

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

JULY 9, 2023

PRELUDE *O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing* - James Denton

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

O be joyful in the Lord all ye lands.

**Serve the Lord with gladness and come before God's presence with
a song.**

It is God who has made us and we ourselves.

We are God's people and the sheep of God's pasture.

HYMN *God, You Spin the Whirling Planets* 285

Jane Parker Huber wrote the text for a 1979 national meeting of church women whose theme was, "In the Image of God." Huber was born in 1926 of Presbyterian missionary parents in China and is a prolific writer of new words to familiar hymn tunes. She chose this tune because the opening night of the conference featured a rendition of Haydn's *Creation*. Haydn wrote this tune, which is a variant of a Croatian folksong, and after hearing "God Save the King" at Westminster Abbey in 1791, so his Austrian people would have their own national anthem.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

God of all creation, our chief end
is to glorify you,
and enjoy you forever.

Our deep delight is in your presence,
our fondest thoughts are of you,
our strongest longing is for your house.

In this hour of worship,
help us to become who we are meant to be--
a community that breathes thankfulness,
voicing your praise in all we do. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Matthew 11:16-19; 25-30 p. 792

***HYMN** *Your Faithfulness, O Lord, Is Sure* 251

Joy Patterson wrote this paraphrase of Psalm 145:13-21 for our hymnal. She has written over 30 hymns, was a member of the committee that organized the hymnal, lives in Wisconsin and is an elder in her church. The tune (*Winchester New*) goes back to 1690 in Hamburg and was known as "Swift German Tune" in 1742. The choirmaster of King's College wrote the harmonization in 1847.

SECOND LESSON Romans 7:15-25a p. 918

SERMON At War

***HYMN** *God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens* 268

Catherine Arnott Cameron, a social psychology professor at the University of La Verne, California, published her hymn first in a supplement by the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship in 1969 during a time when she said she was "experiencing a new sense of direction, growth and creativity in my life." The tune, attributed to William Moore of Tennessee, was first published in 1825.

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 *Adoration* - Gilbert Martin

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

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

***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.

***BENEDICTION**

***POSTLUDE** *God is Our Refuge and Our Strength* - Paul Davis

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 Janet Van Derpoel-Andrea and Mary Elizabeth Groupé. Ushers and greeters for today's service are Courtney Cowan and Joyce Goeke.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments in the foyer after the service. Our thanks to Susan Katz and Marsha Pilachowski for providing coffee hour this morning.

Thank you to Amber Langford for providing flowers for worship this morning.

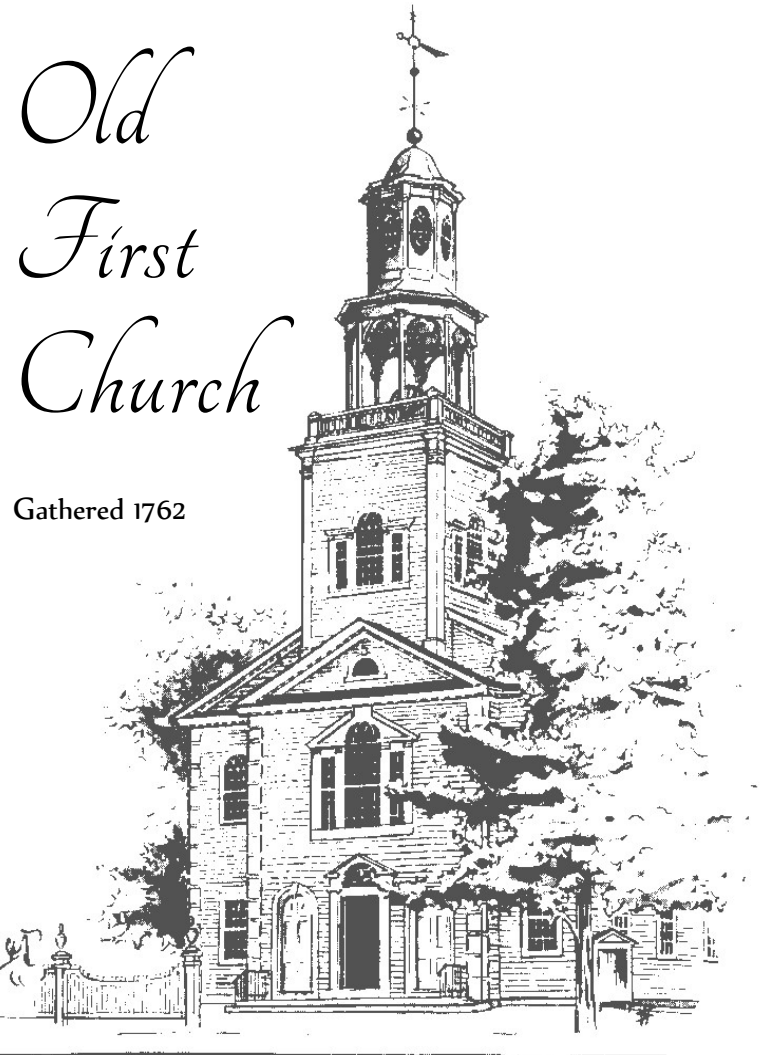
UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS: *(All meetings are open to members of the church)*
7/9 (Today!): Council meeting, following worship
7/17: Trustee meeting, 5:30 PM in the Parlor

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)
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OLD BENNINGTON, VERMONT

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God, You Spin the Whirling Planets

1). God, You spin the whirling planets,
Fill the seas and spread the plain,
Mold the mountains, fashion blossoms,
Call forth sunshine, wind, and rain.
We, created in Your image,
would a true reflection be
Of Your justice, grace, and mercy,
And the truth that makes us free.

2). You have called us to be faithful
In our life and ministry.
We respond in grateful worship
Joined in one community.
When we blur Your gracious image,
Focus us and make us whole.
Healed and strengthened as Your people,
We move onward toward Your goal.

3). God, Your word is still creating,
Calling us to life made new.
Now reveal to us fresh vistas
Where there's work to dare to do.
Keep us clear of all distortion.
Polish us with loving care.
Thus, new creatures in Your image,
We'll proclaim Christ everywhere.

FIRST LESSON

Matthew 11:16-19; 25-30

“But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Your Faithfulness, O Lord, Is Sure

Your faithfulness, O Lord, is sure
In all Your words, Your gracious deeds;
You gently lift all burdened souls
And well provide for all our needs.

The eyes of all are fixed on You;
By You their wants are all supplied;
Your open hand is bountiful
And every soul is satisfied.

Lord, You are just in all Your ways,
And kind in everything You do;
Forever near You stand to hear
And help all those who call on You.

My mouth shall speak Your praise, O Lord,
My soul shall bless Your holy name;
Let all things living join the song
Of praise, from age to age the same.

SECOND LESSON

Romans 7:15-25a

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.

God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens

God, who stretched the spangled heavens
Infinite in time and place,
Flung the suns in burning radiance
Through the silent fields of space:
We, Your children in Your likeness,
Share inventive powers with You;
Great Creator, still creating,
Show us what we yet may do.

We have ventured worlds undreamed of
Since the childhood of our race;
Known the ecstasy of winging
Through untraveled realms of space;
Probed the secrets of the atom,
Yielding unimagined power,
Facing us with life's destruction
Or our most triumphant hour.

As each far horizon beckons,
May it challenge us anew:
Children of creative purpose,
Serving others, honoring You.
May our dreams prove rich with promise,
Each endeavor well begun;
Great Creator, give us guidance
Till our goals and Yours are one.

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!