

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
DAVID PILACHOWSKI, LAY READER
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST
OLD FIRST CHURCH CHOIR

JANUARY 9, 2022

PRELUDE *Living Waters* - Michael Shea

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

O God of power and love be with us.

O God of peace hear our prayer.

In this time of worship we pray to you.

Hear us and give comfort always.

***HYMN** *Brightest and Best of the Stars of the Morning* 67

This Epiphany text was written by Bishop Reginald Heber. Heber (1783-1826) was born in Malpas, England, and educated at Brasenose College, Oxford, where he won prizes for his poetry. He was ordained in 1807 and became vicar of the family estate at Hodnet, Shropshire. In 1823, Heber was appointed bishop of Calcutta and ordained the first native Christian there. Heber died suddenly at the end of a day in which he had baptized forty-two people. He wrote all his hymns before he went to India.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

Eternal God, in whom we live and move and have our being, whose face is hidden from us by our sin, and whose mercy we forget: cleanse us from all offenses, and deliver us from proud thoughts and vain desires; that humbly we may draw near to thee, confessing our faults, confiding in thy grace, and finding in thee our refuge and our strength, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Luke 3:15-17; 21-22 p. 834

***HYMN** *This Is the Day the Lord Hath Made* 230

This paraphrase of Psalm 118 by Isaac Watts was first published in *The Psalms of David* (1719), where he headed it "Hosanna; The Lord's Day; or Christ's Resurrection, and Our Salvation." Watts's intention was for it to be sung on Easter Day or on Sundays.

SECOND LESSON Isaiah 43:1-7 p. 585

SERMON Named and Naming

***HYMN** *We Three Kings* 66

Text and tune were written by John Henry Hopkins, Jr. in 1857. His undergraduate and master's degrees were from the University of Vermont. He was a pastor, and then professor of church music at General Theological Seminary. He designed stained glass windows and Episcopal seals and forms. The introduction was written for our hymnal by Robert Stigall, a church organist and choir director in Charlotte, N.C.

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 to Jordan's Waters Came*
- Brother James' Air, text by Michael Joncas

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

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

***HYMN** *Christ, When for Us You Were Baptized* 70

The text was written by F. Bland Tucker in 1979 and altered in 1982. It was first published in *The Hymnal 1982*. A noted hymn writer and translator, he was made a fellow of the Hymn Society of America in 1980.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *In Christ There Is No East or West* - Dale Wood

* 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 Pat Guerrero and Laurel Varker. Ushers and greeters for today's service are David and Laurel Varker.

Please join us after worship today for coffee hour in the Narthex provided by Beverly Cohen, Pat Guerrero and Jane Radocchia.

REMOVAL OF CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS: We will be removing the wreaths and trees after worship today. Many hands are needed and would be appreciated!

Thank you to those who provided memorial poinsettias this year. Everyone should feel free to take one (or more!) home today. Plastic sleeves are available on the bench to help protect them from the cold.

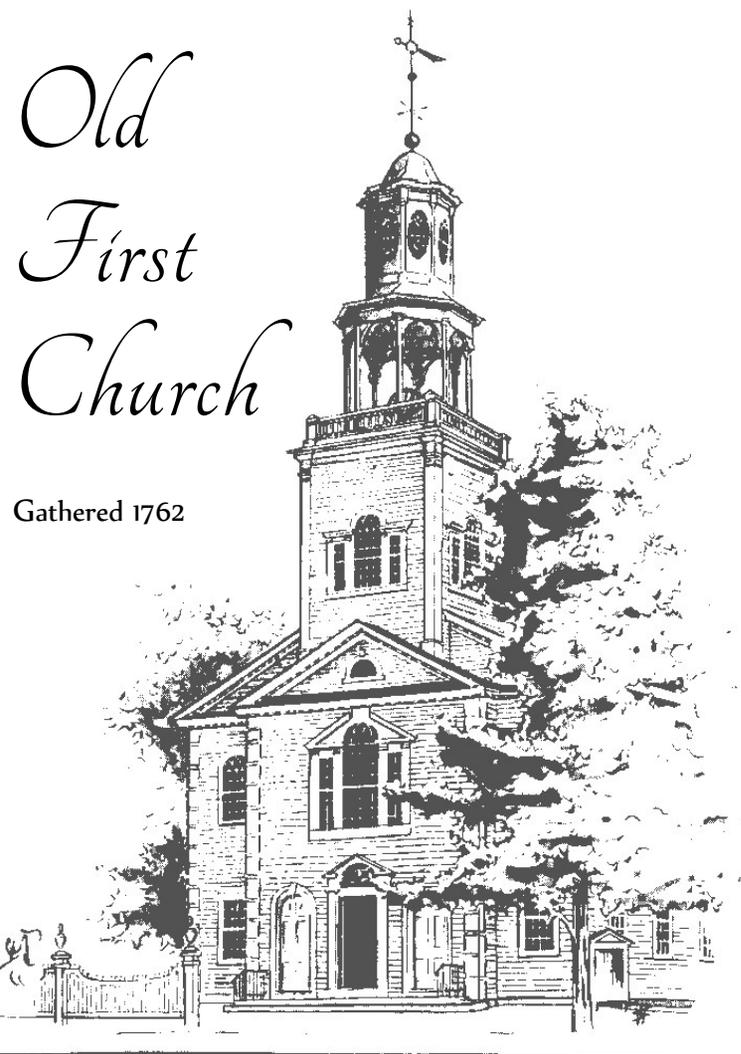
Weekly offering envelopes are available on the glass top table in the narthex. Be sure to indicate the envelope number located on the front of the envelope box along with your name on the sign out sheet.

The Church's Annual Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, February 6 following worship. If you are a Chair or Advocate on the Church Council, please prepare a 2021 year-end report and email, mail or drop it in the mail slot at the Barn by January 23.

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

Choir practice, Sunday mornings, 9:30 AM in the choir loft
1/10: Deacon meeting, 4:00 PM, church parlor and remotely
1/10: Trustee meeting, 5:30 PM, church parlor and remotely
1/13: Council meeting, 5:00 PM, church parlor and remotely
2/6: Annual Meeting, following worship in the church sanctuary

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
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Brightest and Best of the Stars of the Morning

Brightest and best of the stars of the morning,
dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid;
star of the east, the horizon adorning,
guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

Cold on His cradle the dew-drops are shining,
low lies His head with the beasts of the stall;
angels adore Him in slumber reclining,
Maker and Monarch and Savior of all!

Shall we then yield Him, in costly devotion,
odors of Edom and offerings divine,
gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,
myrrh from the forest, or gold from the mine?

Vainly we offer each ample oblation,
vainly with gifts would His favor secure;
richer by far is the heart's adoration,
dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

This Is the Day the Lord Hath Made

This is the day the Lord hath made;
The hours are all God's own;
Let Heaven rejoice, let earth be glad,
And praise surround the throne.

Hosanna to the anointed King,
To David's holy Son!
Help us, O Lord; descend and bring
Salvation from the throne.
Blest be the Lord, who comes in power
With messages of grace,
Who comes in this accepted hour
To save our sinful race.

Hosanna in the highest strains
The church on earth can raise!
The highest heavens, in which God reigns
Shall now resound with praise.

FIRST LESSON

Luke 3:15-17; 21-22

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

SECOND LESSON

Isaiah 43:1-7

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth— everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

We Three Kings

We three kings of Orient are,
bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain,
following yonder star.

Refrain:

O star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright;
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light!

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain,
gold I bring to crown Him again,
King forever, ceasing never
over us all to reign. [Refrain]

Frankincense to offer have I:
incense owns a Deity nigh;
prayer and praising, we are raising,
worshiping God Most High. [Refrain]

Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume
breathes a life of gathering gloom;
sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
sealed in the stone-cold tomb. [Refrain]

Glorious now behold him arise,
King and God and Sacrifice;
Alleluia, Alleluia,
sounds through the earth and skies. [Refrain]

Christ, When for Us You Were Baptized

Christ, when for us You were baptized,
God's Spirit on You came,
as peaceful as a dove
and yet as urgent as a flame.

God called You, "My beloved Son,"
the suffering servant true,
sent You the kingdom to proclaim,
God's holy will to do.

Straightway and steadfast until death
You then obeyed God's call
freely as Son of Man to serve
and give Your life for all.

Baptize us with Your Spirit, Lord,
Your cross on us be signed,
that likewise in God's service we
may perfect freedom find.