

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  
BILL WOOD, LAY READER  
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST  
OLD FIRST CHURCH CHOIR

SEPTEMBER 11, 2022

PRELUDE *Shall We Gather at the River* - Joe Utterback

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

We delight in the word of God.

**May we hear God's voice in each day.**

Let us raise our voices in praise and hope.

**God's promised love is sure and unfailing.**

\*HYMN *My Country, 'Tis of Thee* 561

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)

Lord, let us not dwell in the past,  
nor worry about the future.

We cannot undo what is done.

We cannot foresee what will come.

Let us instead dwell in your peace,

love and be loved,

heal and be healed.

We give the past to you  
and rest in your forgiveness.

We give the future to you  
and rest in your love.

We live in your light,

open our eyes that we may see.

We live in your love,

let your love flow through us,  
to the fulfilment of your kingdom.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND \*GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Luke 15:1-10 p. 850

\*HYMN *My Soul in Silence Waits for God* 197

According to the author, Fred R. Anderson, this metrical version of Psalm 62 is a reworking of number 161 in *The Psalter* (1912). While the images are similar, the language has been extensively changed for the contemporary church. Anderson began the work at the request of the Psalter Task Force of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The hymn is published here for the first time.

SECOND LESSON Exodus 32:7-14 p. 69

SERMON Changing One's Mind

\*HYMN *Nearer, My God, to Thee* insert

Sarah Fuller Flower Adams (1805 – 1848) was an English poet and hymnwriter. As a member of the congregation of the Rev. W. J. Fox, a Unitarian minister in London, she contributed 13 hymns to the *Hymns and Anthems*, published by C. Fox, London, in 1841, for use in his chapel. Of these hymns the most widely known are— "Nearer, my God, to Thee," and "He sendeth sun, He sendeth shower." The remaining eleven, most of which have come into common use, especially in America.

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 This is My Song - Jean Sibelius

\*DOXOLOGY (592) AND PRAYER OF DEDICATION

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

\*HYMN *Day Is Done* 544

This evening hymn was written by Roman Catholic James Quinn and published in *New Hymns for All Seasons* (1969). This collection was edited completely by Quinn. It contained one hundred hymns, some translations and some originals. James Quinn (1919 - 2010) is a Lauriston Jesuit Father from Edinburgh, Scotland.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Light of the World* - Franklin Ritter

**We extend a warm welcome to our guests and visitors and we are delighted to have you worship with us. 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 Sue Philpott. Ushers and greeters for today's service are Susan Katz and Darlene Munson.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments in the foyer after the service. Our thanks to Sandy Bechtel, Marsha Pilachowski, Pat and Larry Ross for providing coffee hour this morning.

**\*\*\*SPECIAL MEETING WARNING\*\*\*** A special meeting of the church will be held at 12:00 PM, following worship on Sunday, September 18 in the church sanctuary to vote on some proposed By-Law changes which will be included in the September newsletter and mailed to members of the church. All members are expected to stay after worship and attend this special meeting.

**UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS:** *(All meetings are open to members of the church)*

Choir practice, Sunday mornings, 9:30 AM in the choir loft

9/12: Deacon meeting, 4:00 PM, Barn

9/18: Special meeting of the church, 12:00 PM, Church Sanctuary

September date TBD: Trustee meeting

**Impromptu Sunday Picnics on the Green:** For those wishing to continue visiting out in front of the church, picnicking on the Green after worship and coffee hour is ongoing as the weather permits. Bring your own picnic lunch and a chair to sit on and pups on a leash are always welcome!

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!

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.

## FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

(OLD FIRST CHURCH)

VT RTE. 9 AND MONUMENT AVENUE

OLD BENNINGTON, VERMONT

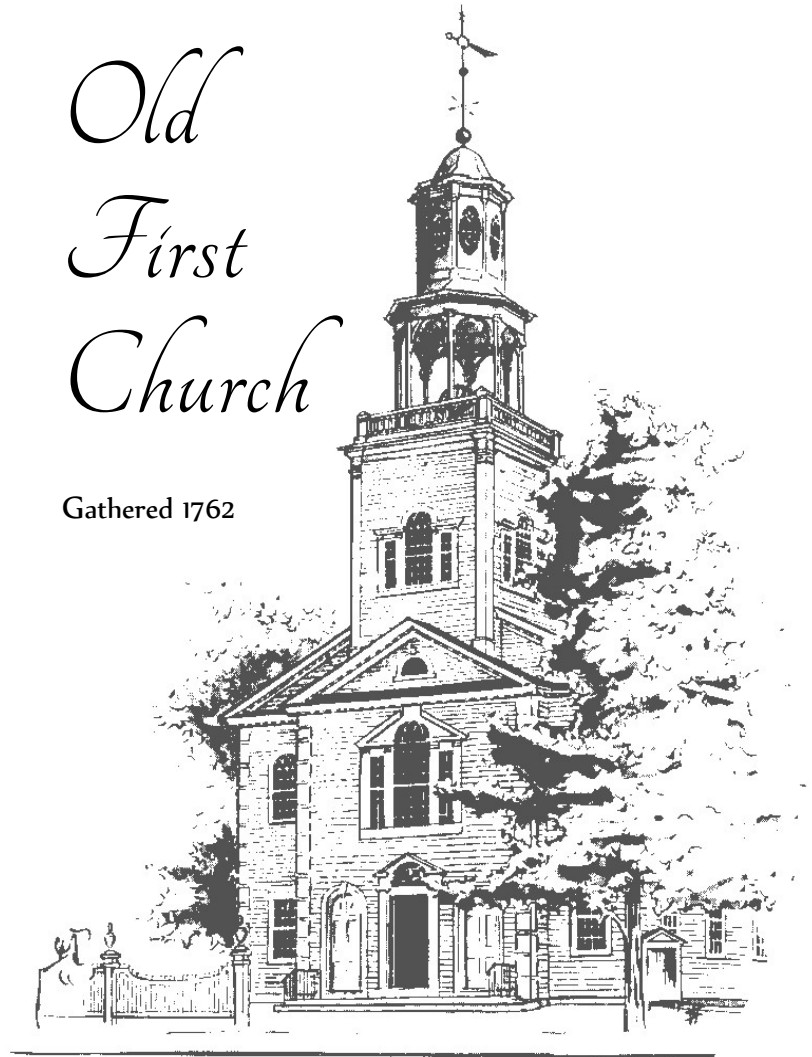
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# Old First Church

Gathered 1762



## *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.

## **FIRST LESSON**

### **Luke 15:1-10**

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." So he told them this parable: "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. "Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

## *My Soul in Silence Waits for God*

1. My soul in silence waits for God,  
Who my own hope has proved.  
A rock and stronghold is my God,  
I never shall be moved.
2. In God alone my honor rests,  
Who brings deliverance sure;  
My rock of strength is found in God,  
My refuge most secure.
3. All people are but vanity,  
The best of us a lie;  
Both high and low-estate combined  
Are lighter than a sigh.
4. In your own strength, then, place no hope,  
For riches, have no lust;  
Though for a moment they appeal,  
They are not worth your trust.
5. For truly God has spoken once,  
And twice to me made known:  
That strength and power belong to God,  
And unto God alone.
6. For so it is that sovereign grace  
Belongs to You, O Lord;  
For You according to our work  
Shall everyone reward.

## **SECOND LESSON**

### **Exodus 32:7-14**

The LORD said to Moses, "Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'" The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation." But Moses implored the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, 'I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'" And the LORD changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

### *Nearer, My God, to Thee*

Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!  
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me,  
still all my song shall be,  
nearer, my God, to thee;  
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

Though like the wanderer, the sun gone down,  
darkness be over me, my rest a stone;  
yet in my dreams I'd be  
nearer, my God, to thee;  
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

There let the way appear, steps unto heaven;  
all that thou sendest me, in mercy given;  
angels to beckon me  
nearer, my God, to thee;  
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

Then, with my waking thoughts bright with thy praise,  
out of my stony griefs Bethel I'll raise;  
so by my woes to be  
nearer, my God, to thee;  
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

Or if, on joyful wing cleaving the sky,  
sun, moon, and stars forgot, upward I fly,  
still all my song shall be,  
nearer, my God, to thee;  
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

### *Day Is Done*

Day is done, but love unfailing  
Dwells ever here;  
Shadows fall, but hope, prevailing,  
Calms every fear.  
God, our Maker, none forsaking,  
Take our hearts, of Love's own making,  
Watch our sleeping, guard our waking,  
Be always near.

Dark descends, but light unending  
Shines through our night;  
You are with us, ever lending  
New strength to sight:  
One in love, Your truth confessing,  
One in hope of heaven's blessing,  
May we see, in love's possessing,  
Love's endless light!

Eyes will close, but You unsleeping,  
Watch by our side;  
Death may come, in love's safekeeping  
Still we abide.  
God of love, all evil quelling,  
Sin forgiving, fear dispelling,  
Stay with us, our hearts indwelling,  
This eventide.