

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 26, 2021

PRELUDE *Fantasia on Polish Carols* - arr. Christos Tsitsaros

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

For everything there is a season,

And a time for every matter under heaven.

God of tomorrows we thank you for the gift of a year.

In all times and season we will trust in God.

***HYMN** *Good Christian Friends, Rejoice* 28

This carol dates to the 14th century! The writer is unknown, but the text is ascribed to Peter of Dresden, who died in 1440. The oldest form of the carol is from a 1400 manuscript in Leipzig University Library. John Mason Neale translated/paraphrased it in 1853. Neale was a 19th century priest of the Church of England who translated many Greek and Latin hymns. The tune, *In Dulci Jubilo* is 14th century German folk and served as the setting for this text. The title line was first altered for the 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

God of all time, who makes all things new, we bring before you the year now ending. For life full and good, for opportunities recognized and taken, for love known and shared, we thank you. Where we have fallen short, forgive us. When we worry over the past, free us. Fill us with joy and let us praise you, when we pray let our hearts be open and your loving mercy full. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Colossians 3:12-17 p. 958

***HYMN** *Let the Whole Creation Cry* 256

This hymn is based on Psalm 148. The liberal views of the author, Stopford Brooke, a priest in Ireland and London, led him to leave the Anglican church in 1880. Jacob Hintze, town musician of Barnam, Germany, may have written the tune, first published in 1678. J. S. Bach harmonized it.

SECOND LESSON Luke 2:41-52 p. 833

SERMON The Word of Christ

***HYMN** *See Amid the Winter's Snow* 51

This text was written by Edward Caswall (1814 – 1878). Caswall was an Anglican priest who was deeply involved in the Oxford movement. He and his wife became Roman Catholics in 1847 and after her death two years later Caswall joined John Henry Newman and was reordained in 1852. The remainder of his life was devoted to service to the poor, the sick, and little children. Most of his writings and translations were during this period.

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 *See the Child in the Manger* - Robert J. Powell

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

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

***HYMN** *Go, Tell It on the Mountain* 29

After hearing the refrain, John Wesley Work II wrote the stanzas around 1900. It was included in the collection, *American Negro Songs and Spirituals* (1940). Work and his brother were leading figures in the preservation, performance and study of African-American spirituals. This carol was arranged by Work's son, who continued the work (!) begun by his father and uncle. The harmony is by the chair of the committee that organized this hymnal, Melva Costen.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Good King Wenceslas* - Edward H. Wetherill

We welcome all visitors and hope you will return! Please fill out a visitor's card found in the pew and be sure to identify yourself so we can present you with a gift bag.

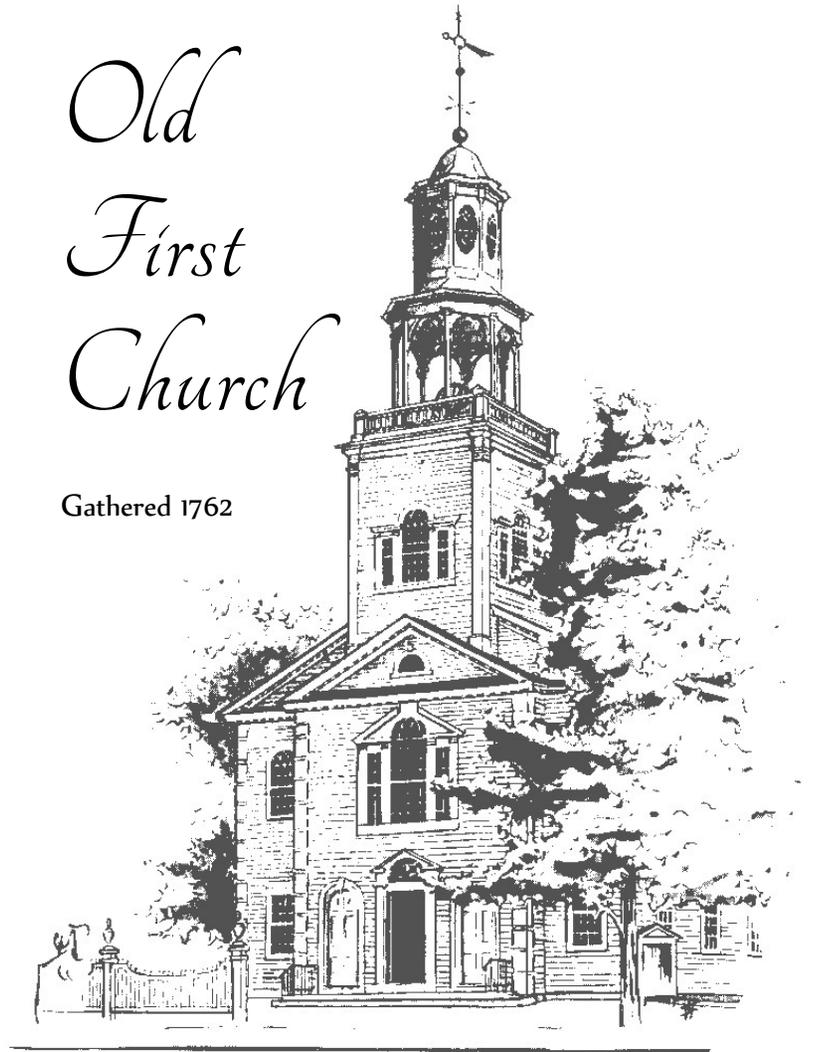
Deacons on call this month are Marsha Pilachowski and Amy Tronsen. Ushers and greeters for today's service are Amy and Bill Tronsen.

Please join us after worship today for coffee hour in the Narthex provided by the Langford family.

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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Good Christian Friends Rejoice

- 1). Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
give ye heed to what we say:
Jesus Christ was born today.
Ox and ass before him bow,
and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today!
Christ is born today!
- 2). Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now ye hear of endless bliss:
Jesus Christ was born for this!
He has opened heaven's door,
and we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this!
Christ was born for this!
- 3). Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now ye need not fear the grave:
Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all
to gain his everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save!
Christ was born to save!

FIRST LESSON

Colossians 3:12-17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Let the Whole Creation Cry

Let the whole creation cry,
"Glory to the Lord on high."
Heaven and earth, awake and sing,
"God is our eternal King."
Praise God, all ye hosts above,
ever shining forth in love;
sun and moon, uplift your voice;
night and stars, in God rejoice!

Men and women, young and old,
raise the anthem manifold;
join with children's song of praise
worship God through length of days.
From the north to southern pole
let the mighty chorus roll:
"Holy, holy, holy One,
glory be to God alone!"

SECOND LESSON

Luke 2:41-52

Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

See Amid the Winter's Snow

See, amid the winter's snow,
born for us on earth below,
see the gentle Lamb appears,
promised from eternal years.

Refrain:

Hail that ever-blessed morn,
Hail redemption's happy dawn,
Sing through all Jerusalem:
Christ is born in Bethlehem.

Say, you holy shepherds, say,
tell your joyful news today.
Why have you now left your sheep
on the lonely mountain steep? *[Refrain]*

"As we watched at dead of night,
there appeared a wondrous light;
angels singing 'Peace on earth'
told us of the Savior's birth." *[Refrain]*

Go, Tell It on the Mountain

Refrain:

Go, tell it on the mountain
Over the hills and everywhere;
Go, tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born!

While shepherds kept their watching
O'er silent flocks by night,
Behold throughout the heavens
There shone a Holy light. *[Refrain]*

The shepherds feared and trembled
When lo! Above the earth,
Rang out the angel chorus
That hailed our Savior's birth. *[Refrain]*

Down in a lowly manger
The humble Christ was born,
And God sent us salvation
That blessed Christmas morn. *[Refrain]*