

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  
AUDREY PIETRUCHA, LAY READER  
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST  
OLD FIRST CHURCH CHOIR

DECEMBER 15, 2024 \* THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**PRELUDE** *Conditor Alme Siderum* - Alexandre Guilmant

**OPENING WORDS** (responsive)

Sing praises to the Lord.

**Who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is.**

The Lord our God is near always.

**Let us pray for the peace of God's presence.**

**LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE**

Fischer Gauthier, Winnie, Isabelle, and Josie Langford, and Dahlia Pecor

**\*HYMN** *Arise, Your Light Is Come!* 411  
Contemporary poet and U.C.C. minister and professor Ruth Duck was working on an adaptation of *Rise Up, O Men of God* when, she writes, "this new hymn text came to me, as if the new wine of the faith I wanted to express would not fit into the old wineskin of the earlier text." The tune by William Henry Walter was published in 1872. Walter was organist at Presbyterian and Episcopal churches in Newark, and at Columbia University.

**OPENING PRAYER** (unison)

**Almighty God, Light of the World, you caused light  
to shine out of the darkness in the advent of Christ;  
you continually open to us the ways we are to prepare.**

**We confess our failure to see the light and to walk in your ways.**

**We have not always opened our eyes to the needs of others,  
and our feet have wandered from the paths of justice and peace.**

**We ask that the Spirit of Jesus be born anew within us,  
that our hearts may be stirred to glorify the hour before us,  
with acts of compassion and service.**

**In Jesus's name we pray, Amen.**

**ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND \*GLORIA PATRI (579)**

**FIRST LESSON** Philippians 4:4-7 p. 955

**\*HYMN** *Watchman, Tell Us of the Night* **Insert**  
(Tune: WATCHMAN)

The author, John Bowring (1792-1872) was a member of the British Parliament, held appointments in France and Hong Kong, knew 200 languages and could converse in 100, wrote extensively, and escaped (although his wife did not) an attempt to poison him and his family while he was in China.

**SECOND LESSON** Luke 3:7-18 p. 834

**SERMON** What Shall We Do?

**\*HYMN** *People, Look East* 12

Eleanor Farjeon was an English Roman Catholic who wrote nursery rhythms and singing games for children. Her text first appeared in a section of the 1928 *Oxford Book of Carols* on modern texts adapted to traditional tunes. The French carol tune was earlier a setting for *Shepherds, Shake Off Your Drowsy Sleep*. The organist, choirmaster, composer and hymnal editor Martin Shaw wrote the harmony.

**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 or hand it to an usher after the service.)

**OFFERING**  
**OFFERTORY** *Star of Advent* - Pepper Choplin

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

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

**\*HYMN** *Of the Father's Love Begotten* 309

A native of Spain, Aurelius Clemens Prudentius (348 – c. 413) was educated in imperial schools where he studied the Latin poets Horace and Virgil. He became a law student and twice a magistrate before being appointed to court office by Theodosius. At age fifty-seven he renounced the world and retreated to a life of poverty, seclusion, and writing.

**\*BENEDICTION**

**\*POSTLUDE** *Lift Up Your Heads, You Mighty Gates*  
- Wilbur Held

\* Stand if able

**We extend a warm welcome to our guests and visitors and we are delighted to have you worship with us. 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 Joyce Goeke and Mary Elizabeth Groupé. Ushers for today's service are Nancy Coseo and Betsy Ehrenfreund.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments in the foyer after the service. Our thanks to Anastasia Gauthier, Kate Musso, Audrey Pietrucha, and Wendy Schmitt.

Keep the church's blanket drive for the needy, as well as hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, socks, and jackets for the grade school kids as you are doing your holiday shopping or fall cleaning of closets. All items should be new or gently used and can be left in the foyer for Jeannette or Anastasia to pick up and distribute.

Our traditional *Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols* service begins at 7 PM tonight and will feature the singing of the Bennington Children's Chorus; organist, Gene Marie Callahan; soloist Kerry Ryer-Parke; carol singing by the congregation; scripture readings by members of the congregation and a brief sermon by Rev. Clarke.

The Christmas Eve service takes place on Tuesday, December 24 at 5 PM. This family service will be filled with a meaningful Christmas message for young and old, familiar carols and readings. The service concludes with the congregation singing "Silent Night" with lighted candles in front of the church. A children's Christmas craft activity will be held at 4:30 in the parlor before the service begins, anyone through age 12 and parents are welcome.

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

- Choir practice, Sunday mornings, 9:45 AM in the choir loft
- 12/19, 12/26: Bible Study, 7:00 PM, Church parlor
- 12/15: Candlelight Service, 7:00 PM
- 12/18 Trustee Meeting, 5:30 PM, Church parlor
- 12/24: Christmas Eve service, 5:00 PM

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)

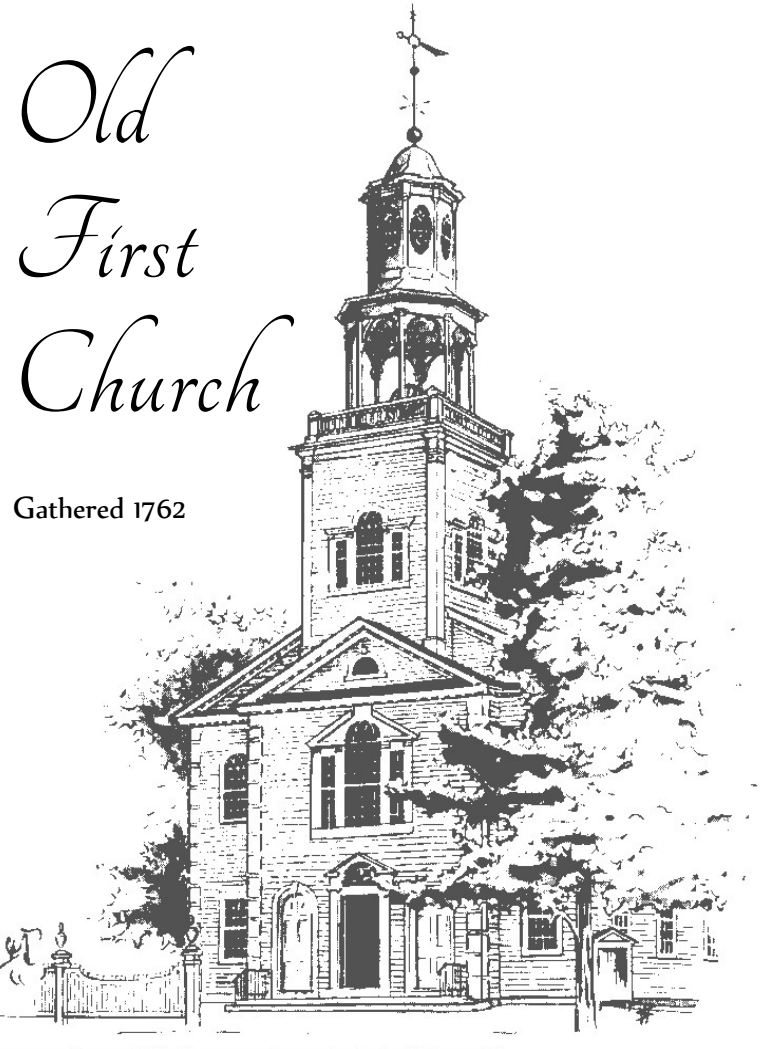
VT RTE. 9 AND MONUMENT AVENUE

OLD BENNINGTON, VERMONT

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### *Arise, Your Light Is Come!*

Arise, your light is come!  
The Spirit's call obey;  
show forth the glory of your God,  
which shines on you today.

Arise, your light is come!  
Fling wide the prison door;  
proclaim the captives' liberty,  
good tidings to the poor.

Arise, your light is come!  
All you in sorrow born,  
bind up the brokenhearted ones  
and comfort those who mourn.

Arise, your light is come!  
The mountains burst in song!  
Rise up like eagles on the wing;  
God's power will make us strong.

### **FIRST LESSON**

### **Philippians 4:4-7**

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

### *Watchman, Tell Us of the Night*

1. Watchman, tell us of the night,  
What its signs of promise are.  
Traveler, o'er yon mountain's height,  
See that glory beaming star.  
Watchman, does its beautiful ray  
Aught of joy or hope foretell?  
Traveler, yes; it brings the day,  
Promised day of Israel.
2. Watchman, tell us of the night,  
Higher yet that star ascends.  
Traveler, blessedness and light,  
Peace and truth its course portends.  
Watchman, will its beams alone  
Gild the spot that gave them birth?  
Traveler, ages are its own;  
See, it bursts o'er all the earth.
3. Watchman, tell us of the night,  
For the morning seems to dawn.  
Traveler, darkness takes its flight,  
Doubt and terror are withdrawn.  
Watchman, let your wanderings cease;  
Hasten to your quiet home.  
Traveler, lo, the Prince of Peace,  
Lo, the Son of God is come!

### **SECOND LESSON**

### **Luke 3:7-18**

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

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." So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

### *People, Look East*

People, look east. The time is near  
Of the crowning of the year.  
Make your house fair as you are able,  
Trim the hearth and set the table.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the guest is on the way.

Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,  
One more seed is planted there:  
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,  
That in course the flower may flourish.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the rose is on the way.

Birds, though you long have ceased to build,  
Guard the nest that must be filled.  
Even the hour when wings are frozen  
God for fledging time has chosen.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the bird is on the way.

Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim  
One more light the bowl shall brim,  
Shining beyond the frosty weather,  
Bright as sun and moon together.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the star is on the way.

Angels, announce with shouts of mirth  
Christ who brings new life to earth.  
Set every peak and valley humming  
With the word, the Lord is coming.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the Lord, is on the way.

### *Of the Father's Love Begotten*

Of the Father's love begotten,  
Ere the worlds began to be,  
He is Alpha and Omega,  
He the source, the ending He,  
Of the things that are, have been,  
And that future years shall see,  
Evermore and evermore!

O ye heights of heaven adore Him;  
Angel hosts, His praises sing;  
Powers, dominions, bow before Him,  
And extol our God and King;  
Let no tongue on earth be silent,  
Every voice in concert ring,  
Evermore and evermore!

Christ, to Thee with God the Father,  
And, O Holy Ghost, to Thee,  
Hymn and chant and high thanksgiving,  
And unwearied praises be:  
Honor, glory, and dominion,  
And eternal victory,  
Evermore and evermore!