

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
KRISTIN CASTELLANOS, LAY READER

AUGUST 22, 2021

PRELUDE *Prelude (Suite in A)* - Charles Callahan

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

Let us gather to worship and praise the Lord.

For the goodness of this life and the promise of each day.

Let us remember God's guiding spirit and give thanks.

For works of mercy, love and peace we have known.

***HYMN** *Come, Thou Font of Every Blessing* 356

This text was written by Robert Robinson (1735-1790) about 1758 and was included in *A Collection of Hymns Used by the Church of Christ in Angel-Alley, Bishopsgate* (1759). It was later included with the tune NETTLETON in John Wyeth's *Repository of Sacred Music, Part Second* (1813).

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

Almighty and merciful God, from whom comes all that is good, we praise you for your mercies, for your goodness that has created us, your grace that has sustained us, your patience that has borne with us, and your love that has redeemed us. Forgive our misdeeds or neglects. Help us to love you, and to be thankful for all your gifts by serving you and delighting to do your will, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Joshua 24:1-2a; 14-18 p. 187

***HYMN** *Thy Mercy and Thy Truth, O Lord* 186

This paraphrase of Psalm 36 was number 94 in *The Psalter* (1912). In that volume it had an additional stanza that read: The workers of iniquity Are fallen utterly; They shall not triumph in their pride, Or drive my soul from Thee.

SECOND LESSON Ephesians 6:10-20 p. 952

SERMON Getting Dressed

***HYMN** *O God of Earth and Altar* 291

The present text is a composite. The original hymn was written by G. K. Chesterton for *The Commonwealth*, the journal of the Christian Social Union, and later appeared in *The English Hymnal* (1906). The alterations to stanza 2 and the new stanza 3 were written by Jane Parker Huber at the request of Lewis Mudge, for the final worship of the Life and Mission Statement Consultation held at Mo Ranch in 1985.

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 *Chaconne (Suite in A)* - Charles Callahan

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

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

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

This hymn was written by Charles Wesley and was first published in 1747. Wesley was the 18th 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 20th 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 *Rondel (Suite in A)* - Charles Callahan

* 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 and ushers and greeters for today's service are Janet Andrea and Amy Tronsen.

Please join us after worship today for coffee hour in the foyer with special thanks to Janet Andrea and Susan Kachmar.

Flowers for worship are provided by Darlene and Jeff Munson in loving memory of their Springer puppies Lovie and Misty. If you would like to provide flowers or host coffee hour some Sunday please sign up on the enclosed BLOG.

BYO PICNIC ON THE VILLAGE GREEN: All are invited to gather on the Green in front of the church after worship today (weather permitting). Participants should provide everything needed for their own lunch and a chair to sit on. If the weather is forecasted to be bad, the group won't be gathering. This is an informal event for those who want to spend a little more time with their friends.

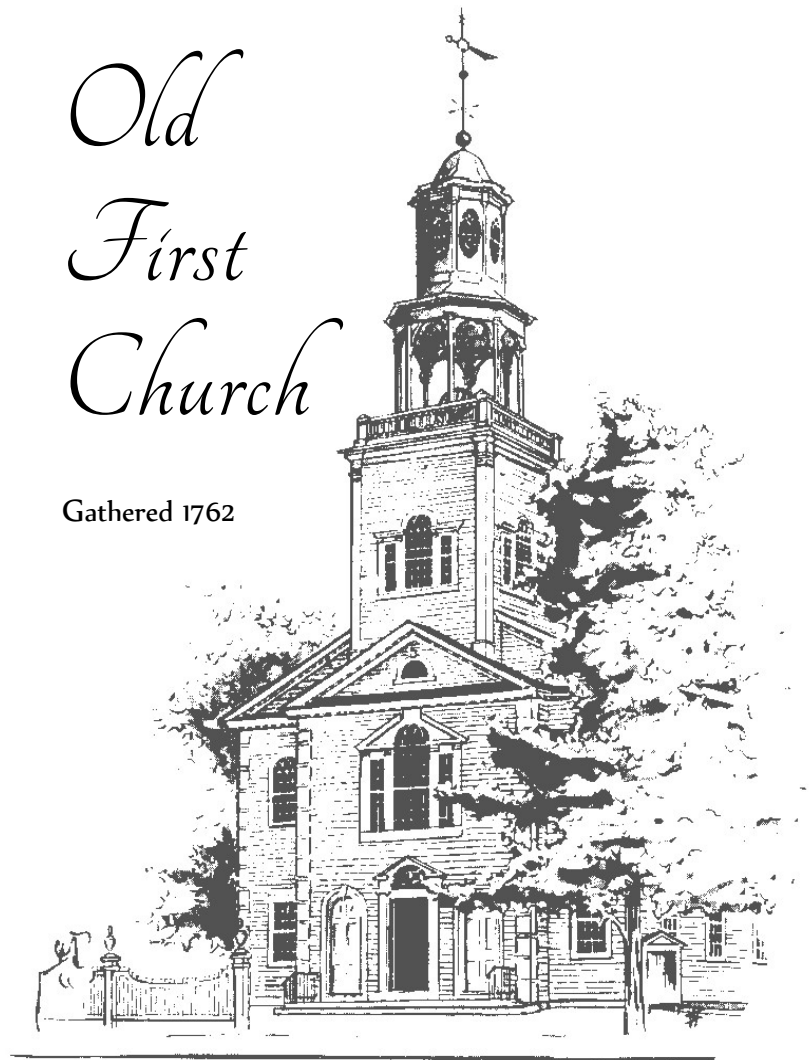
We will be returning to regular worship hour of 11:00 A.M. on Sunday, September 5. Choir practice resumes on September 12th at 9:30 AM.

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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Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

1. Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,
tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing,
call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
sung by flaming tongues above;
praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,
mount of God's unchanging love!
2. Here I raise my Ebenezer,
hither by Thy help I'm come;
and I hope, by Thy good pleasure,
safely to arrive at home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood.
3. O to grace how great a debtor
daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace now, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to Thee:
prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love;
here's my heart, O take and seal it;
seal it for Thy courts above.

FIRST LESSON

Joshua 24:1-2a; 14-18

Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors—Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor—lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods. "Now therefore revere the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; and the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God."

Thy Mercy and Thy Truth, O Lord

Thy mercy and Thy truth, O Lord,
Transcend the lofty sky,
Thy judgements are a mighty deep,
And as the mountains high.

Lord, all Thy creatures Thou wilt save.
Since Thou art ever kind,
Beneath the shadow of Thy wings
We may a refuge find.

With the abundance of Thy house
We shall be satisfied,
From rivers of unfailing joy
Our thirst shall be supplied.

The fountain of eternal life
Is found alone with Thee.
And in the brightness of Thy light
We clearly light shall see.

From those that know Thee may Thy love
And mercy ne'er depart,
And may Thy justice still protect
And bless the upright heart.

SECOND LESSON

Ephesians 6:10-20

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.

Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

O God of Earth and Altar

O God of earth and altar,
bow down and hear our cry;
our earthly rulers falter,
our people drift and die;
the walls of gold entomb us,
the swords of scorn divide;
take not Your thunder from us,
but take away our pride.

From all that terror teaches,
from lies of pen and voice,
from all the easy speeches
that make our hearts rejoice,
from sale and profanation
of honor and the sword,
from sleep and from damnation,
deliver us, good Lord!

Awaken us to action
And forge us into one,
Defying sect and faction;
O God, Your will be done!
Oppressive systems snare us;
Our apathies increase.
Great God, in mercy spare us
For justice and for peace!

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

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.

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.

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.

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.