

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
OLD FIRST CHURCH CHOIR AND FRIENDS
AUDREY PIETRUCHA, LAY READER

AUGUST 15, 2021

PRELUDE *Praeludium* - Marc Antoine Charpentier

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

The Lord is gracious and full of compassion.

The Lord is good to all.

O Lord, open thou our lips.

And our mouth shall show forth thy praise.

***HYMN** *God of the Ages, Whose Almighty Hand* 262

The author of the text was vicar of St. Paul's Church, Concord, New Hampshire. He wrote it for a Fourth of July, 1876 Centennial celebration in Brandon, Vermont to the tune called "Russian Hymn." But soon after that (for the Constitution's centennial) it was set to the present tune written for it by George Warren, an acclaimed organist in Albany and New York City, at whose funeral no music was played to indicate there was no longer anyone to lead the music at his church.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

God of all creation, our chief end is to glorify you, and enjoy you forever. Our deep delight is in your presence, our fondest thoughts are of you, our strongest longing is for your house. In this hour of worship, help us to become who we are meant to be--a community that breathes thankfulness, voicing your praise in all we do. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON 1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14 p. 265

***HYMN** *Peoples, Clap Your Hands!* 194

This new paraphrase of Psalm 47 is by Joy F. Petterson, a member of the Presbyterian Hymnal Committee. Joy was born in 1931 in Lansing, MI, to a Congregational family. She became a Presbyterian at the age of twelve. A lifelong poet, she began writing hymns in 1975, and in 1982 she became one of seven winners of the Hymn Society of America's competition "Hymns for the Whole Family of God".

SECOND LESSON Ephesians 5:15-20 p. 952

SERMON Knowing What to Ask

***HYMN** *O Beautiful for Spacious Skies* 564

Katherine Lee Bates, Wellesley College professor of literature, was inspired to write the text after an 1893 visit to the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where she felt a patriotic feeling, and afterwards wrote, "We went on, my New England eyes delighting in the wind-waved gold of the vast wheat fields." It was after seeing amber skies from Pikes Peak that she then wrote the hymn in Colorado Springs. Samuel Augustus Ward, a Newark, NJ music supply, piano and organ salesperson, wrote the tune in 1882. First used for the hymn, *O Mother Dear, Jerusalem*, his widow gave permission for it to be used with Bates' text in 1912.

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 *Chester* - William Billings

William Billings, born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1746 is considered America's first choral composer. He was, for the most part, self-taught but may have received instruction from John Barry, one of the choir members at the New South Church. Chester is his most well-known patriotic hymn.

Let tyrants shake their iron rod
And slavery clan her galling chains;
We fear them not. We trust in God;
New England's God forever reigns.

The foe comes on with haughty stride,
Our troops advance with martial noise;
Their veterans flee before our youths,
And generals yield to beardless boys.

When God inspired us for the fight
their ranks were broke, their lines were forced.
Their ships were shattered in our sight,
or swiftly driven from our coast.

What grateful offering shall we bring,
What shall we render to the Lord,
Loud Hallelujahs let us sing,
And praise his name on every Chord.

Let's hear it for the beardless boys!

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

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

***HYMN** *Our God, Our Help in Ages Past* 210

Isaac Watts, the "father of English hymnody" based this hymn on Psalm 90:1-5. He wrote his first hymn at 15, and thus began a revolution in Reformed worship using contemporary words or loosely translated Psalms. The tune, *St. Anne*, is named for St. Anne's Church, Soho, England, where composer William Croft was organist, and was used by Handel and Bach.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Fantasia on St. Anne* (O God Our Help in Ages Past)

- Alfred V. Fedak

American composer, organist, and conductor Alfred V. Fedak was born on the fourth of July. His is a prolific hymn writer whose hymns can be found in hymnbooks throughout the world.

* Stand if able

We welcome all visitors and hope you will return! Please fill out a visitor's card found in the pew and be sure to identify yourself so we can present you with a gift bag.

Deacons on call this month are Janet Andrea and Amy Tronsen. Ushers and greeters for today's service are Dave and Marsha Pilachowski.

As we commemorate Bennington Battle Day with the singing of the old and historic New England hymn tune "Chester", we thank our church members John Carson, Jim Dilley, Susan Kachmar, and Carol Poppe and our generous neighbors Larry Betit (Bennington), Bob Stromberg and Lindy Guttman (Round Lake, NY) and Peter Subers (Salem, NY) for their participation in the service. We also thank our choir director and organist Gene Marie Callahan for her work assembling this group and for her musical talents each week.

Please join us after worship today for coffee hour in the foyer with special thanks to Kristin Castellanos and Audrey Pietruca.

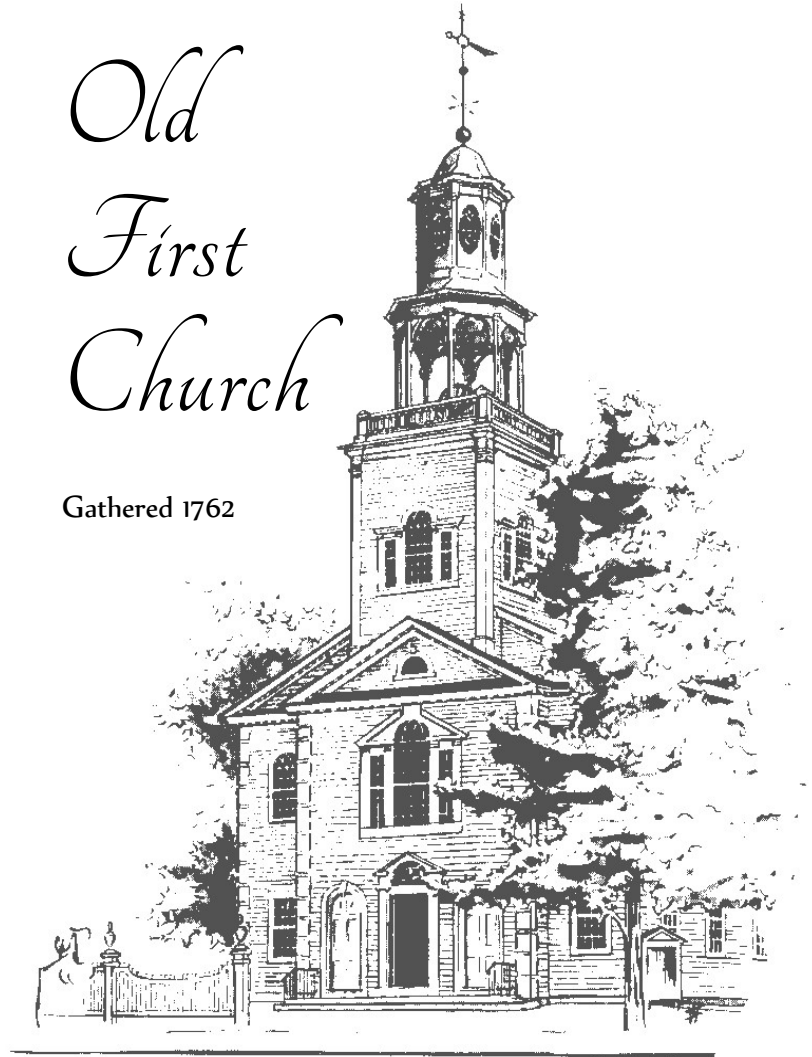
Flowers for worship are provided by Patrice Nolan-Fox in honor of her mother Joan Nolan-Morneau. If you would like to provide flowers or host coffee hour some Sunday please sign up on the enclosed BLOG.

Open Church Needs Your Help! Old First Church is currently positioned at #4 of 15 "Things to Do in Bennington" on the Trip Advisor website. Just a few years ago, we were at the top of that list! While #4 is not a bad place to be in, it tells us that visitors are finding our doors closed and are not writing about their experience of walking into the church, meeting a welcoming guide and learning about the history. They are also not given the chance to buy something from our little gift shop, nor give a donation which helps maintain our magnificent building and programs. Open Church is a type of fundraiser that is much needed and we can't do it without the help of many. If you would like to be that welcoming face at the door and have a couple hours to spare on a certain day each week or fill in here and there, we encourage you to contact Betsy Ehrenfreund or the church office.

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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God of the Ages, Whose Almighty Hand

God of the ages, whose almighty hand
leads forth in beauty all the starry band
of shining worlds in splendor through the skies,
our grateful songs before thy throne arise.

Thy love divine hath led us in the past;
in this free land with thee our lot is cast;
be thou our ruler, guardian, guide, and stay,
Thy word our law, Thy paths our chosen way.

From war's alarms, from deadly pestilence,
be Thy strong arm our ever sure defense;
Thy true religion in our hearts increase;
Thy bounteous goodness nourish us in peace.

Refresh Thy people on their toilsome way;
lead us from night to never-ending day;
fill all our lives with love and grace divine,
and glory, laud, and praise be ever Thine.

FIRST LESSON

1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14

Then David slept with his ancestors, and was buried in the city of David. The time that David reigned over Israel was forty years; he reigned seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem.

So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established. Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David; only, he sacrificed and offered incense at the high places. The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the principal high place; Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.

At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they

cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?" It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor all your life; no other king shall compare with you. If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life."

Peoples, Clap Your Hands!

Peoples, clap your hands! Shout to God with Joy!
King of all the earth is the Lord Most High;
All humanity stands in awe of God.
With a mighty hand God brings nations low,
And beneath our feet casts down every foe;
Our inheritance comes from God the Lord.

God ascends the throne with a joyful cry,
And with trumpet sound has gone up on high;
Sing your praise to God, sing with joyful voice!
Rulers, peoples, now join to serve the Lord,
For earth's mighty ones all belong to God,
Who exalted reigns: now with psalms rejoice!

SECOND LESSON

Ephesians 5:15-20

Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

O Beautiful for Spacious Skies

Oh, beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea.

Oh, beautiful for pilgrim feet,
Whose stern, impassioned stress
A thoroughfare of freedom beat
Across the wilderness!
America! America!
God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control,
Thy liberty in law.

Oh, beautiful for heroes proved
In liberating strife,
Who more than self their country loved,
And mercy more than life!
America! America!
May God thy gold refine,
Till all success be nobleness,
And every gain divine.

Oh, beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam,
Undimmed by human tears!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea.

Our God, Our Help in Ages Past

Our God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal home:

Before the hills in order stood,
or earth received its frame,
from everlasting Thou art God,
to endless years the same.

A thousand ages in Thy sight
are like an evening gone;
short as the watch that ends the night
before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
soon bears us all away;
We fly forgotten, as a dream
dies at the opening day.

Our God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
be Thou our guard while life shall last,
and our eternal home.