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# THE EPISTLE

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Volume 22 Issue 11

December 28, 2018

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Dear Members & Friends of First Church:

I can hardly believe that I've been your pastor for a year and two months. Time just seems to glide by the older I get. As I greet the New Year, I am reminded of Charlie Brown and Peppermint Patty as they converse at their philosopher's wall. You probably recall that whenever they're talking about deep issues in life, they lean on their elbows on this wall and share their insights. And so, Peppermint Patty says to Charlie Brown, "Years are like swimming pools, Chuck. We jump in one end, and we splash around until we reach the other end. How was your year Chuck?" And Charlie Brown sighs and says, "Somebody let all the water out."



So, how has your past year gone? Is there something you want to change in the upcoming year? Do you have any New Year's resolutions? Now here's a poem that I recall:

Last year I made a list of things  
that I resolved to do.  
I'll use that list again this year.  
It's still as good as new.

The prophet Isaiah preached hope to the exiled people of Israel that they would return to their homeland, if they moved beyond living in the past and trusted God to lead them into a faithful future as God's people. Isaiah writes, "Forget about what's happened; don't keep going over old history. Be alert, be present. I'm about to do something brand-new. It's bursting out! Don't you see it?" (Isaiah 43:18-19a from *The Message* by Eugene Peterson).

If God is truly doing something brand-new in our individual lives, in our church, and in our community and world, then that means that we don't have to live in the past. Change is possible because for God all things are possible. When God does something brand-new, we are never left in the past with the old ideas that we've tried and keep trying but never seem to work. No, with God attitudes change, hearts change, churches change, people change.



During his life and ministry, Jesus never left people as he found them. He invited them to follow him, to leave behind their past lives and identity. As the Apostle Paul promises us, "Anyone in Christ becomes a new person altogether; the past is finished and gone, everything has become fresh and new" (2 Corinthians 5:7, adapted). God's about to do something brand-new. It's bursting out into our lives right now! Don't you see it?

Happy NEW Year & Blessings!  
*Pastor Greg Rupright*



**SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS & MESSAGES**  
 (bold font indicates key scripture text(s) for the Message)

**JANUARY 7<sup>TH</sup>**

Baptism of Christ Sunday/Holy Communion

**Genesis 1:1-5**; Psalm 29;

Acts 19:1-7; Mark 1:4-11

*Intergenerational Message: "God's Caretakers"*

**JANUARY 14<sup>TH</sup>**

Second Sunday after Epiphany

1 Samuel 3:1-10; **Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18**;

1 Corinthians 6:12-20; John 1:43-51

*Message: "From the Inside Out"*

**JANUARY 21<sup>ST</sup>**

Third Sunday after Epiphany

Jonah 3:1-5, 10; Psalm 62:5-12;

1 Corinthians 7:29-31; **Mark 1:14-20**

*Message: "Follow Me"*

**JANUARY 28<sup>TH</sup>**

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

Deuteronomy 18:15-20; Psalm 111;

1 Corinthians 8:1-13; **Mark 1:21-28**

*Message: "Disturbed by Jesus"*

# CHURCH NEWS

## THANK YOU FROM PASTOR GREG



I want to thank all of you for your beautiful Christmas cards and gifts as well as the generous Christmas bonus.

It is such a blessing to serve as your pastor and teacher.

With Heartfelt Gratitude,  
*Pastor Greg*

## 2018 GIVING ENVELOPES

If you requested envelopes, they can be picked up in Fellowship Hall, just outside the church office.



## 2017 DONATIONS

For you to receive credit on your 2017 taxes, your check must be dated by December 31, 2017 and be received in the church office by January 5, 2018.

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY

A most generous donation was made to our church by Steve and Vicky Hoover. The tall candle holders at the ends of the pews no longer hold regular wax candles which burn with a real flame. They now hold the beautiful and safe Moving Flame candles that are battery operated. This eliminates the possibility of a wax candle being tipped and falling while lit, and it increases the frequency and amount of time that we have the enjoyment of candlelight during services. So, Steve and Vicky, please accept our thanks for your generous gift.



## DONATE NOW BUTTON ON THE WEBSITE

We wanted to make everyone aware that there is now a Donate button on the website Home Page. Actually, there are three places on the Home Page that can be used to make a donation. There is a \$ sign button in the upper right, there is the word "Donate" on the drop down menu banner at the right hand side and there is a "Donate Online" option in the "Contact Us" box located at the right.



If you hit anyone of these Donate buttons, you will see a list of donation opportunities. You can use either PayPal or a credit card to make a donation.

However, this is NOT intended for normal pledging or in place of checks that you might normally place in the offering or mail to the church office. That is because PayPal takes 2.2% of the donation for their fee. The main purpose for this donate feature is for visitors or if writing a check is not convenient. You could always add a bit to cover the PayPal fee.

Please see Sue Brooks or Jim Franzen if you have any questions.

## PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE UPDATE



You may recall that the Pastoral Relations Committee was formed in early 2016. The basic purpose of this group is to provide support to the pastor and to act as another line of communication for the congregation to provide feedback. We met a number of times with Pastor Tomi Jacobs-Ziobro during her tenure as our interim pastor. We have also met four times with Pastor Greg in 2017. During all of our meetings our discussions have always been very open and positive. We have discussed a variety of topics, including worship, pastoral priorities, and general feedback from the congregation. These conversations are always held in strict confidence, which enables a feeling of trust for all involved.

As a result, we hope that the climate of our church will continue on a positive trajectory and in which the spiritual life and mission of our church will be strengthened.

The committee is always ready to listen to any form of praise, issue, suggestion or anything relevant to the relationship between our congregation and our pastor. However, if you wish to communicate something to Pastor Greg, then please speak with him directly. He would welcome speaking with you. If you are not comfortable with this, then speak with one of us.

The PRC consists of Bruce Barmore, Michele Bowersox, Jim Franzen, Bernie Notar, Steve Smith and Diana Wright.

*Communication is to a relationship like oxygen is to life.  
Without it... it dies*

~Tony Gaskins

## ALTAR FLOWER SIGN-UP DURING EASTER



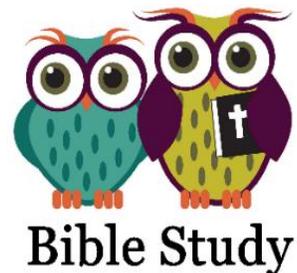
I know Easter is months away, but I also know many of you sign the altar flower chart in advance of a specific date. For Lent and Easter, we have Kittelberger's do special arrangements. At the beginning of Lent, the bouquet begins very small, and every Sunday it gets fuller and fuller, until on Easter Sunday it explodes with beautiful flowers in celebration of the risen Christ. During these special Sundays the arrangement is returned to Kittelbergers every week to enhance the arrangement for the following Sunday. This means that the arrangement will not be available to take home or to donate. Still, your monetary donations for the arrangements are much appreciated. You can sign the flower chart as you normally would, indicating that the arrangement that Sunday could be in memory or honor of someone. The flower chart in Fellowship Hall, on the rolling bulletin board, shows which Sundays the arrangement will be returning to Kittlebergers. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to Sondra Franzen or Vicki.

## MORNING BIBLE STUDY GROUPS

The 11:00 A.M. Wednesday Morning and Sunday Morning Bible Study Groups are reading *Worship Old & New* by Robert E. Webber and studying scripture pertaining to the worship history of the Judeo-Christian faith.

### JANUARY 3<sup>RD</sup> & JANUARY 7<sup>TH</sup>

Read *Worship Old & New*, Chapters 6-8, "Worship Is the Gospel in Motion," "Worship Is the Gospel Enacted," "Worship Is the Gospel Enacted Through Forms and Signs," pp. 65-91; Read all parenthetical scripture references in each of Webber's chapters. Don't worry, you've already read some of these references in previous class sessions.



### JANUARY 10<sup>TH</sup> & JANUARY 14<sup>TH</sup>

Read *Worship Old & New*, Chapter 9, "Ancient and Medieval Worship," pp. 93-107.

### JANUARY 17<sup>TH</sup> & JANUARY 21<sup>ST</sup>

Read *Worship Old & New*, Chapter 10, "Reformation and Free Church Worship," pp. 109-120.

### JANUARY 24<sup>TH</sup> & JANUARY 28<sup>TH</sup>

Read *Worship Old & New*, Chapter 11, "Worship Renewal in the Twentieth Century," pp.121-134.

*We Meet In The Snow Room & All Are Welcome!*



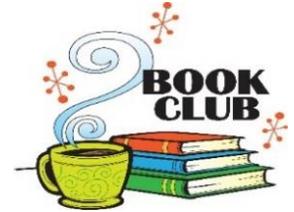
## A SERVICE FOR HEALING & WHOLENESS

There will be a Service for Healing & Wholeness in the Snow Room on Sunday, January 14<sup>th</sup> at 10:45 A.M. All are welcome!

## BOOK CLUB

On January 29th Irene Utter will lead our discussion of *Letters from Skye*, by Jessica Brockmole. We meet in Fellowship Hall at 1:00 and all are welcome.

Our February 26 book selection is *The Language of Flowers* by Vanessa Diffenbaugh.



# Circle News

## MORNING CIRCLE



The Morning Circle will meet on January 9th at 10 AM in Fellowship Hall. Pastor Greg will be our speaker.

New members are always welcome; we have the meeting from 10 to 12 and then those who wish remain for a "brown bag lunch" with beverage and dessert supplied.

## EVENING CIRCLE

The Evening Circle is planning to meet at Jeremiah's Tavern on 2164 Nine Mile Point Road, Penfield, on Monday, January 8 for lunch. We are starting out the new year with a change in our normal routine. It should be a lot of fun, so please join us!

# MISSIONS

## HILLSIDE CHRISTMAS TREE

Many thanks to everyone who participated in the Hillside Christmas Tree project this year. Many of you took 2 or more ornaments and gift tags so that all 75 of the children's wishes could be fulfilled. You've helped to make the children's Christmas special again this year.

Thanks again to Jill O'Connor for making the beautiful ornaments.

Board of Missions and Outreach



## YOUTH NEWS

### CONFIRMATION PROGRAM WITH MT. RISE UCC

First Congregational UCC will join with Mt. Rise UCC for A Joint Confirmation Program, beginning in December. Confirmation Session (CS) dates and meeting places:

1/07/18 (Mt. Rise)  
 01/21/18 (First)  
 02/11/18 (Mt. Rise)  
 02/25/18 (First)  
 03/11/18 (Mt. Rise)

03/25/18 (First)  
 04/15/18 (Mt. Rise)  
 04/29/18 (First)  
 05/06/18 (Mt. Rise);  
 Confirmation Sunday (First).

Presently, all Confirmation Sessions will be from 1:00-2:30 P.M., which may vary depending on the focus of each Confirmation Session. The facilitators are the Ms. Anne-Marie Miller & the Rev. Dr. Greg Osterberg (Mt. Rise UCC) and Ms. Jennifer Lessard & the Rev. Greg Rupright (First Congregational UCC).



**STOP THE STIGMA ROC PRESENTS...  
REAL TALK WITH TEENS**

**An event that allows for open and personal discussion about mental health and suicide.**

**Sunday, January 14, 2018**

**3:00-5:00 p.m.**

**FairPour Café, 6 N. Main St., Fairport**

\*moderated by a representative from NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)

*Stop the Stigma ROC* (STSROC) is an organization that seeks to promote suicide prevention and raise awareness about mental health, specifically in youth (ages 10-25). **Stop the Stigma ROC** is a program of Ecumenical Ministries of Perinton

In February 2016, a Fairport 9<sup>th</sup> grade student died by suicide. In the months after, many of her friends found there was little forum to openly discuss suicide and the surrounding mental health issues that contribute to suicide. As a result a group of teens from several Monroe County school districts formed a concert committee and held the first Stop the Stigma Awareness Concert in May of 2016. The concert showcased youth talent and mental health professionals spoke briefly. The concert was sponsored by local businesses and attended by over 400 youth and adults. The same group organized a second concert that was held in June of 2017 and nearly doubled the event's attendance. Over \$3000 was raised each year and donated to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

In the fall of 2017, members of the Stop the Stigma concert committee decided to form an organization that would, in addition to the annual concert, work to promote discussion around the issues of youth suicide and mental health through smaller events. Stop the Stigma ROC was born and a steering committee/board was created. It was suggested that Ecumenical Ministries of Perinton (EMP) would be a good match as a parent organization. In December, 2017, we submitted our proposal to EMP and the board approved STSROC inclusion as a program of their organization.

As a youth-led organization, Stop the Stigma ROC hopes to promote suicide prevention and raise awareness about mental health through education and by providing a forum for open conversation and dialog. STSROC believes the best way to prevent suicide is to reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness. Through conversation, barriers are lessened between persons struggling with suicidal thoughts and needed professional help. STSROC hopes to connect those who need help with those who are able to provide help. The STSROC volunteers will not offer counseling services. In all cases for counseling, persons will be referred to trained mental health professionals.

Through events and professionally led workshops, STSROC plans to

- educate our community to reduce the stigma of mental illness
- connect people to resources
- increase awareness of warning signs and causes
- teach coping skills to youth and their support systems
- fundraise for *Stop the Stigma ROC* and organizations with a mental health and suicide prevention focus

STSROC Current Board Members are Maeve Reed (youth) – President, Pamela Renfro – President, Marlee Angus (youth) – Treasurer, Marie Kamp – Treasurer, Clara Manley (youth) – Secretary, Lisa Silver – Secretary, Karen Braun – Website Design, Susan Reed and Becky Angus. STSROC volunteer recruitment is ongoing. Interested youth and adults may contact [stopstigmatroc@gmail.com](mailto:stopstigmatroc@gmail.com).

# OUR CHURCH FAMILY

## LIGHT THE NIGHT



Thank you to Dave and Pat Mosher for “lighting the night” for the month of December in memory of their parents.

Thank you to John Cedarleaf for keeping the steeple lights burning bright in January in memory of Jean Cedarleaf.



## REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

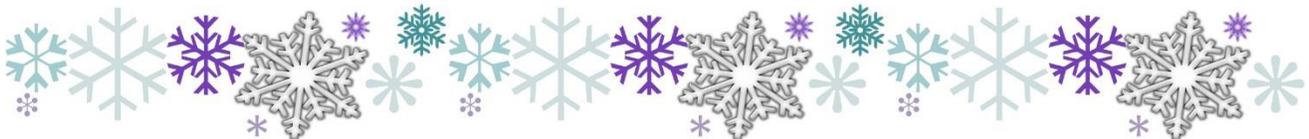
Charlotte Jackson, Heathwood  
 Robert Wagner, Fairport Baptist Home  
 Gerry Hammond  
 Charlotte Jackson  
 Mary Lou Woodhouse  
 David Breckenridge  
 Sue Boland  
 Easton "Kel" Kelsey.



Next “Epistle” Deadline is  
 (The “Third Thursday”)  
**January 18, 2018**



Frequently our church will take photos or videos of members, including children and youth, involved in church related activities. These photos and videos may be used in church-produced publications, on our website or on social media including but not limited to Facebook. If you do not wish to have photos or videos of yourself or your child used, please see Vicki Sherry in the church office to sign an exclusion form.



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Church Service Sundays at 9:30 a.m.

Church Office Hours: 9:00-3:30  
Monday through Friday (Monday-Thursday in July and August)

Rev. Gregory J. Rupright, Pastor  
Rev. Dr. John N. Cedarleaf, Pastor Emeritus  
Administrative Assistant: Vicki Sherry  
Church Moderator: Steve Smith  
Organist: Beatrice Benedict  
Director of Music Ministries: Heather Watras  
Business Administrator: Sue Brooks  
Wedding Coordinator: Betty Shamblen  
Christian Education Teacher: Jen Lessard



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26 East Church Street  
Fairport, NY, 14450