

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
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST
OLD FIRST CHURCH CHOIR

OCTOBER 27, 2024

PRELUDE *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* - Michael Praetorius

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

Give thanks to the Lord, for God is good.

God's love endures forever.

This is the day the Lord has made.

We will rejoice and be glad in it.

***HYMN** *Sing Praise to God, Who Reigns Above* 483

This hymn was originally titled, "Hymn of Thanksgiving." Johann Schütz was a lawyer in Frankfurt who sympathized with the pietist movement in the Lutheran Church. The translator, Frances Elizabeth Cox, was one of the foremost translators into English of German hymns. The tune is from the 1566 Bohemian Brethren's *Kirchengeseng*.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

O God, forgive our sins. Forgive the sins that we remember, and the sins we have forgotten. Forgive our many failures in the face of temptation, and those times when we have been stubborn in the face of correction. Forgive the times we have been proud of our own achievements and those when we have failed to boast in your works. Forgive the harsh judgments we have made of others, and the leniency we have shown to ourselves. Forgive deceit done to others, and the truths we have avoided. Forgive us the pain we have caused others and the indulgence we have shown ourselves. Lord God, have mercy on us and make us whole. In Jesus Christ, our Savior's name, Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON John 8:31-36 p. 871

***HYMN** *God, Our Help and Constant Refuge* 192

The text is a paraphrase of Psalm 46 by Fred R. Anderson from his collection *Singing Psalms of Joy and Praise* (1986). It was written at the request of the Psalter Task Force of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

SECOND LESSON Romans 3:19-28 p. 915

SERMON I Fought the Law

***HYMN** *O Word of God Incarnate* 327

The text was written by William Walsham How. William How (1823-1897) was born in Shrewsbury, England and educated at Wadham College, Oxford and was ordained in 1846. He wrote all his hymns while in the parish of Whittington and was joint editor of several hymnals including *Psalms and Hymns* (1854), Supplement to *Psalms and Hymns* (1867), and *Church Hymns* (1871). He died while on vacation in Ireland.

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 *Your Hands, O Lord, in Days of Old*
- Carson P. Cooman**

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

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

***HYMN** *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* 260

The text and tune became the rallying cry of the Protestant Reformation. It is based on Psalm 46. Luther was a monk, priest, and doctor of divinity. His formal protests against what he considered distortions of the church and abuse of power by the Pope began in 1517; he was excommunicated in 1520, and banned from teaching in 1521. His protector was Elector Frederick, in whose protection he translated the New Testament from Greek into German. The tune may have been Luther's adaptation of a Gregorian melody. The harmonization is by J.S. Bach, who used the tune in Cantata 80.

***BENEDICTION**

***POSTLUDE** *Lobt Gott, ihr Christen, allzugleich*
- Johann Gottfried Walther

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* 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 Jeannette Lesser and Sue Philpott. Ushers and greeters for today's service are Courtney Cowan and Sue Philpott.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments in the foyer after the service. Our thanks to Janet Van Derpoel-Andrea, Joyce Goeke and others for providing coffee hour this morning.

Flowers for worship are provided by Darlene Munson in memory of Jeff Munson.

In an effort to help our friends in the Ashville area, a special collection for hurricane relief is being held. Donations can be dropped in the basket located in the church foyer or sent to the church office. Make checks payable to the church and reference "Hurricane Relief". The funds will be combined and a check from the church will be sent to Samaritan's Purse. <https://www.samaritanspurse.org/>

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

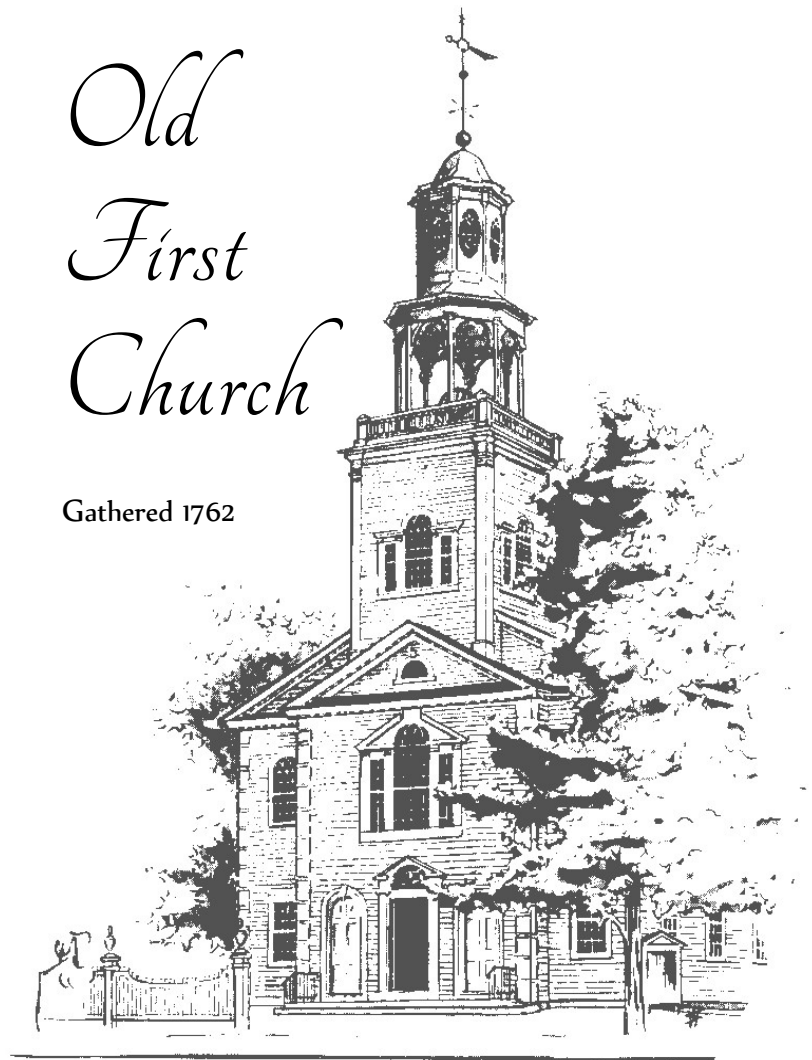
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office@oldfirst.comcastbiz.net • www.oldfirstchurchbenn.org



Old First Church

Gathered 1762



Sing Praise to God, Who Reigns Above

1. Sing praise to God, who reigns above,
the God of all creation,
the God of power, the God of love,
the God of our salvation;
With healing balm my soul is filled,
and every faithless murmur stilled:
To God all praise and glory!
2. What God's almighty power hath made,
God's gracious mercy keepeth;
by morning glow or evening shade
God's watchful eye ne'er sleepeth;
Within the kingdom of God's might,
Lo! All is just and all is right:
To God all praise and glory!
3. The Lord is never far away,
but through all grief distressing,
an ever present help and stay,
our peace, and joy, and blessing;
As with a mother's tender hand,
God gently leads the chosen band:
To God all praise and glory!
4. Thus all my gladsome way along,
I sing aloud Thy praises,
that all may hear the grateful song
my voice unwearied raises.
Be joyful in the Lord, my heart,
both soul and body take your part:
To God all praise and glory!

FIRST LESSON

John 8:31-36

Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, 'You will be made free'?" Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

God, Our Help and Constant Refuge

God, our help and constant refuge,
Ever present in our need!
Though the earth be ever changing,
Though it fall into the sea,
Rock secure,
Ever sure
Through all tumult You endure.

Holy river of God's city,
Healing flows within your streams,
Giving strength within our crisis,
Firm and steady like a beam.
Nations rage,
Wars to wage.
God will still protect this age.

God, the Lord of Hosts, is with us.
Come, behold these mighty deeds:
Wars are ended, spears are broken,
At this voice the world takes heed.
Come, O Lord,
Break the sword.
Bring us peace as Your reward.

Living Lord of Hosts, be with us.
Come, and fill us with Your power.
You, the hope of all the nations,
Be exalted in this hour.
God Most High,
Lest we die,
Give us hope and hear our cry.

SECOND LESSON

Romans 3:19-28

Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For "no human being will be justified in his sight" by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin. But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the

redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus. Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.

O Word of God Incarnate

O Word of God incarnate,
O Wisdom from on high,
O Truth unchanged, unchanging,
O Light of our dark sky:
We praise You for the radiance
That from the hallowed page,
A lantern to our footsteps,
Shines on from age to age.

The church from You, dear Savior,
Received this Gift divine,
And still that light is lifted
On all the earth to shine.
It is the chart and compass
That, all life's voyage through,
Amid the rocks and quick-sands,
Still guides, O Christ, to You.

O make Your church, dear Savior,
A lamp of purest gold
To bear before the nations
Your true light, as of old;
O teach Your wandering pilgrims
By this our path to trace,
Till, clouds and storms thus ended,
We see You face to face.

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our helper He amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great,
And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side,
The Man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He,
Lord Sabaoth His name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo! His doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly powers,
No thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours
Through Him who with us sideth;
Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also;
The body they may kill,
God's truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever.