

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

JULY 5, 2020
FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PRELUDE *America* - Flor Peeters

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

God's goodness is over all creation.

Let us give thanks and praise.

In love and compassion God's spirit is known.

Let us offer prayers of peace and goodwill.

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

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

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 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 the grace of Jesus Christ our Lord,
to come at last to heaven. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67 p. 17

HYMN *Let the Whole Creation Cry* 256

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

This hymn is based on Psalm 148. The liberal views of the author, Stopford Brooke, a priest in Ireland and London, led him to leave the Anglican church in 1880. Jacob Hintze, town musician of Barnam, Germany, may have written the tune, first published in 1678. J. S. Bach harmonized it.

SECOND LESSON Romans 7:15-25a p. 918

SERMON An Inner War

HYMN *My Country, 'Tis of Thee* 561

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

Samuel Francis Smith (1808-95), a Baptist minister and Bostonian linguist, wrote the hymn. At the time of his death he knew 15 languages and was seeking a Russian text to learn Russian. He scribbled out the hymn in about a half-hour when he was 24 years old and a student at Andover Theological Seminary. He found the tune in a German music book given to him by Lowell Mason, prominent musician and educator, because Smith could read German. Mason then arranged the tune to be called AMERICA. The tune has origins that go back to Gregorian chants, Scottish carols, and the court of King Louis XIV. In England it was published to honor George II and given the title "National Anthem," and it was Russia's national tune until 1833.

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 *Andante and Allegro* - Alexander Reinagle
Alexander Reinagle (1756 - 1809) was George Washington's adopted daughter's piano teacher. These two short pieces are from a collection of 24 pieces which can be seen today on the harpsichord in the music room at Mount Vernon.

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

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

HYMN *O Beautiful for Spacious Skies* 564

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

Katherine Lee Bates, Wellesley College professor of literature, was inspired to write the text after an 1893 visit to the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where she felt a patriotic feeling, and afterwards wrote, "We went on, my New England eyes delighting in the wind-waved gold of the vast wheat fields." It was after seeing amber skies from Pikes Peak that she then wrote the hymn in Colorado Springs. Samuel Augustus Ward, a Newark, NJ music supply, piano and organ salesperson, wrote the tune in 1882. First used for the hymn, *O Mother Dear, Jerusalem*, his widow gave permission for it to be used with Bates' text in 1912.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE Fanfare on "American the Beautiful" - Matthew H. Corl

Deacons on call this month are Marietta Hibbard, Jeannette Lesser and Amy Tronsen.

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:

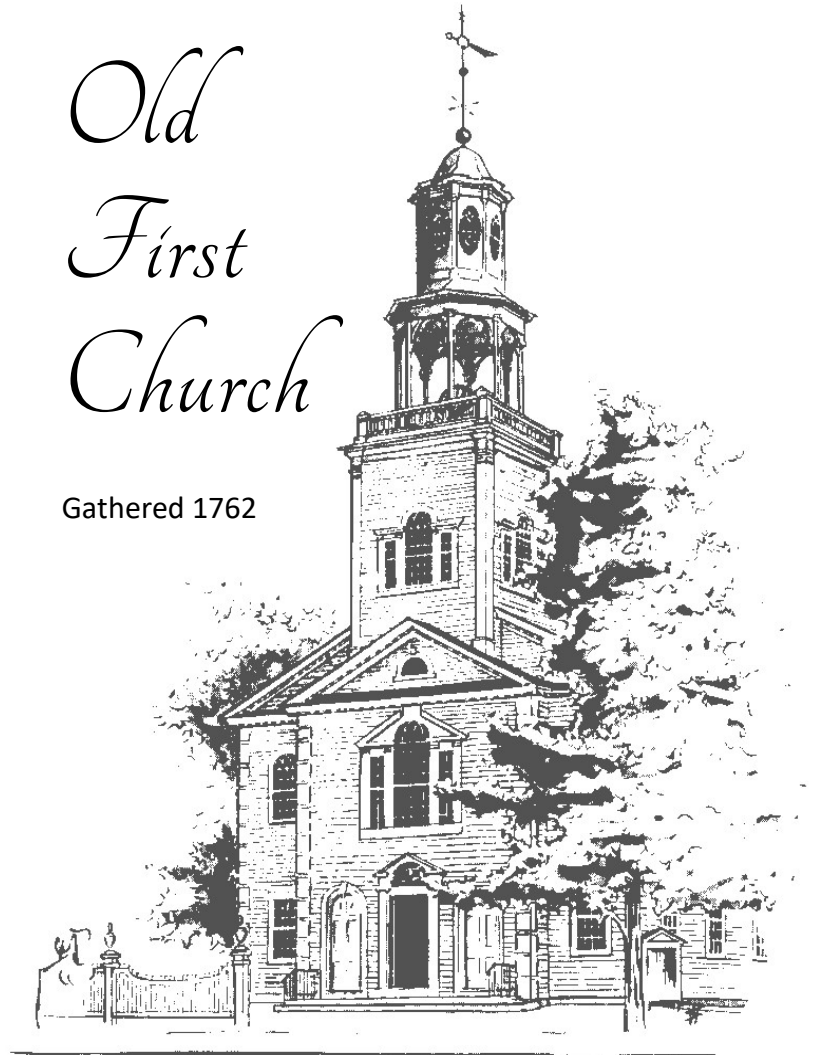
<http://oldfirstchurchbenn.org/worship/worship-here-and-now/>

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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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.

Let the Whole Creation Cry

Let the whole creation cry,
"Glory to the Lord on high!"
Heaven and earth, awake and sing,
"God is our eternal King!"
Praise God, all ye hosts above,
ever shining forth in love;
sun and moon, uplift your voice;
night and stars, in God rejoice!

Men and women, young and old,
raise the anthem manifold;
join with children's sons of praise,
worship God through length of days.
From the north to southern pole
let the mighty chorus roll:
"Holy, holy, holy One,
glory be to God alone!"

My Country, 'Tis of Thee

My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrims' pride,
From every mountainside let freedom ring!

My native country, thee,
Land of the noble free, thy name I love;
I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills;
My heart with rapture thrills, like that above.

Let music swell the breeze,
And ring from all the trees sweet freedom's song;
Let mortal tongues awake;
Let all that breathe partake;
Let rocks their silence break, the sound prolong.

Our fathers' God, to Thee,
Author of liberty, to Thee we sing;
Long may our land be bright
With freedom's holy light;
Protect us by Thy might, Great God, our King.

O Beautiful for Spacious Skies

1). Oh, beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea.

2). Oh, beautiful for pilgrim feet,
Whose stern, impassioned stress
A thoroughfare of freedom beat
Across the wilderness!
America! America!
God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control,
Thy liberty in law.

3). Oh, beautiful for heroes proved
In liberating strife,
Who more than self their country loved,
And mercy more than life!
America! America!
May God thy gold refine,
Till all success be nobleness,
And every gain divine.

4). Oh, beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam,
Undimmed by human tears!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea.

Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67

So he said, “I am Abraham’s servant. The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become wealthy; he has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female slaves, camels and donkeys. And Sarah my master’s wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and he has given him all that he has. My master made me swear, saying, ‘You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live; but you shall go to my father’s house, to my kindred, and get a wife for my son.’ “I came today to the spring, and said, ‘O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, if now you will only make successful the way I am going! I am standing here by the spring of water; let the young woman who comes out to draw, to whom I shall say, “Please give me a little water from your jar to drink,” and who will say to me, “Drink, and I will draw for your camels also” —let her be the woman whom the LORD has appointed for my master’s son.’ “Before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah coming out with her water jar on her shoulder; and she went down to the spring, and drew. I said to her, ‘Please let me drink.’ She quickly let down her jar from her shoulder, and said, ‘Drink, and I will also water your camels.’ So I drank, and she also watered the camels. Then I asked her, ‘Whose daughter are you?’ She said, ‘The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor’s son, whom Milcah bore to him.’ So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her arms. Then I bowed my head and worshiped the LORD, and blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right way to obtain the daughter of my master’s kinsman for his son. Now then, if you will deal loyally and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so that I may turn either to the right hand or to the left.” And they called Rebekah, and said to her, “Will you go with this man?” She said, “I will.” So they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse along with Abraham’s servant and his men. And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, “May you, our sister, become thousands of myriads; may your offspring gain possession of the gates of their foes.” Then Rebekah and her maids rose up, mounted the camels, and followed the man; thus the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

Now Isaac had come from Beer-lahai-roi, and was settled in the Negeb. Isaac went out in the evening to walk in the field; and looking up, he saw camels coming. And Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she slipped quickly from the camel, and said to the servant, “Who is the man over there, walking in the field to meet us?” The servant said, “It is my master.” So she took her veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. Then Isaac brought her into his

mother Sarah’s tent. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.

Romans 7:15-25a

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.

Matthew 11:16-19; 25-30

“But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”