

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

MAY 7, 2023

PRELUDE *Pastorale* - Alec Rowley

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

Make a joyful noise all the earth.

Let us worship the Lord with gladness.

For the Lord is good, God's love endures forever.

God's Spirit is in all times and generations.

***HYMN** *Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise* 263
The author of the text, Walter Chalmers Smith (1824-1908), was a minister in the Free Church of Scotland and was its Moderator in 1893. He published several books, his last one being *A Heretic and Other Poems*. The tune is a Welsh folk melody from the early 19th century.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

Lord, let us not dwell in the past, nor worry about the future. We cannot undo what is done. We cannot foresee what will come. Let us instead dwell in your peace, love and be loved, heal and be healed. We give the past to you and rest in your forgiveness. We give the future to you and rest in your love. We live in your light, open our eyes that we may see. We live in your love, let your love flow through us, to the fulfillment of your kingdom. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Acts 7:55-60 p. 891

***HYMN** *In You, Lord, I Have Put My Trust* 183
This paraphrase of Psalm 31 was written by Adam Reissner (1496-c 1575), born in Bavaria and educated at Wittenberg. He later studied Hebrew and Greek under Johann Reuchlin, a noted language scholar and writer (1521).

SECOND LESSON John 14:1-14 p. 877

SERMON Stones and Spirt

***HYMN** *Knight Without a Sword* insert
Jan Struther (1901-53), the pseudonym of Mrs. A. K. Placzek, was formed from her maiden name, Anstruther. The popular British author is best known for her novel *Mrs. Miniver*, 1940, which consists of sketches of British family life before World War II. Immensely popular, the book was later made into a movie. This hymn was written for *Songs of Praise, Enlarged*, 1931.

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 *Agnus Dei* - Gabriel Faure

***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** *Come, Risen Lord* 503
This text was one of sixteen contributed to the volume *Songs of Praise* (1931), where the last line of stanza I was altered to read "In this our sacrament of bread and wine." *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (1990) has restored the original text.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing*
- 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 Sandy Bechtel and Pat Ross. Ushers, greeters and communion servers for today's service are Marsha Pilachowski and Pat Ross.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments in the foyer after the service. Our thanks to Betsy Ehrenfreund, Susan Katz, Audrey Pietrucha and Vicky Printz for providing coffee hour this morning.

Flowers for worship are provided by Vicky Printz in memory of her husband Gary.

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

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

5/21: Tag Sale meeting following worship

5/22: Trustee meeting, 5:30 PM, Church Parlor

6/4: Monumental Tag Sale kickoff luncheon, 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!

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)

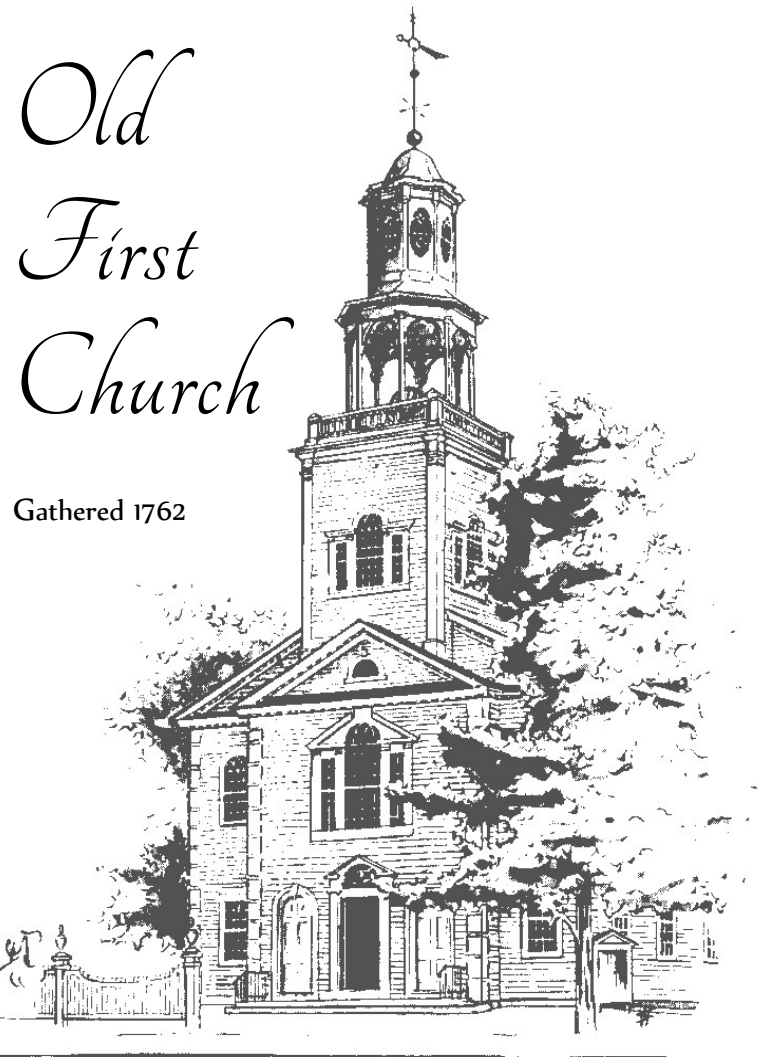
VT RTE. 9 AND MONUMENT AVENUE

OLD BENNINGTON, VERMONT

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

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Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all, life Thou givest, to both great and small;
in all life Thou livest, the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish like leaves on the tree,
then wither and perish; but naught changeth Thee.

Thou reignest in glory, Thou rulest in light,
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;
All praise we would render; O help us to see
“Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee!

In You, Lord, I Have Put My Trust

In You, Lord, I have put my trust;
Leave me not helpless in the dust,
Let me not be confounded.
Let in Your Word
My faith, O Lord,
Be always firmly grounded.

O listen, Lord, most graciously
And hear my cry, my prayer, my plea,
Make haste for my protection;
For woes and fear
Surround me here.
Help me in my affliction.

You are my strength, my shield, my rock.
My fortress that withstands each shock,
My help, my life, my tower,
My battle sword;
Almighty Lord,
What can resist Your power?

With You, Lord, I have cast my lot;
O faithful God, forsake me not,
To You my soul commending.
Lord, be my stay
And lead the way
Now and when life is ending.

FIRST LESSON

Acts 7:55-60

But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look,” he said, “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he died.

SECOND LESSON

John 14:1-14

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

And you know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the

Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?
The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

Knight Without a Sword

When Stephen, full of power and grace,
Went forth throughout the land,
He bore no shield before his face,
No weapon in his hand;
But only in his heart a flame
And on his lips a sword
Wherewith he smote and overcame
The foemen of the Lord.

When Stephen preached against the laws
And by those laws was tried,
He had no friend to plead his cause,
No spokesman at his side;
But only in his heart a flame
And in his eyes a light
Wherewith God's daybreak to proclaim
And rend the veils of night.

When Stephen, young and doomed to die,
Fell crushed beneath the stones,
He had no curse nor vengeful cry
For those who broke his bones;
But only in his heart a flame
And on his lips a prayer
That God, in sweet forgiveness' name,
Should understand and spare.

Let me, O Lord, thy cause defend,
A knight without a sword;
No shield I ask, no faithful friend,
No vengeance, no reward;
But only in my heart a flame
And in my soul a dream,
So that the stones of earthly shame
A jeweled crown may seem.

Come, Risen Lord

Come, risen Lord, and deign to be our guest;
Nay, let us be Thy guests, the feast is Thine;
Thyself at Thine own board make manifest
In Thine own sacrament of bread and wine.

We meet, as in that upper room they met,
Thou at the table, blessing, yet dost stand;
"This is My body"; so Thou givest yet:
Faith still receives the cup as from Thy hand.

One body we, one body who partake,
One church united in communion blest;
One name we bear, one bread of life we break,
With all Thy saints on earth and saints at rest.

One with each other, Lord, for one in Thee,
Who art one Savior and one living head;
Then open Thou our eyes, that we may see;
Be known to us in breaking of the bread.

**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.