

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
LYNN RALEY, ORGANIST

JANUARY 18, 2026

PRELUDE *Come Thou Almighty King/Come, Holy Ghost in Love*
-Healey Willan (1880-1968)

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

O Lord, in your light we see light.

By your love our world is made new.

By your strong spirit we take courage.

Your faithfulness extends to all creation.

***HYMN** *Morning Has Broken* 469

Eleanor Farjeon, the author of nursery rhymes and singing games, wrote the text for this tune. It was first published in 1931. A more recent popular recording by Cat Stevens made the song popular in this country. *Bunessan* is a Gaelic melody first published in 1888. The present arrangement was made for the Christian Reformed Church hymnal in 1985.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

O Lord our God,

you know us better than we know ourselves.

As we come before you now,

believers and doubters alike,

we all share a deep need,

for we are all lost without your grace.

Search us, O God, and know our hearts,

test us and know our troubled thoughts.

Give us true repentance.

Forgive us all our wrongs.

Transform us by your Spirit to live for you each day,

to learn to serve each other

and, through your grace

to come at last to heaven.

This we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 p. 926

***HYMN** *God Is Our Refuge and Our Strength* 191

The text is a meterical paraphrase of Psalm 46. It was altered by Jane Parker Huber, a member of the Psalm subcommittee for *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (1990).

SECOND LESSON John 1:29-42 p. 862

SERMON Recognition

***HYMN** *There Is a Balm in Gilead* 394

The text answers the question in Jeremiah 8:22 and reflects the hope in black spirituals. The tune is also African American.

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 *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring* (Chorale, Cantata 147)

- Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

arr. for viola and piano by Craig Duncan

Mary Elizabeth Groupé, viola / Lynn Raley, piano

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

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

***HYMN** *Precious Lord, Take My Hand* 404

Thomas A. Dorsey, the most influential figure in the gospel song music, wrote this hymn in 1932 when his first wife died. He was born in Georgia in 1899 and died in Chicago in 1993. He was choir director of the Pilgrim Baptist Church in Chicago for 40 years. The tune by George Allen in 1842 received its popularity through Dorsey's arrangement of it for this text.

***BENEDICTION**

***POSTLUDE** *Toccata in E minor* - Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706)

* 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 Sue Philpott and Marsha Pilachowski. Ushers for today's service are Stephanie Cooke and Kate Musso.

Please join us for coffee hour after worship today graciously provided by Mary Elizabeth Groupé and Audrey Pietrucha.

Flowers for worship are provided by Audrey Pietrucha.

Weekly offering envelopes are available on the glass top table in the Narthex. Be sure to indicate the envelope number located on the front of the envelope box along with your name on the sign out sheet.

Game nights at the Pietrucha home will resume Friday, January 23 at 6 p.m. Everyone is welcome, even if you just want to watch and socialize. Please let Audrey or Larry know if you plan to come either in person, by text or via email. Hope to see a good crowd!

The Church's Annual Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, February 15. If you are a Chair or Advocate on the Church Council, please prepare a 2025 year-end report and get it to the church office by Friday, January 30.

23rd Annual Lenten Devotional Booklet: Submissions for our *Meditations for Lent* booklet, by and for members and friends of Old First Church, are being accepted. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, Feb 18. The deadline for submissions is Feb 5 and books will be ready for pick up on Feb 15. Email is the best way to get it to the church office. The devotionals are printed on a half-sheet of 8 ½ x 11" paper so please keep your selections brief.

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

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

1/20: Deacon's meeting, 4:00 PM, **at the Barn**

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

1/25: Council 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

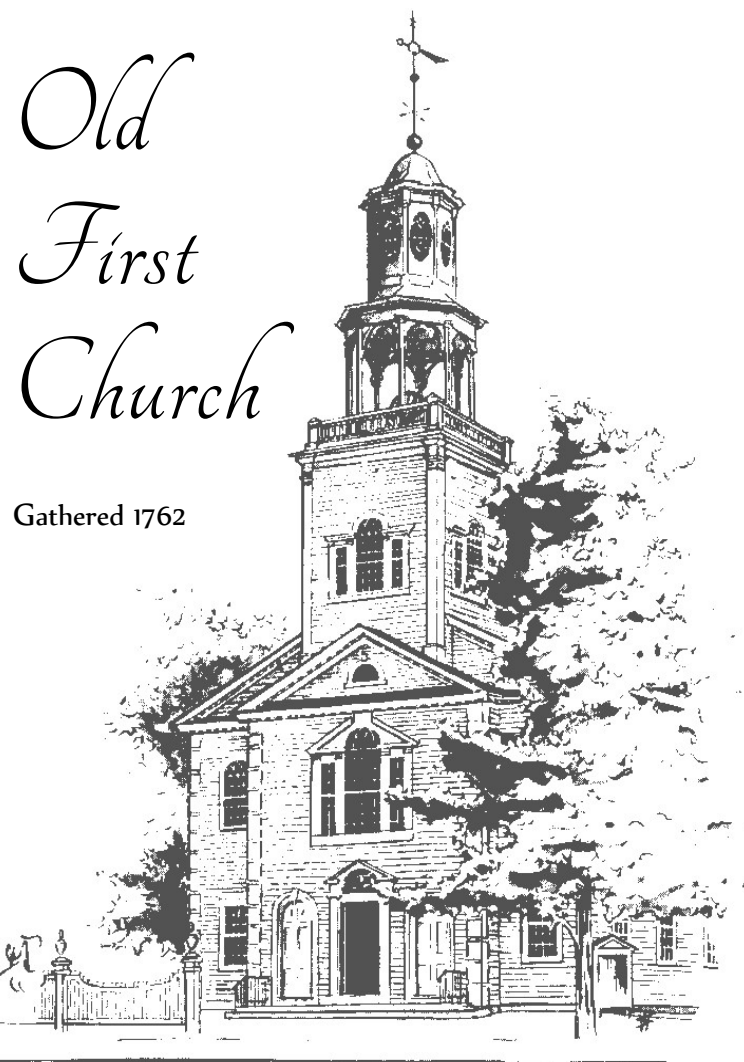
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Morning Has Broken

Morning has broken like the first morning,
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird.
Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!
Praise for them, springing fresh from the Word!

Sweet the rain's new fall sunlit from heaven,
Like the first dew fall on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,
Sprung in completeness where God's feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight! Mine is the morning
Born of the one light Eden saw play!
Praise with elation, praise every morning,
God's recreation of the new day!

FIRST LESSON

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes,

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

God Is Our Refuge and Our Strength

God is our refuge and our strength,
Our ever-present aid,
And therefore, though the earth remove,
We will not be afraid.

Though hills amid the seas be cast,
Though foaming waters roar,
Yea, though the mighty billows shake
The mountains on the shore.

Where God abides a river flows;
That city will rejoice.
But nations fear and kingdoms shake
Before God's thundering voice.

Since God is in the midst of it,
The city walls shall stand,
Secure and safe with God's sure help,
When trouble is at hand.

SECOND LESSON

John 1:29-42

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.

I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'

And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!"

The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?"

He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

There Is a Balm in Gilead

Refrain:

There is a balm in Gilead
To make the wounded whole.
There is a balm in Gilead
To heal the sin-sick soul.

Sometimes I feel discouraged,
And think my work's in vain,
But then the Holy Spirit
Revives my soul again. *[Refrain]*

Don't ever feel discouraged,
For Jesus is your friend,
And if you lack for knowledge
He'll not refuse to lend. *[Refrain]*

If you cannot preach like Peter,
If you cannot pray like Paul,
You can tell the love of Jesus
And say, "He died for all." *[Refrain]*

Precious Lord, Take My Hand

Precious Lord, take my hand,
Lead me on, help me stand;
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
Through the storm, through the night,
Lead me on to the light;
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

When my way grows drear,
Precious Lord, linger near;
When my life is almost gone,
Hear my cry, hear my call,
Hold my hand lest I fall;
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.