

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
JIM DILLEY, LAY READER
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST

JULY 17, 2022

PRELUDE *Pastoral Prelude* - Jean Langlais

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

O be joyful in the Lord all ye lands.

**Serve the Lord with gladness and come before God's presence
with a song.**

It is God who has made us and we ourselves.

We are God's people and the sheep of God's pasture.

***HYMN** *God, You Spin the Whirling Planets* 285

Jane Parker Huber wrote the text for a 1979 national meeting of church women whose theme was, "In the Image of God." Huber was born in 1926 of Presbyterian missionary parents in China and is a prolific writer of new words to familiar hymn tunes. She chose this tune because the opening night of the conference featured a rendition of Haydn's *Creation*. Haydn wrote this tune, which is a variant of a Croatian folksong, and after hearing "God Save the King" at Westminster Abbey in 1791, so his Austrian people would have their own national anthem.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

God of all creation,
our chief end is to glorify you,
and enjoy you forever.
Our deep delight is in your presence,
our fondest thoughts are of you,
our strongest longing is for your house.
In this hour of worship,
help us to become who we are meant to be--
a community that breathes thankfulness,
voicing your praise in all we do. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Genesis 18:1-10 p. 12

***HYMN** *The Heavens Above Declare God's Praise* 166

This new metrical paraphrase of Psalm 19:1-6 is by Christopher L. Webber. It was first published in *A Metrical Psalter* (1986). The tune, *Caithnes*, is from the Scottish Psalter (1635) with harmonization from *The English Hymnal* (1906).

SECOND LESSON Luke 10:38-42 p. 845

SERMON The Better Part

***HYMN** *God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens* 268

Catherine Arnott Cameron, a social psychology professor at the University of La Verne, California, published her hymn first in a supplement by the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship in 1969 during a time when she said she was "experiencing a new sense of direction, growth and creativity in my life." The tune, attributed to William Moore of Tennessee, was first published in 1825.

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 *Verse* - Peter Hurford

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

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

***HYMN** *Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise* 263

The author of the text, Walter Chalmers Smith (1824-1908), was a minister in the Free Church of Scotland and was its Moderator in 1893. He published several books, his last one being *A Heretic and Other Poems*. The tune is a Welsh folk melody from the early 19th century.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Fugue in F Major* - Georg Philipp Telemann

* Stand if able

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 Joyce Goeke and Ellen Knapp. Ushers and greeters for today's service are Darlene Munson and David Varker.

Please join us after worship today for coffee hour provided by Sandy Bechtel, Joyce Goeke, Darlene Munson and Marsha Pilachowski.

Flowers for worship are provided by Marsha and Dave Pilachowski. If you would like to provide flowers or host coffee hour some Sunday please sign up on the BLOG.

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS: *(All meetings are open to members of the church)*
7/18: Trustee meeting, 5:30 PM, Parlor

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

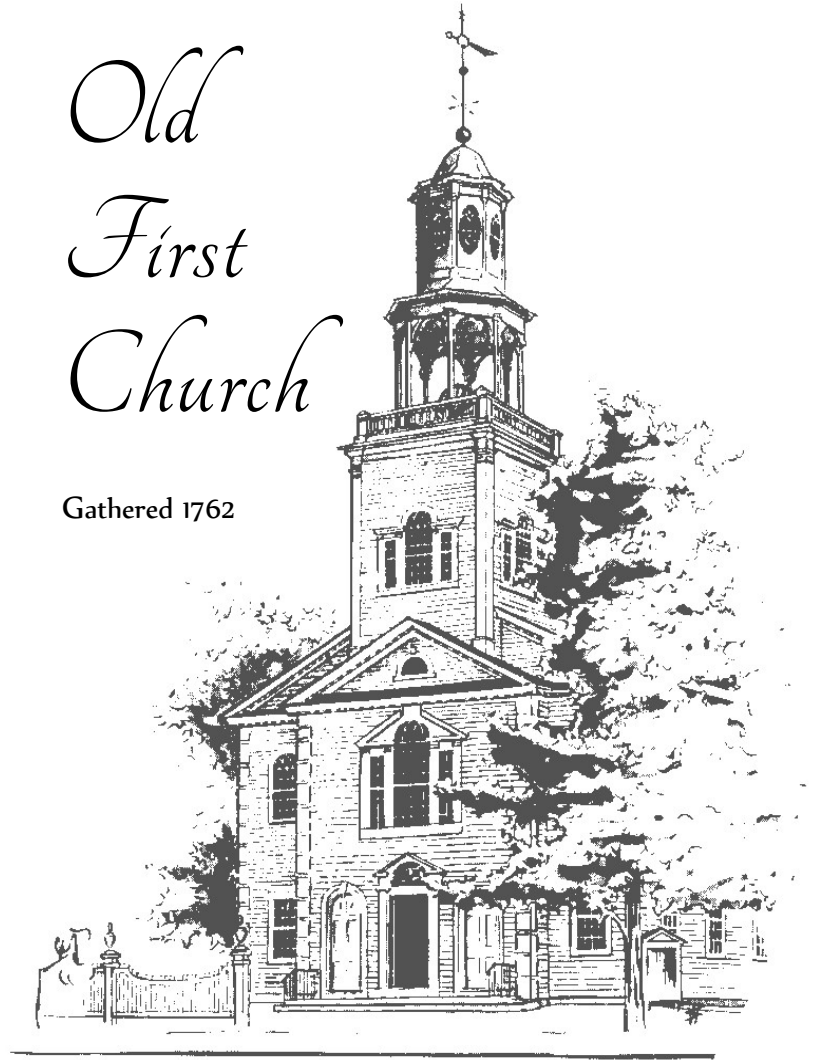
(OLD FIRST CHURCH)

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Health note: Indoor air is constantly exchanged with fresh air with a LifeBreath circulation system operating during the service to maintain the healthiest standards for public gathering.

*Old
First
Church*

Gathered 1762



God, You Spin the Whirling Planets

God, You spin the whirling planets,
Fill the seas and spread the plain,
Mold the mountains, fashion blossoms,
Call forth sunshine, wind, and rain.
We, created in Your image,
would a true reflection be
Of Your justice, grace, and mercy,
And the truth that makes us free.

You have called us to be faithful
In our life and ministry.
We respond in grateful worship
Joined in one community.
When we blur Your gracious image,
Focus us and make us whole.
Healed and strengthened as Your people,
We move onward toward Your goal.

God, Your word is still creating,
Calling us to life made new.
Now reveal to us fresh vistas
Where there's work to dare to do.
Keep us clear of all distortion.
Polish us with loving care.
Thus, new creatures in Your image,
We'll proclaim Christ everywhere.

They said to him, "Where is your wife Sarah?" And he said, "There, in the tent." Then one said, "I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him.

The Heavens Above Declare God's Praise

The heavens above declare God's praise,
the work God's hands have made;
day after day the tale is told,
and night by night displayed.

There is no utterance or speech,
no voice has ever heard,
yet to all nations comes the sound,
to every place their word.

Forth like a bridegroom comes the sun
from its appointed place,
and like a hero runs its course,
rejoicing in the race.

It runs from east to farthest west
to make its course complete,
and nothing in the world beneath
escapes its scorching heat.

FIRST LESSON

Genesis 18:1-10

The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, "My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes." Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

SECOND LESSON

Luke 10:38-42

Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens

God, who stretched the spangled heavens
Infinite in time and place,
Flung the suns in burning radiance
Through the silent fields of space:
We, Your children in Your likeness,
Share inventive powers with You;
Great Creator, still creating,
Show us what we yet may do.

We have ventured worlds undreamed of
Since the childhood of our race;
Known the ecstasy of winging
Through untraveled realms of space;
Probed the secrets of the atom,
Yielding unimagined power,
Facing us with life's destruction
Or our most triumphant hour.

As each far horizon beckons,
May it challenge us anew:
Children of creative purpose,
Serving others, honoring You.
May our dreams prove rich with promise,
Each endeavor well begun;
Great Creator, give us guidance
Till our goals and Yours are one.

Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all, life Thou givest, to both great and small;
in all life Thou livest, the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish like leaves on the tree,
then wither and perish; but naught changeth Thee.

Thou reignest in glory, Thou rulest in light,
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;
All praise we would render; O help us to see
"Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee!