

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

FEBRUARY 28, 2021
SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

PRELUDE Rathburn "When the woes of life o'ertake me . . ."
- Ithamer Conkey Setting by Alfred V. Feda

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

This is the day that the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Mercy and truth are met together.

May God guide us in paths of goodness.

HYMN *Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise* 263
(LYRICS REPRINTED AT THE END OF THE ORDER OF SERVICE)

The author of the text, Walter Chalmers Smith (1824-1908), was a minister in the Free Church of Scotland and was its Moderator in 1893. He published several books, his last one being *A Heretic and Other Poems*. The tune is a Welsh folk melody from the early 19th century.

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 Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 p. 11

HYMN *God's Law Is Perfect and Gives Life* 167
(LYRICS REPRINTED AT THE END OF THE ORDER OF SERVICE)

This metrical rendering of Psalm 19:7-14 is by Christopher L. Webber. It is from *A New Metrical Psalter* (1986), which attempts to "follow closely the original texts as they are presented in the Book of Common Prayer, 1979." According to the Common Lectionary, these verses of Psalm 19 are for use on the Third Sunday after Epiphany, Year C; the Third Sunday in Lent, Year B; and on the Sunday between September 11 and 17, Year A.

SECOND LESSON Mark 8:31-38 p. 820

SERMON Journeys

HYMN *Today We All Are Called to Be Disciples* 434
(LYRICS REPRINTED AT THE END OF THE ORDER OF SERVICE)

The text was written in 1985 by a Presbyterian minister in Duarte, California for a national stewardship campaign. The tune was first published in *English Country Songs* (1893) and was later named for the village where Ralph Vaughn Williams, the most important composer of his generation, heard it, after which he wrote the harmony for *The English Hymnal* (1906).

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 *Jesus Walked this Lonesome Valley*
- African American Spiritual

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

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

HYMN *In Christ There Is No East or West* 440
(LYRICS REPRINTED AT THE END OF THE ORDER OF SERVICE)

The text was originally from a play, "The Pageant of Darkness and Light," written for the London Missionary Society exhibition on the Orient in 1908. The author was a wholesale grocer and writer of 42 novels and 25 collections of poetry and hymns, including "Hymns for Men at the Front," which sold 8 million copies in World War I. The spiritual tune was the setting for "I Know the Angel's Done Changed My Name" in an 1884 hymn collection "Jubilee Songs," and was later adapted and named for Elmer McKee, rector of St. George's Protestant Episcopal Church in New York City in the 1930's.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Psalm XIX* - Benedetto Marcello

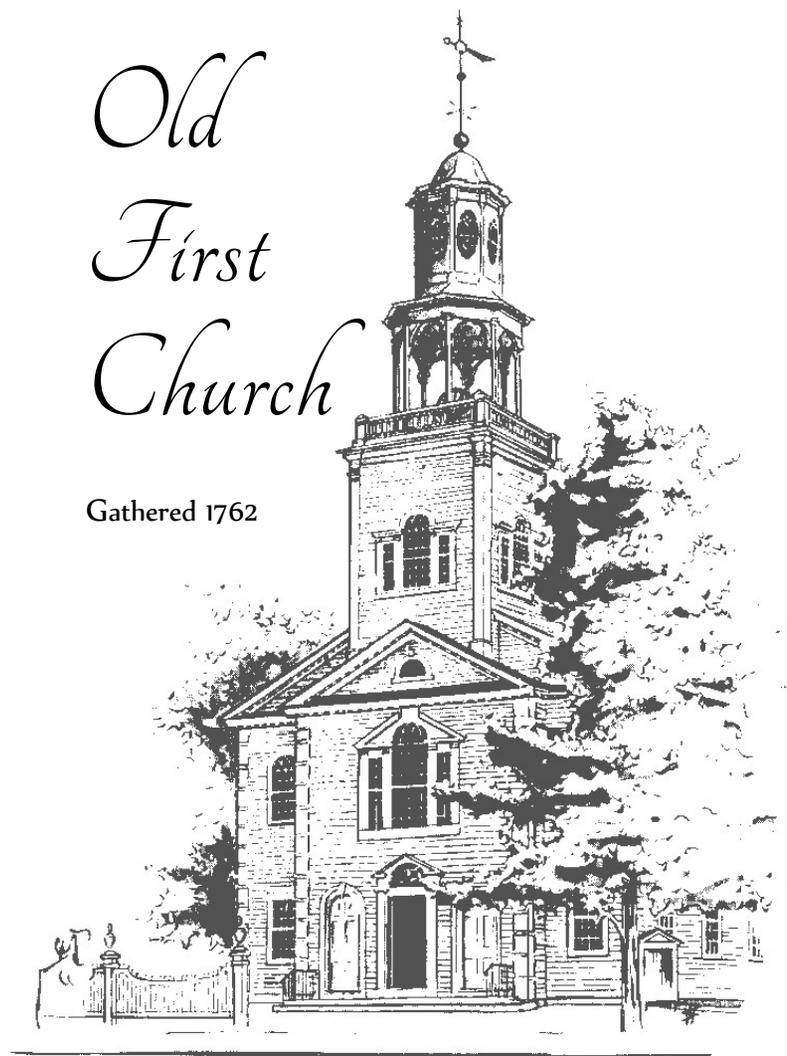
Deacons on call this month are Marsha Pilachowski and Wendy Schmitt.

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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Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all, life Thou givest, to both great and small;
in all life Thou livest, the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish like leaves on the tree,
then wither and perish; but naught changeth Thee.

Thou reignest in glory, Thou rulest in light,
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;
All praise we would render; O help us to see
‘Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee!

Today We All Are Called to Be Disciples

- 1). Today we are all called to be
Disciples of the Lord,
To help to set the captives free,
Make plow-share out of sword,
To feed the hungry, quench their thirst,
Make love and peace our fast,
To serve the poor and homeless first,
Our ease and comfort last.
- 2). God made the world and at its birth
Ordained our human race
To live as stewards of the earth,
Responding to God's grace.
But we are vain and sadly proud,
We sow not peace but strife,
Our discord spreads a deadly cloud
That threatens all of life.
- 3). Pray justice may come rolling down
As in a mighty stream,
With righteousness in field and town
To cleanse us and redeem.
For God is longing to restore
An earth where conflicts cease,
A world that was created for
A harmony of peace.
- 4). May we in service to our God
Act out the living Word,
And walk the road the saints have trod
Till all have seen and heard.
As stewards of the earth may we
Give thanks in one accord
To God who calls us all to be
Disciples of the Lord.

God's Law Is Perfect and Gives Life

- 1). God's law is perfect and gives life,
Revives the weary soul;
God's testimonies all are sure,
Wisdom for all to hold.
The statutes of the Lord are just
And give the heart delight;
God's precepts are direct and pure
And give the eyes clear sight.
- 2). The fear of God is always clean,
Enduring as the sun;
The judgements of the Lord are true
And righteous, every one.
And even more to be desired
Than gold, the finest gold,
And sweeter than the honeycomb,
The words God spoke of old.
- 3). Your servant finds enlightenment
By means of them, O Lord;
And in the keeping of Your law,
There is a great reward.
But who can tell how often they
Offend unknowingly?
From all my secret faults, O Lord,
I ask You to cleanse me.
- 4). Lord, keep me from presumptuous sins;
Let them not rule my soul;
Then I shall not commit great wrongs,
I shall be sound and whole.
Let all my words and all my thoughts,
My Lord, Redemer, Might,
Find favor now, and always win
Acceptance in Your sight.

In Christ There Is No East or West

- 1). In Christ there is no east or west,
In Him no south or north;
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth.
- 2). In Christ shall true hearts everywhere
Their high communion find;
His service is the golden cord
Close binding humankind.
- 3). Join hands, disciples in the faith,
Whate'er your race may be.
All children of the living God
Are surely kin to me.
- 4). In Christ now meet both east and west,
In Him meet south and north;
All Christly souls are one in Him
Throughout the whole wide earth.

GENESIS 17:1-7, 15-16

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.” Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him,

“As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.

I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”

MARK 8:31-38

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”