

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
SUSAN KATZ, LAY READER
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST
OLD FIRST CHURCH CHOIR

NOVEMBER 23, 2025

PRELUDE Prelude on "Kremser" - Flor Peeters

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!

Worship the Lord with gladness,

Come into God's presence with thanksgiving,

For the Lord is good, God's steadfast love endures forever.

***HYMN** *We Gather Together* 559

This 17th C. folk hymn was written during Holland's struggle for independence with Spain. The political environment is reflected in the text. The tune is named for Eduard Kremser (1838-1914), a Viennese composer and choir director, who discovered the hymn after it had been forgotten for two centuries.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

Gracious God, you have given us so much,
but too often we take those gifts for granted,
or as something to which we are by skill entitled.
You call us to live in love,
but too often we place our wants and needs first,
and those of others a distant second.

You call us to share
but we are think that there may not be enough,
You call us to understand, but we do not take time to listen.
Let us know the joy of giving thanks
and the peace found in discovering the source of all good gifts.
For all the times when we mistreat and misuse what we have,
for all the times when we forget the gift and neglect the giver,
forgive us and lead us back to the path of wisdom.
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Philippians 4:4-9 p. 955

***HYMN** *All People That on Earth Do Dwell* 220

The metrical version of Psalm 100 was published in 1561 in the Anglo-Geneva Psalter by William Kethe. He was a Scotsman who fled to the continent during the reign of Mary, was a chaplain to English soldiers at Havre, and was one of the Geneva Bible translators. The tune *Old Hundredth* by Louis Bourgeois was first the setting of a 1551 version of Psalm 134; but since 1562 it has been linked with this Psalm. Bourgeois got into trouble in Geneva for changing tunes of Psalms people already knew. Of course, we sing this tune each week as a Doxology, as well.

SECOND LESSON Deuteronomy 26:1-11 p. 158

SERMON Think on These Things

***HYMN** *We Plow the Fields and Scatter* 560
TUNE: Wir pflügen und wir streuen

"Wir pflügen und wir streuen" (We Plough the Fields and Scatter) is a German hymn about gratitude for the harvest, written by Matthias Claudius and first published in 1782. It has been translated into English by Jane Montgomery Campbell and is frequently used for harvest festivals and Thanksgiving. The hymn's central theme is giving thanks to God for the bounty of the earth, which is provided and sustained by divine power.

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 *Sing to the Lord of Harvest*
- Setting by Healey Willan

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

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

***HYMN** *Now Thank We All Our God* 555

This hymn, known as the German Te Deum, was written near the close of the Thirty Years' War and is still sung in German churches on New Year's Eve. The text's author was a minister in Ellenburg, Saxony who in 1637 buried half of the 8,000 who died in an epidemic there. The tune first appeared with this text. The composer was a hymnal editor and adapted the harmonization of this tune from Mendelssohn's "Lobgesang".

***BENEDICTION**

***POSTLUDE** *St. George's Windsor* - Flor Peeters

* 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 Ross and Wendy Schmitt. Ushers for today's service are Dave and Marsha Pilachowski.

Please join us for coffee hour after worship today graciously provided by Anastasia Gauthier, Marsha Pilachowski, Nancy Coseo and others.

Flowers for worship are provided by Sherry Schreiber in memory of her friend Judith Stockman.

Keep the church's blanket drive for the needy, as well as hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, socks, and jackets for the grade school kids as you are doing your holiday shopping or fall cleaning of closets. 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).

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.

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

Choir practice 9:45 AM in the choir loft

12/3, 12/10, 12/17: Bible Study, 6:30 PM, Parlor

12/7: Hanging of the Greens/breakfast at the church, 9:30 AM

12/9: Deacon's meeting, 1:30 PM for preparing and setting out pew candles in the sanctuary and 2:30 PM in the Parlor for the business meeting.

12/14: Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols, 7PM

12/24: Christmas Eve Service, 5PM

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!

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

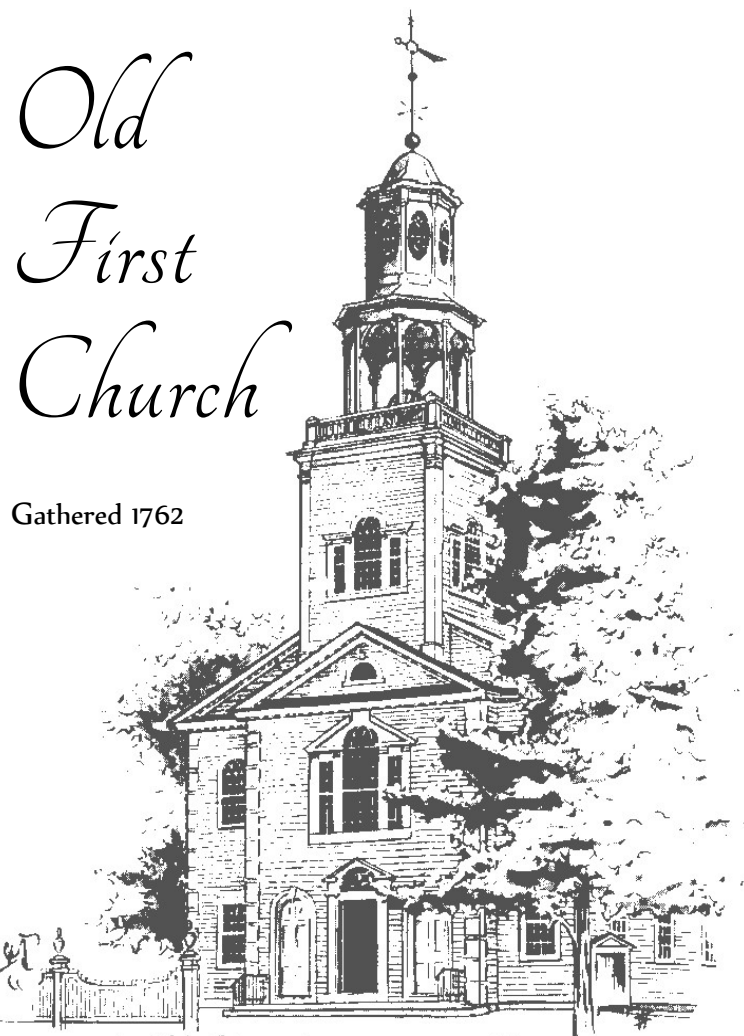
VT RTE. 9 AND MONUMENT AVENUE

OLD BENNINGTON, VERMONT

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We Gather Together

We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing;
He chastens and hastens His will to make known;
The wicked oppressing now cease from distressing,
Sing praises to His name; He forgets not His own.

Beside us to guide us, our God with us joining,
Ordaining, maintaining His kingdom divine;
So from the beginning the fight we were winning;
Thou, Lord, wast at our side; all glory be Thine!

We all do extol thee, thou leader triumphant,
And pray that thou still our defender wilt be.
Let thy congregation escape tribulation;
Thy name be ever praised! O Lord, make us free!

All People That on Earth Do Dwell

All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
Him serve with mirth, His praise forth tell,
Come ye before Him and rejoice.

Know that the Lord is God indeed;
Without our aid He did us make;
We are His folk, He doth us feed,
And for His sheep He doth us take.

O enter then His gates with praise,
Approach with joy His courts unto;
Praise, laud and bless His name always,
For it is seemly so to do.

For why? The Lord our God is good,
His mercy is forever sure;
His truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure.

FIRST LESSON

Philippians 4:4-9

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

SECOND LESSON

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

When you have come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess and you possess it and settle in it, you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time and say to him, "Today I declare to the Lord your God that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us." When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, you shall make this response before the Lord your God: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. So now I bring the first of

the fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me.” You shall set it down before the Lord your God and bow down before the Lord your God. Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house.

We Plow the Fields and Scatter

We plow the fields and scatter
The good seed on the land,
But it is fed and watered
By God’s almighty hand;
God sends the snow in winter,
The warmth to swell the grain,
The breezes and the sunshine,
And soft, refreshing rain.

You only are the Maker
Of all things near and far;
You paint the wayside flower,
You light the evening star;
The winds and waves obey You,
By You the birds are fed;
Much more to us, Your children,
You give our daily bread.

We thank You, then Creator,
For all things bright and good,
The seed-time and the harvest,
Our life, our health, our food;
Accept the gifts we offer,
For all Your love imparts,
And what You most would welcome,
Our humble, thankful hearts.

Now Thank We All Our God

Now thank we all our God
With heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done,
In whom this world rejoices;
Who, from our mothers’ arms,
Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God
Through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts
And blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in God’s grace,
And guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all ills
In this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God,
Who reigns in highest heaven,
To Father and to Son
And Spirit now be given.
The one eternal God,
Whom heaven and earth adore,
The God who was, and is,
And shall be ever more.