

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
RENNY PONVERT, LAY READER
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST

AUGUST 31, 2025

PRELUDE *Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend*
- Johann Gottfried Walther

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

Bless the Lord, O my soul.

Let all that is in me bless God's name.

Mercy and justice are the Lord's.

May God's love and peace bless us.

***HYMN** *Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise* 263
The author of the text, Walter Chalmers Smith (1824-1908), was a minister in the Free Church of Scotland and was its Moderator in 1893. He published several books, his last one being *A Heretic and Other Poems*. The tune is a Welsh folk melody from the early 19th century.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

**Creator God,
forgive our moments of ingratitude,
the spiritual blindness that prevents us
from appreciating the wonder that is this world,
the endless cycle of nature,
of life and death and rebirth.
Forgive us for taking without giving,
reaping without sowing.
Open our eyes to see,
our lips to praise,
our hands to share.
May our feet land lightly on the path we take,
and our footsteps be worthy of following,
for they lead to you. This we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.**

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Luke 14:1, 7-14 p. 849

***HYMN** *You Are Before Me, Lord* 248
This paraphrase of Psalm 139 is by Ian Pitt-Watson. He wrote the text in 1973 and revised it extensively in 1989. The new "authorized version" appears in *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (1990).

SECOND LESSON Jeremiah 2:4-13 and Psalm 81:1, 10-16 p. 610 & 471

SERMON Sweet Honey

***HYMN** *Lord of All Good* 375
The text was written for the Eccleston, Wales, Congregational Church's Christmas fair by the pastor, Albert Bayly, in 1962. The tune is a form of "Old 124th," first published in the 1551 Genevan Psalter.

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 *Bist du bei mir* - J.S. Bach
Surabhee Arjunwadkar, soprano

***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** *Hilf, Gott, dass mirs gelinge* - J.S. Bach

* 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 Pat Guerrero and Amy Tronsen. Ushers for today's service are Pat and Larry Ross.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments in the foyer after the service graciously provided by Betsy Ehrenfreund, Mary Elizabeth Groupé, Kate Musso, Marsha Pilachowski, Vicky Printz, and Pat Ross.

Flowers for worship are provided by Mary and JW Brooks in memory of Jennifer Brooks.

SUNDAY SCHOOL: Informal drop in Sunday School will run in the half hour before worship starting today. Programs include crafts, games, and classic Bible stories and lessons. All are welcome, but materials best suited for kids under 10.

We will be returning to regular worship hour of 11:00 A.M. next Sunday, Sept 7. Choir practice will also resume next Sunday (9:45AM) and we will have a church picnic following worship. See the BLOG insert for more information on the picnic and other opportunities to sign up and help with church functions.

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

Bible study will resume in September. Starting date to be announced.

9/7: Choir practice resumes, 9:45 AM in the choir loft

9/7: Church Picnic, following worship

9/14: OFC hosting the Free Sunday Supper @ 2nd Congregational

9/16: Deacon's meeting, 4:00 PM, Barn

9/18: Trustee meeting, 5:30 PM, Parlor

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

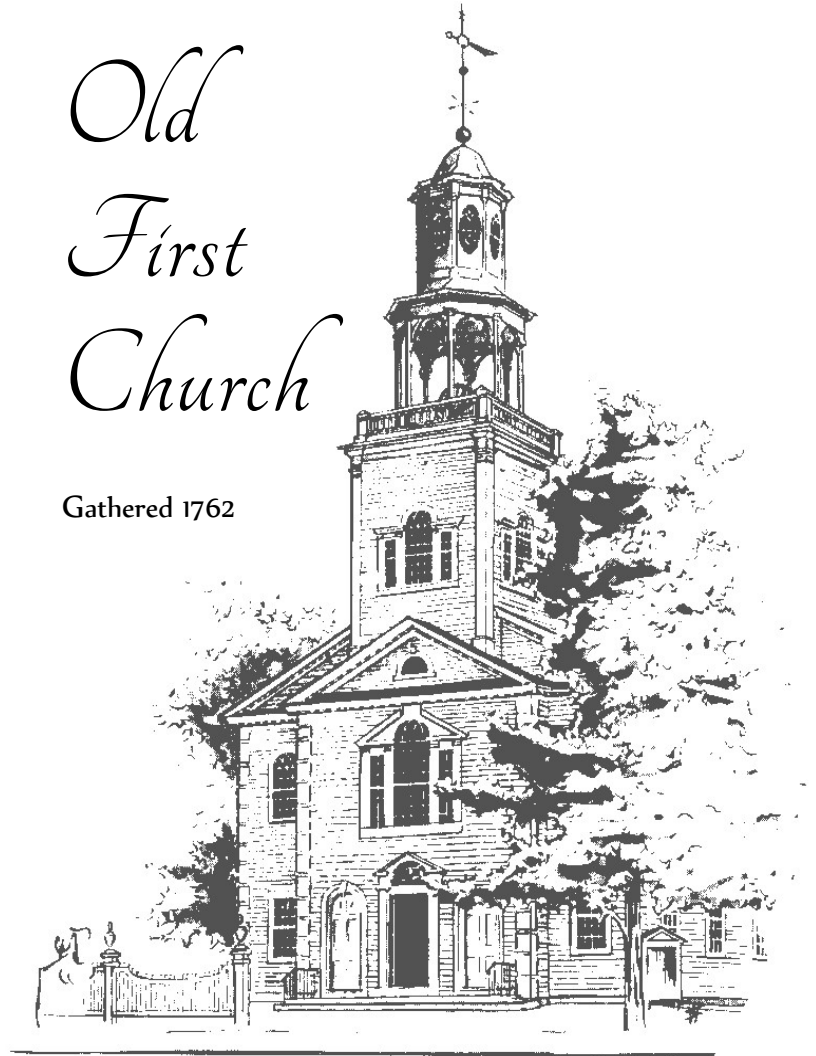
1 MONUMENT CIRCLE • BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201 • (802) 447-1223

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



Old First Church

Gathered 1762



Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all, life Thou givest, to both great and small;
in all life Thou livest, the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish like leaves on the tree,
then wither and perish; but naught changeth Thee.

Thou reignest in glory, Thou rulest in light,
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;
All praise we would render; O help us to see
“Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee!

FIRST LESSON

Luke 14:1, 7-14

On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the Sabbath, they were watching him closely.

When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. “When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host, and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, ‘Give this person your place,’ and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

He said also to the one who had invited him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

You Are Before Me, Lord

You are before me, Lord, You are behind,
And over me You have spread out Your hand;
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
Too high to grasp, too great to understand.

Then from Your Spirit where, Lord, shall I go;
And from Your presence where, Lord, shall I fly?
If I ascend to heaven You are there,
And still are with me if in hell I lie.

If I should take my flight into the dawn,
If I should dwell on ocean’s farthest shore,
Your mighty hand will rest upon me still,
And Your right hand will guard me evermore.

If I should say, “Let darkness cover me,
And I shall hide within the veil of night,”
Surely the darkness is not dark to You:
The night is as the day, the darkness light.

Search me, O God, search me and know my heart;
Try me, O God, my mind and spirit try;
Keep me from any path that gives You pain,
And lead me in the everlasting way.

SECOND LESSON

Jeremiah 2:4-13

⁴Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel. ⁵Thus says the Lord:

What wrong did your ancestors find in me
that they went far from me
and went after worthless things and became worthless themselves?

⁶They did not say, “Where is the Lord,
who brought us up from the land of Egypt,
who led us in the wilderness,
in a land of deserts and pits,
in a land of drought and deep darkness,
in a land that no one passes through,
where no one lives?”

⁷I brought you into a plentiful land
to eat its fruits and its good things.
But when you entered you defiled my land
and made my heritage an abomination.

⁸ The priests did not say, "Where is the Lord?"
Those who handle the law did not know me;
the rulers transgressed against me;
the prophets prophesied by Baal
and went after things that do not profit.

⁹ Therefore once more I accuse you,
says the Lord,
and I accuse your children's children.

¹⁰ Cross to the coasts of Cyprus and look;
send to Kedar and examine with care;
see if there has ever been such a thing.

¹¹ Has a nation changed its gods,
even though they are no gods?
But my people have changed their glory
for something that does not profit.

¹² Be appalled, O heavens, at this;
be shocked; be utterly desolate,
says the Lord,

¹³ for my people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken me,
the fountain of living water,
and dug out cisterns for themselves,
cracked cisterns
that can hold no water.

Psalm 81:1, 10-16

¹ Sing aloud to God our strength;
shout for joy to the God of Jacob.

¹⁰ I am the Lord your God,
who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.
Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.

¹¹ "But my people did not listen to my voice;
Israel would not submit to me.

¹² So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts,
to follow their own counsels.

¹³ O that my people would listen to me,
that Israel would walk in my ways!

¹⁴ Then I would quickly subdue their enemies
and turn my hand against their foes.

¹⁵ Those who hate the Lord would cringe before him,
and their doom would last forever.

¹⁶ I would feed you with the finest of the wheat,
and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you."

Lord of All Good

Lord of all good, our gifts we bring to You;
Use them Your holy purpose to fulfill;
Tokens of love and pledges brought anew,
That our whole life is offered to Your will.

We give our minds to understand Your ways,
Hands, eyes, and voice to serve Your great design,
Heart with the flame of Your own love ablaze,
Till for Your glory all our powers combine.

Father, whose bounty all creation shows;
Christ, by whose willing sacrifice we live;
Spirit, from whom all life in fullness flows:
To You with grateful hearts ourselves we give.

Come, Labor On

1. 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."

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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!"