

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

APRIL 30, 2023

PRELUDE *Now That Daylight Fills the Sky* - Dale Wood

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

May God's voice guide us and strengthen us this day.

Let us listen for the word of God.

May God's love change us.

Help us, O God, to live in your peace.

*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)

Everlasting God, in whom we live and move and have our being: You have made us for yourself, so that our hearts are restless until they rest in you. Give us purity of heart and strength of purpose, that no selfish passion may hinder us from knowing your will, no weakness keep us from doing it; that in your light we may see light clearly, and in your service find perfect freedom. Free us from unconcern and haste, keep us in your wisdom and forgive our faults and failings. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Acts 2:42-47 p. 886

*HYMN *My Shepherd Will Supply My Need* 172

Watts' collection including this hymn was first published in the U.S. by Benjamin Franklin in 1729. The tune is American folk; the harmonizer is on the faculty of Dordt College in Iowa

SECOND LESSON John 10:1-10 p. 872

SERMON All Things in Common

HYMN *We Sing of Golden Mornings* insert

Ralph Waldo Emerson, son of a Unitarian Minister, was born in Boston, May 25, 1803. He was educated for the Unitarian Ministry, and acted, 1829-32, as one of their ministers. Ultimately he left the ministry, and devoted himself to lecturing and literature. As a philosopher, essayist, and poet he rose to a distinguished position. He died at Concord, Massachusetts, April 27, 1882. His published works include poems, orations, lectures, and addresses. His hymns are not numerous.

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 *Loving Shepherd of the Sheep*
- setting by Ludwig Lenel

*DOXOLOGY (592) AND PRAYER OF DEDICATION

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

*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.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Postlude* - Douglas Wagner

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 David Roberts and Deborah Turner.

Coffee Hour and Flowers for Worship: Due to a last-minute scheduling issue, the coffee hour and flowers intended for Jen Daks' son, Jonathan's birthday had to be postponed and other flowers were to be put in their place, and we apologize for their absence last week. Thank you to Marsha and Pat Ross for covering coffee hour, and please join us for light Hors d'oeuvres, lemon cake and Forsythia this Sunday to finally welcome spring and honor 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.

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

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

5/7: Council meeting following worship

5/6: Open Church meeting 3:30 PM, Church Parlor

5/11: Deacon's meeting, 4:00 PM, Barn

5/22: Trustee Meeting, 5:30 PM, 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!

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

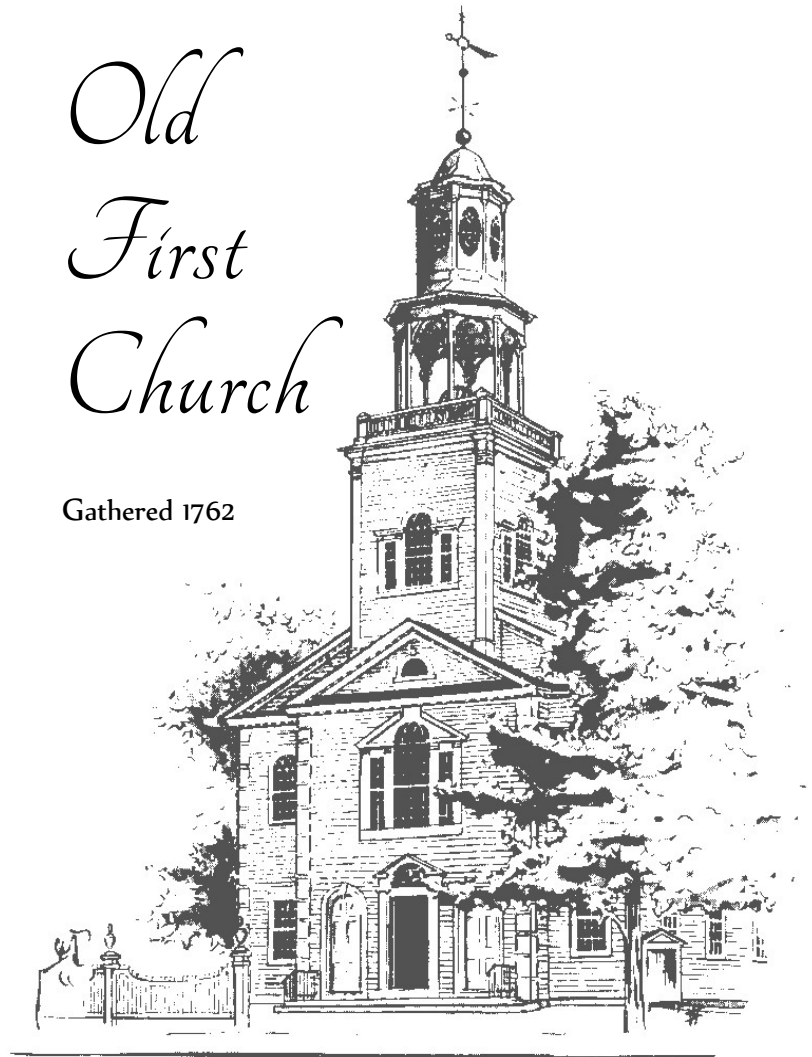
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Old First Church

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.

My Shepherd Will Supply My Need

1. My Shepherd will supply my need; 2. When I walk through the shades of death
Jehovah is His name: Your presence is my stay;
In pastures fresh He makes me feed, One word of Your supporting breath
Beside the living stream. Drives all my fears away.
He brings my wandering spirit back, Your hand, in sight of all my foes,
When I forsake His ways; Does still my table spread;
And leads me, for His mercy's sake, My cup with blessings over flows,
In paths of truth and grace. Your oil anoints my head.

3. The sure provisions of my God
Attend me all my days;
O may Your House be my abode,
And all my work be praise.
There would I find a settled rest,
While others go and come;
No more a stranger, or a guest,
But like a child at home.

FIRST LESSON

Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

SECOND LESSON

John 10:1-10

“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

We Sing of Golden Mornings

We sing of golden mornings,
we sing of sparkling seas,
of prairies, valleys, mountains,
and stately forest trees.

We sing of flashing sunshine
and life bestowing rain,
of birds among the branches,
and springtime come again.

We sing the heart courageous,
the youthful, eager mind;
we sing of hopes undaunted,
of friendly ways and kind.

We sing the roses waiting
beneath the deep-piled snow;
we sing, when night is darkest,
the day's returning glow.

O Day of God, Draw Nigh

O day of God, draw nigh
in beauty and in power;
come with thy timeless judgment now
to match our present hour.

Bring to our troubled minds,
uncertain and afraid,
the quiet of a steadfast faith,
calm of a call obeyed.

Bring justice to our land,
that all may dwell secure,
and finely build for days to come
foundations that endure.

Bring to our world of strife
Your sovereign word of peace,
that war may haunt the earth no more
and desolation cease.

O day of God, draw nigh
as at creation's birth;
let there be light again, and set
Your judgments in the earth.