

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

AUGUST 2, 2020

**PRELUDE** *Solemn Prelude* - Alec Rowley

**OPENING WORDS** (responsive)

God's goodness waits in the summer sun.

**May God open our hearts this season.**

May this day be full of light and hope.

**In the beauty of the morning may God's truth shine.**

**HYMN** *Sing Praise to God, Who Reigns Above* 483

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

This hymn was originally titled, "Hymn of Thanksgiving." Johann Schütz was a lawyer in Frankfurt who sympathized with the pietist movement in the Lutheran Church. The translator, Frances Elizabeth Cox, was one of the foremost translators into English of German hymns. The tune is from the 1566 Bohemian Brethren's *Kirchengeseng*.

**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 32:22-31 p. 26

**HYMN** *Behold the Goodness of Our Lord* 241

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

This paraphrase of Psalm 133 was written in 1983 by the Rev. Fred Anderson in celebration of the news that two branches of the Presbyterian Church divided since the Civil War would be uniting. The tune was composed by Jessie Seymour Irvine (1836-1887) and named for the village in northeast Scotland where she wrote it when her father was the pastor. The current setting was used in the wedding of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip in 1947.

**SECOND LESSON** Matthew 14:13-21 p. 796

**SERMON** WHERE WE OUGHT TO BE

**HYMN** *Break Thou the Bread of Life* 329

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

This text was written by Mary Artemisia Lathbury for the Chautaugua Literary and Scientific Circle in the summer of 1877. Mary Artemisia Lathbury (1841-1913) was born in Manchester, NY and devoted her life to art and writing. She was once editor for the *Methodist Sunday School Union* and was a partner with Methodist Bishop John H Vincent in the promotion of Chautaugua, the westernmost county in the state of New York, bordering Lake Erie. She died in East Orange, NJ.

**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** *Meditation* - Ernest A. Dicks

**\*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 18<sup>th</sup> 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** *Benediction in D* - Orlando A. Mansfield

Deacons on call this month are Sandy Bechtel and Laurel Varker.

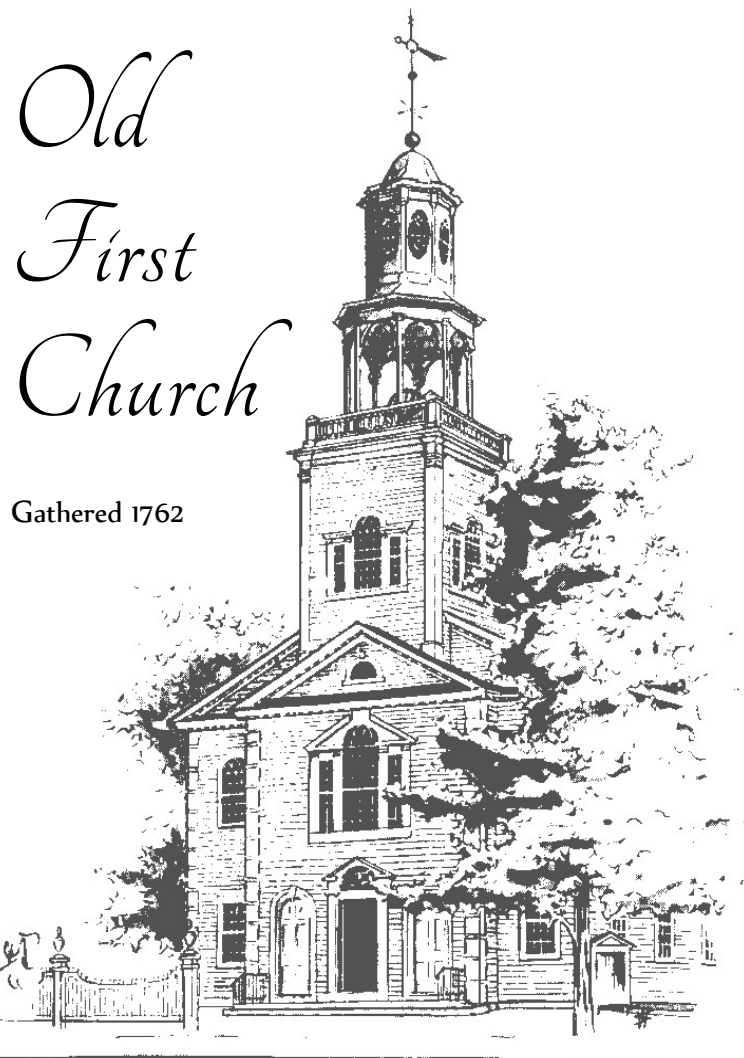
**CHURCH PICNIC:** All are welcome to an outside gathering in front of the church at 12:00 PM next Sunday (August 9), weather permitting, which will include prayers and a “BYOE” picnic. Those who wish to attend should pack everything needed for your own picnic lunch and a chair or blanket to sit on.

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!



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

(OLD FIRST CHURCH)

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### *Sing Praise to God, Who Reigns Above*

1. Sing praise to God who reigns above,  
the God of all creation,  
the God of power, the God of love,  
the God of our salvation.  
With healing balm my soul is filled  
and every faithless murmur stilled:  
To God all praise and glory.
2. What God's almighty power hath made,  
God's gracious mercy keepeth;  
by morning glow or evening shade  
God's watchful eye ne'er sleepeth:  
Within the kingdom of God's might,  
Lo! All is just and all is right:  
To God all praise and glory.
3. The Lord is never far away,  
but through all grief distressing,  
an ever present help and stay,  
our peace, and joy, and blessing;  
as with a mother's tender hand,  
God gently leads the chosen band:  
To God all praise and glory.
4. Thus all my gladsome way along,  
I sing aloud Thy praises  
that all may hear and grateful song  
my voice unwearied raises.  
Be joyful in the Lord, my heart,  
both soul and body take your part:  
To God all praise and glory.

### *Behold the Goodness of Our Lord*

Behold the goodness of our Lord,  
how blest it is to be  
a company of God's beloved,  
in holy unity.

Like precious oil upon the head,  
a healing for our strife,  
it flows throughout our common bond,  
refreshing all of life.

As dew on Zion's mountaintop  
brings freshness to its door,  
our Lord commands this in our midst  
and brings life evermore.

### *Break Thou the Bread of Life*

Break Thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me,  
As Thou didst break the loaves beside the sea;  
Beyond the sacred page I seek Thee, Lord;  
My spirit pants for Thee, O living Word!

Bless Thou the truth, dear Lord, now unto me,  
As Thou didst bless the bread by Galilee;  
Then shall all bondage cease, all fetters fall;  
And I shall find my peace, my all in all.

### *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.

### **Genesis 32:22-31**

The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had.

Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip.

### **Matthew 14:13-21**

Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." And he said, "Bring them here to me." Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.