes and two more Lutheran parishes were established in the community.

The Evangel Church began with Bible study meetings in the Bown Block on South Main Street in 1946 under the leadership of the Rev. Albert D'Annunzio. By 1948, the congregation had grown enough to incorporate and in 1951 they purchased the former East Church Street school. The 1855 building was extensively remodeled by the congregation and served as their home until it was destroyed by fire in 1971. Subsequently, the parish built the structure that now stands at 38 East Church Street. The congregation, which is led by the Rev. Reid Ferguson, changed its name to the Evangelical Church of Fairport in order that people might better understand its mission of spreading the good news of the Gospel. Mr. Ferguson has been associated with the church for over 30 years and has served as pastor since the late 1990's, succeeding his father, the Rev. Raymond Ferguson, who was pastor for 22 years.

The Jehovah's Witnesses have been a presence in Perinton since the early 1960's. Their first church was located on High Street Extension. Currently, they are located on Moseley Road.

The United Church of Christ established a mission church on Mountain Rise off Pittsford-Palmyra Road in 1962. While awaiting the building of their church, the group had a temporary home in a building on Ayrault Road between Kreag Road and the canal led by their first pastor, the Rev. Charles B. Higgins. The organization was formalized in June 1963 when 110 charter members signed the roll. The new church building was completed in 1966 and the parish became self-sustaining in 1969. Under the leadership of Pastor Greg Osterberg, the congregation presents itself as an "open & affirming" church, meaning that we welcome all to full participation...". Mountain Rise Church has also been home to the Etz Chaim Congregation. The two groups not only share facilities, but also have cooperated in such area outreach programs as "Make a Difference Day."

Perinton Community Church had its beginnings in 1968 when five couples met on a Sunday for fellowship and to seek guidance concerning the establishment of an organized group dedicated to the spreading of the Gospel. After close to a year of meetings and the addition of more people, the group rented the former St. Luke's Episcopal Church (the present site of the Fire Department) for \$150 per month. After the first formal meeting on December 31, 1968, regular worship and Bible classes began in January 1969. The church was incorporated in February 1969 and in June of that year, the Rev. Robert Barr came as pastor. The congregation continued to grow, and property on High Street Extension was purchased in 1970. The facility was completed in December of 1972. Mr. Barr continued as pastor until 1989, when illness forced his retirement. This non-denominational church, with its approximately 225 members is currently led by senior pastor the Rev. Jeffrey Fuhrman, who came to the parish in 1996, and is closely aligned with the National Association of Evangelicals.

A new ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints was formed in Perinton in 1969 with 350 people from the Rochester ward. In the Mormon Church, when a ward numbers between 700 and 800, a new one splits off. The congregation met at the Forman

Center while raising money for a building of their own. The facility at 460 Kreag Road was completed in 1971 and also includes a Family History Center.

The Presbyterian Church in Perinton was officially organized in 1983 at a service held in the Fairport Masonic Hall on South Main Street. This followed two years of study by the Presbytery of Genesee Valley who conducted a random survey in 1981 that found 33 families interested in establishing a congregation in Perinton. The Rev. David Gellert was called as pastor to the fledgling group. By 1985, the congregation numbered 66 families and purchased land on Pittsford-Palmyra Road for a church building which opened in 1988. By their 25th anniversary in 2008, the church had nearly 600 members and had completed an addition that tripled the size of the original building. The current pastor is the Rev. Steven Becker who arrived in 1996. He is assisted by the Rev. J. Edward Bonner, associate pastor.

Because religion, like the society of which it is a part, is dynamic and diverse, there are always new congregations and groups meeting and organizing. Because these groups have yet to establish a "history," they have not been included here. Nonetheless, they are an important part of the vibrant Perinton community.