

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
THE REV. BRUCE LEE CLARK, GUEST MINISTER
ITEKE PRINS, GUEST ORGANIST

AUGUST 29, 2021

PRELUDE *God Prevails: Chorale and Variations*
setting Johann C. H. Rinck (1770-1846)

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

We have come to worship God. Let us arrive embracing humility.

**We offer all that we are, knowing that we need God's Spirit to be
what we ought to be.**

We have come to worship God. Let us arrive with expectation.

**In the Divine Presence there is light for our darkness and purpose
in our striving. Praise be to God!**

***HYMN** *Sing Praise to God, Who Reigns Above* **483**

This hymn was originally titled, "Hymn of Thanksgiving." Johann Schütz was a lawyer in Frankfurt who sympathized with the pietist movement in the Lutheran Church. The translator, Frances Elizabeth Cox, was one of the foremost translators into English of German hymns. The tune is from the 1566 Bohemian Brethren's *Kirchengeseng*.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

O God of love, you have called us into the church. We thank you for opportunities to grow in understanding and concern for one another and for the greater world. May this gathering be an incarnation of your love within and beyond these church doors, wherever there is loneliness, injustice, or conflict and misunderstanding, through the power of your creating Spirit we pray. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9 p. 140

***HYMN** *Fairest Lord Jesus* **306**

This text has been traced to the Jesuits in Münster. A handwritten copy from 1662 and a published collection from the Münster Gesangbuch (1677) date its origin. This translation first appeared in Richard Storrs Willis' *Church Chorals and Choir Studies* (1850). It was slightly altered for *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (1990).

SECOND LESSON Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23 p. 818

SERMON Dirty Hands and Open Hearts

***HYMN** *Though I May Speak* **335**

The text is a paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 13, by Hal Hopson. Hopson has been on music faculties at Westminster Choir College, Princeton, and Scarritt Graduate School, Nashville, and has published more than 900 works for organ, harpsichord, congregation and choirs. The tune, *O Waly Waly*, is an English folk melody and was first published by Cecil Sharp (1859-1924), the most important of English folk song collectors who gathered 4,977 tunes.

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 *What God Does, Is Done Well*
S. Gastorius 1679/setting Max Reger

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

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

***HYMN** *God of Grace and God of Glory* **420**

The text was written in 1930 for the opening of Riverside Church in New York City by the pastor, Harry Emerson Fosdick, when the congregation moved from Park Avenue to its new building. John Hughes, a deacon in the Salem Baptist Church in Wales, wrote the tune in 1907 for a Welsh singing festival. It's named for the principal coal town in Glamorganshire.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE "Postlude" from Celebrate Life Buryl Red 1972

* Stand if able

Deacons on call this month are Janet Andrea and Amy Tronsen. Ushers and greeters for today's service are Marietta Hibbard and Ellen Knapp.

Please join us after worship today for coffee hour in the foyer with special thanks to Amber Langford and Marsha Pilachowski.

Flowers for worship are provided by Jane Radocchia in honor of Vicky and Gary Printz's 60 years of humor. If you would like to provide flowers or host coffee hour some Sunday please sign up on the enclosed BLOG.

We welcome the Rev. Bruce Lee-Clark as our guest Pastor today. Bruce is an ordained United Methodist Minister [since 1975] having received his education at Syracuse University [B.A., J.D.] and Harvard University [M.Div.]. He has served churches in Northern and Central New York, and after graduating from the College of Law at S.U., was admitted to practice in NY State in 1993. While in New York, Bruce served as Staff Attorney at Legal Services of Central New York, Inc., heading the Aids Law Project in the mid-1990's. He continues to consult on issues of professional conduct for religious organizations throughout the Mid-Atlantic States. Bruce currently serves on the Town of Bennington Select Board. He is married to The Rev. Mary Lee-Clark, former pastor of Second Congregational Church (UCC) in Bennington and is the proud parent of two grown children and grandfather of one.

We will be returning to regular worship hour of 11:00 A.M. NEXT Sunday, September 5. Choir practice will resume on September 12 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!

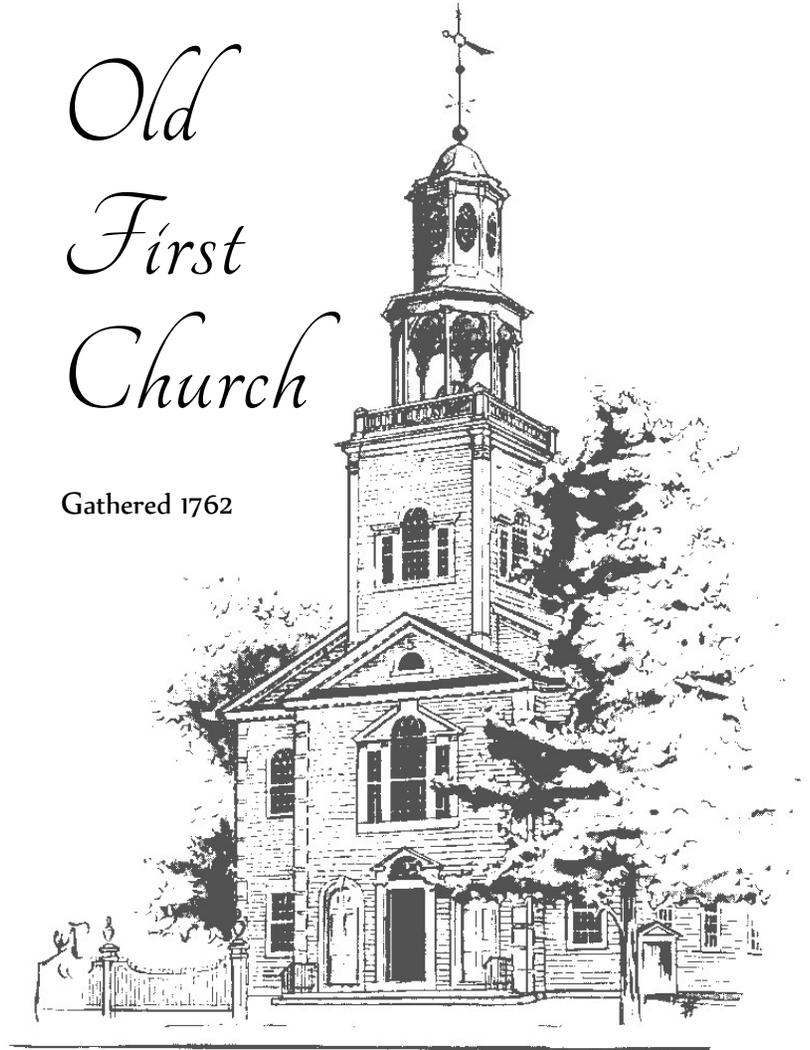
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

(OLD FIRST CHURCH)

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Old First Church

Gathered 1762



Sing Praise to God, Who Reigns Above

1. Sing praise to God, who reigns above,
the God of all creation,
the God of power, the God of love,
the God of our salvation;
With healing balm my soul is filled,
and every faithless murmur stilled:
To God all praise and glory!
2. What God's almighty power hath made,
God's gracious mercy keepeth;
by morning glow or evening shade
God's watchful eye ne'er slepeth;
Within the kingdom of God's might,
Lo! All is just and all is right:
To God all praise and glory!
3. The Lord is never far away,
but through all grief distressing,
an ever present help and stay,
our peace, and joy, and blessing;
As with a mother's tender hand,
God gently leads the chosen band:
To God all praise and glory!
4. Thus all my gladsome way along,
I sing aloud Thy praises,
that all may hear the grateful song
my voice unwearied raises.
Be joyful in the Lord, my heart,
both soul and body take your part:
To God all praise and glory!

Fairest Lord Jesus

Fairest Lord Jesus,
Ruler of all nature,
O Thou of God to earth come down,
Thee will I cherish, Thee will I honor,
Thou, my soul's glory, joy, and crown.

Fair are the meadows,
Fairer still the woodlands,
Robed in the blooming garb of spring:
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer,
Who makes the woeful heart to sing.

Fair is the sunshine,
Fairer still the moonlight,
And all the twinkling, stary host:
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer,
Than all the angels heaven can boast.

FIRST LESSON

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9

So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God with which I am charging you. You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!" For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is whenever we call to him? And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today? But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children—

SECOND LESSON

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.' You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition."

Then he called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile." For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

God of Grace and God of Glory

Thou I May Speak

Though I may speak with bravest fire,
And have the gift to all inspire,
And have not love, my words are vain;
As sounding brass, and hopeless gain.

Though I may give all I possess,
And striving so my love profess,
But not be given by love within,
The profit soon turns strangely thin.

Come, Spirit, come, our hearts control,
Our spirits long to be made whole.
Let inward love guide every deed;
By this we worship and are freed.

1. God of grace and God of glory,
on Thy people pour Thy power.
Crown Thine ancient church's story;
bring its bud to glorious flower.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the facing of this hour,
for the facing of this hour.
2. Lo! the hosts of evil round us
scorn Thy Christ, assail Thy ways!
From the fears that long have bound us
free our hearts to faith and praise.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the living of these days,
for the living of these days.
3. Cure Thy children's warring madness,
bend our pride to Thy control;
shame our wanton, selfish gladness,
rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
lest we miss Thy kingdom's goal,
lest we miss Thy kingdom's goal.
4. Set our feet on lofty places;
gird our lives that they may be
armored with all Christ-like graces,
pledged to set all captives free.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
that we fail not them nor Thee!
that we fail not them nor Thee!
5. Save us from weak resignation
to the evils we deplore;
Let the gift of Thy salvation
be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
serving Thee whom we adore,
serving Thee whom we adore.