

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
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST

MAY 3, 2020

PRELUDE *Chant de May* - Jongen

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

May God's voice guide us and strengthen us this day.

Let us listen for the word of God.

May God's love change us.

Help us, O God, to live in your peace.

HYMN *Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty* 482

(LYRICS REPRINTED AT THE END OF THE ORDER OF SERVICE)

The text's author, Joachim Neander, took the Calvinist faith seriously but also lived a "rather unruly existence" before his pastor and others influenced him to make some changes in his life. In 1674 he became a grammar school headmaster. 66 of his hymn texts were published in 1691. The valley Neanderthal, where he took long walks, was named in his honor (and was where the famous skeleton was discovered 200 years later in 1856). The tune may have had secular origins but was used by J.S. Bach in three cantatas and an organ setting, as well as Neander's hymn.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

Eternal God, in whom we live and move and have our being, whose face is hidden from us by our sins, and whose mercy we forget in the blindness of our hearts: cleanse us from all our offenses, and deliver us from proud thoughts and vain desires, that with reverent and humble hearts we may draw near to you, confessing our faults, confiding in your grace, and finding in you our refuge and strength; through Jesus Christ your Son.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Acts 2:42-47 p. 886

HYMN *The Lord's My Shepherd, All My Need* 175

(LYRICS REPRINTED AT THE END OF THE ORDER OF SERVICE)

Christopher Webber, an Episcopal priest, wrote this rendition of Psalm 23 in 1986 for a collection of hymns to allow his congregation to sing the psalms. William Henry Havergal, a 19th-century priest of the Anglican Church wrote the tune. He introduced the German chorale into English use and wrote a book, *A History of the Old Hundredth Psalm Tune*.

SECOND LESSON John 10:1-10 p. 872

SERMON With Glad and Generous Hearts

HYMN *We Sing of Golden Mornings*

(LYRICS REPRINTED AT THE END OF THE ORDER OF SERVICE)

Ralph Waldo Emerson, son of a Unitarian Minister, was born in Boston, May 25, 1803. He was educated for the Unitarian Ministry, and acted, 1829-32, as one of their ministers. Ultimately he left the ministry, and devoted himself to lecturing and literature. As a philosopher, essayist, and poet he rose to a distinguished position. He died at Concord, Massachusetts, April 27, 1882. His published works include poems, orations, lectures, and addresses. His hymns are not numerous.

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.)

OFFERING

OFFERTORY *Lyric Piece* - Merkel

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

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

HYMN *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah* 281

(LYRICS REPRINTED AT THE END OF THE ORDER OF SERVICE)

The text was written by the 18th century William Williams, known as the "Sweet Singer of Wales." He was a deacon in the Church of England who identified with the Calvinist Methodist movement and traveled throughout Wales, preaching, for 50 years. He wrote more than 800 Welsh hymns. The tune was written for a Welsh singing festival at Capel Rhonda in 1905 or 1907. The composer, John Hughes, was an active member of the Salem Baptist Church in Wales who succeeded his father as deacon and precentor (singing leader).

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Justified by Faith* - Broughton

Deacons on call this month are Marsha Pilachowski and Wendy Schmitt.

Worship and life at Old First is changing in response to the need to reduce activity as we work to get through the challenge of the COVID-19 presence in our life. Our prayers and thoughts go to everyone immediately affected and thanks go to all people who work to provide care and supply our needs in this time. An audio version of our weekly worship services can be found on the church's website by clicking on the "Worship" tab and selecting "Worship Here and Now". Or simply paste the following into your computer's browser at the top of the page:

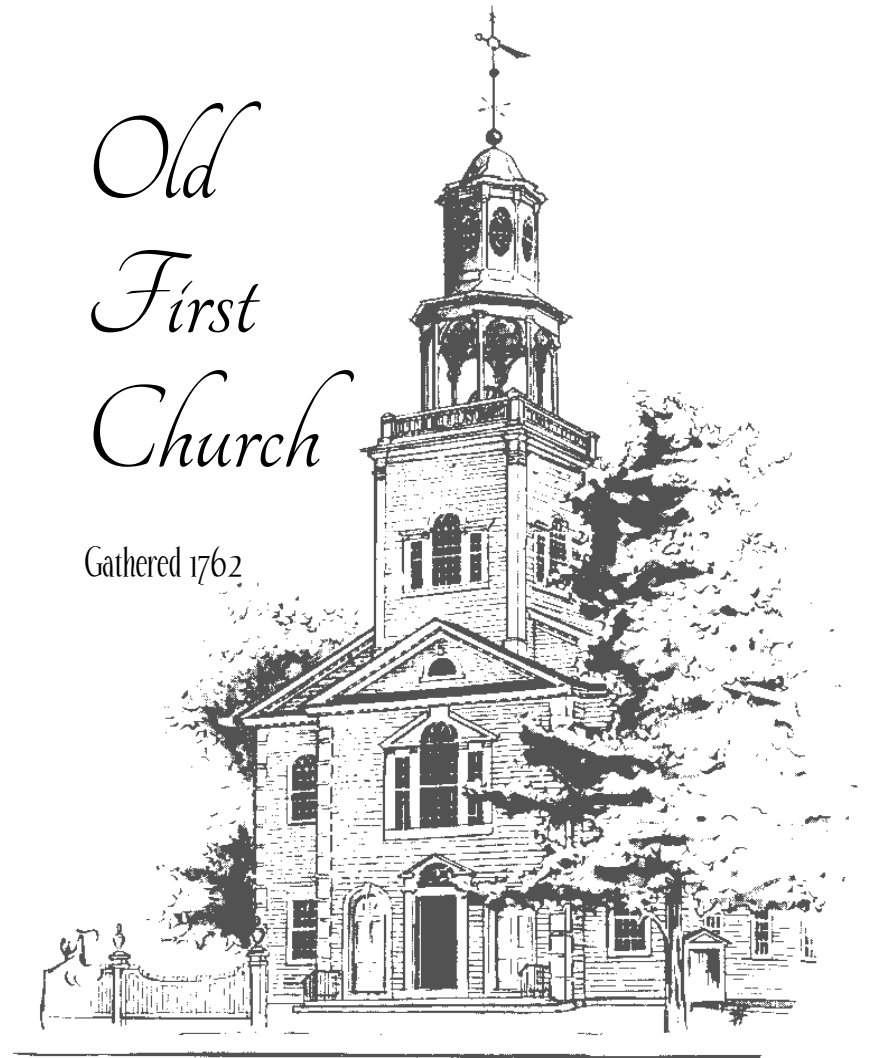
<http://oldfirstchurchbenn.org/worship/worship-here-and-now/>

If this link appears in blue on the device you are using to read this, you can also just "click on the link" and you will be there! The church office has been temporarily moved to the home of our office administrator. Please use email, phone or U.S. Mail for correspondence.

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!

Old First Church

Gathered 1762



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

(OLD FIRST CHURCH)

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Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty

Praise ye the Lord,
the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise Him,
for He is thy health and salvation!
All ye who hear, now to His temple draw near;
join me in glad adoration!

Praise ye the Lord,
who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth,
shelters thee under His wings,
yea, so gently sustaineth!
Hast thou not seen, how thy desires e'er have been
granted in what He ordaineth?

Praise ye the Lord!
O let all that is in me adore Him!
All that hath life and breath,
come now with praises before Him!
Let the amen sound His people again;
gladly for aye we adore Him.

The Lord's My Shepherd, All My Need

The Lord's my Shepherd,
all my need will surely be supplied;
by quiet streams and through green fields
the Lord will be my guide.

The Lord revives me,
guides my feet on pathways that are right,
and I shall fear no evil though
I walk through darkest night.

Your rod and staff,
they comfort me; In presence of my foes
You feed me; You anoint my head
and my cup overflows.

Your goodness and Your mercy,
Lord, shall surely follow me,
and I will dwell in God's own house
for all eternity.

We Sing of Golden Mornings

We sing of golden mornings,
we sing of sparkling seas,
of prairies, valleys, mountains,
and stately forest trees.
We sing of flashing sunshine
and life bestowing rain,
of birds among the branches,
and springtime come again.

We sing the heart courageous,
the youthful, eager mind;
we sing of hopes undaunted,
of friendly ways and kind.
We sing the roses waiting
beneath the deep-piled snow;
we sing, when night is darkest,
the day's returning glow.

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
hold me with Thy powerful hand;
bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me till I want no more,
feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain,
whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fire and cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through;
strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
be Thou still my strength and shield,
be Thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death, and hell's destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side;
songs of praises, songs of praises
I will ever give to Thee,
I will ever give to Thee.

Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

John 10:1-10

“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.