

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  
NOAH LANGFORD, LAY READER  
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST  
OLD FIRST CHURCH CHOIR

JANUARY 28, 2024

PRELUDE *Reflection* - Kerry J. Beaumont

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

O Lord, in your light we see light.

**By your love our world is made new.**

Let us sing with thanks and praise to God.

**Your faithfulness extends to all creation.**

\*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)

O Lord our God,  
you know us better than we know ourselves.  
As we come before you now,  
believers and doubters alike,  
we all share a deep need,  
for we are all lost without your grace.  
Search us, O God, and know our hearts,  
test us and know our troubled thoughts.  
Give us true repentance.  
Forgive us all our wrongs.  
Transform us by your Spirit to live for you each day,  
to learn to serve each other  
and, through your grace  
to come at last to heaven.  
This we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND \*GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Mark 1:21-28 p. 812

\*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 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 p. 930

SERMON Uses of Liberty

\*HYMN *God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending* 422

The text by Robert Edwards was one of the ten winners of the 1961 Hymn Society of America's competition for stewardship hymns. The tune first appeared in the 1844 Philadelphia publication, *Sacred Harp*, by B.F. White and Elisha King; the 1958 harmony is by James Wood.

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 *Blessed Jesus, at Your Word* - Johann Rudolph Ahle

\*DOXOLOGY (592) AND PRAYER OF DEDICATION

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

\*HYMN *There Is a Balm in Gilead* 394

The text answers the question in Jeremiah 8:22 and reflects the hope in black spirituals. The tune is also African American.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Postlude* - Douglas Wagner

**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 Janet Van Derpoel-Andrea and Sue Philpott. Ushers and greeters for today's service are Marsha and Dave Pilachowski.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments in the foyer after the service. Our thanks to Sandy Bechtel, Mary Elizabeth Groupé, Audrey Pietrucha, and Pat Ross for providing coffee hour this morning.

Flowers for worship are provided by Kate Musso in memory of Flavia Folsom Davis.

**21<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL LENTEN DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET:** Submissions for our *Meditations for Lent* booklet, by and for members and friends of Old First, are being accepted. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 14. The deadline for submissions is February 5. Email is the best way to get it to the church office. The devotionals are printed on a half-sheet of 8 ½ x 11" paper so please keep your selections brief.

**\*\*MEETING WARNING\*\***The Church's Annual Meeting is scheduled for **Sunday, Feb. 11** following worship. If you are a Chair or Advocate on the Church Council, please prepare a 2023 year-end report and get it to the church office by January 30.

**BLANKETS FOR THE HOMELESS:** We are still collecting new or gently used blankets for the homeless. Gently used blankets must be clean and no electric blankets please. Donations can be left in the church parlor or brought to the office during the week.

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!

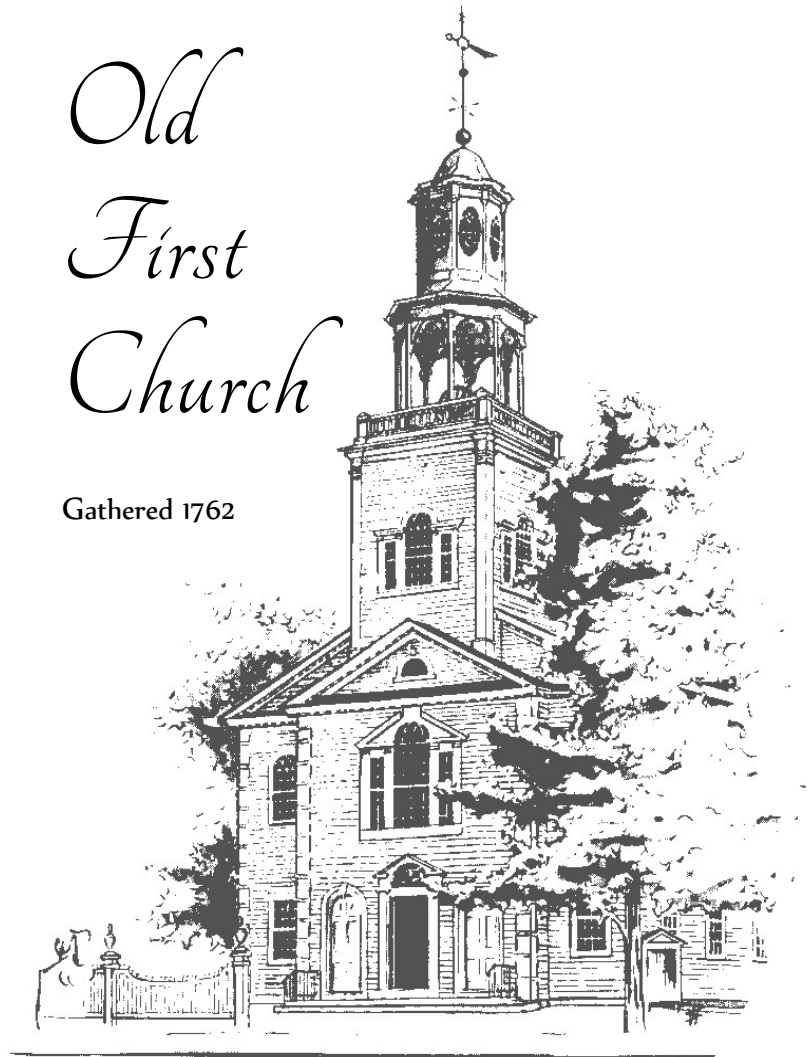
To maintain the healthiest standards for public gathering, indoor air is constantly being exchanged with fresh air with a LifeBreath circulation system operating during the service today.

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 established 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.

### **FIRST LESSON**

#### **Mark 1:21-28**

They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

## *This Is the Day the Lord Hath Made*

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| 1 This is the day the Lord has made;<br>He calls the hours His own;<br>let heav'n rejoice, let earth be glad,<br>and praise surround the throne. | 3 Hosanna to th' anointed King,<br>to David's holy Son.<br>help us, O LORD, descend and bring<br>salvation from Your throne.        |
| 2 Today He rose and left the dead,<br>and Satan's empire fell;<br>today the saints His triumphs spread,<br>and all His wonders tell.             | 4 Blest be the Lord, who comes to us<br>with messages of grace;<br>who comes, in God His Father's name,<br>to save our sinful race. |

### **SECOND LESSON**

#### **1 Corinthians 8:1-13**

Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; but anyone who loves God is known by him.

Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "no idol in the world really exists," and that "there is no God but one." Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. "Food will not bring us close to God." We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.

## *God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending*

God, whose giving knows no ending,  
from Your rich and endless store,  
Nature's wonder, Jesus' wisdom,  
Costly cross, grave's shattered door:  
Gifted by You, we turn to You,  
Offering up ourselves in praise;  
Thankful song shall rise forever,  
Gracious donor of our days.

Skills and time are ours for pressing  
Toward the goals of Christ, your Son:  
All at peace in health and freedom,  
Races joined, the church made one.  
Now direct our daily labor,  
Lest we strive for self alone;  
Born with talents, make us servants  
Fit to answer at Your throne.

Treasure too You have entrusted,  
Gain through powers Your grace conferred;  
Ours to use for home and kindred,  
And to spread the gospel Word.  
Open wide our hands, in sharing,  
As we heed Christ's ageless call,  
Healing, teaching, and reclaiming,  
Serving You by loving all.

## *There Is a Balm in Gilead*

*Refrain:*

There is a balm in Gilead  
To make the wounded whole.  
There is a balm in Gilead  
To heal the sin-sick soul.

Sometimes I feel discouraged,  
And think my work's in vain,  
But then the Holy Spirit  
Revives my soul again. *[Refrain]*

Don't ever feel discouraged,  
For Jesus is your friend,  
And if you lack for knowledge  
He'll not refuse to lend. *[Refrain]*

If you cannot preach like Peter,  
If you cannot pray like Paul,  
You can tell the love of Jesus  
And say, "He died for all." *[Refrain]*