

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

DECEMBER 6, 2020  
SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

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**PRELUDE**                      *Savior of the Nations Come*                      - J.S. Bach

**OPENING WORDS** (responsive)

Love and faithfulness meet this day.

**Righteousness and peace come together.**

Let us wait with hope this season.

**The darkness shall give way to light.**

**HYMN**                      *When the Morning Stars Together*                      486

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

The text's author was a Congregational minister in England from 1929 to 1972, was made a fellow of Westminster Choir College, Princeton, N.J., and honored at Westminster Abbey. The tune was a folk song that first appeared in a 1741 Cologne hymnal.

**OPENING PRAYER** (unison)

O God who lives in and beyond every human season,  
we come to you this morning as we are.

Nothing is enough;

we do not recognize your blessing at work in our day to day lives.

Allow us, this day, to see your light ahead and be strong.

Forgive us when all seems too dark or hard to care.

Forgive us when we have been unkind or uncaring.

Be with us even when we feel alone. Teach us to see what we have is  
enough and that it is even your blessing. In Jesus' name we pray,  
Amen.

**ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND GLORIA PATRI (579)**

**FIRST LESSON**                      Isaiah 40:1-11                      p. 581

**HYMN**                      *Comfort, Comfort You My People*                      3

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

Based on Isaiah 40, the words of this hymn were written for John the Baptist Day (June 24) and first published in 1671 in a German collection of 1200 hymns, 300 of which were by Olearius. He also wrote a commentary on the entire Bible. The translator, Winkworth, was the foremost English translator of German hymns. The tune is from the 1551 Genevan Psalter. This arrangement and harmonization are from our former *Pilgrim Hymnal*. Here's a clue about accenting words that will make singing it easier and more fun (even like a dance!) – emphasize every syllable where the note above it is “open” (a half or whole note) rather than “solid” (a quarter note).

**SECOND LESSON**                      Mark 1:1-8                      p. 812

**SERMON**                      Expectation of the Dawn

**HYMN**                      *Creator of the Stars of Night*                      4

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

The text is a ninth-century Latin hymn sung during Advent at Vespers. Another form of the text, “Creator alme siderum,” which is the product of revisions of Pope Urban VIII, also exists.

**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*  
- arr. Chuck Marohnic

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

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

**HYMN**                      *Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates*                      8

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

The hymn was written based on Psalm 42 by an early 17<sup>th</sup> century German pastor at Königsberg, Georg Weissel, who wrote about 20 hymns. The tune first appeared in *Psalmodia Evangelica* in 1789.

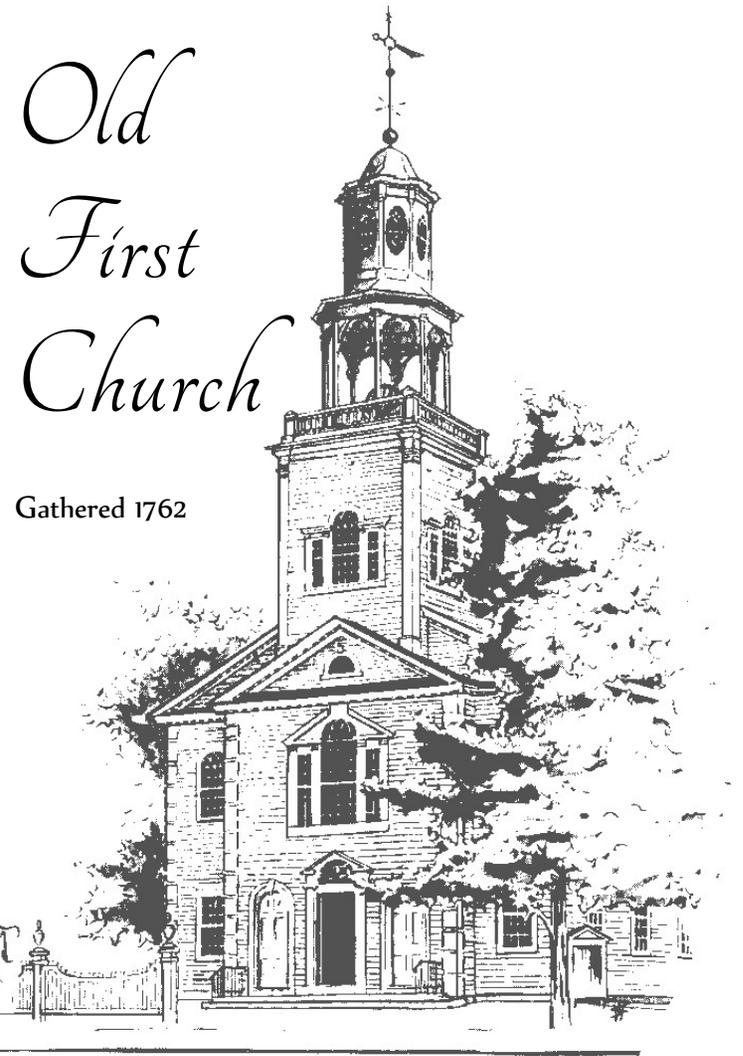
**BENEDICTION**

**POSTLUDE**                      *Prepare the Way O Zion*                      - Dale Wood

Deacons on call this month are Pat Guerrero, 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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### *When the Morning Stars Together*

1. When the morning stars together  
Their Creator's glory sang,  
And the angel host all shouted  
Till with joy the heavens rang,  
Then Your wisdom and Your greatness  
Their exultant music told,  
All the beauty and the splendor  
Which Your mighty works unfold.
2. When in synagogue and temple  
Voices raised the psalmists' songs,  
Offering the adoration  
Which alone to You belongs,  
When the singers and the cymbals  
With the trumpet made accord,  
Glory filled the house of worship,  
And all knew Your presence, Lord.
3. Voice and instrument in union  
Through the ages spoke Your praise,  
Plainsong, tuneful hymns, and anthems  
Told Your faithful, gracious ways,  
Choir and orchestra and organ  
Each sacred offering brought,  
While, inspired by Your own Spirit,  
Poet and composer wrought.
4. Lord, we bring our gift of music;  
Touch our lips and fire our hearts,  
Teach our minds and train our senses,  
Fit us for these sacred arts.  
Then with skill and consecration  
We would serve Your, Lord, and give  
All our powers to glorify You,  
And in serving fully live.

### *Comfort, Comfort You My People*

1. Comfort, comfort you my people,  
tell of peace, thus says our God;  
comfort those who sit in darkness  
bowed beneath oppression's load.  
Speak you to Jerusalem  
of the peace that waits for them;  
tell them that their sins I cover,  
and their warfare now is over.
2. For the herald's voice is calling  
in the desert far and near,  
bidding us to make repentance  
since the kingdom now is here.  
O that warning cry obey!  
Now prepare for God a way;  
let the valleys rise in meeting  
and the hills bow down in greeting.
3. Make you straight what long was crooked,  
make the rougher places plain;  
let your hearts be true and humble,  
as befits God's holy reign.  
For the glory of the Lord  
now o'er earth is shed abroad;  
and all flesh shall see the token  
that God's word is never broken.

### *Creator of the Stars of Night*

Creator of the stars of night,  
Your people's everlasting light,  
O Christ, Redeemer of us all,  
We pray You, hear us when we call.

When this old world drew on toward night,  
You came, but not in splendor bright,  
Not as a monarch, but the child  
Of Mary, blameless mother mild.

At Your great name, O Jesus, now  
All knees must bend, all hearts must bow:  
All things on earth with one accord,  
Like those in heaven, shall call You Lord.

To God the Father, God the Son,  
And God the Spirit, Three in One,  
Praise, honor, might, and glory be  
From age to age eternally. Amen.

### *Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates*

Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates;  
behold, the King of glory waits;  
the King of kings is drawing near;  
the Savior of the world is here!

Fling wide the portals of your heart;  
make it a temple, set apart  
from earthly use for heaven's employ,  
adorned with prayer and love and joy.

Redeemer, come! I open wide  
My heart to Thee; here, Lord, abide  
Let me Thy inner presence feel;  
Thy grace and love in me reveal.

## ISAIAH 40:1-11

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

## MARK 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way;  
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
'Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight,'"

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."