

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

SEPTEMBER 27, 2020

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PRELUDE *Prelude and Fugue in D Major* - G.F. Handel

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

Our help is in the name of the Lord.

God watches over all creation.

Let us give thanks to God for all good things this day.

We praise God for our life and blessings.

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)

Most holy and merciful God,

We confess to you and to one another,

that we have sinned against you

by what we have done,

and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our

whole heart and mind and strength.

We have not fully loved our neighbors as ourselves.

We have not always had in us the mind of Christ.

You alone know how often we have grieved you

by wasting your gifts, by wandering from your ways.

Forgive us, we pray you, most merciful God;

And free us from our sin.

Renew in us the grace and strength of your Holy Spirit,

for the sake of Jesus Christ your Son our Savior. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Ezekiel 18:1-4; 25-32 p. 685

HYMN *Lord, to You My Soul Is Lifted* 178

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

This new metrical rendering of Psalm 25 is by Stanley Wiersma (1930-1986) for the *Psalter Hymnal* (1987) of the Christian Reformed Church.

SECOND LESSON Philippians 2:1-13 p. 954

SERMON Get Yourselves A New Heart

HYMN *At the Name of Jesus* 148

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

This hymn was written by Caroline Marcia Noel (1817-1877) as a processional for Ascension Day and published in *The Name of Jesus and Other Verses for the Sick and Lonely* (enl. Ed., 1870). This text is based on Philippians 2:5-11

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 *Tiro par Contre Fugue in the Sixth Tone, Op. 1*
- Lambert Chaumont

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

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

HYMN *I Walk the Unfrequented Road*

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

Frederick Lucian Hosmer was born at Framingham, Mass., in 1840, and educated at Harvard, where he graduated B.A. in 1869. Entering the Unitarian Ministry in 1872 he has held charges in Quincy, Ill.; Cleveland, Ohio; St. Louis; and Berkeley, CA. During his life he wrote many hymns which were published jointly by him and W.C. Gannett. Hosmer died in 1929.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE Improvisation on "Nearer, My God, to Thee"
- Sigfird Karg-Elert

Deacons on call this month are Pat Guerrero and Marsha Pilachowski.

“BYOE” (Bring Your Own Everything) CHURCH PICNIC

All are welcome to a “BYOE” church picnic this Sunday, (September 27). Those who wish to attend should gather on the green in front of the church at Noon (weather permitting). As usual attendees should pack everything needed for your own picnic lunch and a chair or blanket to sit on. PLEASE be mindful of the CDC guidelines as well as regulations set by our Governor to limit and mitigate the effects of COVID-19. Face coverings are required and safe social distancing is essential. The church building and bathroom will remain closed.

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.

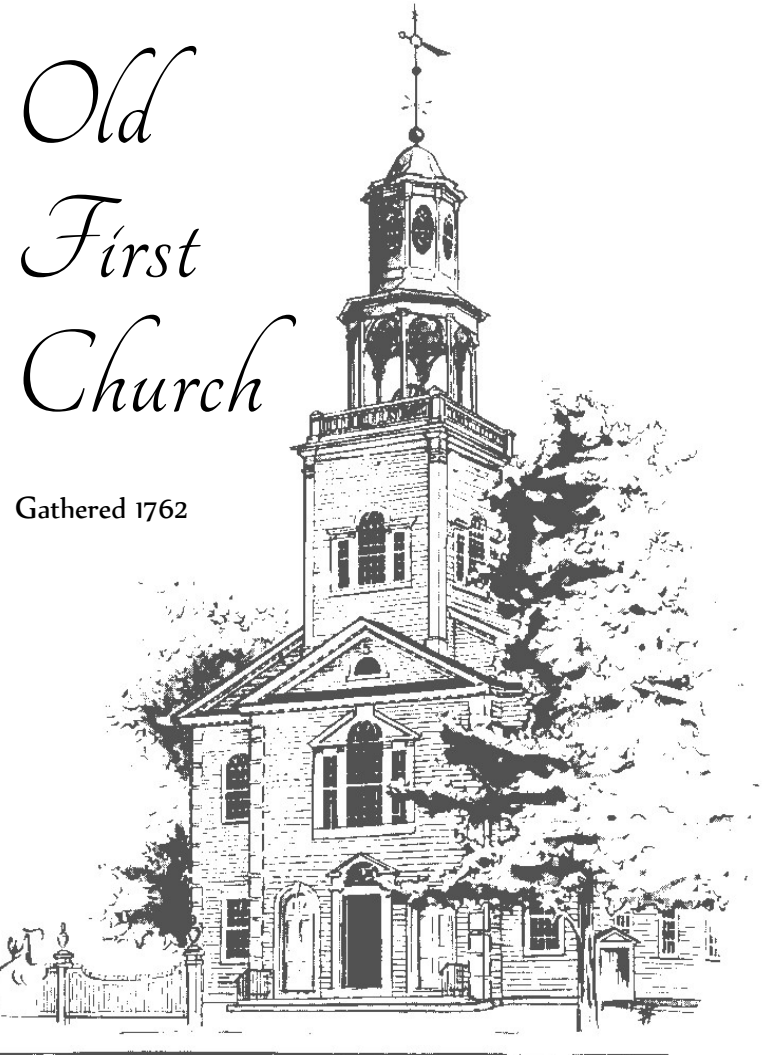
If you are interested in discussing matters of faith and want to inquire about Christian membership in the church, please contact Rev. Clarke. We welcome the chance to have you join us in our historic, but active-in-the-world, community of faith!

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

(OLD FIRST CHURCH)

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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 the under His wings, yea, so gently sustaineth!
Hast thou not seen how thy desires e'er have been
sent by his gracious ordaining?
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 from His people again;
gladly for aye we adore Him.

Lord, to You My Soul Is Lifted

Lord, to You my soul is lifted.
Let me never be ashamed
that I trust in You to keep me
though I seem to wait in vain.
Lord, remember all Your love;
in Your holy will instruct me.
Lord, do not remember sins
of those younger years behind me.

Lord of covenant and goodness,
pardon and correct my sin.
Take who worship You and fear You
choose the paths You choose for them.
They and all their family
shall possess the earth forever.
You, O Lord, will be their friend.
From the snare You will deliver.

Turn to me in grace and mercy,
as I suffer all alone.
Take away my sin and sadness,
all the trouble I have known.
May my fierce and spiteful foes
not succeed to harm and curse me.
In Your faithfulness I hope.
On Your people, Lord, have mercy.

At the Name of Jesus

At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow,
every tongue confess Him King of glory now;
'Tis the Father's pleasure we should call Him Lord,
who from the beginning was the mighty Word.

Humbled for a season, to receive a name
from the lips of sinners, unto whom He came,
faithfully He bore it spotless to the last,
brought it back victorious, when from death he passed;

Bore it up triumphant, with its human light,
through all ranks of creatures, to the central height,
to the throne of Godhead, to the Father's breast;
filled it with the glory of that perfect rest.

Christians, this Lord Jesus shall return again,
with His Father's glory o'er the earth to reign;
for all wreaths of empire meet upon His brow,
and our hearts confess Him King of glory now.

I Walk the Unfrequented Road

- 1). I walk the unfrequented road
with open eye and ear;
I watch a field the farmer load
the bounty of the year.
- 2). I filch the fruit of no man's toil –
no trespasser am I—
and yet I reap from every soil
and from the unmeasured sky.
- 3). I gather where I did not sow,
and bind the mystic sheaf,
the amber air, the river's flow,
the rustle of the leaf.
- 4). A beauty springtime never knew
haunts all the quiet ways,
and sweeter shines the landscape through
its veil of autumn haze.
- 5). I face the hills, the streams, the wood,
and feel with all akin;
my heart expands, their fortitude
and peace and joy flow in.

EZEKIEL 18:1-4; 25-32

The word of the Lord came to me: What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, “The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge”? As I live, says the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die. Yet you say, “The way of the Lord is unfair.” Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life. Because they considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die. Yet the house of Israel says, “The way of the Lord is unfair.” O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?

Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God. Turn, then, and live.

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-13

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.