

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
NOAH LANGFORD, LAY READER
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST
OLD FIRST CHURCH CHOIR

FEBRUARY 12, 2023

PRELUDE *Andante Cantabile* - Stuart P. Hoppin

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

Lord, be with us as we gather here.

Be with us with the gift of your grace.

Be with us in understanding and love.

Comfort us and set us on the path of kindness.

***HYMN** *Ye Servants of God, Your Master Proclaim* 477

The text was written by Charles Wesley as part of a hymn tract series issued for the Wesleys' class meetings. A caption to the hymn stated "To be sung in a tumult." The tract containing thirty-three hymns was titled *Hymns for Times of Trouble and Persecution* (1744).

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

Merciful God,

we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,

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 loved our neighbors as ourselves.

In your mercy forgive what we have been,

help us amend what we are,

and direct what we shall be,

so that we may delight in your will

and walk in your ways,

to the glory of your holy name.

Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON 1 Corinthians 3:1-9 p. 927

***HYMN** *Why Are Nations Raging* 159

Fred Anderson wrote this metrical setting for Psalm 104 in 1986. He is pastor of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York City and has been metering Psalms for 21 years.

SECOND LESSON Deuteronomy 30:15-20 p. 163

SERMON Hold Fast

***HYMN** *Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether* 504

This text was written by Percy Dearmer and included in *Enlarged Songs of Praise* (1931), which he edited with Ralph Vaughan Williams and Martin Shaw. Dearmer also compiled a handbook for the collection titled *Songs of Praise Discussed* (1933).

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 or hand it to an usher after the service.)

OFFERING

OFFERTORY *Let Us Break Bread Together on Our Knees*
- African American Spiritual

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

SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER (insert)

The congregation is invited to participate in the service as found in the insert included in this order of service. *(Please note that grape juice is on the outer circle only and wine inside. We partake together after all have been served.)*

COMMUNION VOLUNTARY

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

***HYMN** *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah* 281

The text was written by the 18th century William Williams, known as the "Sweet Singer of Wales." He was a deacon in the Church of England who identified with the Calvinist Methodist movement and traveled throughout Wales, preaching, for 50 years. He wrote more than 800 Welsh hymns. The tune was written for a Welsh singing festival at Capel Rhonda in 1905 or 1907. The composer, John Hughes, was an active member of the Salem Baptist Church in Wales who succeeded his father as deacon and precentor (singing leader).

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Postlude in E Flat* - Reginald W. Martin

* Stand if able

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 and ushers, greeters and communion servers for today's service are Janet Van Derpoel-Andrea and Sue Philpott.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments in the foyer after the service. Our thanks to Joyce Goeke, Reg Jones, Audrey Pietrucha and Wendy Schmitt for providing coffee hour this morning.

SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY SPECIAL COLLECTION: There are two soup pots in the entry of the church today for the Souper Bowl of Caring collection, joining with other churches across the country to collect money for those who are hungry and hurting. 100% of the money collected at our church will be donated to the Kitchen Cupboard at GBICS. Please support this important fundraiser by dropping your donation in one of the soup pots.

We are still collecting new or gently used blankets for the homeless. Gently used blankets must be clean and no electric blankets please.

20TH ANNUAL LENTEN DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET: Submissions for our *Meditations for Lent* booklet, by and for members and friends of Old First Church, are being accepted. **The deadline for submissions is February 13.** Email is the best way to get it to the church office. The devotionals are printed on a half-sheet of 8 ½ x 11" paper so please keep your selections brief. Copies will be available for pick up at the church on Sunday, February 19.

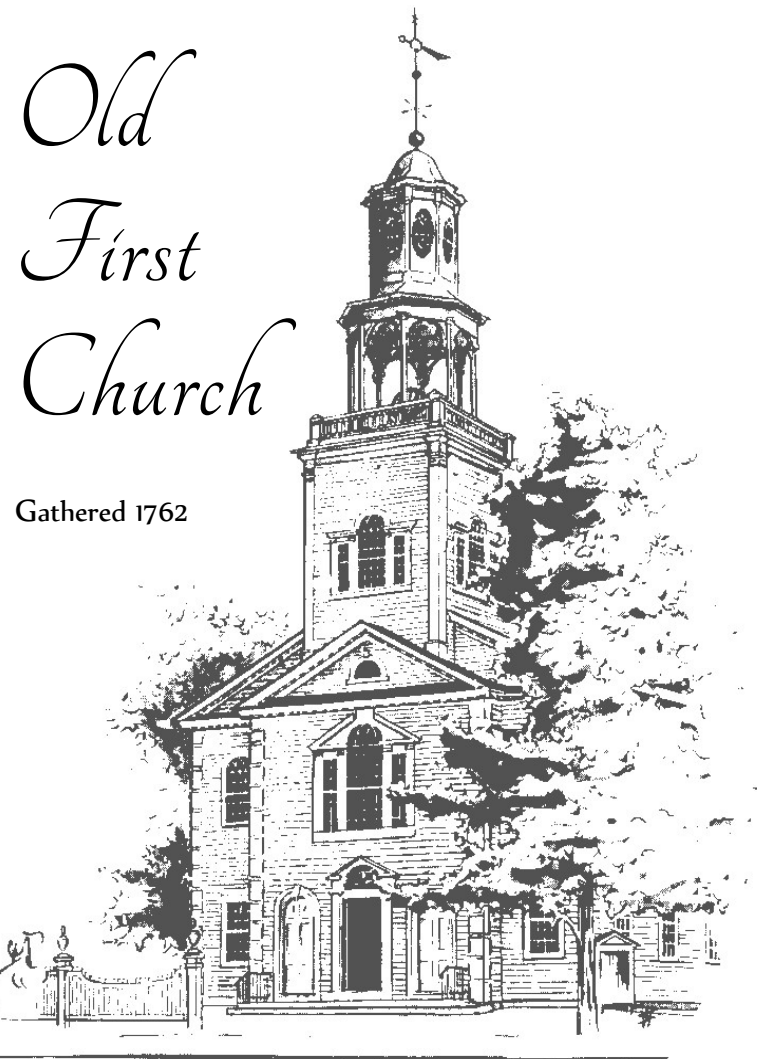
UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS: *(All meetings are open to members of the church)*
Choir practice, Sunday mornings, 9:30 AM in the choir loft
2/16: Deacon Meeting, 4:00 PM at the Barn
2/20: Trustee Meeting, 5:00 PM in the church parlor

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!

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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Ye Servants of God, Your Master Proclaim

Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim,
and publish abroad His wonderful name;
the name all-victorious of Jesus extol;
his kingdom is glorious, He rules over all.

God ruleth in the height, almighty to save;
and still He is nigh – His presence we have;
the great congregation His triumph shall sing,
ascribing salvation to Jesus our King.

"Salvation to God, who sits on the throne,"
let all cry aloud, and honor the Son;
the praises of Jesus the angels proclaim,
fall down on their faces, and worship the Lamb.

Then let us adore, and give Him His right,
all glory and power, all wisdom and might,
all honor and blessing, with angels above,
and thanks never ceasing, and infinite love.

FIRST LESSON

1 Corinthians 3:1-9

And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not merely human?

What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building.

Why Are Nations Raging

Why are nations raging
and conspiring plots in vain?
Rulers of the world rise up,
Weaving webs of death and pain.
Then against the Lord they cry,
And against God's holy Son,
"Let us tear their bonds from us
And with their control be done."

But the Lord has scorn on them,
Laughing and enthroned on high.
God brings wrath upon their work;
Filled with anger God replies:
"It is My own holy will
That the Christ on earth shall reign,
And on Zion's holy hill,
My anointed I'll maintain."

God's decree unto the King
Tells us what the Lord did say:
"You are My own holy child;
I've begotten You this day.
Ask of Me and I will make
All the nations Your own stay.
These possessions You shall rule,
Strong as Iron smashing clay."

Therefore, leaders of the earth,
Serve the Lord with holy fear;
Trembling come before the throne
Or God's anger will appear.
Kiss God's feet in trembling awe
Or the Lord will use the rod,
Making beggars of all the kings.
Blest are those who trust in God.

See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether

Draw us in the Spirit's tether,
 For when humbly in Your name
 Two or three are met together,
 You are in the midst of them;
 Alleluia! Alleluia!
 Touch we now Your garment's hem.

As disciples used to gather
 In the name of Christ to sup,
 Then with thanks to God the Father
 Break the bread and bless the cup,
 Alleluia! Alleluia!
 So now bind our friendship up.

All our meals and all our living
 Make as sacraments of You,
 That by caring, helping, giving,
 We may be disciples true.
 Alleluia! Alleluia!
 We will serve with faith anew.

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
 Pilgrim through this barren land;
 I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
 Hold me with Thy powerful hand;
 Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
 Feed me till I want no more,
 Feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain,
 Whence the healing stream doth flow;
 Let the fire and cloudy pillar
 Lead me all my journey through;
 Strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
 Be Thou still my strength and shield,
 Be Thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
 Bid my anxious fears subside;
 Death of death and hell's destruction,
 Land me safe on Canaan's side;
 Songs of praises, songs of praises
 I will ever give to Thee,
 I will ever give to Thee.

**Order of Service for
The Lord's Supper or Communion
At the First Congregational Church
Bennington, Vermont**

Scripture Sentences

Opening Words and Invocation

Prayer of Confession (read by the Minister and People in Unison)

We come not into thy presence, most holy Lord God, trusting in our own righteousness but in thy manifold and abiding mercies. Remembering this day the great heart and passion of a son of man of long ago, we are conscious of our shortcomings. We would here be turned to the way of his brave and tender spirit, and find that wholeness of life which shall be at once a divine blessing for us and a divine ministry from us. Forgive our failures and shortcomings, and by thy grace strengthen our desire for goodness, that we may henceforth serve thee without fear and without shame, all the days of our lives. Amen.

Responsive Reading

Let us hear the words of Jesus which speak of the way of blessedness.

Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN; FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED.

Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.

BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH DO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS; FOR THEY SHALL BE FILLED.

Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART; FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD.

Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God.

BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE; FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

THIS IS THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT.

And the second is like unto it, namely this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

ON THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS HANG ALL THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS.

Offertory and Communion Prayer

The Lord be with you.

AND ALSO WITH YOU.

Lift up your hearts

WE LIFT THEM TO THE LORD.

It is right to give our thanks and praise

LET US GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD OUR GOD

Words of Institution

The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and, when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said: This is my body which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me.

After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood. This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

Take and eat this in remembrance of Christ.

Take and drink this in remembrance of Christ.

Silent Prayer

The service continues and concludes as found in today's order of service.