



Gabriel's Horn Newsletter

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

Website:

www.eastbloomfieldcongregationalchurch.org

E-mail: 1st.Cong.Church@gmail.com

January/February 2024

✽ **Our Sunday worship service begins at 10:00 a.m.** ✽

CHURCH STAFF

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✦ From the Pastor ✦

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1:1-5

This is a dark time of year. Although we know we are gaining a little bit of light each day, it still feels dark. When we have to turn on the lights at 5 p.m. and look at the long, dark



evening ahead of us, it can get depressing! This disorder, where we are severely suffering from the early onset of darkness, is known as seasonal affective disorder. It is routed in the length of darkness that we endure on a daily basis. We can tend to turn inward, and ruminate on all our perceived mistakes, from little to large. We can turn them over in our minds, wondering why we didn't do or say something different. We can be experts at beating ourselves up!

Into our darkness, a light shines! We do not have to live in darkness. There is another choice. Jesus was born into our world to conquer the darkness. He came to shine the light of His love into our darkest corners. He offers his light of forgiveness so we can put our perceived failures behind us. We do not need to turn those actions or words over in our minds. They have been wiped from our slates. God, through His Son, Jesus Christ, has taken them away. We have the chance to begin again.

This is the New Year: 2024. It is a time when many of us make resolutions. Sometimes we can keep them, sometimes not. But there is one resolution that is directly tied to Jesus' entry into our world. He came to show us the many aspects of God's love. The one I just mentioned was forgiveness. When we ask for forgiveness, we receive it. How is that resolution tied to this? We now need to forgive ourselves. If our all knowing, all loving God sees us at our absolute worse, and still forgives us, what keeps us from forgiving ourselves? Is it stubbornness? Is it the way that we look at ourselves, believing we don't deserve forgiveness? Whatever it is, in God, through God, we can let go of it. God already has. May your 2024 be filled with the Light of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Sue

**** 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.****

✦ Church News & Updates ✦

● **Annual Meeting:** The church will have it's annual meeting on **Sunday, January 28th**, after the worship service. We will review the events and activities of 2023, elect a council moderator, select committee members and prepare for church operations for 2024. All members and friends of the church are welcome to attend.



● **Free Friday Suppers Resume:** The church will host a free dinner on the last Friday of the month January through April. For this period, the dates are **Friday, January 26th** and **Friday, February 23th**. We will be serving from 5 - 6:30 p.m. The meal is free and open to all in the community, so come and enjoy some good food and fellowship. If you wish to sponsor a meal, or help with preparation or serving, please add your name to the sign up sheet in Fellowship Hall or contact a church member to offer your assistance.

● **Ash Wednesday:** Lent begins on **Wednesday, February 14th**. The church will hold an Ash Wednesday service at 6:45 p.m. All are welcome.

● **Lenten Bible Study:** Pastor Sue leads a Bible study for Lent covering the Gospel of Mark. The group will meet after the worship service beginning **February 18th** and meet **February 25th**, March 10th, March 17th and March 24th. Each session will be about an hour. There is no sign-up list for the Bible study, please feel free to just come after the service. Pastor Sue hopes to see you there and looks forward to joining in the study and discussion.

● **News From the Trustees:** The trustees are updating security at the church and are installing doorbells at the two main entrances. In addition, for our safety, the door leading to the Route 5 & 20 parking lot has been upgraded to have a safety exit. These improvements will aid in the security and safety of our members and friends.

● **Women's and Men's Breakfast Dates and Times:** Both the women's and men's breakfast gatherings are permanently changed to Mondays at 9:00 a.m. The women will meet on the first Monday while the men will meet on the last Monday. Both groups will meet at Brady J's restaurant here in Bloomfield (at 24 Maple Avenue). Please note these gatherings are not just for members of the church; all are invited.

● **Christian Education Fundraising:** Christian Ed chose to have our major fund raiser be for something local. We chose, for 2023, to help the children from our school district and did so. With the aid of the Bloomfield Elementary School social worker, we decided to provide funds for snacks for the children without the means to bring their own to school. These are the children that receive back pack foods on Fridays to help them get through the weekends. We had an outstanding response from the congregation and were able to provide the program with over \$1000, which was so very appreciated. Our heartfelt thanks go out to the congregation who donated so generously.

● **Annual Stewardship Campaign:** The campaign ended successfully (with two new pledgers joining the congregation) and the trustees planned our church budget for 2024. Our thanks to all the people who pledged to support the church and its mission for the year 2024. Blessings to all.

**** God of new beginnings, you wipe away our tears and call us to care for one another. Give us eyes to see your gifts, hearts to embrace all creation, and hands to serve you every day of our lives. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen. ****

✦ Birthdays ✦

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



January:

11 Isaac Barton

February:

1 Lujza Rockcastle

17 Bob Sickmond

29 Nancy Stewart

**** God of grace and glory, you call us with your voice of flame to be your people, faithful and courageous. As your beloved Son embraced his mission in the waters of baptism, inspire us with the fire of your Spirit to join in his transforming work. We ask this in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.****

✦ Reoccurring Calendar Events (Monthly) ✦

● **Special Offering:** An extra offering plate is passed on the first Sunday of every month. This special offering supports church outreach to the local community and local missions and is kept in the Benevolence Fund for future distributions. The offering basket will be available at our live service. For this period, the special offerings will be on **Sunday, January 7th**, and **Sunday, February 4th**. 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 wish to make a donation to the church (pledge, benevolence or faith), you can mail your donation to Marilyn Shafer at 12 Howard Avenue, Bloomfield, NY, 14469.

● **Church Council:** The church council meets the first Sunday of each month after regular church services. However, there are no regular council meetings this period. Regular council meetings will resume in March.

● **Woman's Breakfast:** meets the first Monday of every month at **Brady J's** restaurant (24 Maple Avenue, Bloomfield) at 9:00 a.m. All interested women are invited; being a member of

the church is not a requirement. Due to the holidays, the women will meet only on **Monday, February 5th.**

● **Choir Practice:** The choir rehearses every Wednesday evening at 7:30 p.m. In addition, the choir meets on Sundays at 9:15 a.m. for rehearsal. As always, they are looking for singers and all are welcome.

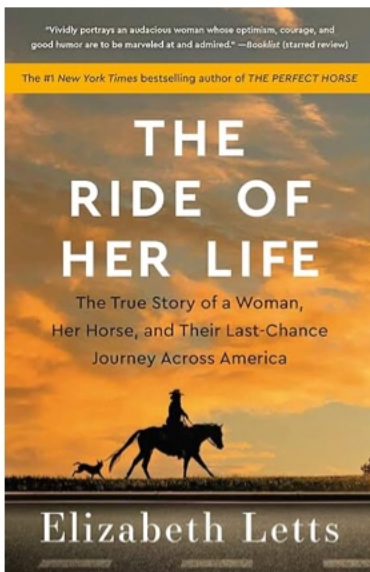
● **Men's Breakfast:** The men meet the last Monday of every month at **Brady J's** restaurant (24 Maple Avenue, Bloomfield) at 9:00 a.m. All interested men are invited; being a member of the church isn't a requirement. For this period, the men will meet on **Monday, January 29th,** and **Monday, February 26th.**

✦ January and February Specific Calendar Events ✦

- **Monday, January 1:** New Year's Day
- **Saturday, January 6:** Epiphany
- **Sunday, January 7:** Baptism of the Lord
- **Monday, January 15:** Martin Luther King Jr. Day



- **Thursday, January 18 (9:30 a.m.):** The church book club meets in Pastor Sue's office; they will discuss the novel *The Ride of Her Life* by Elizabeth Letts.

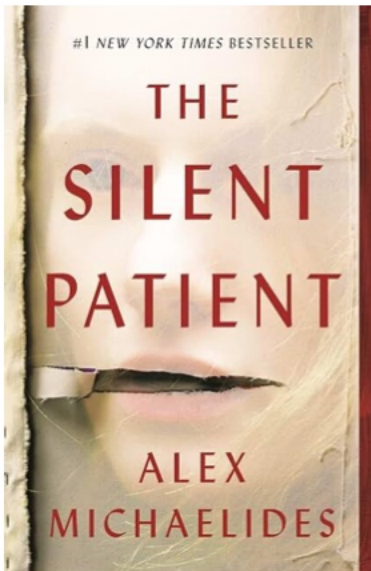


Amazon synopsis:

In 1954, sixty-three-year-old Maine farmer Annie Wilkins embarked on an impossible journey. She had no money and no family, she had just lost her farm, and her doctor had given her only two years to live. But Annie wanted to see the Pacific Ocean before she died. She ignored her doctor's advice to move into the county charity home. Instead, she bought a cast-off brown gelding named Tarzan, donned men's dungarees, and headed south in mid-November, hoping to beat the snow. Annie had little idea what to expect beyond her rural crossroads; she didn't even have a map. But she did have her ex-racehorse, her faithful mutt, and her own unflinching belief that Americans would treat a stranger with kindness.

Annie, Tarzan, and her dog, Depeche Toi, rode straight into a world transformed by the rapid construction of modern highways. Between 1954 and 1956, the three travelers pushed through blizzards, forded rivers, climbed mountains, and clung to the narrow shoulder as cars whipped by them at terrifying speeds. Annie rode more than four thousand miles, through America's big cities and small towns. Along the way, she met ordinary people and celebrities—from Andrew Wyeth (who sketched Tarzan) to Art Linkletter and Groucho Marx. She received many offers—a permanent home at a riding stable in New Jersey, a job at a gas station in rural Kentucky, even a marriage proposal from a Wyoming rancher. In a decade when car ownership nearly tripled, when television's influence was expanding fast, when homeowners began locking their doors, Annie and her four-footed companions inspired an outpouring of neighborliness in a rapidly changing world.

- **Monday, January 29 (9:00 a.m.):** Men's breakfast at Brady J's.
- **Friday, February 2:** Groundhog Day
- **Monday, February 5 (9:00 a.m.):** Women's breakfast at Brady J's
- **Sunday, February 11:** Transfiguration Sunday
- **Tuesday, February 13:** Shrove Tuesday/Mardi Gras
- **Wednesday, February 14:** Ash Wednesday (Lent begins). A worship service begins at 6:45 p.m. in the sanctuary.
- **Wednesday, February 14:** Valentine's Day



- **Thursday, February 15, 2023 (9:30 a.m.):** The church book club meets in Pastor Sue's office; they will discuss the novel *The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides.

Amazon synopsis:

Alicia Berenson's life is seemingly perfect. A famous painter married to an in-demand fashion photographer, she lives in a grand house with big windows overlooking a park in one of London's most desirable areas. One evening her husband Gabriel returns home late from a fashion shoot, and Alicia shoots him five times in the face, and then never speaks another word.

Alicia's refusal to talk, or give any kind of explanation, turns a domestic tragedy into something far grander, a mystery that captures the public imagination and casts Alicia into notoriety. The price of her art skyrockets, and she, the silent patient, is hidden away from the tabloids and spotlight at the Grove, a secure forensic unit in North London.

Theo Faber is a criminal psychotherapist who has waited a long time for the opportunity to work with Alicia. His determination to get her to talk and unravel the mystery of why she shot her husband takes him down a twisting path into his own motivations—a search for the truth that threatens to consume him....

- **Monday, February 19:** Presidents' Day
- **Monday, February 26 (9:00 a.m.):** Men's breakfast at Brady J's.

✦ Picture Us ✦

● **Decorating for Christmas Season:** Members of the church were hard at work preparing and decorating the sanctuary for the Advent and Christmas celebrations. As usual, the sanctuary is a beautiful, magical place when the season of Christmas is near.



- **Results:** And here is the sanctuary all dressed up for the season. It was so beautiful as we progressed through the Advent season.



The poinsettias were donated by Gloria Duffy for the Duffy family and Joan Chase; by Mona Eddy in memory of Mick and Richard; by Donna Magraw for Lee & Mona Moll; by Mary Martin in memory of Kenneth Martin; by Alice McConnell in memory of Bob and Lloyd McConnell; by Nancy Stewart in memory of Richard & Helen Robinson and Gary Stewart and by Joe & Sue Walters for Hareta Smith and Bill & Jean Blake.

*** The church shines in welcome in the dark winter night. ***



● **Christmas at the ARC:** The Christian Education committee coordinated a Christmas party and caroling at the Bloomfield ARC. There were stocking gifts for the residents, cookies for all and, of course, caroling. The puppets even joined in as they helped prepare the stockings and sung Christmas carols with the church members. It was a great way to celebrate.



O God,
you spoke your word
and revealed your good news in Jesus, the Christ.
Fill all creation with that word again,
so that by proclaiming your joyful promises to all nations
and singing of your glorious hope to all peoples,
we may become one living body,
your incarnate presence on the earth. Amen.

✦ Miscellaneous ✦

- **Pastor Office Hours:** Pastor Sue has open door office hours every Thursday. She leads morning prayer from her office beginning at 9:00 a.m. which is streamed live on the church's Facebook page. Pastor Sue will remain in her office until 1:00 p.m. and, as always, drop-ins for a cup of coffee or tea are welcome. She is also available at other times by appointment; please call (716) 983-5760 to make arrangements.
- **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 A Church Event:** To advertise any church event, please contact Alice McConnell, 8291 Wesley Road, Bloomfield, 14469; (585) 402-5397 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.
- **Worship Services:** For those who cannot attend the in-person service, we continue to record and post portions of the worship service on our Facebook page. Please note the posts are audio only (similar to a podcast) and we are recording only the scripture readings and the sermon (and sometimes the song offering from the choir). The podcasts can be listened to 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/>).
- **Food Cupboard:** As a continuing reminder, please keep the food cupboard's needs in your minds and hearts. We collect/deliver for the cupboard on a monthly basis, however, donations are welcome at any time.

*Righteous God,
in humility and repentance
we bring our failures in caring, helping, and loving,
we bring the pain we have caused other,
we bring the injustice in society of which we are a part,
to the transforming power of your grace.
Grant us the courage to accept the healing you offer
and to turn again toward the sunrise of your reign,
that we may walk with you in the promise of peace
you have willed for all the children of the earth,
and have made known to us in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

✦ Lectionary Readings for January & February ✦

	First reading	Psalm	Second reading	Gospel
January 6, 2024 (Epiphany)	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14	Ephesians 3:1-12	Matthew 2:1-12
January 7, 2024	Genesis 1:1-5	Psalm 29	Acts 19:1-7	Mark 1:4-11
January 14, 2024	1 Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20)	Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18	1 Corinthians 6:12-20	John 1:43-51
January 21, 2024	Jonah 3:1-5, 10	Psalm 62:5-12	1 Corinthians 7:29-31	Mark 1:14-20
January 28, 2024	Deuteronomy 18:15-20	Psalm 111	1 Corinthians 8:1-13	Mark 1:21-28
February 4, 2024	Isaiah 40:21-31	Psalm 147:1-11, 20c	1 Corinthians 9:16-23	Mark 1:29-39
February 11, 2024	2 Kings 2:1-12	Psalm 50:1-6	2 Corinthians 4:3-6	Mark 9:2-9
February 14, 2024 (Ash Wednesday)	Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or <i>Isaiah 58:1-12</i>	Psalm 51:1-17	2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10	Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
February 18, 2024 (1st Sunday in Lent)	Genesis 9:8-17	Psalm 25:1-10	1 Peter 3:18-22	Mark 1:9-15
February 25, 2024 (2nd Sunday in Lent)	Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16	Psalm 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.

*** Gracious God, we come before you seeking renewal in the new year. Renew our minds, our hearts, and our spirits. May we be transformed by the power of your Holy Spirit, leaving behind the old and embracing the new that you have in store for us. Amen ***



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