

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

LYNN RALEY, ORGANIST

MAY 31, 2026

PRELUDE

Shall We Gather at the River

- trad., arr. Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

Sing to the Lord a new song;

Sing to the Lord, all the earth.

Let us worship the Lord in spirit and in truth.

May the way of peace open our hearts.

*HYMN *God of the Ages, Whose Almighty Hand* 262

The author of the text was vicar of St. Paul's Church, Concord, New Hampshire. He wrote it for a Fourth of July, 1876 Centennial celebration in Brandon, Vermont to the tune called "Russian Hymn." But soon after that (for the Constitution's centennial) it was set to the present tune written for it by George Warren, an acclaimed organist in Albany and New York City, at whose funeral no music was played to indicate there was no longer anyone to lead the music at his church.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

O Lord, we come before you to confess that we often forget that we are yours. Sometimes we carry on our lives as if you were not there and neglect the gifts we have from you. Forgive us and give us strength. Give us clear minds and open hearts so we may witness to you in our world. Remind us who you would have us to be regardless of what we are doing or who we are with. Help us live with you and with those you have given us on earth in love and with renewed faith. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON

Psalm 91

p. 477

*HYMN

Give Ear, Ye Children

insert

This paraphrase of Psalm 78:1-6 is from Jeremy Belknap's *Sacred Poetry, Consisting of Psalms and Hymns adapted to Public Worship* (Boston 1795). The first three stanzas are altered from Tate and Brady's *New Version of the Psalms*, 1696; the rest are from Isaac Watts's *Psalms of David Imitated*, 1719. Jeremy Belknap (1744-1798) served as a Congregational minister in Dover, New Hampshire, and later in Boston. A graduate of Harvard in 1762, he was elected an Overseer in 1792. He is also remembered as a founder of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

SECOND LESSON

Genesis 1:1-2:4a

p. 1

SERMON

Blessing

*HYMN

Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory

insert

Julia Ward Howe (May 27, 1819 – October 17, 1910) was an American poet and author, known for writing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and the original 1870 pacifist Mother's Day Proclamation. She was also an advocate for abolitionism and a social activist, particularly for women's suffrage.

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

Simple Gifts

[trad. Shaker Hymn]

*DOXOLOGY (592) AND PRAYER OF DEDICATION

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

*HYMN

Eternal Father, Strong to Save

562

William Whiting wrote the text for a student about to set sail for America in 1860. He was master of Winchester College Choristers' School. John Dykes wrote the tune for this text. A vicar, he published over 300 hymn tunes. The tune, *Melita*, refers to Malta, where Paul was shipwrecked. The hymn is known as the Navy Hymn in this country and is also sung on English ships. It was Franklin Delano Roosevelt's favorite and was sung at his funeral in 1945.

*BENEDICTION

*POSTLUDE

Postlude on MELITA

- John Bacchus Dykes (1823-1876)

* 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 Janet Van Derpoel-Andrea and Kate Musso. Ushers for today's service are Courtney Cowan and Mary Elizabeth Groupé.

Please join us after worship today at the Barn (1 Monument Circle) for our annual Monumental Tag Sale Kickoff Luncheon and room (and tent!) set up.

Flowers for worship are provided by the Guerrero family in memory of Pat Guerrero.

Email Address: We can receive emails at the new church's email address (office@oldfirstchurchbenn.org), however we are unable to respond from that address until our new internet provider installs a new line.

SPREAD THE WORD...The Old First Monumental Tag Sale is **NEXT Saturday**, June 6, 9AM-3PM at the Barn. We will need your help with set up during the week as well as on the day of the sale. If you can't help, but would like to, consider providing some lunch food for our hard-working crew (salads, sandwiches, desserts, etc.). Call the church office to coordinate.

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

Bible Study, 4:30 PM, every Wednesday in the church Parlor

5/31: Tag Sale Luncheon, following worship

6/1 – 6/5: Tag sale set up week at the Barn

6/6: Monumental Tag Sale at the Barn

6/14: Deacon's mtg. following worship at the church

6/25: Trustee mtg. 5:30 PM, parlor

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!

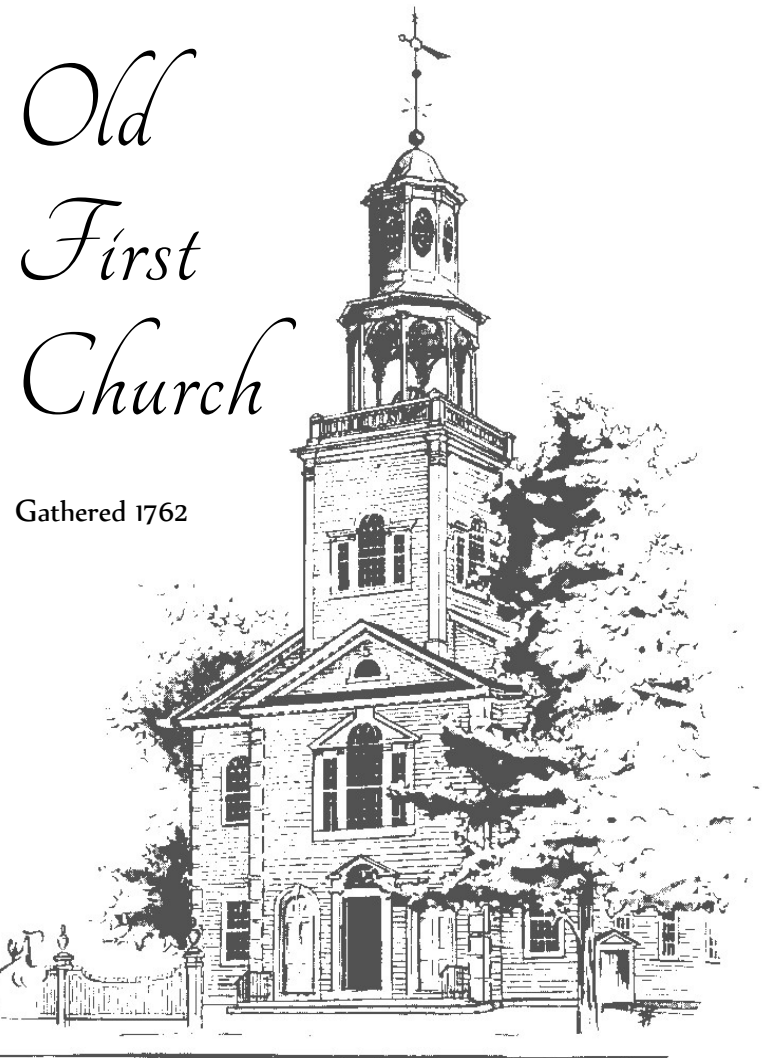
To maintain the healthiest standards for public gathering, indoor air is constantly being exchanged with fresh air with a LifeBreath circulation system operating during the service today.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

VT RTE. 9 AND MONUMENT AVENUE
OLD BENNINGTON, VERMONT

MAILING ADDRESS & CONTACT INFORMATION

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God of the Ages, Whose Almighty Hand

God of the ages, whose almighty hand
leads forth in beauty all the starry band
of shining worlds in splendor through the skies,
our grateful songs before thy throne arise.

Thy love divine hath led us in the past;
in this free land with thee our lot is cast;
be thou our ruler, guardian, guide, and stay,
Thy word our law, Thy paths our chosen way.

From war's alarms, from deadly pestilence,
be Thy strong arm our ever sure defense;
Thy true religion in our hearts increase;
Thy bounteous goodness nourish us in peace.

Refresh Thy people on their toilsome way;
lead us from night to never-ending day;
fill all our lives with love and grace divine,
and glory, laud, and praise be ever Thine.

You will only look with your eyes
and see the punishment of the wicked.

Because you have made the Lord your refuge,*
the Most High your dwelling-place,
no evil shall befall you,
no scourge come near your tent.

For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.
On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.
You will tread on the lion and the adder,
the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.

Those who love me, I will deliver;
I will protect those who know my name.
When they call to me, I will answer them;
I will be with them in trouble,
I will rescue them and honor them.
With long life I will satisfy them,
and show them my salvation.

FIRST LESSON

Psalm 91

You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust.'

For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler
and from the deadly pestilence;
he will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.

You will not fear the terror of the night,
or the arrow that flies by day,
or the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
or the destruction that wastes at noonday.

A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.

Give Ear, Ye Children

1. Give ear, ye children, to my law
Devout attention lend,
Let the instructions of my mouth
Deep in your hearts descend.
2. My tongue, by inspiration taught,
Shall parables unfold:
Dark oracles, but understood,
And owned for truths of old,
3. Which we from sacred registers
Of ancient times have known,
And our forefathers' pious care
To us has handed down.
4. Let children hear the mighty deeds,
Which God performed of old,
Which in our younger years we saw,
And which our fathers told.
5. Our lips shall tell them to our sons,
And they again to theirs, --
That generations yet unborn,
May teach them to their heirs.

SECOND LESSON

0 Genesis 1:1-2:4a

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep while the wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

And God saw the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters. So God made the dome, and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so.

God called the dry land Earth. and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days, and years, and let them be for lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth". And it was so.

God made two great lights -- the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night -- and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky. So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens,

Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword;
His truth is marching on.

Glory, glory, hallelujah,
Glory, glory, hallelujah,
Glory, glory, hallelujah;
His truth is marching on.

He has sounded forth a trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before his judgement seat,
O be swift, my soul, to answer him: be jubilant, my feet;
Our God is Marching on.

Glory, glory, hallelujah,
Glory, glory, hallelujah,
Glory, glory, hallelujah;
Our God is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me;
As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on.

Glory, glory, hallelujah,
Glory, glory, hallelujah,
Glory, glory, hallelujah;
While God is marching on.

Eternal Father, Strong to Save

Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm has bound the restless wave,
Who bade the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep:
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea.

O Savior, whose almighty word
The winds and waves submissive heard,
Who walked upon the foaming deep,
And calm amid its rage did sleep:
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea.

O Holy Spirit, who did brood
Upon the chaos wild and rude,
And bade its angry tumult cease,
And gave for fierce confusion, peace:
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea.

O Trinity of love and power,
All travelers guard in danger's hour;
From rock and tempest, fire and foe,
Protect them where-so-e'er they go;
Thus evermore shall rise to Thee
Glad praise from air and land and sea.