

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 10, 2020

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**PRELUDE**                      *Now that Daylight Fills the Sky*                      - Dale Wood

**OPENING WORDS** (responsive)

Make a joyful noise to the Lord.

**Let us delight in the love and nurture around us.**

For this precious world and the wisdom that created all things.

**We give our thanks and praise and prayer.**

**HYMN**                      *Now Thank We All Our God*                      **555**

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

This hymn, known as the German Te Deum, was written near the close of the Thirty Years' War and is still sung in German churches on New Year's Eve. The text's author was a minister in Ellenburg, Saxony who in 1637 buried half of the 8,000 who died in an epidemic there. The tune first appeared with this text. The composer was a hymnal editor and adapted the harmonization of this tune from Mendelssohn's "Lobgesang".

**OPENING PRAYER** (unison)

Everlasting God, in whom we live and move and have our being: You have made us for yourself, so that our hearts are restless until they rest in you. Give us purity of heart and strength of purpose, that no selfish passion may hinder us from knowing your will, no weakness keep us from doing it; that in your light we may see light clearly, and in your service find perfect freedom. Free us from unconcern and haste, keep us in your wisdom and forgive our faults and failings. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

**ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND GLORIA PATRI (579)**

**FIRST LESSON**                      Psalm 31:1-5; 15-16                      p. 439

**HYMN**                      *How Happy Is Each Child of God*                      **239**

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

The text is a paraphrase of Psalm 128 by Dwyne M. Mounger. While a pastor in Valdosta, Georgia, Mounger tried to remain faithful to the Common Lectionary's choice of Psalms and scripture lessons for Sundays. There were psalms that *The Hymnbook* (1955) did not have either to be read responsively or to be sung. He and his associate began to paraphrase the psalms and set them to familiar tunes. This text was one of those paraphrases. It became a favorite of the congregation and was sung on Christian Family Sunday every year.

**SECOND LESSON**                      Acts 7:55-60                      p. 891

**SERMON**                      Duck Tales

**HYMN**                      *Now I Recall My Childhood*

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

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was a Hindu poet, dramatist, musician, painter, and author of religious and philosophic writings. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 and was active in educational and social reform in India. Knighted by the British in 1915, he renounced the honor in 1919, in protest against repressive measures by the British.

**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**                      Elegy on "Old One Hundredth"                      - Russell Schulz

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

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

**HYMN**                      *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*                      **376**

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

This hymn was written by Charles Wesley and was first published in 1747. Wesley was the 18<sup>th</sup> child of Samuel and Susanna ("She Must Have Been a Saint") Wesley. Charles was an Anglican priest, dedicated to the Methodist movement, and he wrote between 6,000 and 6,500 hymns. Rowland Hugh Pritchard wrote the Welsh tune *Hyfrydol* in 1831 before his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. He was an assistant loom tender for the Welsh Flannel Manufacturing Company. An interesting point about the melody is that with one exception, it lies within the first five notes of the scale.

**BENEDICTION**

**POSTLUDE**                      *Pasticcio*                      - Jean Langlais

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:

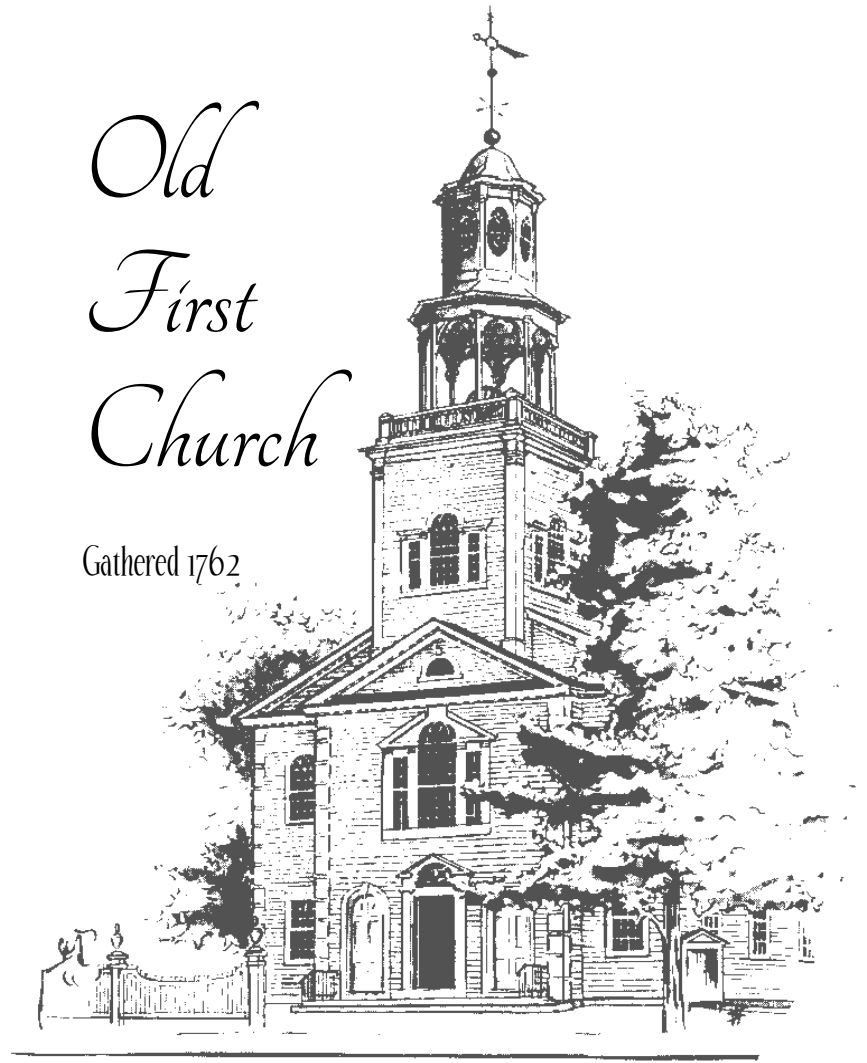
<http://oldfirstchurchbenn.org/worship/worship-here-and-now/>

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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### *Now Thank We All Our God*

Now thank we all our God  
With heart and hands and voices,  
Who wondrous things hath done,  
In whom this world rejoices;  
Who, from our mothers' arms,  
Hath blessed us on our way  
With countless gifts of love,  
And still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God  
Through all our life be near us,  
With ever joyful hearts  
And blessed peace to cheer us;  
And keep us in God's grace,  
And guide us when perplexed,  
And free us from all ills  
In this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God,  
Who reigns in highest heaven,  
To Father and to Son  
And Spirit now be given.  
The one eternal God,  
Whom heaven and earth adore,  
The God who was, and is,  
And shall be ever more.

### *How Happy Is Each Child of God*

1. How happy is each child of God  
Who walks within God's ways!  
You'll reap good fruit from honest work,  
And joy in life always.

2. With fruitful spouse you'll parent now  
Your children strong, adored;  
Like olive shoots they shall surround  
Your laden table board!

3. How happy is the family  
Who honors God above!  
The Lord shall send all help and grace  
To bless your home with love.

4. May God's great peace, good health and joy  
Forever fill your home;  
May you and your descendants know  
Forever God's shalom!

### *Now I Recall My Childhood*

Now I recall my childhood when the sun  
Burst to my bedside with the day's surprise;  
Faith in the marvelous bloomed anew each dawn,  
Flowers bursting fresh within my heart each day.

Looking upon the world with simple joy,  
On insects, birds, and beasts, and common weeds,  
The grass and clouds had fullest wealth of awe;  
My mother's voice gave meaning to the stars.

Now when I turn to think of coming death,  
I find life's song in star-songs of the night,  
In rise of curtains and new morning light,  
In life reborn in fresh surprise of love.

### *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*

1. Love divine, all loves excelling,  
Joy of heaven to earth come down,  
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,  
All Thy faithful mercies crown!  
Jesus, Thou art all compassion,  
Pure, unbounded love Thou art;  
Visit us with Thy salvation,  
Enter every trembling heart.

2. Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit  
Into every troubled breast!  
Let us all in Thee inherit,  
Let us find the promised rest;  
Take away the love of sinning;  
Alpha and Omega be;  
End of faith, as its beginning,  
Set our hearts at liberty.

3. Come, Almighty to deliver,  
Let us all Thy life receive;  
Suddenly return, and never,  
Never more Thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
Serve Thee as Thy host above;  
Pray, and praise Thee without ceasing,  
Glory in Thy perfect love.

4. Finish, then, Thy new creation;  
Pure and spotless let us be;  
Let us see Thy great salvation  
Perfectly restored in Thee;  
Changed from glory into glory,  
Till in heaven we take our place,  
Till we cast our crowns before Thee  
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.

## **Psalm 31**

In you, O LORD, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me.

Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily. Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me.

You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me,

take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge.

Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.

My times are in your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.

Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love.

## **Acts 7:55-60**

But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died.