

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
KRISTIN ROESSNER, LAY READER
ROB ELLIS, GUEST MUSICIAN

JULY 21, 2024

PRELUDE *Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring* - J.S. Bach

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

Let us recall things of joy and gladness.

May God open our hearts this season.

Renew our spirit and lift us from any darkness.

In the beauty of the morning may God's truth shine.

***HYMN** *Come, Thou Font of Every Blessing* 356

This text was written by Robert Robinson (1735-1790) about 1758 and was included in *A Collection of Hymns Used by the Church of Christ in Angel-Alley, Bishopsgate* (1759). It was later included with the tune NETTLETON in John Wyeth's *Repository of Sacred Music, Part Second* (1813).

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Mark 6:30-34; 53-56 p. 818

HYMN *The Lord's My Shepherd, All My Need* 175

Christopher Webber, an Episcopal priest, wrote this rendition of Psalm 23 in 1986 for a collection of hymns to allow his congregation to sing the psalms. William Henry Havergal, a 19th-century priest of the Anglican Church wrote the tune. He introduced the German chorale into English use and wrote a book, *A History of the Old Hundredth Psalm Tune*.

SECOND LESSON Jeremiah 3:1-6 p. 612

SERMON From the Wilderness

***HYMN** *O God of Earth and Altar* 291

The present text is a composite. The original hymn was written by G. K. Chesterton for *The Commonwealth*, the journal of the Christian Social Union, and later appeared in *The English Hymnal* (1906). The alterations to stanza 2 and the new stanza 3 were written by Jane Parker Huber at the request of Lewis Mudge, for the final worship of the Life and Mission Statement Consultation held at Mo Ranch in 1985.

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 *Theme from New World Symphony* - Antonin Dvorak

***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 *And They Shall See God*
Aria from Handel's Messiah

* 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 Janet Van Derpoel-Andrea and Sue Philpott. Ushers and greeters for today's service are Joyce Goeke and Kate Musso.

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

Flowers for worship are provided by Betsy Ehrenfreund.

Council meeting will take place following worship today.

Sunday School: Informal drop in Sunday School will continue to run in the half hour before worship. Programs for summer include crafts, games, and classic Bible stories and lessons. All are welcome, but materials best suited for kids under 7.

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!

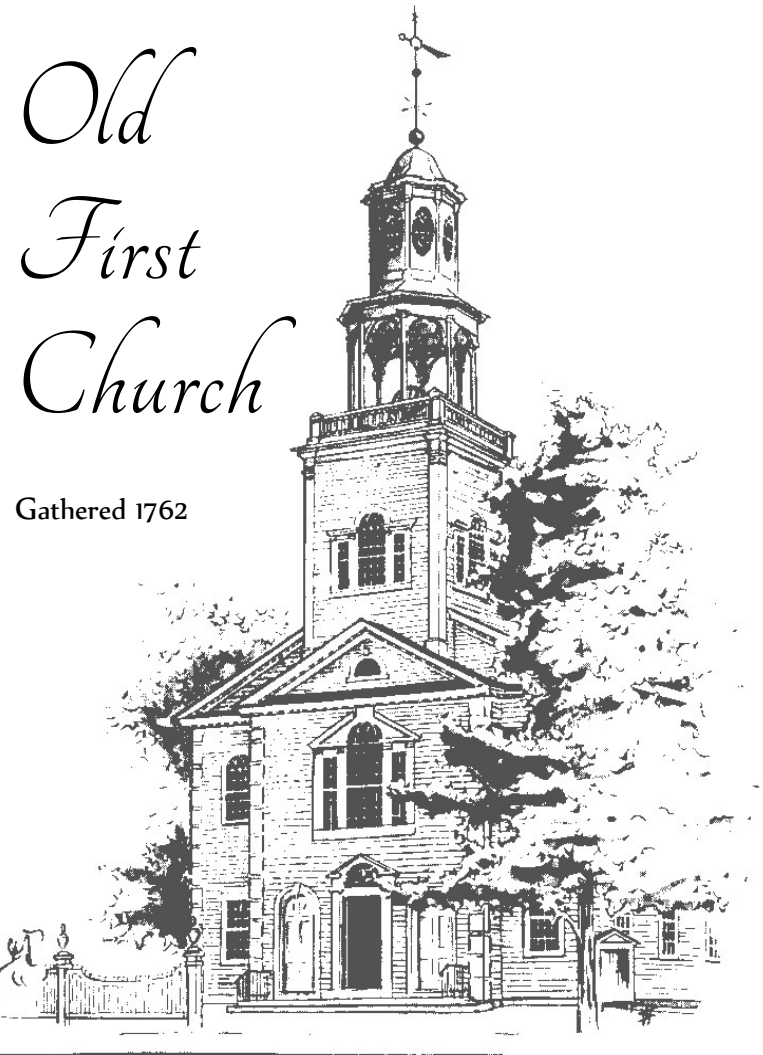
To maintain the healthiest standards for public gathering, indoor air is constantly being exchanged with fresh air with a LifeBreath circulation system operating during the service today.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

(OLD FIRST CHURCH)
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OLD BENNINGTON, VERMONT

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Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

1. Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,
tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing,
call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
sung by flaming tongues above;
praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,
mount of God's unchanging love!
2. Here I raise my Ebenezer,
hither by Thy help I'm come;
and I hope, by Thy good pleasure,
safely to arrive at home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood.
3. O to grace how great a debtor
daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace now, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to Thee:
prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love;
here's my heart, O take and seal it;
seal it for Thy courts above.

The Lord's My Shepherd, All My Need

The Lord's my Shepherd,
all my need will surely be supplied;
by quiet streams and through green fields
the Lord will be my guide.

The Lord revives me,
guides my feet on pathways that are right,
and I shall fear no evil though
I walk through darkest night.

Your rod and staff,
they comfort me; In presence of my foes
You feed me; You anoint my head
and my cup overflows.

Your goodness and Your mercy,
Lord, shall surely follow me,
and I will dwell in God's own house
for all eternity.

FIRST LESSON

Mark 6:30-34; 53-56

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

SECOND LESSON

Jeremiah 3:1-6

If a man divorces his wife and she goes from him and becomes another man's wife, will he return to her? Would not such a land be greatly polluted? You have played the whore with many lovers; and would you return to me? says the Lord. Look up to the bare heights, and see! Where have you not been lain with? By the waysides you have sat waiting for lovers, like a nomad in the wilderness. You have polluted the land with your whoring and wickedness. Therefore the showers have been withheld, and the spring rain has not come; yet you have the forehead of a whore, you refuse to be ashamed. Have you not just now called to me, "My Father, you are the friend of my youth— will he be angry forever, will he be indignant to the end?" This is how you have spoken, but you have done all the evil that you could.

The Lord said to me in the days of King Josiah: Have you seen what she did, that faithless one, Israel, how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and played the whore there?

O God of Earth and Altar

O God of earth and altar,
bow down and hear our cry;
our earthly rulers falter,
our people drift and die;
the walls of gold entomb us,
the swords of scorn divide;
take not Your thunder from us,
but take away our pride.

From all that terror teaches,
from lies of pen and voice,
from all the easy speeches
that make our hearts rejoice,
from sale and profanation
of honor and the sword,
from sleep and from damnation,
deliver us, good Lord!

Awaken us to action
And forge us into one,
Defying sect and faction;
O God, Your will be done!
Oppressive systems snare us;
Our apathies increase.
Great God, in mercy spare us
For justice and for peace!

In Christ There Is No East or West

In Christ there is no east or west,
In Him no south or north;
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth.

In Christ shall true hearts everywhere
Their high communion find;
His service is the golden cord
Close binding humankind.

Join hands, disciples in the faith,
Whate'er your race may be.
All children of the living God
Are surely kin to me.

In Christ now meet both east and west,
In Him meet south and north;
All Christly souls are one in Him
Throughout the whole wide earth.