

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
MARIE GUARINIELLO, LAY READER
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST
OLD FIRST CHURCH CHOIR

MARCH 26, 2023

PRELUDE *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir*
- Friedrich Wilhelm Zachau

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

Let us be joyful in the word of God.

Let us walk in the way of peace.

Remember the Lord is with us.

And so rejoice in the blessing of life renewed.

***HYMN** *The God of Abraham Praise* 488
The text in our hymnal is quite close to one in *The Union Hymnal* edited by the Central Conference of American Rabbis. The 1885 translation is based on a Jewish creedal statement by Moses Maimonides (1130-1205) and set to meter by Daniel ben Judah (14th century). Maimonides wrote the 13 articles of the Jewish creed known as the *Yigdal*. The tune, LEONI (a.k.a. YIGDAL) was introduced into Christian worship around 1770. Thomas Olivers, a Wesleyan minister, heard cantor Meyer Lyon sing the *Yigdal* at Great Duke's Synagogue, Alegate, London. Lyon transcribed the melody for Olivers, who named the tune LEONI.

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,

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 Ezekiel 37:1-14 p. 704

***HYMN** *Out of the Depths* 240
This versification of Psalm 130 is by Martin Luther. Four stanzas were in circulation in 1523 and published in *Etlich Christlich lider Lobgesang un Psalm* (1524) and set to the tune ES IST DAS HEIL. The second stanza was expanded to two stanzas and appeared in Johann Walther's *Geystliche gesangk Buchleyn* (1524) and set to the present tune. The English translation is by Richard Massie from his English translation of *Martin Luther's Spiritual Songs* (1854).

SECOND LESSON John 11:1-45 p. 873

SERMON The Shortest Sentence

***HYMN** *When Jesus Wept* 312
Both the text and the music of this canon were composed by William Billings (1746-1800) and appeared in the *New England Psalm Singer* (1770), a collection of one hundred twenty vocal compositions. This completely American collection was the first of its type and also the first music book to contain tunes by a single American composer.

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 *O Lord, Throughout These Forty Days*
- Walter L. Pelz

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

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

***HYMN** *My Song Is Love Unknown* 76
Samuel Crossman was one of the first English poets to write hymns whose inspiration came from outside scripture. He was an Anglican priest, who became a Puritan. The hymn was first published during the plague of 1664. The tune was composed for this text in 1918 by John Ireland on the back of a menu, during a lunch when a friend passed him Crossman's poem, asking that he write a tune for it. Ireland was an organist and prolific composer in England.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Savior, When in Dust to You*
- setting by Thomas Janson

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 Sandy Bechtel and Marsha Pilachowski. Ushers and greeters for today's service are David and Laurel Varker.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments in the foyer after the service. Our thanks to Betsy Ehrenfreund, Jeannette Lesser and Pat & Larry Ross for providing coffee hour this morning.

An organizational meeting for the tag sale will take place after worship today. We encourage everyone interested in helping with the tag sale to attend where we will outline important procedures, sign up for various tasks and share ideas.

We continue to collect new or gently used blankets for the homeless. Used blankets must be clean and no electric blankets please. Just 11 more needed to reach the milestone of 100 blankets collected from our church family!

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

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

4/6: Maundy Thursday service, 6:30 PM at the Barn

4/6: Tenebrae service, 8:00 PM at the Church

4/13: Deacon meeting, 4:00 PM at the Barn

4/24: Trustee meeting, 5:30 PM in the 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!

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

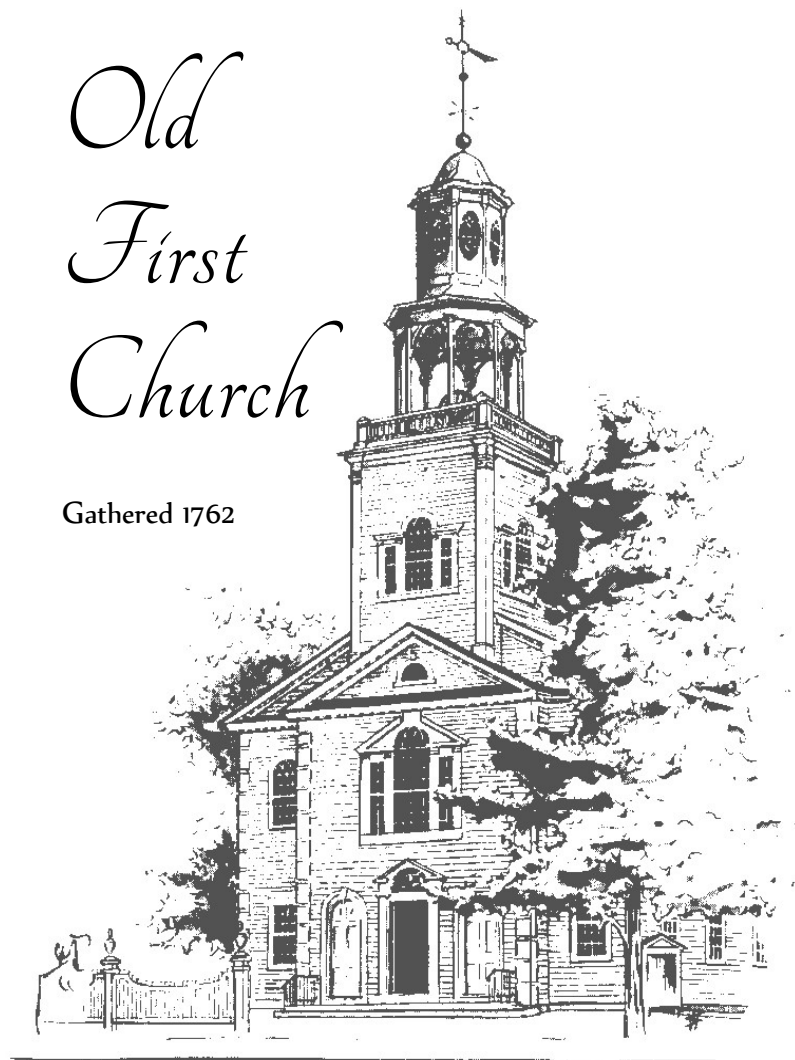
MAILING ADDRESS & CONTACT INFORMATION

1 MONUMENT CIRCLE • BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201 • (802) 447-1223

office@oldfirst.comcastbiz.net • www.oldfirstchurchbenn.org

*Old
First
Church*

Gathered 1762



The God of Abraham Praise

The God of Abraham praise, who reigns enthroned above;
The ancient of eternal days, the God of love!
The Lord, the great I Am, by earth and heaven confessed,
We bow before Your holy name, forever blest.

Your spirit still flows free, high surging where it will;
In prophet's word You spoke of old and You speak still.
Established is Your law, and changeless it shall stand,
Deep writ upon the human heart, on sea, or land.

You have eternal life implanted in the soul;
Your love shall be our strength and stay, while ages roll.
We praise You, living God! We praise Your holy name;
The first, the last, beyond all thought, and still the same!

FIRST LESSON

Ezekiel 37:1-14

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord God, you know." Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord." So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act," says the Lord.

Out of the Depths

1. Out of the depths to Thee I raise
The voice of lamentation;
Lord, turn a gracious ear to me,
And hear my supplication.
If Thou shouldst count our every sin,
Each evil deed or thought within,
O who could stand before Thee?
2. To wash away the crimson stain
Grace, grace alone prevaieth.
Our works, alas! are all in vain;
In much the best life faileth.
For none can glory in Thy sight,
All must alike confess Thy might
And live alone by mercy.
3. Therefore my trust is in the Lord,
And not in mine own merit.
On God my soul shall rest; God's work
Upholds my fainting spirit.
God's promised mercy is my fort,
My comfort, and my strong support;
I wait for it with patience.
4. What though I wait the live-long night,
And till the dawn appeareth,
My heart still trusteth in God's might;
It doubteth not nor feareth:
So let the Israelites in heart,
Born of the Spirit, do their part,
And wait till God appeareth.

SECOND LESSON

John 11:1-45

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world." When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

When Jesus Wept

When Jesus wept, the falling tear
in mercy flowed beyond all bound.
When Jesus groaned, a trembling fear
seized all the guilty world around.

My Song is Love Unknown

My song is love unknown,
My Savior's love to me,
Love to the loveless shown
That they might lovely be.
O who am I that for my sake
My Lord should take frail flesh, and die?

Christ came from heaven's throne
Salvation to bestow,
But people scorned and none
The longed-for Christ would know.
But O my Friend, my friend indeed
Who at my need His life did spend!

Sometimes they strew His way,
And His sweet praises sing,
Resounding all the way
Hosannas to their King.
Then "Crucify!" Is all their breath,
And for His death they thirst and cry.

They rise, and needs will have
My dear Lord made away:
A murderer they save,
The Prince of life they slay.
Yet steadfast He to suffering goes,
That He His foes from thence might free.

Here might I stay and sing,
No story so divine:
Never was love, dear King,
Never was grief like Thine.
This is my Friend, in whose sweet praise
I all my days could gladly spend.