

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  
DAVID VARKER, LAY READER

AUGUST 8, 2021

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**PRELUDE** *Prelude in G* - Frederic Archer

**OPENING WORDS** (responsive)

Bless the Lord, O my soul.

**Let all that is in me bless God's name.**

Mercy and justice are the Lord's.

**May God's presence seen in love and peace.**

**\*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)

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** Ephesians 4:25-5:2 p. 951

**\*HYMN** *All People That on Earth Do Dwell* 220

The metrical version of Psalm 100 was published in 1561 in the Anglo-Geneva Psalter by William Kethe. He was a Scotsman who fled to the continent during the reign of Mary, was a chaplain to English soldiers at Havre, and was one of the Geneva Bible translators. The tune *Old Hundredth* by Louis Bourgeois was first the setting of a 1551 version of Psalm 134; but since 1562 it has been linked with this Psalm. Bourgeois got into trouble in Geneva for changing tunes of Psalms people already knew. Of course, we sing this tune each week as a Doxology, as well.

**SECOND LESSON** 2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33 p. 255

**SERMON** Be Imitators

**\*HYMN** *Lord, Make Us Servants of Your Peace* 374

The text is a new paraphrase of Francis of Assisi's poem, by Fr. James Quinn, a Jesuit priest. He has made the hymn corporate by pluralizing the first-person pronouns. Francis was a wealthy cloth merchant's son and was imprisoned for a year during an Italian city war. Later, he heard the voice of Jesus from a crucifix asking him to repair the church; so he sold the cloth in his father's warehouse, was publicly disinherited by his father, and handed over the money to rebuild three churches and establish a religious order in 1212. The composer, from the Bristol-Myers family, was director of public relations before changing careers. He was an Episcopal lay reader and President of Westminster Choir College in Princeton. The tune was named for Dickinson College, where in 1959 Bristol received one of his 11 honorary doctoral degrees.

**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.)

**RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS** (see insert)

Gene Marie Callahan, John Carson, Mary Elizabeth Groupé  
Ellen Knapp reinstating active membership

**OFFERING**

**OFFERTORY** *Blest Be the Tie That Binds*  
- Kimberly Kondel Patterson

**\*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

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** *Jesus Shall Reign* - Paul Karvonen

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 David and Laurel Varker

Please join us after worship today for coffee hour in the foyer with special thanks to Anastasia and Fischer Gauthier.

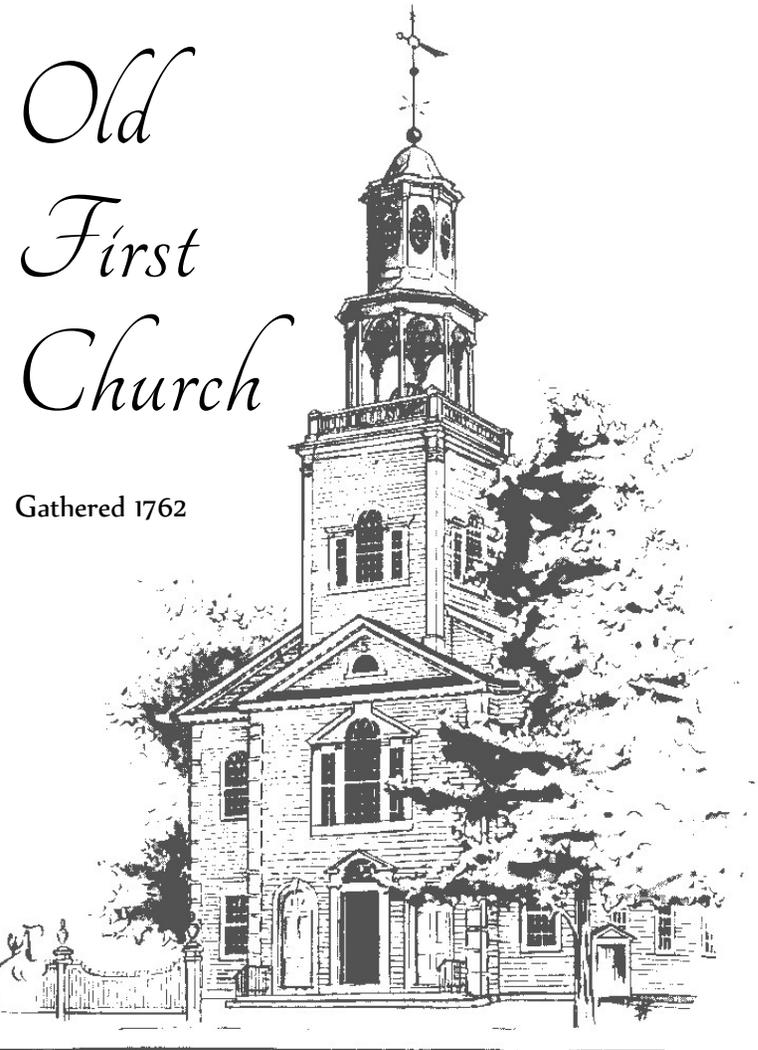
If you would like to provide flowers or host coffee hour some Sunday please sign up on the BLOG.

**CHOIR REHEARSAL:** Thursday August 12 at 7:00 p.m., interested singers will be rehearsing "Chester" for the "Battle Day" service on August 15. All singers must be fully vaccinated to participate. Please speak with Gene Marie Callahan for more information.

**UPCOMING MEETINGS:** *(All meetings are open to members of the church)*

8/9: Trustee meeting, 5:30 PM, church parlor and remotely

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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## MEMBERSHIP RECEPTION

We prepare to welcome into our membership today **Gene Marie Callahan, John Carson and Mary Elizabeth Groupé** into membership by reaffirmation of faith and reinstating **Ellen Knapp** into active membership by her request.

### THE CONFIRMATION OF FAITH

In presenting yourself for membership in the First Congregational Church of Bennington, do you affirm your trust in God as the creative source of life and power?

#### **I DO**

Are you willing to accept the example and teachings of Jesus Christ and seek to make them the guiding principles of your life?

#### **I AM**

Will you be loyal to this Church and support it by your prayer, your presence, and your service?

#### **I WILL**

### THE WELCOME OF THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

We, the members of the First Congregational Church, hereby affirm your reception, *Gene Marie, John, Mary Elizabeth and Ellen* into the full membership of our communion. We pledge to you our mutual care, support, and prayers. God grant that loving and being loved, serving and being served, blessing and being blessed, we may prepare ourselves, while we dwell together on earth, for the age that is to come.

READING OF THE CHURCH COVENANT (front cover of hymnal)

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READING OF THE CHURCH COVENANT (front cover of hymnal)

### *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 sleepeth;  
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!

### **FIRST LESSON**

#### **Ephesians 4:25-5:2**

So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil. Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

### *All People That on Earth Do Dwell*

All people that on earth do dwell,  
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;  
Him serve with mirth, His praise forth tell,  
Come ye before Him and rejoice.

Know that the Lord is God indeed;  
Without our aid He did us make;  
We are His folk, He doth us feed,  
And for His sheep He doth us take.

O enter then His gates with praise,  
Approach with joy His courts unto;  
Praise, laud and bless His name always,  
For it is seemly so to do.

For why? The Lord our God is good,  
His mercy is forever sure;  
His truth at all times firmly stood,  
And shall from age to age endure.

### **SECOND LESSON**

#### **2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33**

The king ordered Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king gave orders to all the commanders concerning Absalom. So the army went out into the field against Israel; and the battle was fought in the forest of Ephraim. The men of Israel were defeated there by the servants of David, and the slaughter there was great on that day, twenty thousand men. The battle spread over the face of all the country; and the forest claimed more victims that day than the sword.

Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak. His head caught fast in the oak, and he was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him went on. And ten young men, Joab's armor-bearers, surrounded Absalom and struck him, and killed him. Then the Cushite came; and the Cushite said, "Good tidings for my lord the king! For the LORD has vindicated you this day, delivering you from the power of all who rose up against you." The king said to the Cushite, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" The Cushite answered, "May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up to do you harm, be like that young man." The king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, he said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

*Lord, Make Us Servants of Your Peace*

Lord, make us servants of Your peace:  
Where there is hate, may we sow love;  
Where there is hurt, may we forgive;  
Where there is strife, may we make one.

Where all is doubt, may we sow faith;  
Where all is gloom, may we sow hope;  
Where all is night, may we sow light;  
Where all is tears, may we sow joy.

Jesus, our Lord, may we not seek  
To be consoled, but to console,  
Nor look to understanding hearts,  
But look for hearts to understand.

May we not look for love's return,  
But seek to love unselfishly,  
For in our giving we receive,  
And in forgiving are forgiven.

Dying, we live, and are reborn  
Through death's dark night to endless day:  
Lord, make us servants of Your peace  
To wake at last in heaven's light.

*In Christ There Is No East or West*

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