

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

OCTOBER 4, 2020

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PRELUDE Rhosymedre ("Lovely") - Ralph Vaughn Williams

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

The presence of God is love and peace.

Grant us the gifts of faith and service.

Be with us, O Lord, in our work and home.

Stay with us and be our help in all times.

HYMN *O God, Our Faithful God* 277

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

This hymn originally in German was written by Johann Heermann and titled "A Daily Prayer." It was published in *Devoti Musica Hordis, Hauss- und Hertz-Musica* (1630). Heermann (1585-1647) was born in Raudten, Silesia, the youngest and only surviving child of five born to his parents. As a child, Heermann was quite ill and his mother vowed if God would spare him, she would dedicate the child's life to the ministry.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

Almighty and most merciful God,

we confess that we have sinned against you

in what we have done

and in what we have left undone.

We have not trusted in your goodness

and have allowed fear to rule us.

We have been silent when we should have spoken,

we have been deaf to the calls of the poor,

and unresponsive when we should have acted more decisively.

We have not lived with the same grace

that you have always shown us.

Forgive us and help us to serve you

by serving your world with generous spirits.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20 p. 58

HYMN *The Heavens Above Declare God's Praise* 166

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

This new metrical paraphrase of Psalm 19:1-6 is by Christopher L. Webber. It was first published in *A Metrical Psalter* (1986). The tune, *Caithnes*, is from the Scottish Psalter (1635) with harmonization from *The English Hymnal* (1906).

SECOND LESSON Matthew 21:33-46 p. 803

SERMON Then God Spoke

HYMN *The World Abounds with God's Free Grace* 556

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

The author, David Mehrrens, was a researcher for DuPont in Waynesboro, Virginia. This was the first publication of his 1980 hymn. The tune is from G. F. Handel's oratorio *Susanna* (1748) where it was the setting for the aria, "Ask if yon damask rose be sweet." C Winfred Douglas wrote the present harmony for *The Hymnal 1940*. He was an Episcopal priest and editor of two Protestant Episcopal hymnals in 1916 and 1940.

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 *The Call from A Cycle of Mystical Songs*
- Ralph Vaughn Williams

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

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

HYMN *The Spacious Firmament on High*

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

Joseph Addison (1672-1719) was an English poet, politician, public official, and essayist, major contributor to *The Spectator*, 1711-12, for which he furnished 274 of the 555 daily issues. This hymn has been in all editions of the Protestant Episcopal Hymnal since 1789.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *On the tune Dundee* - Healey Willan

Deacons on call this month are Bill Gordon and Marie Guariniello.

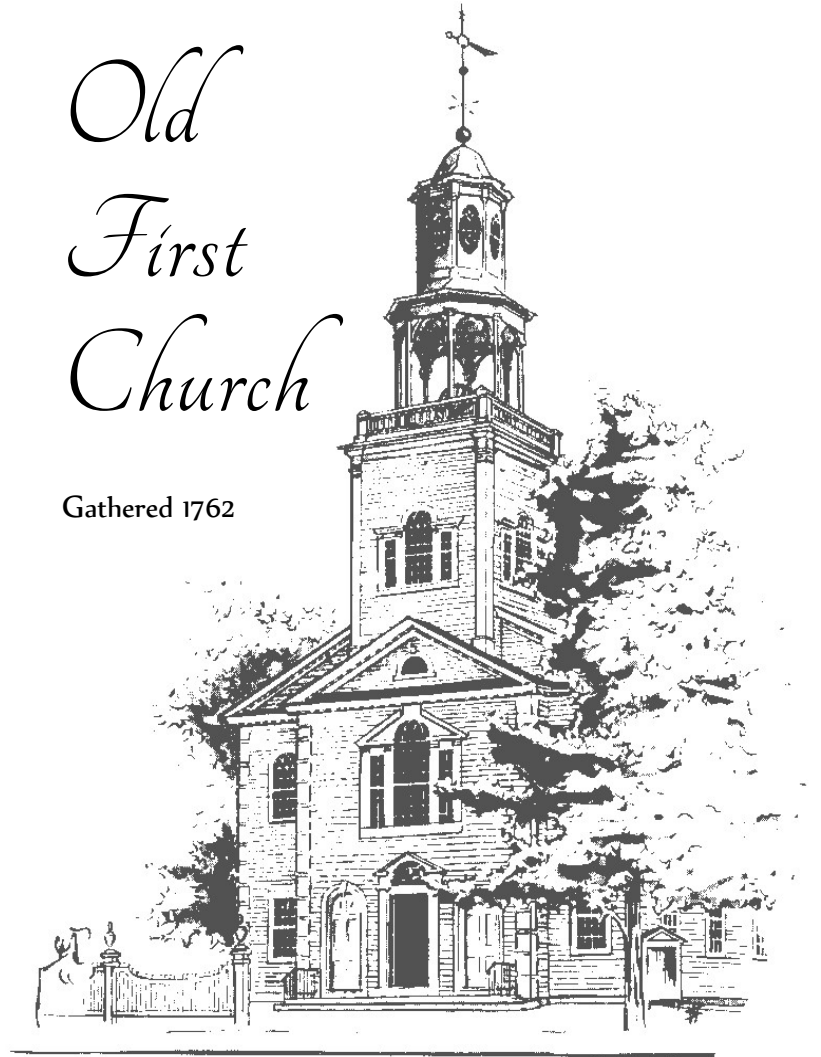
Worship and life at Old First is changing in response to the need to reduce activity as we work to get through the challenge of the COVID-19 presence in our life. Our prayers and thoughts go to everyone immediately affected and thanks go to all people who work to provide care and supply our needs in 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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O God, Our Faithful God

1). O God, our faithful God,
O fountain ever flowing,
without whom nothing is,
all perfect gifts bestowing,
grant us a faithful life,
and give us, Lord, within
commitment free from strife,
a soul unhurt by sin.

2). God, grant us strength to do
with ready heart and willing,
whatever You command,
our calling here fulfilling;
And do it when we ought,
with zeal and joyfulness;
And bless the work we've wrought,
for You must give success.

3). If dangers gather round,
still keep us calm and fearless;
Help us to bear the cross
when life is bleak and cheerless,
to overcome our foes
with words and actions kind;
O God, Your will disclose,
Your counsel let us find.

The Heavens Above Declare God's Praise

The heavens above declare God's praise,
the work God's hands have made;
day after day the tale is told,
and night by night displayed.

There is no utterance or speech,
no voice has ever heard,
yet to all nations comes the sound,
to every place their word.

Forth like a bridegroom comes the sun
from its appointed place,
and like a hero runs its course,
rejoicing in the race.

It runs from east to farthest west
to make its course complete,
and nothing in the world beneath
escapes its scorching heat.

The World Abounds with God's Free Grace

The world abounds with God's free grace;
What wonders bless the land!
And on through boundless starry space,
God's matchless works expand.

Refrain:

**Lord, teach us an attitude that thanks You all our days,
A love that shows our gratitude through deeds that live our praise.**

Give thanks for plains and valleys spaced
By mountains thrusting high;
Give thanks by fighting greed and waste
That drain their treasures dry. *Refrain*

In full thanksgiving for God's love,
From which earth's blessings flow,
Protect the precious air above,
The waters spread below. *Refrain*

Give thanks in hope, rejoice, repent,
And practice all you prayed;
True thanks can never be content
To foul the world God made. *Refrain*

The Spacious Firmament on High

1). The spacious firmament on high,
with all the blue ethereal sky,
and spangled heavens, a shining frame,
their great Original proclaim.
The unwearied sun from day to day
does his Creator's power display,
and publishes to every land
the work of an almighty hand.

2). Soon as the evening shades prevail
the moon takes up the wondrous tale,
and nightly to the listening earth
repeats the story of her birth;
whilst all the stars that round her burn,
and all the planets in their turn,
confirm the tidings, as they roll,
and spread the truth from pole to pole.

3). What though in solemn silence all
move round the dark terrestrial ball?
What though no real voice nor sound
amid their radiant orbs be found?
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
and utter forth a glorious voice,
forever singing as they shine,
"The hand that made us is divine."

EXODUS 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20

Then God spoke all these words: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work.

Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid and trembled and stood at a distance, and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die." Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin."

MATTHEW 21:33-46

"Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.'" So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time." Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes'? Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls." When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.