



Gabriel's Horn Newsletter

...Heralding the Good News to our neighbors...

www.eastbloomfieldcongregationalchurch.org

January/February 2021

*** Our Sunday worship service is at 10:00 AM ***

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Ever-living God, you inscribe our names in your book of life so that we may share in the first fruits of salvation. Grant that we may acknowledge Christ as our redeemer and, trusting in him, be confident that none of your own will be lost or forgotten. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen.

FROM THE PASTOR

"Do all things without murmuring and arguing, so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world"

Philippians 2:14-15



It is a new year! I don't know that we have ever been so grateful to see the calendar turn over to another year. 2020 was certainly a year like no other. COVID dominated everything. You could not turn on the TV or radio without hearing about it. It affected all that we did.

Now, we have two vaccines. We will be receiving them in the near future. We may be able to look at our lives from a more "normal" perspective. But, whether or when we will be able to attain such a perspective, we can always look to scripture for a roadmap to our actions.

This passage from Philippians is such a guide. "Do all things without murmuring and arguing." I think the murmuring is a reference to talking behind someone's back. Neither that action nor arguing are on God's list of preferred behaviors. Just the opposite. If you are going to speak with someone, murmuring or arguing is not the way to do it. Talking clearly (hard to do behind a mask) and kindly is the way.

Remember what used to be called the Golden Rule: do unto others as you would have them do to you. In all our interactions with others, remember they are God's children. Treat them as you would like them to treat you. That is not talking about them behind their backs, or arguing with them. It is finding a way to get through the disagreements without losing respect (assuming it was there from the beginning.) It is seeking to find the good and not focus on the bad. The idea behind this is so we shine...shine like stars. So the radiance of Christ is evident in our relationships with all.

Is this world the way we would like it? No, of course not. But, we can make a difference by shining like stars....shining light into the world.

May your brilliance never be extinguished!

Blessings,

Sue

Prayer Requests:

As we go through the next couple of months, please keep the following people in your thoughts and prayers:

The Glamack family * Donna Magraw * the Eddy family* Mary Martin * Bev Clark * the Perkins family * the Tyler family * Jennifer * Terry * the Gliewe family * Lori * the Sickmond family * Kay * the Messner family * Helen * Don Shultz * Autumn * Catherine * the Brien family * the Stewart family * all places & people with Covid-19 * school teachers, students & school administration * all those in the medical fields * our country

Birthdays:

These people are celebrating birthdays during these two months. When you see them, please wish them a Happy Birthday!

January:

11 Isaac Barton,
28 Don Shultz

February:

1 Lujza Rockcastle,
14 Mick Eddy,
17 Bob Sickmond,
24 June Bartos,
29 Nancy Stewart



Church News:

● **Annual Church Meeting:** The annual meeting of the church will be Sunday, January 24, 2021. We will review 2020 church records, approve the 2021 budget and elect the council moderator for 2021 meetings. All church members and friends of the church are encouraged to attend. The meeting will start shortly after that Sunday's worship service; there will be a light lunch prior.

● **Worship Services:** We continue to be in the sanctuary for our Sunday worship service! It has been going well (we've been worshipping in the sanctuary since the beginning of September). Such a comfort to be back in our familiar surroundings.

It does look different as we've got the pews set up for social distancing. But we are using the church hymnals and bibles and singing along with the music. Yes, we're still wearing masks and keeping social distancing. But, we're here! Please consider joining us. All are welcome.

For those who cannot attend, or who are still not yet comfortable attending public services, we continue to tape and post Sunday's service that Sunday afternoon on our Facebook page. The videos can be viewed at any time (along with all the other videos we've posted) by accessing the Video tab on our Facebook page (link: <https://www.facebook.com/First-Congregational-Church-Bloomfield-NY-357770224341588/>).

In addition, Pastor Sue continues to lead a weekly prayer session. These will be live-streamed on our Facebook page on Thursdays at 8:30 am. The prayer service can be viewed live or accessed later by going to our Facebook page's Video section.

● **Choir:** As of the first Sunday in Advent, the choir is back to aid in Sunday worship. They sang a regular anthem each Advent Sunday and also had an anthem to present to the congregation during the Christmas Eve service.

As this was a successful return (in the opinion of the choir, the choir director, the pastor and the congregation), the choir will continue to sing every Sunday. So, Wednesday night choir rehearsals are back on. The choir, appropriately masked and seated at a proper social distance, now meets at 7:30 PM in Fellowship Hall. Come join them!

● **Food Cupboard:** As a continuing reminder, the food cupboards most needed items right now are toilet paper, hand soap, laundry detergent, dish soap and hearty soups. Because of shopping & purchasing restrictions (rationing), these are the hardest items to keep stocked. So please, buy an extra item on your next shopping trip and leave it in the box in the church entryway. Your donations are always well appreciated.

Reoccurring Calendar Events (Monthly):

● **Woman's Breakfast:** meets the first Sunday of every month at Brady J's restaurant (Bloomfield) at 8:00 AM. All interested women are invited; being a member of the church is not a requirement. For this period, the group meets **January 3rd** and **February 7th**.

● **Special Offering:** An extra offering plate is passed on the first Sunday of every month. This is a special offering to support church outreach to the local community and local missions and is kept in the Benevolence Fund for future distributions. For this period, the offerings are on Sunday, **January 3rd** and **February 7th**. The offering basket will be

available at our live service. However, if you are unable to attend, please contact Janice Kelly, our Benevolence Secretary, to make arrangements for your gift.

Please note that if you are unable to attend worship service yet you wish to make a regular donation to the church's mission, you can mail your donation to Marilyn Shafer (please call 585-935-1538 for her address).

● **Church Council:** The next meeting will be **January 24th** after regular worship service. As mentioned before, this meeting is the annual meeting. Starting in February and until the summer hiatus, council will meet the first Sunday of every month.

● **Choir Practice:** The choir is now rehearsing on Wednesday evenings at 7:30 PM. They are masked and, with the practice now held in Fellowship Hall, appropriately distanced. In addition, the choir also meets on Sunday mornings at 9:30 PM. Please, come join them as they are always looking for singers.

● **Men's Breakfast:** The men's breakfast is on hiatus until further notice. We will notify all when the men begin regularly meeting again.

January & February Specific Calendar Events:

● **Sunday, January 3 (8:00 AM):** Women's breakfast at Brady J's (24 Maple Avenue, Bloomfield)

● **Thursday, January 6:** Epiphany, commonly known as Three Kings' Day in the United States, is on January 6. It celebrates the three wise men's visit to baby Jesus and also remembers his baptism.

● **Thursday, January 21 (10:30 AM):** Book club meets in Fellowship Hall; they will discuss the novel *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood.

Amazon synopsis: *The Handmaid's Tale* is a novel of such power that the reader will be unable to forget its images and its forecast. Set in the near future, it describes life in what was once the United States and is now called the Republic of Gilead, a monotheocracy that has reacted to social unrest and a sharply declining birthrate by reverting to, and going beyond, the repressive intolerance of the original Puritans. The regime takes the Book of Genesis absolutely at its word, with bizarre consequences for the women and men in its population.

The story is told through the eyes of Offred, one of the unfortunate Handmaids under the new social order. In condensed but eloquent prose, by turns cool-eyed, tender, despairing,

passionate, and wry, she reveals to us the dark corners behind the establishment's calm facade, as certain tendencies now in existence are carried to their logical conclusions. *The Handmaid's Tale* is funny, unexpected, horrifying, and altogether convincing. It is at once scathing satire, dire warning, and a tour de force. It is Margaret Atwood at her best.

● **Sunday, January 24 (11:30 AM):** Annual Meeting of the First Congregational Church. We will have a light lunch prior to the meeting start.

● **Monday, February 15 (2:00 - 7:00 PM):** Red Cross blood drive (Fellowship Hall).

We accept donors with appointments and those who just walk-in. Please help support the Red Cross by donating this day.

● **Tuesday, February 16:** Shrove Tuesday

● **Wednesday, February 17:** Ash Wednesday. A special Ash Wednesday service will be held in the sanctuary starting at 7:00 PM.

● **Thursday, February 18 (10:30 AM):** Book club meets in Fellowship Hall; they will discuss the book *Thick as Thieves* by Sandra Brown.

Amazon synopsis: *In this tantalizing thriller from a #1 New York Times bestselling author, a woman uncovers lifelong secrets as she searches for the truth behind her father's involvement in a heist gone wrong.*

Twenty years ago in the dead of night, four seemingly random individuals pulled the ultimate heist and almost walked away with half a million dollars. But by daybreak, their plan had been shot to hell. One of them was in the hospital. One was in jail. One was dead. And one got away with it.

Arden Maxwell, the daughter of the man who disappeared all those years ago—presumably with the money, after murdering his accomplice—has never reconciled with her father's abandonment of her and her sister. After countless personal setbacks she decides to return to her family home near mysterious Caddo Lake, and finally get answers to the many questions that torment her. Little does she know, two of her father's co-conspirators—a war hero and a corrupt district attorney—are watching her every move.

Ledge Burnet, a rebellious teen at the time of the heist, evaded his jail sentence by enlisting in the army. Now he's back in town to care for his ailing father—and to keep his eye on the county's corrupt district attorney, whom he suspects was the real murderer. Although the two are bound to silence because of the crime they committed together, each has spent years waiting and hoping that the other will make a fatal misstep. But the arrival of their elusive accomplice's daughter, Arden, who may know more about the missing money than she's

telling, sets them both on red alert. She ignites Ledge's determination to expose the D.A.'s treachery . . . and sparks a desire he wishes to deny.

- **Sunday, February 21:** First Sunday in Lent.
- **Sunday, February 28:** Fourth Sunday in Lent.

Church Membership:

Please call Pastor Sue Walters at (716) 983-5760 or e-mail her at revst88@gmail.com for information on joining the First Congregational Church of East Bloomfield or to arrange Home Communion for a shut in.

Advertising Your Church Event:

To advertise any church event, please contact Alice McConnell, 8291 Wesley Road, Bloomfield, 14469; (585) 703-1449 or e-mail her at beehive270@gmail.com. Please ensure you get the written details of the event to Alice 4 weeks before the date of the event.

*O God of light and peace,
whose glory, shining in the child of Bethlehem,
still draws the nations to yourself:
dispel the darkness that shrouds our path,
that we may come
to kneel before Christ in true worship,
offer him our hearts and souls,
and return from his presence to live as he has taught. Amen.*

Lectionary Readings

DATE	FIRST READING	PSALM	SECOND READING	GOSPEL
New Years Day January 1, 2021	Ecclesiastes 3:1-13	Psalms 8	Revelation 21:1-6a	Matthew 25:31-46
January 3, 2021	Jeremiah 31:7-14 or <i>Sirach 24:1-12</i>	Psalms 147:12-20 or <i>Wisdom of Solomon 10:15-21</i>	Ephesians 1:3-14	John 1:(1-9), 10-18
Epiphany of the Lord January 6, 2021	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalms 72:1-7, 10-14	Ephesians 3:1-12	Matthew 2:1-12
Baptism of the Lord January 10, 2021	Genesis 1:1-5	Psalms 29	Acts 19:1-7	Mark 1:4-11
January 17, 2021	1 Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20)	Psalms 139:1-6, 13-18	1 Corinthians 6:12-20	John 1:43-51
January 24, 2021	Jonah 3:1-5, 10	Psalms 62:5-12	1 Corinthians 7:29-31	Mark 1:14-20
January 31, 2021	Deuteronomy 18:15-20	Psalms 111	1 Corinthians 8:1-13	Mark 1:21-28
February 2, 2021	Malachi 3:1-4	Psalms 84 or <i>Psalms 24:7-10</i>	Hebrews 2:14-18	Luke 2:22-40
February 7, 2021	Isaiah 40:21-31	Psalms 147:1-11, 20c	1 Corinthians 9:16-23	Mark 1:29-39
Transfiguration Sunday February 14, 2021	2 Kings 2:1-12	Psalms 50:1-6	2 Corinthians 4:3-6	Mark 9:2
Ash Wednesday February 17, 2021	Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or <i>Isaiah 58:1-12</i>	Psalms 51:1-17	2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10	Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
First Sunday in Lent February 21, 2021	Genesis 9:8-17	Psalms 25:1-10	1 Peter 3:18-22	Mark 1:9-15
Second Sunday in Lent February 28, 2021	Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16	Psalms 22:23-31	Romans 4:13-25	Mark 8:31-38 or <i>Mark 9:2-9</i>

* *Italicized readings, complementary to the standard reading, may be used with, or in place of it.*

Picture Us

As mentioned before, the choir is back! Here is a typical view of the choir as they present a worshipful anthem to the congregation.



Thanks to the work of the congregation, the sanctuary was once again transformed into a wonderful Christmas venue. Here is the church sanctuary on Christmas Eve (left) and the altar table with all the candles:



*God of wilderness and water,
your Son was baptized and tempted as we are.
Guide us through this season,
that we may not avoid struggle,
but open ourselves to blessing,
through the cleansing depths of repentance
and the heaven-rending words of the Spirit. Amen.*

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