

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  
MARIE GUARINIELLO, LAY READER  
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST  
OLD FIRST CHURCH CHOIR

FEBRUARY 18, 2024

PRELUDE *Elegy* - Douglas Wood

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

We gather in prayer and praise.

**God is our refuge and our strength.**

God's word calls to us.

**Open our hearts this hour.**

\*HYMN *O Worship the King, All Glorious Above!* 476

Robert Grant paraphrased Psalm 104 for this hymn. Born and died in India, he was a British member of Parliament who introduced a bill in 1833 emancipating the Jews. The text of verse two has been altered to be closer to the language of the Psalm ("chariots of wrath," which some may remember, isn't in the Psalm!) It is not certain that Johann Michael Haydn, Franz Joseph's brother, was the composer. A number of pieces by both contain the first line. Johann was a singer who supposedly had a range of three octaves.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND \*GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Psalm 25:1-10 p. 436

\*HYMN *Lord, to You My Soul Is Lifted* 178

This new metrical rendering of Psalm 25 is by Stanley Wiersma (1930-1986) for the *Psalter Hymnal* (1987) of the Christian Reformed Church.

SECOND LESSON Genesis 9:8-17 p. 6

SERMON Signs and Remembrance

\*HYMN *Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days* 81

The text, written by Claudia Hernaman, who was the daughter of an Anglican priest in Surrey, England, and who also married a minister, was one of over 150 hymns she wrote, many of whom were for children. It was first published in *Child's Book of Praise* (1873). The tune was published in 1562 for the first half of a hymn for Psalm 132 and adapted for an 1853 hymnal, *Ancient Hymn*

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.)

RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS (see insert) JW & Mary Brooks

OFFERING  
OFFERTORY *Steal Away to Jesus* - Spiritual

\*DOXOLOGY (592) AND PRAYER OF DEDICATION

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

\*HYMN *Come, Labor On* 415

The author was Jane Laurie Borthwick, a member of the Free Church of Scotland. Known primarily as a translator along with her sister, they published together four volumes titled *Hymns from the Land of Luther*. She published this text in 1857 in her book, *Thoughts for Thoughtful Hours*. The tune was written by Thomas Tertius Noble in 1918. He was a noted composer and organist in York, England and at St. Thomas Church, New York City.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross* - David Schack

**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 Pat Guerrero. Ushers and greeters for today's service are Stacy Carreau and Susan Katz.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments in the foyer after the service. Our thanks to Marsha Pilachowski for providing coffee hour this morning.

Flowers for worship are provided by Betsy Ehrenfreund in memory of Bill Gordon.

The 21<sup>st</sup> annual *MEDITATIONS FOR LENT* booklet can be found in the foyer for those wishing to have a copy to read through the season of Lent. Lent began on Wednesday, Feb. 14. Our thanks to all who submitted devotionals this year.

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

Choir practice, Sunday mornings, 9:45 AM in the choir loft

2/21: Trustee Meeting, 5:30 PM, Church

2/22: Deacon Meeting, 4:00 PM, Barn

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!

To maintain the healthiest standards for public gathering, indoor air is constantly being exchanged with fresh air with a LifeBreath circulation system operating during the service today.

## FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

(OLD FIRST CHURCH)

VT RTE. 9 AND MONUMENT AVENUE

OLD BENNINGTON, VERMONT

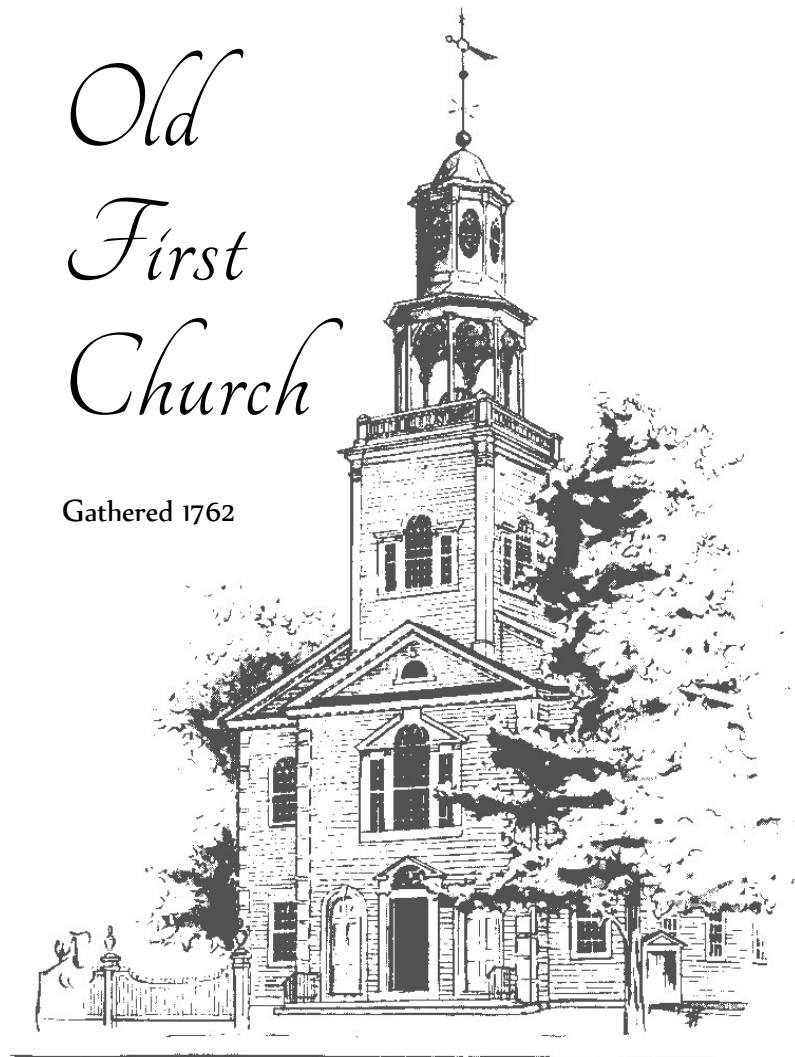
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# Old First Church

Gathered 1762



## *O Worship the King, All Glorious Above!*

O worship the King, all-glorious above! O gratefully sing God's power and God's love; our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days, pavilioned in splendor and girded with praise.

O tell of God's might, O sing of God's grace, whose robe is the light, whose canopy space. The chariots of heaven the deep thunderclouds form, and bright is God's path on the wings of the storm.

The earth with its store of wonders untold, almighty, Thy power hath founded of old; hath stablished it fast by a changeless decree, and round it hath cast, like a mantle, the sea.

Thy bountiful care what tongue can recite? It breathes in the air, it shines in the light; it streams from the hills, it descends to the plain, and sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.

Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail, in Thee do we trust, nor find Thee to fail; Thy mercies how tender, how firm to the end, our maker, defender, redeemer, and friend.

Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

## *Lord, to You My Soul Is Lifted*

Lord, to You my soul is lifted.  
Let me never be ashamed  
that I trust in You to keep me  
though I seem to wait in vain.  
Lord, remember all Your love;  
in Your holy will instruct me.  
Lord, do not remember sins  
of those younger years behind me.

Lord of covenant and goodness,  
pardon and correct my sin.  
They who worship You and fear You  
choose the paths You choose for them.  
They and all their family  
shall possess the earth forever.  
You, O Lord, will be their friend.  
From the snare You will deliver.

Turn to me in grace and mercy,  
as I suffer all alone.  
Take away my sin and sadness,  
all the trouble I have known.  
May my fierce and spiteful foes  
not succeed to harm and curse me.  
In Your faithfulness I hope.  
On Your people, Lord, have mercy.

## **FIRST LESSON**

## **Psalm 25**

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me.

Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.

Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.

Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.

Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord!

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."

God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

### *Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days*

Lord, who throughout these forty days  
For us didst fast and pray,  
Teach us with Thee to mourn our sins,  
And close by Thee to stay.

As Thou with Satan didst contend,  
And didst the victory win,  
O give us strength in Thee to fight,  
In Thee to conquer sin.

And through these days of penitence,  
And through Thy Passiontide,  
Yea, evermore, in life and death,  
O Lord, with us abide.

Abide with us, that so, this life  
Of suffering overpast,  
An Easter of unending joy  
We may attain at last!

### *Come, Labor On*

Come, labor on.  
Who dares stand idle on the harvest plain  
while all around us waves the golden grain?  
And to each servant does the Master say,  
"Go work today."

Come, labor on.  
Claim the high calling angels cannot share;  
to young and old the gospel gladness bear.  
Redeem the time; its hours too swiftly fly.  
The night draws nigh.

Come, labor on.  
Away with gloomy doubts and faithless fear!  
No arm so weak but may do service here.  
Though feeble agents, may we all fulfill  
God's righteous will.

Come, labor on.  
No time for rest, till glows the western sky,  
till the long shadows o'er our pathway lie,  
and a glad sound comes with the setting sun,  
"Well done, well done!"

## MEMBERSHIP RECEPTION

We prepare to welcome into our membership today, **JW and Mary Brooks** by reaffirmation of faith.

### 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, *JW and Mary* 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

## COVENANT

We covenant with the Lord and with one another and do bind ourselves in the presence of God, to walk together in all His ways, according as He is pleased to reveal Himself unto us in our diversity of mind and spirit.

We declare, and intend, and with dependence upon His powerful grace we engage, to walk together as a church of the Lord Jesus Christ in the faith and order of the Gospel so far as we shall have the same revealed to us, conscientiously attending the public worship of God, the sacraments of the New Testament, the discipline of His Kingdom, and all His holy institutions in communion with one another, and watchfully avoiding all sinful stumbling-blocks, as become a people whom the Lord hath bound up together in the bundle of eternal life.

Depending, as did our forebears, upon the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, we work and pray for the transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God, and we look with faith for the triumph of righteousness and the life everlasting.

*Adopted by the Old First Church, at the Annual Meeting, May 1980.*

*Our covenant exemplifies the history of our Congregational tradition. The first paragraph is, with a minor modification, one of the original New England Church covenants, used by the Salem Church in 1629. The second paragraph is taken from what appears to be the original covenant of our own church, from the late 18th century. The third paragraph is an excerpt from a Modern Congregational confession, the Kansas City Statement of Faith, of 1913. Like many traditional confessions of faith, our covenant is triune in character, the three paragraphs speaking, respectively, of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*