

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
THE REV. LOUIS N. GUARINIELLO, GUEST MINISTER
DAVID VARKER, LAY READER
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST
OLD FIRST CHURCH CHOIR

AUGUST 6, 2023

PRELUDE *Voluntary on St. Catherine* - Robert Lind

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

And also with you.

This is another day given to us by God.

We are glad God cares for us.

Let us come and worship and celebrate God's love.

**Yes, we will celebrate God's love by offering ourselves in worship
and in love.**

*HYMN *The God of Abraham Praise* 488

The text in our hymnal is quite close to one in *The Union Hymnal* edited by the Central Conference of American Rabbis. The 1885 translation is based on a Jewish creedal statement by Moses Maimonides (1130-1205) and set to meter by Daniel ben Judah (14th century). Maimonides wrote the 13 articles of the Jewish creed known as the *Yigdal*. The tune, LEONI (a.k.a. YIGDAL) was introduced into Christian worship around 1770. Thomas Olivers, a Wesleyan minister, heard cantor Meyer Lyon sing the *Yigdal* at Great Duke's Synagogue, Alegate, London. Lyon transcribed the melody for Olivers, who named the tune LEONI.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

**O God, who saved a people from oppression by signs and wonders
and an outstretched hand, save us from ourselves and from the
perils we face each day. So many stimuli propel us toward the
darkness of dishonesty, unfaithfulness, and unfairness. Sometimes
we face enemies within-laziness, fear, and low self-esteem. Often
structures and powers outside us have little regard for covenant
communities, individual rights, or corporate responsibility. We
confess our complicity with evil and our slowness to seek your help.
Listen to our prayer and deliver us.**

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON The Letter of Paul to The Romans 9:1-5 p. 920

*HYMN *Here I Am, Lord* 525

Daniel Shutte wrote the text and tune in 1981 for a diaconate ordination. He was a Roman Catholic priest in South Dakota but is now a layperson, and serves as music director of a Roman Catholic parish in Milwaukee.

SECOND LESSON Genesis 32:22-31 p. 26

SERMON The Blessed Struggle

*HYMN *Called as Partners in Christ's Service* 343

Jane Parker Huber was born of Presbyterian missionary parents in China and has worked on women's issues in the church. She has written several hymn texts to familiar tunes in our hymnal. For this hymn, in 1981, Huber was thinking of the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women as elders, and the 25th as ministers in her church. The tune was first published in 1870 by John Zundel, a church organist in Brooklyn and New York City.

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 *The Call* - Ralph Vaughn Williams

*DOXOLOGY (592) AND PRAYER OF DEDICATION

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

*HYMN *Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life* 408

The words were written by Frank Mason North at the request of a member of the commission for the 1905 Methodist Hymnal, who asked North to write a hymn with a missionary theme. North, a Methodist minister and editor of *The Christian City* magazine, at first protested that he couldn't write hymns. William Gardiner, who introduced many German tunes to English hymnody in the 19th century, published the tune in *Sacred Melodies from Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven*. He said he found it in Beethoven's works, but could not tell where in Beethoven he found it!

*BENEDICTION

*POSTLUDE *At the Name of Jesus* - Anthony Giamanco

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 Ellen Knapp. Ushers and greeters for today's service are Ellen Knapp and Darlene Munson.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments in the foyer after the service. Our thanks to Mary Elizabeth Groupé and Marsha Pilachowski, set up by Pat and Larry Ross.

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

8/21: Trustee meeting, 5:30 PM, Church Parlor

9/10: Return to 11:00 AM worship time

9/10: Choir practice resumes, 9:45 AM in the choir loft

9/10: OFC hosting the Free Sunday Supper @ 2nd Congregational

9/14: Deacon's meeting, 4:00 PM, Barn

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

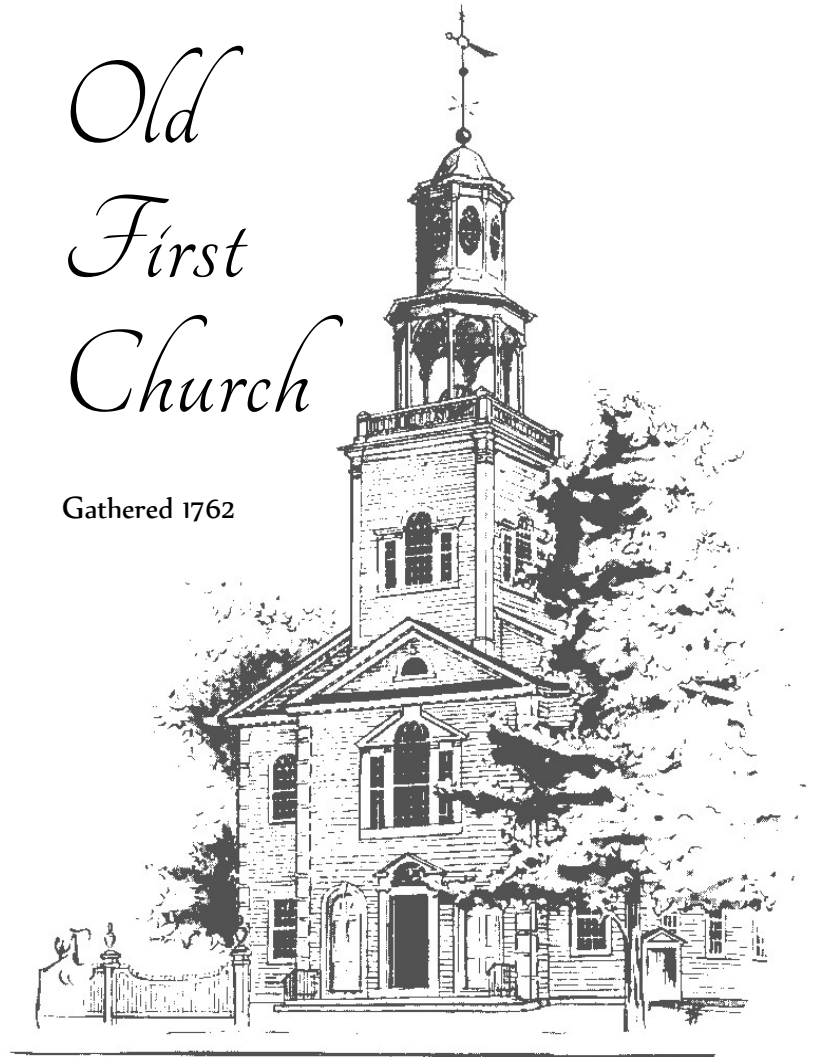
MAILING ADDRESS & CONTACT INFORMATION

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Old
First
Church

Gathered 1762



The God of Abraham Praise

The God of Abraham praise, who reigns enthroned above;
The ancient of eternal days, the God of love!
The Lord, the great I Am, by earth and heaven confessed,
We bow before Your holy name, forever blest.

Your spirit still flows free, high surging where it will;
In prophet's word You spoke of old and You speak still.
Established is Your law, and changeless it shall stand,
Deep writ upon the human heart, on sea, or land.

You have eternal life implanted in the soul;
Your love shall be our strength and stay, while ages roll.
We praise You, living God! We praise Your holy name;
The first, the last, beyond all thought, and still the same!

FIRST LESSON

Romans 9:1-5

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit—I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh. They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

Here I Am, Lord

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in deepest sin
My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear My light to them?
Whom shall I send?

Refrain:

Here I am, Lord
Is it I, Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night
I will go, Lord,
If You lead me.
I will hold Your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne My people's pain.
I have wept for love of them,
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
Give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak My word to them.
Whom shall I send? [*Refrain*]

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them,
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give My life to them.
Whom shall I send? [*Refrain*]

SECOND LESSON

Genesis 32:22-31

The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had.

Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then the man said, "You shall no

longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip.

Called as Partners in Christ's Service

Called as partners in Christ's service,
Called to ministries of grace,
We respond with deep commitment
Fresh new lines of faith to trace.
May we learn the art of sharing,
Side by side and friend with friend,
Equal partners in our caring
To fulfill God's chosen end.

Christ's example, Christ's inspiring,
Christ's clear call to work and worth,
Let us follow, never faltering,
Reconciling folk on earth.
Men and women, richer, poorer,
All God's people, young and old,
Blending human skills together
Gracious gifts from God unfold.

Thus new patterns for Christ's mission,
In a small or global sense,
Help us bear each other's burdens,
Breaking down each wall or fence.
Words of comfort, words of vision,
Words of challenge, said with care,
Bring new power and strength for action,
Make us colleagues, free and fair.

So God grant us for tomorrow
Ways to order human life
That surround each person's sorrow
With a calm that conquers strife.
Make us partners in our living,
Our compassion to increase,
Messengers of faith, thus giving
Hope and confidence and peace.

Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life

Where cross the crowded ways of life,
Where sound the cries of race and clan,
Above the noise of selfish strife,
We hear Thy voice, O Son of Man.

In haunts of wretchedness and need,
On shadowed thresholds fraught with fears,
From paths where hide the lures of greed,
We catch the vision of Thy tears.

From tender childhood's helplessness,
From human grief and burdened toil,
From famished souls, from sorrow's stress,
Thy heart has never known recoil.

The cup of water given for Thee
Still holds the freshness of Thy grace;
Yet long these multitudes to see
The sweet compassion of Thy face.

O Master, from the mountainside,
Make haste to heal these hearts of pain;
Among these restless throngs abide,
O tread the city's streets again;

Till all the world shall learn Thy love,
And follow where Thy feet have trod;
Till glorious from Thy heaven above
Shall come the city of our God.