

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
ANASTASIA GAUTHIER, LAY READER
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST
OLD FIRST CHURCH CHOIR

MARCH 5, 2023

PRELUDE *Aus Tiefer Not* - Alfred V. Fedak

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

We come together for worship.

God is our refuge and our strength.

God's word calls to us.

May God's peace be with us this day.

***HYMN** *Awake, My Soul, and with the Sun* 456

Thomas Ken (1637-1711) was born at Little Berkhamstead, Hertfordshire, England, but went to live with his brother-in-law, Isaak Walton, after his parents died when Ken was nine years old. He was educated at Winchester and New College, Oxford. He was curate for Little Easton in Essex for three years after his ordination in 1662 and served for one year as a domestic chaplain to Bishop Morley. King James II of England declared the author of this hymn, Thomas Ken, the most eloquent preacher among Protestants of his time.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

Heavenly God, your Son confronted the powers of darkness that obscure your compassion and love for all of creation: help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer, so that we may witness to that saving love proclaimed in Christ. We are human. Forgive us where we fall short and lift us up to where your light can shine. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Genesis 12:1-4 p. 8

***HYMN** *I to the Hills Will Lift My Eyes* 234

Here we go back to our singing roots and sing a Psalm. The text is a metrical setting of Psalm 121 from the 1912 hymnal, *The Psalter*, which was a joint work of nine U.S. and Canadian Reformed traditions. The tune is from the 1615 Scottish Psalter, *CL Hymns of David*.

SECOND LESSON

John 3:1-17

p. 863

SERMON

tba

***HYMN** *Eternal Light, Shine in My Heart* 340

The Latin text of this hymn is from a prayer attributed to Alcuin (c. 735-804). Born in Northumbria, he was educated at the Cathedral school in York, where he spent most of his life. He became master of the school in 766 and at the time of his death was abbot of the monastery of St. Martin at Tours. Alcuin was a counselor and cultural adviser to Charlemagne and inspired the Carolingian Renaissance. He revised the Roman lectionary in Gaul and composed votive masses. He is also credited with the introduction of the Feast of All Saints.

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 *Meditation at the Cross* - Douglas E. Wagner

***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** *I Come with Joy* 507

Brian Wren wrote this hymn as a summary of a series of sermons to his congregation on the meaning of Communion. Wren is a minister in the United Reformed Church (formerly English Congregational) and has been called the most successful English hymn writer since Charles Wesley. The tune is an American folk melody, first published in 1854, and arranged in 1977 by Austin Lovelace, a prolific composer and professor of music at various seminaries and colleges.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Elegy* - Russell Schulz

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 Sandy Bechtel, Jeannette Lesser and Marsha Pilachowski.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments in the foyer after the service. Our thanks to Amber and Noah Langford for providing coffee hour this morning.

Thank you to Wendy and Tom Schmitt for providing flowers for worship this morning.

Those interested in becoming a member of Old First Church are invited to meet with the deacons after worship today. You might want to grab a bite to eat from the coffee hour table first before heading downstairs to the Parlor.

We continue to collect new or gently used blankets for the homeless. Gently used blankets must be clean and no electric blankets please.

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

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

3/9: Deacon Meeting, 4:00 PM at the Barn

3/19: St. Patrick's Luncheon following worship, at the Barn

3/21: Trustee Meeting, 5:30 PM in the church parlor

3/26: Monumental Tag Sale organizational meeting following worship

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)

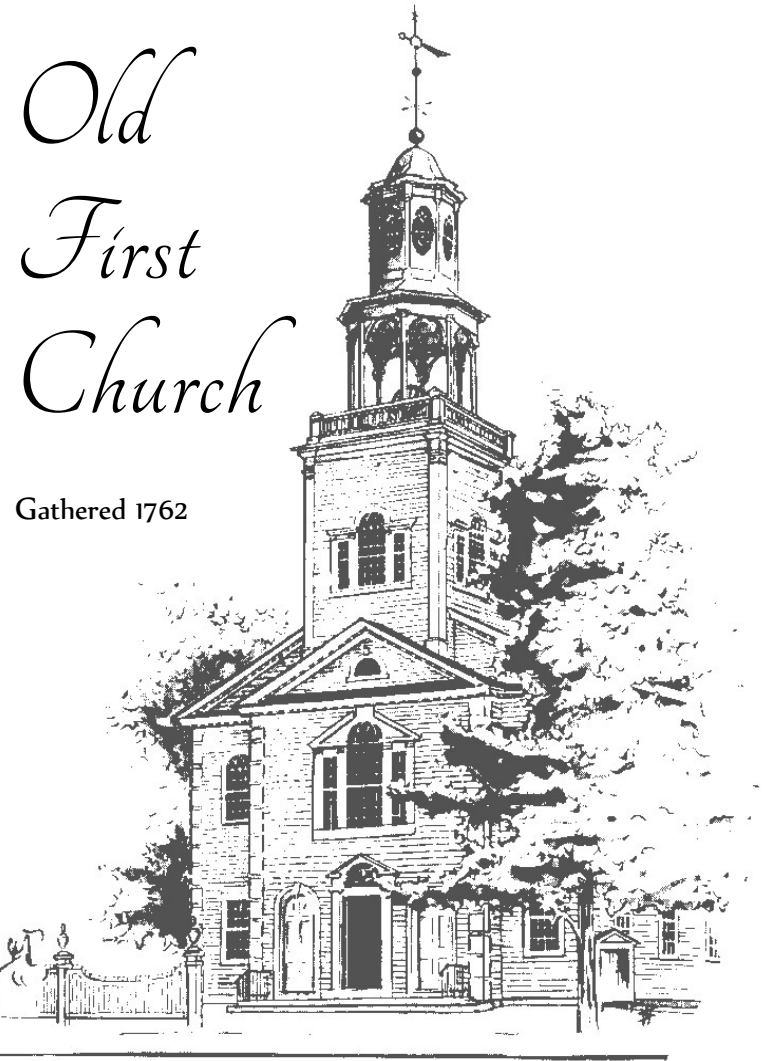
VT RTE. 9 AND MONUMENT AVENUE

OLD BENNINGTON, VERMONT

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Awake, My Soul, and with the Sun

Awake, my soul, and with the sun
your daily stage of duty run;
Shake off dull sloth, and joyful rise
To pay your morning sacrifice.

Lord, I my vows to You renew.
Disperse my sins as morning dew;
Guard my first springs of thought and will,
And with Yourself my spirit fill.

Direct, control, suggest, this day,
All I design or do or say;
That all my powers, with all their might,
in Your sole glory may unite.

I to the Hills Will Lift My Eyes

I to the hills will lift my eyes;
From whence shall come my aid?
My help is from the Lord alone,
who heaven and earth has made.

God will not let your foot be moved,
your guardian never sleeps;
God's watchful and un-slumbering care
protects and safely keeps.

Your faithful keeper is the Lord,
your shelter and your shade;
'Neath sun or moon, by day or night,
you shall not be afraid.

From evil God will keep you safe,
provide for all you need;
Your going out, your coming in,
God will forever lead.

FIRST LESSON

Genesis 12:1-4

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

SECOND LESSON

John 3:1-17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as

Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Eternal Light, Shine in My Heart

Eternal light, shine in my heart;
eternal hope, lift up my eyes;
eternal power, be my support;
eternal wisdom, make me wise.

Eternal life, raise me from death;
eternal brightness, help me see;
eternal Spirit, give me breath;
eternal Savior, come to me:

Until by Your most costly grace,
invited by Your holy word,
at last I come before Your face
to know You, my eternal God.

I Come with Joy

I come with joy to meet my Lord,
Forgiven, loved, and free,
In awe and wonder to recall
His life laid down for me,
His life laid down for me.

I come with Christians far and near
To find, as all are fed,
The new community of love
In Christ’s communion bread,
In Christ’s communion bread.

As Christ breaks bread and bids us share,
Each proud division ends.
The love that made us, makes us one,
And strangers now are friends,
And strangers now are friends.

And thus with joy we meet our Lord.
His presence, always near,
Is in such friendship better known:
We see and praise Him here,
We see and praise Him here.

Together met, together bound,
We’ll go our different ways,
And as His people in the world,
We’ll live and speak His praise,
We’ll live and speak His praise.

**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.