

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
DAVE PILACHOWSKI, LAY READER
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST

APRIL 16, 2023

PRELUDE *This Joyful Eastertide* - Robert Lind

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

Let us be joyful in the word of God.

Let us walk in the way of peace.

Let us remember the Lord is with us.

And let us rejoice in the blessing of life renewed.

*HYMN *Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty* 482

The text's author, Joachim Neander, took the Calvinist faith seriously but also lived a "rather unruly existence" before his pastor and others influenced him to make some changes in his life. In 1674 he became a grammar school headmaster. 66 of his hymn texts were published in 1691. The valley Neanderthal, where he took long walks, was named in his honor (and was where the famous skeleton was discovered 200 years later in 1856). The tune may have had secular origins but was used by J.S. Bach in three cantatas and an organ setting, as well as Neander's hymn.

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 John 20:19-31 p. 883

*HYMN *As Morning Dawns* 161
The text is a new paraphrase of Psalm 5 by Fred R. Anderson. It was first published in Singing Psalms of Joy and Praise (1986).

SECOND LESSON Acts 2:14a, 22-32 p. 885

SERMON Wonders and Signs

*HYMN *We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight* 399
Henry Alford, who was dean of Canterbury Cathedral for 14 years, wrote the text. He was a Greek scholar and wrote a 4-volume Greek New Testament with notes that was a standard in his day. Samuel McFarland, who flourished around 1816, wrote the tune.

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 *Pastorale* - Don Michael Dicie

*DOXOLOGY (592) AND PRAYER OF DEDICATION

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

*HYMN *Now Once Again the Heaven Turns* insert
The author of this hymn, Kenneth Leo Patton (August 25, 1911-December 25, 1994), born in a small town in western Michigan, identified as one of the major poets and a prophet of contemporary liberal religion, was a voice for a poetic, naturalistic humanism at a time when most humanists were defining a religion of reason. Minister and scholar David Bumbaugh has summed up Patton's work: "It was he who taught a monotone rationalism how to sing; it was he who taught a stumble-footed humanism how to dance; it was he who cried 'Look!' and taught our eyes to see the glory in the ordinary."

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Jesus Christ Is Risen Today* - Robert A. Hobby

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 Pat and Larry Ross.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments in the foyer after the service. Our thanks to Janet Van Derpoel-Andrea, Sandy Bechtel, Susan Kachmar, and Marsha Pilachowski for providing coffee hour this morning.

Sunday School runs every Sunday morning from 10:30 - 11:00 AM in the parlor. This informal "drop in" program is ideally geared for children under the age of 6. For more information contact our Christian Ed Advocate, Amber Langford at aemc412@comcast.net.

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS: *(All meetings are open to members of the church)*
Choir practice resumes next Sunday at 9:30 AM in the choir loft
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!

To maintain the healthiest standards for public gathering, indoor air is constantly being exchanged with fresh air with a LifeBreath circulation system operating during the service today.

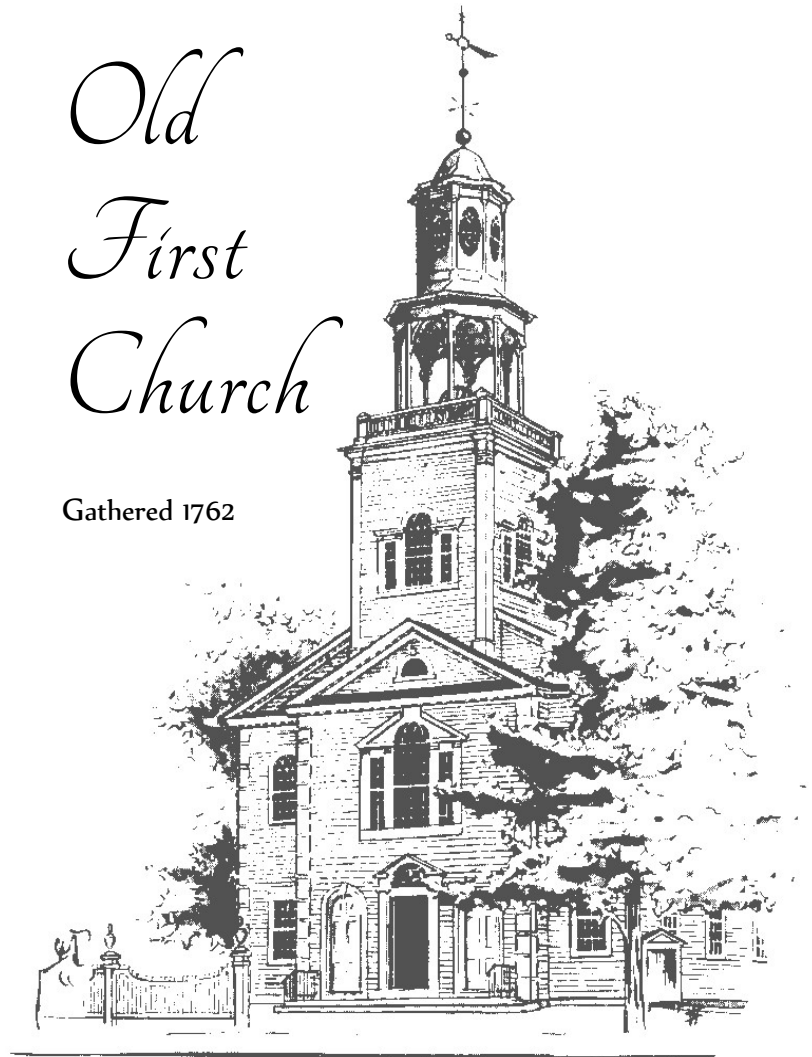
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Old First Church

Gathered 1762



Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty

Praise ye the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!
All ye who hear, now to His temple draw near;
join me in glad adoration!

Praise ye the Lord, who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth,
shelters the under His wings, yea, so gently sustaineth!
Hast thou not seen how thy desires e'er have been
sent by his gracious ordaining?
Granted in what He ordaineth?

Praise ye the Lord! O let all that is in me adore Him!
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him!
Let the amen sound from His people again;
gladly for aye we adore Him.

FIRST LESSON

John 20:19-31

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

As Morning Dawns

As morning dawns, Lord, hear our cry.
O sovereign God, now hear our sigh.
As first light brings the sun's warm rays,
Accept our sacrifice of praise.

Before You, Lord, the wicked fall,
And none shall dwell within Your hall.
The proud shall never gain a place,
Nor evil live to see Your face.

Your steadfast love shall welcome all
Who seek Your house and on You call.
O lead us, Lord, in righteousness,
As through this day Your name we bless.

Let all who seek You then rejoice,
And sing to You with joyful voice.
For You shall bless the righteous, Lord.
Forever be Your name adored.

SECOND LESSON

Acts 2:14a, 22-32

Peter Addresses the Crowd

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.

"You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him,

"I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
moreover, my flesh will live in hope.
For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
or let your Holy One experience corruption.
You have made known to me the ways of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence."

‘Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying,
“He was not abandoned to Hades,
nor did his flesh experience corruption.”
This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.

We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight

We walk by faith, and not by sight;
no gracious words we hear
from Christ, who spoke as none e’er spoke;
but we believe Him near.

We may not touch His hands and side,
nor follow where He trod;
but in His promise we rejoice,
and cry, “My Lord and God!”

Help then, O Lord, our unbelief;
and may our faith abound
to call on You when You are near,
and seek where You are found.

That, when our life of faith is done,
in realms of clearer light
we may behold You as You are,
with full and endless sight.

Now Once Again the Heaven Turns

Now once again the heaven turns
To bring again the verdant year.
And once again the old sun burns
To freshen up the earth to bear.

Anon, anon, the seeds will burst
From swelling in the warming soil.
The rains will quench the season’s thirst;
The tillers will resume their toil.

And, answering, the heart of man
Will waken from its old despair,
And glory in what spring it can,
To make the human season fair.

Then will the blossoms of our hope,
Arranged with blossoms of the year,
So beautify the festive scope,
The heart will triumph over fear.