

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  
MARSHA PILACHOWSKI, LAY READER  
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST  
OLD FIRST CHURCH CHOIR

APRIL 23, 2023

**PRELUDE** *Arioso* - Cesar Franck

**OPENING WORDS** (responsive)

Hear our prayer, O Lord.

**Sustain us with your Word.**

Be with us in any time of trouble,

**Let us know your peace.**

**\*HYMN** *For the Beauty of the Earth* 473

The text's author was briefly a headmaster and literature teacher at a college in England, but an inheritance allowed him to spend the rest of his life traveling and writing. This text was originally written as a communion hymn to infuse a note of joy into the then otherwise solemn service. The tune's original author was choirmaster and organist at Stuttgart, and modified to be the setting of William Dix's "As With Gladness Men of Old."

**OPENING PRAYER** (unison)

Look to this day!

For it is life, the very life of life.

In its brief course

Lie all the verities and realities of your existence:

The bliss of growth

The glory of action

The splendour of beauty,

For yesterday is but a dream

And tomorrow only a vision,

But today well lived makes every yesterday a dream  
of happiness

And every tomorrow a vision of hope.

Look well, therefore, to this day!

**ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND \*GLORIA PATRI (579)**

**FIRST LESSON** Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19 p. 491

**\*HYMN** *To Bless the Earth* 200

This paraphrase of Psalm 65 first appeared in *The Psalter* (1912), a publication of a joint committee of nine churches representing the Reformed tradition in the U.S. and Canada. The tune is an old one, by Melchior Vulpius, in 1609. He was the leading German composer of his day, a schoolmaster and musicologist, composing over 200 motets and 400 hymns for Lutheran worship.

**SECOND LESSON** Luke 24:13-35 p. 860

**SERMON** On the Road Again

**\*HYMN** *O Day of God, Draw Nigh* 452

This hymn was written by R.B.Y. Scott, a United Church of Canada pastor and professor of Old Testament at Vancouver, Montreal and Princeton. It was first published in 1939 and then in the 1958 *Pilgrim Hymnal*. The tune by Louis Bourgeois first appeared as a setting for Psalm 101 in the Genevan Psalter (1551). William Crotch (b. 1775), an English child prodigy musician, revived and arranged it in 1836 and named it St. Michael.

**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** *A Time for All Things* - Douglas Wagner

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

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

**\*HYMN** *Early Spring* insert

This hymn is based on the golden year of Fan Cheng-ta, a Chinese rural sequence rendered into English verse by Gerald Bullett in 1946 and adapted in 1960. Bullett was a British novelist, essayist, short story writer, critic and poet. He wrote both supernatural fiction and some children's literature.

**BENEDICTION**

**POSTLUDE** *Rondel* - Charles Callahan

**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 Joyce Goeke and Wendy Schmitt. Ushers and greeters for today's service are Janet Andrea and Susan Katz.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments in the foyer after the service. Our thanks to Jen Daks for providing coffee hour this morning and to Pat and Larry Ross for setting up.

Flowers for worship today are provided by Jen Daks in honor of her son, Jonathan's birthday.

**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](mailto:aemc412@comcast.net).

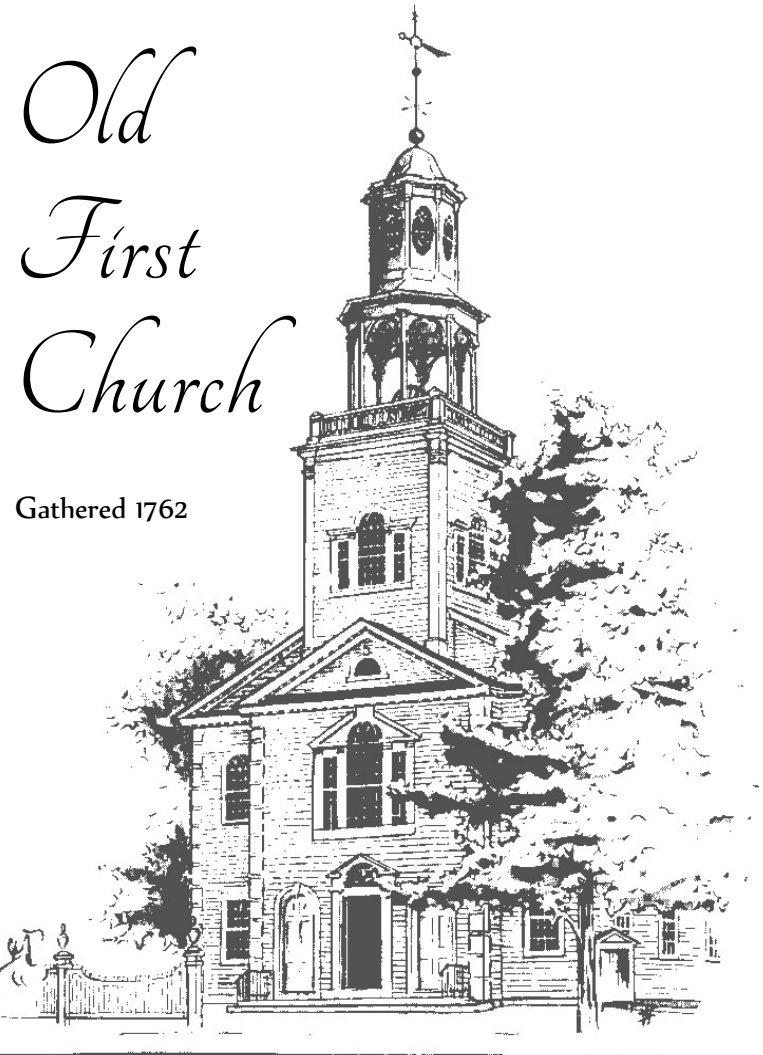
**UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS:** *(All meetings are open to members of the church)*  
Choir practice, Sunday mornings, 9:30 AM in the choir loft  
4/24: Trustee meeting, 5:30 PM in the Parlor

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.

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

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### ***For the Beauty of the Earth***

For the beauty of the earth,  
For the glory of the skies,  
For the love which from our birth  
Over and around us lies.

*Refrain:* Lord of all to Thee we raise  
This our hymn of grateful praise.

For the wonder of each hour,  
Of the day and of the night,  
Hill and vale, and tree and flower,  
Sun and moon, and stars of light. *(Refrain)*

For the joy of ear and eye,  
For the heart and mind's delight,  
For the mystic harmony  
Linking sense to sound and sight, *(Refrain)*

For the joy of human love,  
Brother, sister, parent, child,  
Friends on earth and friends above,  
For all gentle thoughts and mild. *(Refrain)*

For Thy church that evermore  
Lifteth holy hands above,  
Offering up on every shore  
Her pure sacrifice of love, *(Refrain)*

### **FIRST LESSON**

### **Psalm 116**

I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my supplications.

Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.

The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;  
I suffered distress and anguish.

Then I called on the name of the LORD: "O LORD, I pray, save my life!"

What shall I return to the LORD for all his bounty to me?

I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD,

I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful ones.

O LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant, the child of your serving  
girl. You have loosed my bonds.

I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice and call on the name of  
the LORD.

I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people,

in the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise  
the LORD!

### ***To Bless the Earth***

To bless the earth, God sends us  
From heaven's abundant store  
The waters of the springtime,  
Enriching it once more.

The seed by God provided  
Is sown o'er hill and plain,  
And then come gentle showers  
To bless the springing grain.

God crowns the year with goodness,  
The earth God's mercy fills,  
The wilderness is fruitful,  
And joyful are the hills.

With grain the fields are covered,  
The flocks in pastures graze;  
All nature joins in singing  
A joyful song of praise.

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

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| <p>1. O day of God, draw nigh<br/>in beauty and in power;<br/>come with thy timeless judgment now<br/>to match our present hour.</p> <p>2. Bring to our troubled minds,<br/>uncertain and afraid,<br/>the quiet of a steadfast faith,<br/>calm of a call obeyed.</p> | <p>3. Bring justice to our land,<br/>that all may dwell secure,<br/>and finely build for days to come<br/>foundations that endure.</p> <p>4. Bring to our world of strife<br/>Your sovereign word of peace,<br/>that war may haunt the earth no more<br/>and desolation cease.</p> |
| <p>5. O day of God, draw nigh<br/>as at creation's birth;<br/>let there be light again,<br/>and set Your judgments in the earth.</p>   |  |

### *Early Spring*

But for the cockerel calling the noon hour,  
No voice is heard in lanes of willow flower.  
The leaves of mulberry, young and half uncurled,  
Are showing their green tips to the warm world.

Under the silver lash of the small rain  
The quickened earth is bringing forth again;  
Ten thousand spears of grass and sudden flowers  
Spring up to meet the welcome of the showers.

In the high fields the green of the wheat runs  
To join the mountain curve in green and bronze;  
The river meadows, not yet under plow,  
A darker, more luxuriant green-ness show.

The village, flowered with almond and with peach,  
Looks like a picture drawn with silver stitch;  
And there the folk, with song and dance and drum,  
Make festival because the spring has come.