

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
THE REV. CHARLES W. FOX, GUEST MINISTER
ANASTASIA GAUTHIER, LAY READER
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST
OLD FIRST CHURCH CHOIR

NOVEMBER 13, 2022

PRELUDE *Fidelis Servus* - Dom Paul Benoit

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

Sing praises to the Lord for God has done marvelous things.

Come and worship with thanks and joy.

God's work is present in all that we see.

*HYMN *Not Alone for Mighty Empire* insert

William Pierson Merrill wrote this hymn following a Union Thanksgiving service at the Forty-First Street Presbyterian Church in Chicago, Illinois. Merrill was a graduate of Rutgers College (BA 1887, MA 1890) and Union Theological Seminary (BD 1890). He pastored at Presbyterian churches in Philadelphia; Chicago; and the Brick Presbyterian Church in New York City (1911-1938).

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

Most holy and merciful God, we confess to you and to one another, that we have sinned against you by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart and mind and strength. We have not fully loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not always had in us the mind of Christ. You alone know how often we have grieved you by wasting your gifts, by wandering from your ways. Forgive us, we pray you, most merciful God; and free us from our sin. Renew in us the grace and strength of your Holy Spirit, for the sake of Jesus Christ your Son our Savior. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Genesis 9:8-17 p. 6

SECOND LESSON Matthew 5:13-20 p. 786

SERMON Patriotism Beyond Nationalism

*HYMN *We Gather Together* 559

This 17th century folk hymn was written during Holland's struggle for independence with Spain. The political environment is reflected in the text. The tune is named for Eduard Kremser (1838-1914), a Viennese composer and choir director, who discovered the hymn after it had been forgotten for two centuries.

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.)

MOMENT FOR STEWARDSHIP David Varker

OFFERING

OFFERTORY *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*
- Ralph Vaughn Williams

*DOXOLOGY (592) AND PRAYER OF DEDICATION

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

*HYMN *O Beautiful for Spacious Skies* 564

Katherine Lee Bates, Wellesley College professor of literature, was inspired to write the text after an 1893 visit to the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where she felt a patriotic feeling, and afterwards wrote, "We went on, my New England eyes delighting in the wind-waved gold of the vast wheat fields." It was after seeing amber skies from Pikes Peak that she then wrote the hymn in Colorado Springs. Samuel Augustus Ward, a Newark, NJ music supply, piano and organ salesperson, wrote the tune in 1882. First used for the hymn, *O Mother Dear, Jerusalem*, his widow gave permission for it to be used with Bates' text in 1912.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Fight the Good Fight with All Thy Might*
- Hugo Gehrke

We extend a warm welcome to our guests and visitors and we are
delighted to have you worship with us.

Deacons on call this month are Janet Andrea and Sandy Bechtel. Ushers and greeters for today's service are Fischer Gauthier and Jim Pullman.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments in the foyer after the service. Our thanks to Sandy Bechtel, Anastasia and Fischer Gauthier and Amber and Noah Langford for providing coffee hour this morning and to Jane Radocchia for setting up. With the continued respect for the high COVID numbers locally and out of an abundance of caution, we invite you to make a plate from the coffee hour table and visit in the sanctuary where the air circulation is best.

It is a delight to welcome back the Rev. Dr. Charles W. Fox as our guest minister today. Rev. Fox served as minister here at Old First Church from 1977 – 1991. Rev. Fox retired from professorship in Cultural Studies with the State University of NY in 2007 and continues to live in Williamstown, Massachusetts.

A NOTE FROM REV. FOX: In my last sermon at the Old First, "Re-Thinking God in the Stress of our Times", I spoke about the spiritual discovery of the "still small voice within" by the prophet Elijah. I associated this with the experience of prayer as inwardness and what is now commonly called "meditation". If anyone would like to get some more concrete and specific guidance in developing the practice of meditation, I would be happy to provide that guidance by emailing me at chaswfox@hotmail.com.

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

- Choir practice, Sunday mornings, 9:30 AM in the choir loft
- 11/21: Deacon meeting, 4:00 PM, at the Barn
- 11/21: Trustee meeting, 5:00 PM, Church parlor
- 12/4: Hanging of the Greens
- 12/18: Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols, 7:00 PM
- 12/24: Christmas Eve Service, 5:00 PM

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

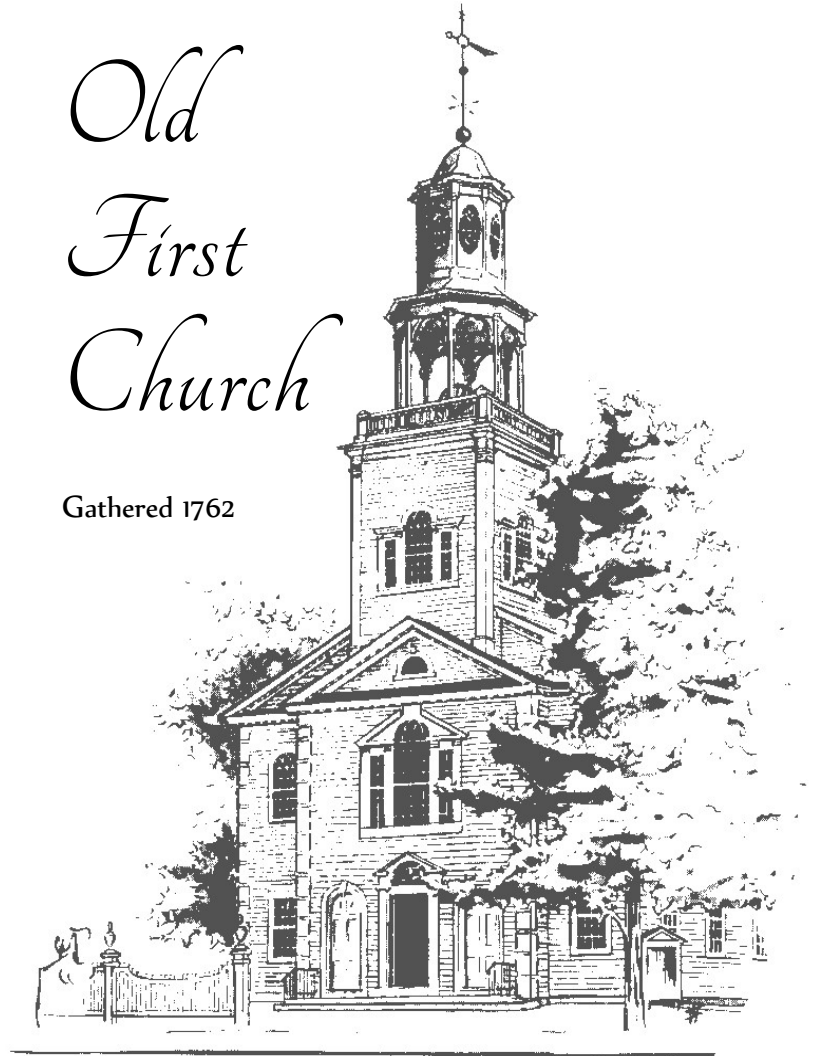
(OLD FIRST CHURCH)
VT RTE. 9 AND MONUMENT AVENUE
OLD BENNINGTON, VERMONT

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Old First Church

Gathered 1762



Not Alone for Mighty Empire

Not alone for mighty empire,
Stretching far o'er land and sea;
Not alone for bounteous harvests,
Lift we up our hearts to Thee.
Standing in the living present,
Memory and hope between,
Lord, we would with deep thanksgiving
Praise Thee most for things unseen.

Not for battleship and fortress,
Not for conquests of the sword;
But for conquests of the spirit
Give we thanks to Thee, O Lord;
For the heritage of freedom,
For the home, the church, the school;
For the open door to manhood
In a land the people rule.

For the armies of the faithful,
Souls that passed and left no name;
For the glory that illumines
Patriot lives of deathless fame;
For our prophets and apostles,
Loyal to the living Word;
For all heroes of the Spirit,
Give we thanks to Thee, O Lord.

God of justice, save the people
From the clash of race and creed,
From the strife of class and faction:
Make our nation free indeed.
Keep her faith in simple manhood
Strong as when her life began,
Till it find its full fruition
In the brotherhood of man.

FIRST LESSON

Genesis 9:8-17

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."

God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

SECOND LESSON

Matthew 5:13-20

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

We Gather Together

We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing;
He chastens and hastens His will to make known;
The wicked oppressing now cease from distressing,
Sing praises to His name; He forgets not His own.

Beside us to guide us, our God with us joining,
Ordaining, maintaining His kingdom divine;
So from the beginning the fight we were winning;
Thou, Lord, wast at our side; all glory be Thine!

We all do extol thee, thou leader triumphant,
And pray that thou still our defender wilt be.
Let thy congregation escape tribulation;
Thy name be ever praised! O Lord, make us free!

O Beautiful for Spacious Skies

Oh, beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea.

Oh, beautiful for pilgrim feet,
Whose stern, impassioned stress
A thoroughfare of freedom beat
Across the wilderness!
America! America!
God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control,
Thy liberty in law.

Oh, beautiful for heroes proved
In liberating strife,
Who more than self their country loved,
And mercy more than life!
America! America!
May God thy gold refine,
Till all success be nobleness,
And every gain divine.

Oh, beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam,
Undimmed by human tears!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea.