

**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
KATE MUSSO, LAY READER
LYNN RALEY, GUEST ORGANIST

DECEMBER 28, 2025

PRELUDE *Herr Christ, der ein'ge Gottessohn* - Johann Pachelbel
("Lord Christ, the Only Son of God") (1653-1706)

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

This is the day which the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Teach us the ways of peace and the path of kindness.

Be with us, O Lord, in all we do and say.

***HYMN** *Go, Tell It on the Mountain* **29**
After hearing the refrain, John Wesley Work II wrote the stanzas around 1900. It was included in the collection, *American Negro Songs and Spirituals* (1940). Work and his brother were leading figures in the preservation, performance and study of African-American spirituals. This carol was arranged by Work's son, who continued the work (!) begun by his father and uncle. The harmony is by the chair of the committee that organized this hymnal, Melva Costen.

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 Isaiah 9:2-7 p. 555

***HYMN** *Let the Whole Creation Cry* **256**

This hymn is based on Psalm 148. The liberal views of the author, Stopford Brooke, a priest in Ireland and London, led him to leave the Anglican church in 1880. Jacob Hintze, town musician of Barnam, Germany, may have written the tune, first published in 1678. J. S. Bach harmonized it.

SECOND LESSON Matthew 2:13-23 p. 784

SERMON Darkness and Light

***HYMN** *All Beautiful the March of Days* insert

Wile, Mrs. Frances Whitmarsh. (Bristol Centre, New York, December 2, 1878--July 31, 1939, Rochester, N.Y.). Married A.J. Wile in 1901. Her lovely hymn for use in winter, beginning "All beautiful the march of days" was written about 1907 while she was a parishioner of Rev. William C. Gannett, in Rochester, N.Y., in consultation with him, and was included in Gannett and Hosmer's revised edition of *Unity Hymns and Chorals*, 1911, from which it passed into *The New Hymn and Tune Book*, 1914, and *Hymns of the Spirit*, 1937.

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 *Offertoire* - Léon Boëllmann
(1862-1897)

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

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

***HYMN** *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee* **464**

The text was written in 1907 when Henry van Dyke was guest preacher at Williams College. He said it should be sung to this tune, from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Beethoven's original rhythm for the 12th and 13th measures has been restored in our hymnal.

***BENEDICTION**

***POSTLUDE** *Toccata in F Major* - Johann Pachelbel

* 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 Joyce Goeke and Mary Elizabeth Groupé. Ushers for today's service are Joyce Goeke and Darlene Munson.

Please join us for coffee hour after worship today graciously provided by Janet Van Derpoel-Andrea, Nancy Coseo, Jeannette Lesser, Kate Musso and Vicky Printz.

The blanket and clothing drive continues. All items should be new or gently used and can be given to Jeannette or Anastasia to distribute. (if they are not available at worship, there will be bins in the Parlor to place these items in for temporary storage).

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

1/8, 1/15, 1/21, 1/29: Bible Study, 6:30 PM, Parlor

1/20: Deacon's meeting, 4:00 PM, at Marsha's house

1/22: Trustee's meeting, 5:30 PM, Parlor

Council meeting (January date to be determined), 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

VT RTE. 9 AND MONUMENT AVENUE
OLD BENNINGTON, VERMONT

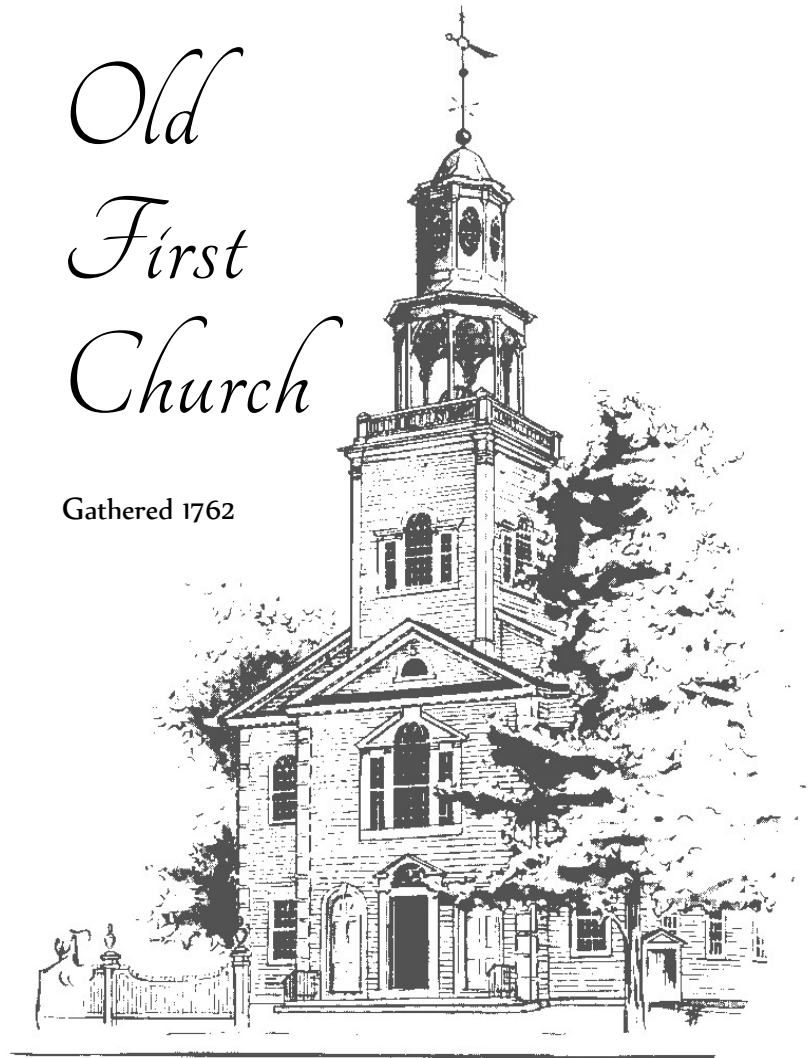
MAILING ADDRESS & CONTACT INFORMATION

1 MONUMENT CIRCLE • BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201 • (802) 447-1223
office@oldfirst.comcastbiz.net • www.oldfirstchurchbenn.org



Old
First
Church

Gathered 1762



Go, Tell It on the Mountain

Refrain:

Go, tell it on the mountain
Over the hills and everywhere;
Go, tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born!

While shepherds kept their watching
O'er silent flocks by night,
Behold throughout the heavens
There shone a Holy light. *[Refrain]*

The shepherds feared and trembled
When lo! Above the earth,
Rang out the angel chorus
That hailed our Savior's birth. *[Refrain]*

Down in a lowly manger
The humble Christ was born,
And God sent us salvation
That blessed Christmas morn. *[Refrain]*

FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 9:2-7

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.

You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

For the yoke of their burden and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders, and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Let the Whole Creation Cry

Let the whole creation cry,
"Glory to the Lord on high."
Heaven and earth, awake and sing,
"God is our eternal King."
Praise God, all ye hosts above,
ever shining forth in love;
sun and moon, uplift your voice;
night and stars, in God rejoice!

Men and women, young and old,
raise the anthem manifold;
join with children's song of praise
worship God through length of days.
From the north to southern pole
let the mighty chorus roll:
"Holy, holy, holy One,
glory be to God alone!"

SECOND LESSON

Matthew 2:13-23

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

"A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled, because they are no more."

When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazarene."

All Beautiful the March of Days

All beautiful the march of days,
As seasons come and go;
The hand that shaped the rose has wrought
The crystal of the snow;
Hath sent the hoary frost of heaven,
The flowing waters sealed,
And laid a silent loveliness
On hill and wood and field.

O'er white expanses sparkling pure
The radiant morns unfold;
The solemn splendors of the night
Burn brighter through the cold;
Life mounts in every throbbing vein,
Love deepens round the hearth,
And clearer sounds the angel hymn,
"Good will to men on earth."

O Thou from whose unfathomed law
The year in beauty flows,
Thyself the vision passing by
In crystal and in rose,
Day unto day doth utter speech,
And night to night proclaim,
In ever changing words of light,
The wonder of thy name.

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee,
God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee,
Opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;
Drive the gloom of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness,
Fill us with the light of day.

All Thy works with joy surround Thee,
Earth and heaven reflect Thy rays,
Stars and angels sing around Thee,
Center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
Flowery meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain,
Call us to rejoice in Thee.

Mortals, join the happy chorus
Which the morning stars began;
Lord divine is reigning o'er us,
Joining all in heaven's plan.
Ever singing, march we onward,
Victors in the midst of strife,
Joyful music leads us sunward
In the triumph song of life.