

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
BENNINGTON, VERMONT

*Vermont's Colonial Shrine: Welcoming all to share God's light,
and proclaiming God's embracing love since 1806*

THE REV. KENNETH A. CLARKE, MINISTER
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST

MAY 17, 2020

PRELUDE *Larghetto from Concerto No. 12* - G.F. Handel

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

This is the day which the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

We gather to give thanks for all creation.

We gather to serve and live in God's word.

HYMN *Morning Has Broken* 469

(LYRICS REPRINTED AT THE END OF THE ORDER OF SERVICE)

Eleanor Farjeon, the author of nursery rhymes and singing games, wrote the text for this tune. It was first published in 1931. A more recent popular recording by Cat Stevens made the song popular in this country. *Bunessan* is a Gaelic melody first published in 1888. The present arrangement was made for the Christian Reformed Church hymnal in 1985.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

Eternal God, in whom we live and move and have our being, whose face is hidden from us by our sin, and whose mercy we forget: cleanse us from all offenses, and deliver us from proud thoughts and vain desires; that humbly we may draw near to thee, confessing our faults, confiding in thy grace, and finding in thee our refuge and our strength, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Acts 17:22-31 p. 902

HYMN *Let the Whole Creation Cry* 256

(LYRICS REPRINTED AT THE END OF THE ORDER OF SERVICE)

This hymn is based on Psalm 148. The liberal views of the author, Stopford Brooke, a priest in Ireland and London, led him to leave the Anglican church in 1880. Jacob Hintze, town musician of Barnum, Germany, may have written the tune, first published in 1678. J. S. Bach harmonized it.

SECOND LESSON John 14:15-21 p. 877

SERMON "Agnostos Theos"

HYMN *Oh, Give Us Pleasure in the Flowers Today*

(LYRICS REPRINTED AT THE END OF THE ORDER OF SERVICE)

Robert Frost (1875- 1963) was a New England poet of simple, colloquial verse. He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for New Hampshire in 1924, for *Collected Poems* in 1931, and for *A Further Range* in 1937. He served as professor of poetry at Amherst College for many years, and also taught at Harvard. This text comes from Frost's first collection of poems, *A Boy's Will*, 1913.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE CHURCH (Visitors are kindly requested to fill out one of the visitor's cards in the pew and put it in the offering plate.)

OFFERING

OFFERTORY *Adagio from Sonata da Chiesa* - Arcangelo Corelli

***DOXOLOGY (592) AND PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

CLOSING PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER (debts/debtors) p. 16

HYMN *Wherever I May Wander* 294

(LYRICS REPRINTED AT THE END OF THE ORDER OF SERVICE)

This children's hymn was written by Ann B. Snow in 1959. It was published in *Songs and Hymns for Primary Children* (1963) by Westminster Press for the United Presbyterian Church U.S.A. The tune NEW ENGLAND is a folk melody from New England. The present arrangement was first published by the Unitarian Universalist Association.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Tocatta in E minor* - Johann Pachelbel

Deacons on call this month are Marsha Pilachowski and Wendy Schmitt.

Worship and life at Old First is changing in response to the need to reduce activity as we work to get through the challenge of the COVID-19 presence in our life. Our prayers and thoughts go to everyone immediately affected and thanks go to all people who work to provide care and supply our needs in this time. An audio version of our weekly worship services can be found on the church's website by clicking on the "Worship" tab and selecting "Worship Here and Now". Or simply paste the following into your computer's browser at the top of the page:

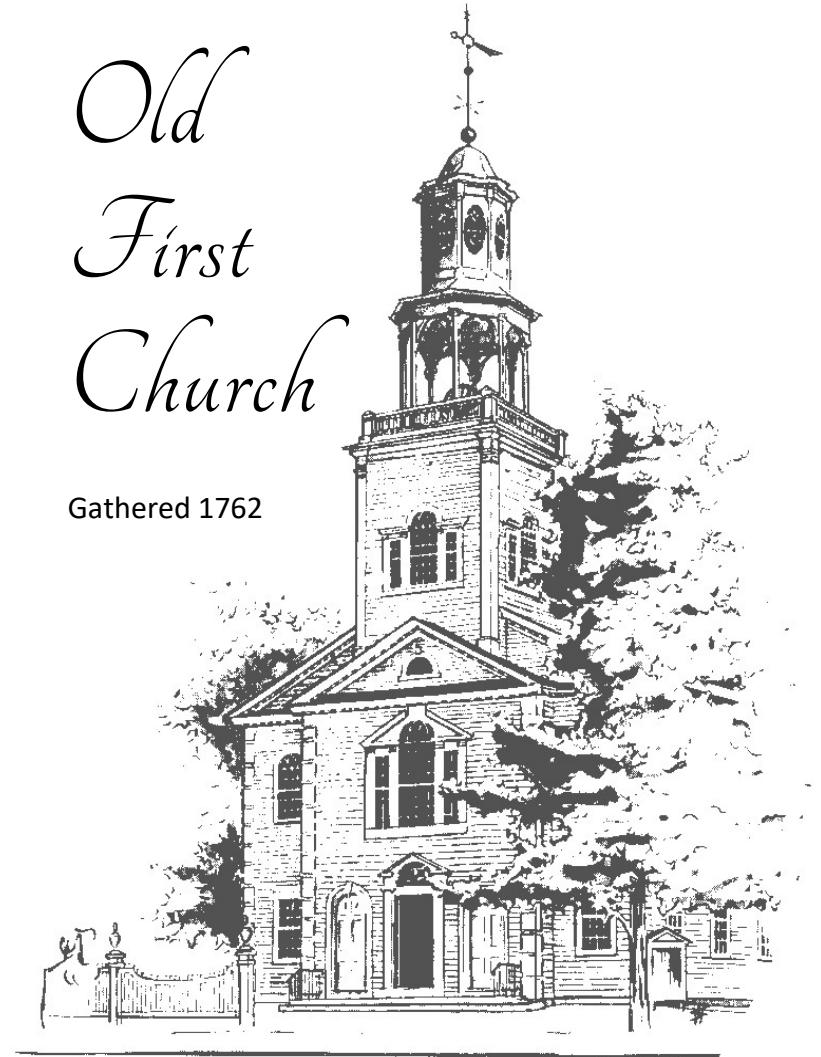
<http://oldfirstchurchbenn.org/worship/worship-here-and-now/>

If this link appears in blue on the device you are using to read this, you can also just "click on the link" and you will be there! The church office has been temporarily moved to the home of our office administrator. Please use email, phone or U.S. Mail for correspondence.

If you are interested in discussing matters of faith and want to inquire about Christian membership in the church, please contact Rev. Clarke. We welcome the chance to have you join us in our historic, but active-in-the-world, community of faith!

Old First Church

Gathered 1762



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

(OLD FIRST CHURCH)

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Morning Has Broken

Morning has broken like the first morning,
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird.
Praise for the singing!
Praise for the morning!
Praise for them, springing fresh from the Word!

Sweet the rain's new fall sunlit from heaven,
Like the first dew fall on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,
Sprung in completeness where God's feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight!
Mine is the morning
Born of the one light Eden saw play!
Praise with elation, praise every morning,
God's recreation of the new day!

Let the Whole Creation Cry

Let the whole creation cry,
"Glory to the Lord on high."
Heaven and earth, awake and sing,
"God is our eternal King."
Praise God, all ye hosts above,
ever shining forth in love;
sun and moon, uplift your voice;
night and stars, in God rejoice!

Men and women, young and old,
raise the anthem manifold;
join with children's songs of praise,
Worship God through length of days.
From the north to southern pole
Let the mighty chorus roll:
"Holy, holy, holy One,
glory be to God alone!"

Oh, Give Us Pleasure in the Flowers Today

Oh, give us pleasure in the flowers today;
And give us not to think so far away
As the uncertain harvest; keep us here
All simply in the springing of the year.

Oh, give us pleasure in the orchard white
Like nothing else by day, like ghosts by night;
And make us happy in the happy bees,
The swarm dilating round the perfect trees.

And make us happy in the darting bird
That suddenly above the bees is heard,
The meteor that thrusts in with needle bill,
And off a blossom in mid-air stands still.

For this is love and nothing else is love,
The which it is reserved for God above
To sanctify to what far ends he will,
But which it only needs that we fulfill.

Wherever I May Wander

Wherever I may wander,
Wherever I may be,
I'm certain of my Maker's love;
God's care is over me.
God made the great high mountains,
And made the wide blue sea;
God made the sky where airplanes fly;
God made the world, and me.

Throughout the whole creation
I see God's loving care
For everyone in every land,
God's children everywhere.
Wherever I may wander,
Wherever I may be,
I'm certain of my Maker's love
God's care is over me.

Acts 17:22-31

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’ Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

John 14:15-21

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”