

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  
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST  
OLD FIRST CHURCH CHOIR

MARCH 23, 2025

**PRELUDE** *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross* - Guenter Raphael

**OPENING WORDS** (responsive)

Give thanks to the Lord for God is good.

**God's steadfast love endures forever.**

Sing to the Lord a new song,

**Sing to the Lord, all the earth!**

**\*HYMN** *Awake, My Soul, and with the Sun* **456**

Thomas Ken (1637-1711) was born at Little Berkhamstead, Hertfordshire, England, but went to live with his brother-in-law, Isaak Walton, after his parents died when Ken was nine years old. He was educated at Winchester and New College, Oxford. He was curate for Little Easton in Essex for three years after his ordination in 1662 and served for one year as a domestic chaplain to Bishop Morley. King James II of England declared the author of this hymn, Thomas Ken, the most eloquent preacher among Protestants of his time.

**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 achievement;**

**For yesterday is but a dream,**

**And tomorrow is only a vision;**

**But today, well lived, makes every yesterday**

**a dream of happiness,**

**And every tomorrow a vision of hope.**

**Be with us, O Lord, we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.**

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

**FIRST LESSON**

Luke 13:1-9

p. 848

**\*HYMN**

*O God, You Are My God*

**198**

This metrical version of Psalm 63 was written by Christopher L. Webber. It was published in A New Metrical Psalter (1986). A metrical version of the Psalter may not be a "translation" in the strict sense, but it does offer new words and music with which God's word may be sung by more people. At the least, such a fuller use of psalmody should lead to a deeper understanding of the meaning of redemption as we respond to it in worship.

**SECOND LESSON**

Isaiah 55:1-9

p. 598

**SERMON**

Not Your Thoughts

**\*HYMN**

*Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley*

**80**

This is an American spiritual which rose out of white communities. It portrays the true humanity of Jesus Christ in enduring the trials and temptations of life just as do all other humans. A New Testament allusion may be Hebrews 4:15. The text moves on to make these experiences more personal by saying in stanza 2, "We must walk this lonesome valley" and in stanza 3, "You must go and stand your trial." The hymn is particularly appropriate for the Lenten season.

**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**

*Be Calm, My Soul*

- Gloria Roe

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

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

p. 16

**\*HYMN**

*I've Got Peace Like a River*

**368**

This text with its tune is an African-American spiritual. The text portrays peace, joy, and love as like a river, a fountain, and an ocean. It conveys a sense of the moving, refreshing vastness of God's presence. Most directly it picks up the language of Galatians 5:22 as love, joy, and peace are cited as the first three in the list of the "fruit[s] of the Spirit."

**\*BENEDICTION**

**\*POSTLUDE**

*Abridge*

- C.S. Lang

\* 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 Marsha Pilachowski and Wendy Schmitt. Ushers for today's service are Audrey and Larry Pietrucha.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments in the foyer after the service. Our thanks to Audrey Pietrucha and Marsha Pilachowski for hosting.

Flowers for worship are provided by Kate Musso.

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

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

3/26: Bible Study, 7:00 PM, Parlor

3/27: Trustee's meeting, 5:30 PM

3/30: Open Church 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

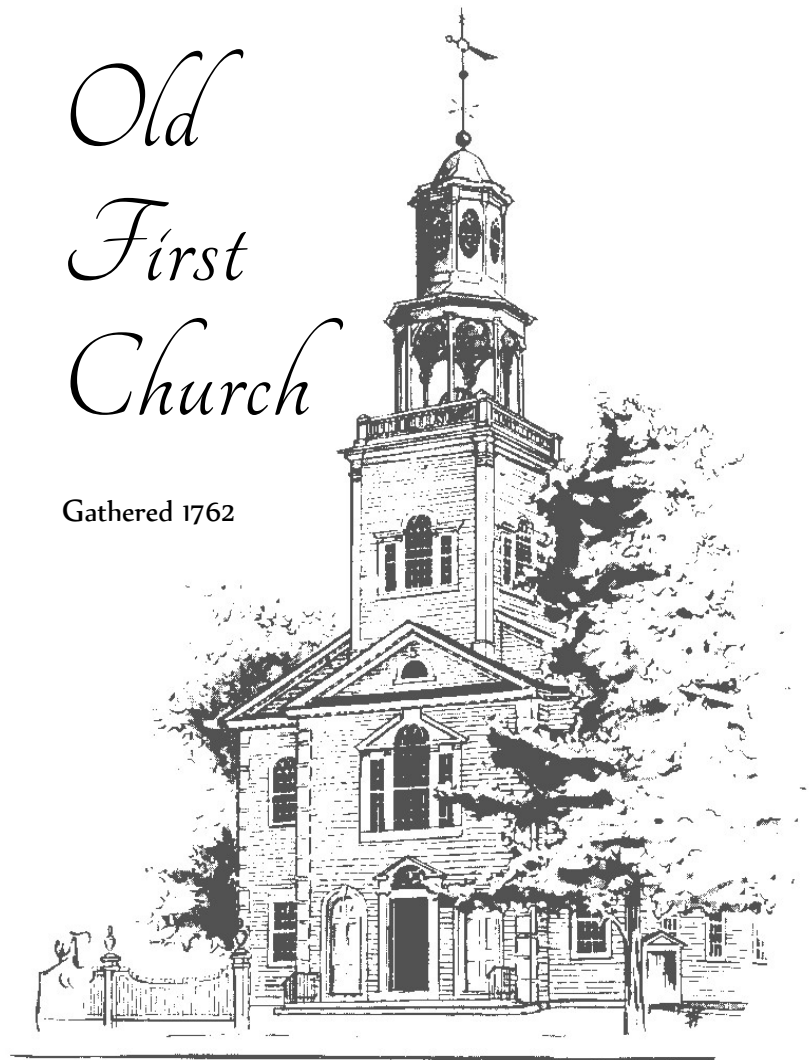
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# Old First Church

Gathered 1762



## *Awake, My Soul, and with the Sun*

Awake, my soul, and with the sun  
your daily stage of duty run;  
Shake off dull sloth, and joyful rise  
To pay your morning sacrifice.

Lord, I my vows to You renew.  
Disperse my sins as morning dew;  
Guard my first springs of thought and will,  
And with Yourself my spirit fill.

Direct, control, suggest, this day,  
All I design or do or say;  
That all my powers, with all their might,  
in Your sole glory may unite.

### **FIRST LESSON**

#### **Luke 13:1-9**

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.”

Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

## *O God, You Are My God*

O God, You are my God;  
I seek You eagerly;  
My soul and body thirst for You  
In barren lands and dry.

Therefore I gazed on You  
Within Your holy place,  
That I might look upon Your power,  
The glory of Your face.

Your love is more than life;  
My lips shall give You praise;  
I lift my hands up in Your name  
And bless You all my days.

My soul is well content,  
My mouth shall give You praise  
When I remember You at night  
And ponder all Your ways.

Your wings have sheltered me,  
My helper in the past;  
My soul, Lord, clings to You alone,  
Your right hand holds me fast.

### **SECOND LESSON**

#### **Isaiah 55:1-9**

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

### *Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley*

Jesus walked this lonesome valley;  
He had to walk it by himself.  
Oh, nobody else could walk it for him;  
He had to walk it by himself.

We must walk this lonesome valley;  
We have to walk it by ourselves.  
Oh, nobody else can walk it for us;  
We have to walk it by ourselves.

You must go and stand your trial;  
You have to stand it by yourself.  
Oh, nobody else can stand it for you;  
You have to stand it by yourself.

### *I've Got Peace Like a River*

I've got peace like a river,  
I've got peace like a river,  
I've got peace like a river in a my soul.  
I've got river in a my soul.

I've got joy like a fountain ,  
I've got joy like a fountain,  
I've got joy like a fountain in a my soul.  
I've got joy fountain in a my soul.

I've got love like an ocean,  
I've got love like an ocean,  
I've got love like an ocean in a my soul.  
I've got ocean in a my soul.