

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 ROBERTS, LAY READER  
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST

JULY 7, 2024

**PRELUDE** *Improvisation on O Beautiful for Spacious Skies*  
- Charles Callahan

**OPENING WORDS** (responsive)

God's goodness is over all creation.

**Let us give thanks and praise.**

In love and compassion God's spirit is known.

**Let us offer prayers of peace and goodwill.**

**\*HYMN** *Lift Every Voice and Sing* **563**

Two brothers wrote this hymn, first published in 1921. The text was by James Weldon Johnson, who was self-taught in law and admitted to the Florida bar. He was a U.S. consul in Venezuela and Nicaragua, authored several books and was secretary of the NAACP for 14 years. J. Rosamund Johnson wrote the tune. He was educated at the New England Conservatory of Music, toured in vaudeville, directed Hammerstein Opera House in London and the Music School in NYC, and composed Broadway scores. The hymn is the official song of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

**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 the grace of Jesus Christ our Lord,  
to come at last to heaven.  
This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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

**FIRST LESSON** Matthew 10:40-42 p. 791

**\*HYMN** *I to the Hills Will Lift My Eyes* **234**

Here we go back to our singing roots and sing a Psalm. The text is a metrical setting of Psalm 121 from the 1912 hymnal, *The Psalter*, which was a joint work of nine U.S. and Canadian Reformed traditions. The tune is from the 1615 Scottish Psalter, *CL Hymns of David*.

**SECOND LESSON** Hebrews 11:8-16 p. 977

**SERMON** Our Faith

**\*HYMN** *My Country, 'Tis of Thee* **561**

Samuel Francis Smith (1808-95), a Baptist minister and Bostonian linguist, wrote the hymn. At the time of his death he knew 15 languages and was seeking a Russian text to learn Russian. He scribbled out the hymn in about a half-hour when he was 24 years old and a student at Andover Theological Seminary. He found the tune in a German music book given to him by Lowell Mason, prominent musician and educator, because Smith could read German. Mason then arranged the tune to be called AMERICA. The tune has origins that go back to Gregorian chants, Scottish carols, and the court of King Louis XIV. In England it was published to honor George II and given the title "National Anthem," and it was Russia's national tune until 1833.

**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** *America* - Flor Peeters

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

**SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER** (insert)

The congregation is invited to participate in the service as found in the insert included in this order of service. *(Please note that grape juice is on the outer circle only and wine inside. We partake together after all have been served.)*

**COMMUNION VOLUNTARY**

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

**\*HYMN** *O Beautiful for Spacious Skies* **564**

Katherine Lee Bates, Wellesley College professor of literature, was inspired to write the text after an 1893 visit to the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where she felt a patriotic feeling, and afterwards wrote, "We went on, my New England eyes delighting in the wind-waved gold of the vast wheat fields." It was after seeing amber skies from Pikes Peak that she then wrote the hymn in Colorado Springs. Samuel Augustus Ward, a Newark, NJ music supply, piano and organ salesperson, wrote the tune in 1882. First used for the hymn, *O Mother Dear, Jerusalem*, his widow gave permission for it to be used with Bates' text in 1912.

**BENEDICTION**

**POSTLUDE** *Finale* - Charles Callahan

\* 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 and ushers, greeters and communion servers for today's service are Janet Van Derpoel-Andrea and Sue Philpott.

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

Flowers for worship are provided by Kate Musso in memory of Jane Lewis

**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.

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

7/17: Trustee Meeting, 5:30 PM, Parlor

7/21: Council Meeting, following worship

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

### MAILING ADDRESS & CONTACT INFORMATION

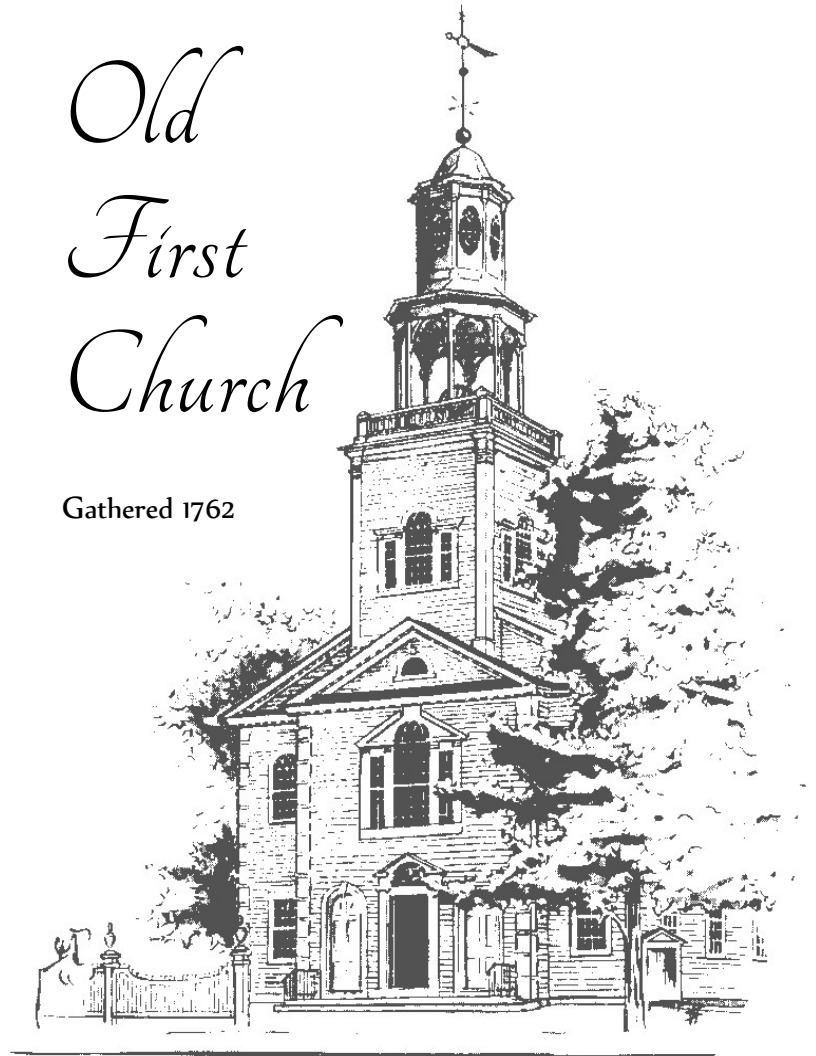
1 MONUMENT CIRCLE • BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201 • (802) 447-1223

[office@oldfirst.comcastbiz.net](mailto:office@oldfirst.comcastbiz.net) • [www.oldfirstchurchbenn.org](http://www.oldfirstchurchbenn.org)



# Old First Church

Gathered 1762



### *Lift Every Voice and Sing*

Lift every voice and sing till earth and heaven ring,  
ring with the harmonies of liberty.  
Let our rejoicing rise high as the listening skies;  
let it resound loud as the rolling sea.  
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us;  
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;  
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,  
let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod, bitter the chastening rod,  
felt in the days when hope unborn had died;  
yet with a steady beat, have not our weary feet  
come to the place for which our father's sighed?  
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered;  
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,  
out from the gloomy past, till now we stand at last  
where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,  
thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;  
thou who hast by Thy might led us into the light;  
keep us forever in the path, we pray.  
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee;  
lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee;  
shadowed beneath Thy hand may we forever stand,  
true to our God, true to our native land.

### **FIRST LESSON**

### **Matthew 10:40-42**

“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”

### *I to the Hills Will Lift My Eyes*

I to the hills will lift my eyes;  
From whence shall come my aid?  
My help is from the Lord alone,  
who heaven and earth has made.

God will not let your foot be moved,  
your guardian never sleeps;  
God’s watchful and un-slumbering care  
protects and safely keeps.

Your faithful keeper is the Lord,  
your shelter and your shade;  
’Neath sun or moon, by day or night,  
you shall not be afraid.

From evil God will keep you safe,  
provide for all you need;  
Your going out, your coming in,  
God will forever lead.

### **SECOND LESSON**

### **Hebrews 11:8-16**

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old—and Sarah herself was barren—because he considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, “as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.” All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

### *My Country, 'Tis of Thee*

My country, 'tis of thee,  
Sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing;  
Land where my fathers died,  
Land of the pilgrims' pride,  
From every mountainside let freedom ring!

My native country, thee,  
Land of the noble free, thy name I love;  
I love thy rocks and rills,  
Thy woods and templed hills;  
My heart with rapture thrills, like that above.

Let music swell the breeze,  
And ring from all the trees sweet freedom's song;  
Let mortal tongues awake;  
Let all that breathe partake;  
Let rocks their silence break, the sound prolong.

Our fathers' God, to Thee,  
Author of liberty, to Thee we sing;  
Long may our land be bright  
With freedom's holy light;  
Protect us by Thy might, Great God, our King.

### *O Beautiful for Spacious Skies*

Oh, beautiful for spacious skies,  
For amber waves of grain,  
For purple mountain majesties  
Above the fruited plain!  
America! America!  
God shed His grace on thee,  
And crown thy good with brotherhood  
From sea to shining sea.

Oh, beautiful for pilgrim feet,  
Whose stern, impassioned stress  
A thoroughfare of freedom beat  
Across the wilderness!  
America! America!  
God mend thine every flaw,  
Confirm thy soul in self-control,  
Thy liberty in law.

Oh, beautiful for heroes proved  
In liberating strife,  
Who more than self their country loved,  
And mercy more than life!  
America! America!  
May God thy gold refine,  
Till all success be nobleness,  
And every gain divine.

Oh, beautiful for patriot dream  
That sees beyond the years  
Thine alabaster cities gleam,  
Undimmed by human tears!  
America! America!  
God shed His grace on thee,  
And crown thy good with brotherhood  
From sea to shining sea.

**Order of Service for  
The Lord's Supper or Communion  
At the First Congregational Church  
Bennington, Vermont**

**Scripture Sentences**

**Opening Words and Invocation**

**Prayer of Confession** (read by the Minister and People in Unison)

*We come not into thy presence, most holy Lord God, trusting in our own righteousness but in thy manifold and abiding mercies. Remembering this day the great heart and passion of a son of man of long ago, we are conscious of our shortcomings. We would here be turned to the way of his brave and tender spirit, and find that wholeness of life which shall be at once a divine blessing for us and a divine ministry from us. Forgive our failures and shortcomings, and by thy grace strengthen our desire for goodness, that we may henceforth serve thee without fear and without shame, all the days of our lives. Amen.*

**Responsive Reading**

Let us hear the words of Jesus which speak of the way of blessedness.

Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN; FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED.**

Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.

**BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH DO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS; FOR THEY SHALL BE FILLED.**

Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.

**BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART; FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD.**

Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God.

**BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE; FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.**

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

**THIS IS THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT.**

And the second is like unto it, namely this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

**ON THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS HANG ALL THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS.**

**Offertory and Communion Prayer**

The Lord be with you.

**AND ALSO WITH YOU.**

Lift up your hearts

**WE LIFT THEM TO THE LORD.**

It is right to give our thanks and praise

**LET US GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD OUR GOD**

**Words of Institution**

The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and, when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said: This is my body which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me.

After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood. This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

*Take and eat this in remembrance of Christ.*

*Take and drink this in remembrance of Christ.*

**Silent Prayer**

The service continues and concludes as found in today's order of service.