

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 8, 2020
23RD SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY

PRELUDE *Praeambulum* - Heinrich Scheidermann (1596-1663)

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

Our hope is in the name of the Lord.
Who made heaven and earth.
God watches over all creation.
God's spirit moves in all times.

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.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

God of peace, we acknowledge that we have not sought peace enough.
God of love, we acknowledge that we have not always been loving.
God of justice, we acknowledge that we have closed our eyes to injustice.
God of heaven, we acknowledge that we have let the world
around us shape us into its mold, and resisted your call on us to be Christlike.
We remember the lives lost in war, the soldiers and civilians alike. We honor
the courage of the brave, and we lament the failures that sent them to fight.
And in the name of Christ, the Prince of Peace, we commit ourselves to walk
in the ways of peace, in thought, word and deed.
O God of love, O king of peace
Make wars throughout the earth to cease:
The wrath of sinful men restrain,
Give peace, O God, give peace again. This we pray in the name of Jesus,
Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25 p. 187

HYMN *Give Ear, Ye Children*

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

This paraphrase of Psalm 78:1-6 is from Jeremy Belknap's *Sacred Poetry, Consisting of Psalms and Hymns adapted to Public Worship* (Boston 1795). The first three stanzas are altered from Tate and Brady's *New Version of the Psalms*, 1696; the rest are from Isaac Watts's *Psalms of David Imitated*, 1719. Jeremy Belknap (1744-1798) served as a Congregational minister in Dover, New Hampshire, and later in Boston. A graduate of Harvard in 1762, he was elected an Overseer in 1792. He is also remembered as a founder of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

SECOND LESSON Matthew 25:1-13 p. 806

SERMON Choose This Day

HYMN *O God of Earth and Altar* 291

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

The present text is a composite. The original hymn was written by G. K. Chesterton for *The Commonwealth*, the journal of the Christian Social Union, and later appeared in *The English Hymnal* (1906). The alterations to stanza 2 and the new stanza 3 were written by Jane Parker Huber at the request of Lewis Mudge, for the final worship of the Life and Mission Statement Consultation held at Mo Ranch in 1985.

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 I Come to Thee, O Blessed Lord "Genevan Psalter" 1547
- Johann Gottfried Walther (1684-1748)

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

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

HYMN *Eternal Father, Strong to Save* 562

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

William Whiting wrote the text for a student about to set sail for America in 1860. He was master of Winchester College Choristers' School. John Dykes wrote the tune for this text. A vicar, he published over 300 hymn tunes. The tune, *Melita*, refers to Malta, where Paul was shipwrecked. The hymn is known as the Navy Hymn in this country and is also sung on English ships. It was Franklin Delano Roosevelt's favorite and was sung at his funeral in 1945.

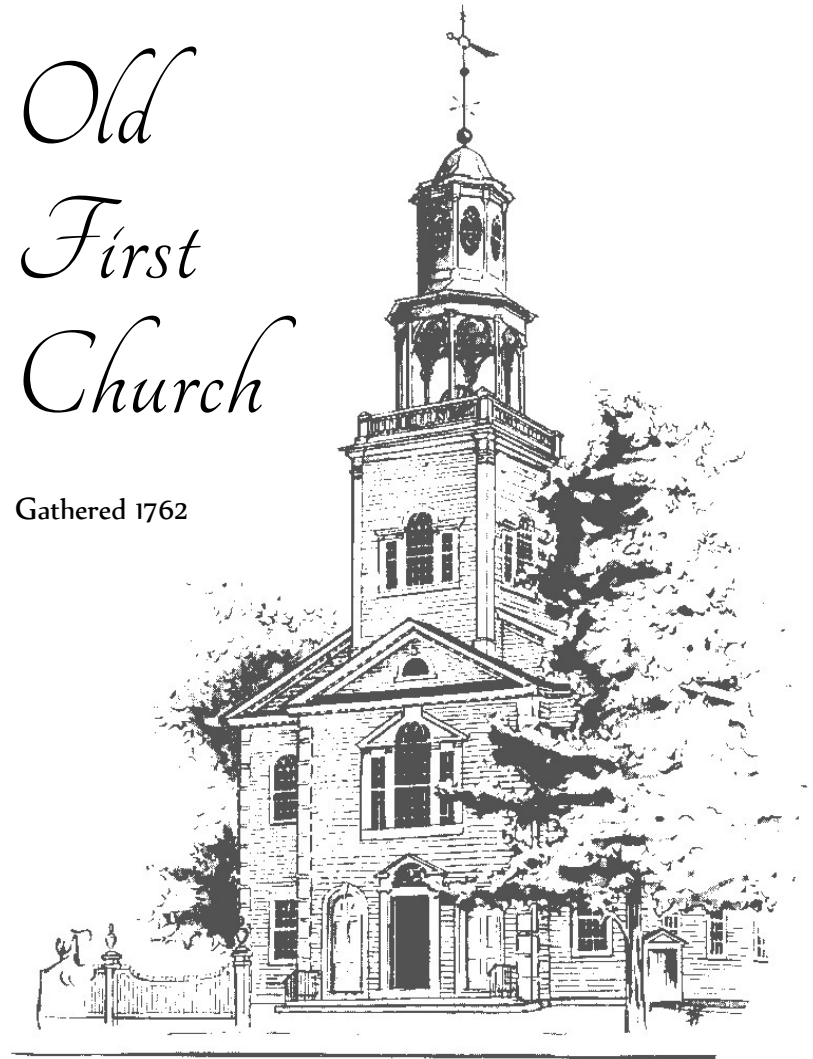
BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Allegretto* - Bernard Schmid (1567-1625)

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!



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

(OLD FIRST CHURCH)

1 Monument Circle • Old Bennington, Vermont 05201 • (802) 447-1223
office@oldfirst.comcastbiz.net • www.oldfirstchurchbenn.org

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.

Give Ear, Ye Children

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1). Give ear, ye children, to my law
Devout attention lend,
Let the instructions of my mouth
Deep in your hearts descend. | 3). Which we from sacred registers
Of ancient times have known,
And our forefathers' pious care
To us has handed down. |
| 2). My tongue, by inspiration taught,
Shall parables unfold:
Dark oracles, but understood,
And owned for truths of old, | 4). Let children hear the mighty deeds,
Which God performed of old,
Which in our younger years we saw,
And which our fathers told. |

5). Our lips shall tell them to our sons,
And they again to theirs, --
That generations yet unborn,
May teach them to their heirs.

O God of Earth and Altar

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1). O God of earth and altar,
bow down and hear our cry;
our earthly rulers falter,
our people drift and die;
the walls of gold entomb us,
the swords of scorn divide;
take not Your thunder from us,
but take away our pride. | 2). From all that terror teaches,
from lies of pen and voice,
from all the easy speeches
that make our hearts rejoice,
from sale and profanation
of honor and the sword,
from sleep and from damnation,
deliver us, good Lord! |
| 3). Awaken us to action
And forge us into one,
Defying sect and faction;
O God, Your will be done!
Oppressive systems snare us;
Our apathies increase.
Great God, in mercy spare us
For justice and for peace! | |

Eternal Father, Strong to Save

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1). Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm has bound the restless wave,
Who bade the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep:
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea. | 3). O Holy Spirit, who did brood
Upon the chaos wild and rude,
And bade its angry tumult cease,
And gave for fierce confusion, peace:
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea. |
| 2). O Savior, whose almighty word
The winds and waves submissive heard,
Who walked upon the foaming deep,
And calm amid its rage did sleep:
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea. | 4). O Trinity of love and power,
All travelers guard in danger's hour;
From rock and tempest, fire and foe,
Protect them where-so-e'er they go;
Thus evermore shall rise to Thee
Glad praise from air and land and sea. |

JOSHUA 24:1-3A, 14-25

Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors—Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor—lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac; “Now therefore revere the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” Then the people answered, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods; for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; and the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God.” But Joshua said to the people, “You cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm, and consume you, after having done you good.” And the people said to Joshua, “No, we will serve the Lord!” Then Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.” He said, “Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.” The people said to Joshua, “The Lord our God we will serve, and him we will obey.” So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem.

MATTHEW 25:1-13

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise replied, ‘No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you.’ Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.