

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

JANUARY 5, 2025

PRELUDE *How Brightly Shines the Morning Star* - Flor Peeters

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

O God of power and love be with us.

O God of peace hear our prayer.

In this time of worship we pray to you.

Hear us and give comfort always.

***HYMN** *Brightest and Best of the Stars of the Morning* 67

This Epiphany text was written by Bishop Reginald Heber. Heber (1783-1826) was born in Malpas, England, and educated at Brasenose College, Oxford, where he won prizes for his poetry. He was ordained in 1807 and became vicar of the family estate at Hodnet, Shropshire. In 1823, Heber was appointed bishop of Calcutta and ordained the first native Christian there. Heber died suddenly at the end of a day in which he had baptized forty-two people. He wrote all his hymns before he went to India.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

Look to this day!

For it is life, the very life of life.

In its brief course

Lie all the verities and realities of your existence:

The bliss of growth

The glory of action

The splendor of beauty,

For yesterday is but a dream

And tomorrow only a vision,

But today well lived makes every yesterday a dream of happiness

And every tomorrow a vision of hope.

Look well, therefore, to this day!

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

ACT OF BAPTISM

George Clark Langford and Arthur Abraham Langford
Amber and Noah Langford, Parents

SPECIAL MUSIC

Allemande from Suite in G Major

Johann Sebastian Bach

Mary Elizabeth Groupé, viola

FIRST LESSON

Sirach 24:1-12

***HYMN**

Child of Blessing, Child of Promise

498

This hymn was written by Ronald S. Cole-Turner (1980) and first published in Ruth C. Duck and Michael G. Bausch's edited volume *Everflowing Streams* (1981). Later the hymn was published in the children's baptismal booklet *A Time to Remember*. There it appeared in both Spanish and English.

SECOND LESSON

John 1:1-18

p. 862

SERMON

Light and Dark

***HYMN**

O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright

69

This hymn, originally in German was written by Philipp Nicolai while a pastor in Unna. An unknown "pestilence" had spread so broadly that in seven months thirteen hundred people had died. The pastor's home overlooked the cemetery where up to thirty bodies were buried daily. These events led him to seek comfort in Christ and in the hope of eternal life. The hymn became a favorite "wedding hymn" in Germany.

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

A New Year Carol

- Benjamin Britten

***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** *For the Bread Which You Have Broken* **508**

Louis Benson wrote the text in 1924. Benson started his career as a lawyer, but abandoned it after seven years to become a Presbyterian minister, after which he became editor of several hymnals, and taught hymnody at Auburn and Princeton Seminaries. The tune was written in 1959 by V. Earle Copes, a 1940 graduate of Davidson College. Copes is a Methodist minister, and has served as minister of music in a number of churches and on college faculties.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Et in terra pax* - Francois Couperin

* 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, ushers and communion servers are Kate Musso and Marsha Pilachowski.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments in the foyer after the service. Our thanks to Nancy Coseo and Kate Musso.

Offering envelopes for 2025 contributions can be picked up in the foyer. Please be sure to indicate the box number and your name on the sign-out sheet.

The blanket drive continues during the winter months. Donations of new and gently used blankets are greatly appreciated. Please know that we cannot accept electric blankets. Donations can be left in the foyer of the church or downstairs in the parlor.

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

Choir practice, Sunday mornings, 9:45 AM in the choir loft

1/5: Council meeting, following worship

1/9, 1/16, 1/23, 1/30: Bible Study, 7:00 PM, Church parlor

1/15: Deacon's meeting, 4:00 PM, Barn

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

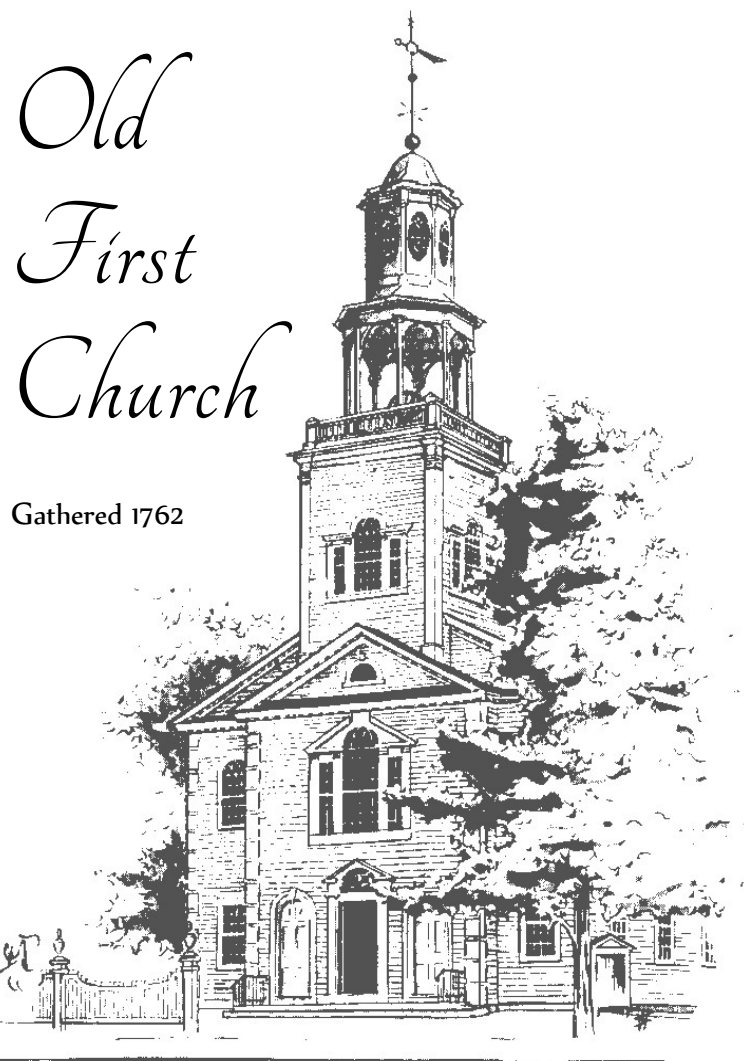
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Brightest and Best of the Stars of the Morning

Brightest and best of the stars of the morning,
dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid;
star of the east, the horizon adorning,
guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

Cold on His cradle the dew-drops are shining,
low lies His head with the beasts of the stall;
angels adore Him in slumber reclining,
Maker and Monarch and Savior of all!

Shall we then yield Him, in costly devotion,
odors of Edom and offerings divine,
gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,
myrrh from the forest, or gold from the mine?

Vainly we offer each ample oblation,
vainly with gifts would His favor secure;
richer by far is the heart's adoration,
dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

FIRST LESSON

Sirach 24:1-12

Wisdom praises herself and tells of her glory in the midst of her people.

In the assembly of the Most High she opens her mouth, and in the presence of his hosts she tells of her glory:

"I came forth from the mouth of the Most High and covered the earth like a mist.

I encamped in the heights, and my throne was in a pillar of cloud.

Alone I compassed the vault of heaven and traversed the depths of the abyss.

Over waves of the sea, over all the earth, and over every people and nation I have held sway."

Among all these I sought a rest place; in whose inheritance should I abide?

"Then the Creator of all things gave me a command, and my Creator pitched my tent. He said, 'Encamp in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance.'

Before the ages, in the beginning, he created me, and for all the ages I shall not cease to be.

In the holy tent I ministered before him, and so I was established in Zion.

Thus in the beloved city he gave me a resting place, and in Jerusalem was my domain.

I took root in an honored people in the portion of the Lord is my inheritance.

Child of Blessing, Child of Promise

Child of blessing, child of promise,
baptized with the Spirit's sign,
with this water God has sealed you
unto love and grace divine.

Child of love, our love's expression,
love's creation, loved indeed!
Fresh from God, refresh our spirits,
into joy and laughter lead.

Child of joy, our dearest treasure,
God's you are; from God you came.
Back to God we humbly give you:
live as one who bears Christ's name.

Child of God, your loving Parent,
learn to listen for God's call.
Grow to laugh and sing and worship,
trust and love God more than all.

SECOND LESSON

John 1:1-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not

know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

(John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright

O Morning Star, how fair and bright
Thou beamest forth in truth and light!
O Sovereign meek and lowly!
Thou root of Jesse, David's Son,
My Lord and Savior, Thou hast won
My heart to serve Thee solely!
Thou art holy,
fair and glorious, all victorious,
Rich in blessing,
Rule and might o'er all possessing.

Thou heavenly brightness! Light divine!
O deep within my heart now shine,
And make Thee there an altar!
Fill me with joy and strength to be
Thy member, ever joined to Thee
In love that cannot falter!
Toward Thee longing
Doth possess me; turn and bless me;
Here in sadness
Eye and heart long for Thy gladness!

For the Bread Which You Have Broken

For the bread which You have broken,
For the wine which You have poured,
For the words which You have spoken,
Now we give You thanks, O Lord.

By this promise that You love us,
By Your gift of peace restore,
By Your call to heaven above us,
Hallow all our lives, O Lord.

With the saints who now adore You
Seated at the heavenly board,
May the church still waiting for You
Keep love's tie unbroken, Lord.

In Your service, Lord, defend us;
In our hearts keep watch and ward;
In the world to which You send us
Let Your kingdom come, O Lord.

**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.