

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

NOVEMBER 29, 2020 ~ FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

PRELUDE *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence* - Richard Warner

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

Blessed is the Lord.

Who alone does wondrous things.

May the sense of the spirit fill our lives.

May we live in the light of God's love.

HYMN *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus* 1

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

The author of the text, who was his parents' eighteenth child, and who, as an Anglican priest, was devoted to the Methodist movement, wrote over 6,000 hymns in the mid-18th century. This tune is attributed to an early 18th century German hymnbook of Psalms.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

Almighty God, in this season of Advent remind us that in the midst of our darkness you are bringing us peace to calm our anxious spirits and hectic lives. Turn our hearts again toward you. Help make us ready to receive your Son our Savior. Slow our pace, and give us the blessing of feeling your peace in our soul. Forgive us when our hearts are cold and guide us on the path leading to you. For this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Isaiah 64:1-9 p. 606

HYMN *Not Unto Us, O Lord of Heaven* 227

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

This hymn originally in German was written by Johann Heermann and titled "A Daily Prayer." It was published in *Devoti Musica Hordis, Hauss- und Hertz-Musica* (1630). Heermann (1585-1647) was born in Raudten, Silesia, the youngest and only surviving child of five born to his parents. As a child, Heermann was quite ill and his mother vowed if God would spare him, she would dedicate the child's life to the ministry.

SECOND LESSON Mark 13:24-37 p. 826

SERMON The Day and The Hour

HYMN *O Day of God, Draw Nigh* 452

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

This hymn was written by R.B.Y. Scott, a United Church of Canada pastor and professor of Old Testament at Vancouver, Montreal and Princeton. It was first published in 1939 and then in the 1958 *Pilgrim Hymnal*. The tune by Louis Bourgeois first appeared as a setting for Psalm 101 in the Genevan Psalter (1551). William Crotch (b. 1775), an English child prodigy musician, revived and arranged it in 1836 and named it St. Michael.

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 *O Come, O Come Emmanuel* - Mark Hayes

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

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

HYMN *Sleeper's Wake, A Voice Astounds Us* 17

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

This hymn known as the "king of chorales" was written by Philipp Nicolai while in Unna in Westphalia (1596-1598). The text is based on the parable of the "wise and foolish bridesmaids" in Matthew 25:1-13. It was composed during a time of widespread disease when thousands were dying. Nicolai wrote in the preface: "To leave behind me (if God should call me from this world) as a token of my peaceful, joyful, Christian departure, or (if God should spare me in health) to comfort other sufferers whom He should also visit with the pestilence."

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme (Sleepers Wake)*
- Johann Gottfried Walther

Deacons on call this month are Sandy Bechtel and Wendy Schmitt.

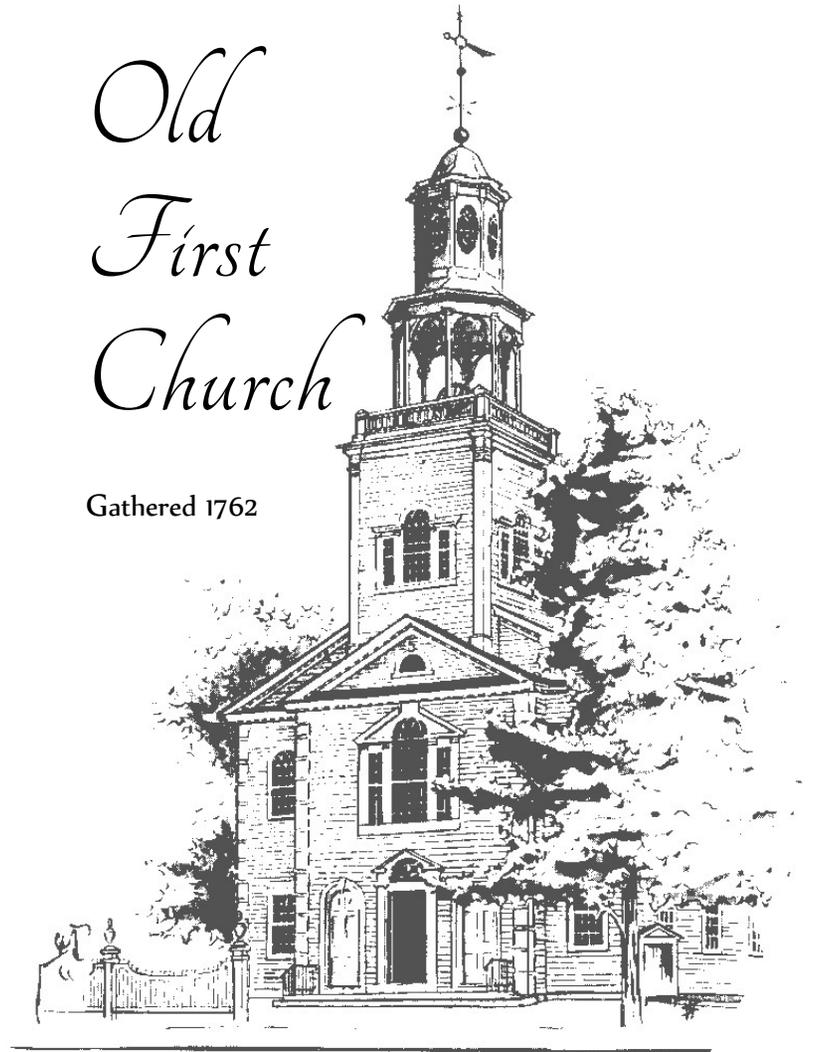
Worship and life at Old First is changing in response to the need to reduce activity as we work to get through the challenge of the COVID-19 presence in our life. Our prayers and thoughts go to everyone immediately affected and thanks go to all people who work to provide care and supply our needs in 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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Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

- 1). Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us;
Let us find our rest in Thee.
- 2). Israel's strength and consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.
- 3). Born Thy people to deliver,
Born a child and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever,
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.
- 4). By Thine own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all-sufficient merit,
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

Not Unto Us, O Lord of Heaven

- 1). Not unto us, O Lord of heaven,
but unto You be glory given.
In love and truth You do fulfill
the counsels of Your sovereign will;
though nations fail Your power to own,
yet You still reign, and You alone.
- 2). The idol gods of heathen lands
are but the work of human hands;
they cannot see, they cannot speak,
their ears are deaf, their hands are weak;
Like them shall be all those who hold
to gods of silver and of gold.
- 3). Let Israel trust in God alone,
the Lord whose grace and power are known;
To God your full allegiance yield,
that one will be your help and shield;
All those who fear God will be blest,
the saints have proved God's faithfulness.

O Day of God, Draw Nigh

- 1). O day of God, draw nigh
in beauty and in power;
come with thy timeless judgment now
to match our present hour.
- 2). Bring to our troubled minds,
uncertain and afraid,
the quiet of a steadfast faith,
calm of a call obeyed.
- 3). Bring justice to our land,
that all may dwell secure,
and finely build for days to come
foundations that endure.
- 4). Bring to our world of strife
Your sovereign word of peace,
that war may haunt the earth no more
and desolation cease.
- 5). O day of God, draw nigh
as at creation's birth;
let there be light again,
and set Your judgments in the earth.

Sleeper's Wake, A Voice Astounds Us

"Sleepers, wake!" A voice astounds us;
the shout of rampart-guards surrounds us:
"Awake, Jerusalem, arise!"

Midnight's peace their cry has broken,
their urgent summons clearly spoken:
"The time has come, O maidens wise!
Rise up, and give us light;
the Bridegroom is in sight.

Alleluia!

Your lamps prepare and hasten there,
that you the wedding feast may share."

Zion hears the watchmen singing,
her heart with joyful hope is springing;
she wakes and hurries through the night.
Forth he comes, her Bridegroom glorious
in strength of grace, in truth victorious:
her star is risen, her light grows bright.

Now come, most worthy Lord,
God's Son, Incarnate Word,

Alleluia!

We follow all and heed Your call
to come into the banquet hall.

Lamb of God, the heavens adore You;
let saints and angels sing before You,
as harps and cymbals swell the sound.

Twelve great pearls, the city's portals:
through them we stream to join the immortals
as we with joy Your throne surround.

No eye has known the sight,
no ear heard such delight:

Alleluia!

Therefore we sing to greet our King;
for ever let our praises ring.

ISAIAH 64:1-9

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence— as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil— to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed.

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

MARK 13:24-37

“But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”