

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

SEPTEMBER 10, 2023

PRELUDE *Prelude Modal* - Jean Langlais

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

We delight in the word of God.

The earth is full of God's works.

Let us raise our voices in praise and hope.

May God's lovingkindness keep our hearts.

***HYMN** *My Country, 'Tis of Thee* 561

Samuel Francis Smith (1808-95), a Baptist minister and Bostonian linguist, wrote the hymn. At the time of his death he knew 15 languages and was seeking a Russian text to learn Russian. He scribbled out the hymn in about a half-hour when he was 24 years old and a student at Andover Theological Seminary. He found the tune in a German music book given to him by Lowell Mason, prominent musician and educator, because Smith could read German. Mason then arranged the tune to be called AMERICA. The tune has origins that go back to Gregorian chants, Scottish carols, and the court of King Louis XIV. In England it was published to honor George II and given the title "National Anthem," and it was Russia's national tune until 1833.

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 fulfilment of your kingdom. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Romans 13:8-14 p. 923

***HYMN** *Give Praise to the Lord* 257

This tune, *Laudate Dominum* was composed by C. Hubert H. Parry about 1915. The text is a paraphrase of Psalm 149 from *The Psalter* (1912) number 407, it was altered by the Psalter Task Force of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in 1984.

SECOND LESSON Matthew 18:15-20 p. 799

SERMON I Am There

***HYMN** *Nearer, My God, to Thee* insert

Sarah Fuller Flower Adams (1805 – 1848) was an English poet and hymnwriter. As a member of the congregation of the Rev. W. J. Fox, a Unitarian minister in London, she contributed 13 hymns to the *Hymns and Anthems*, published by C. Fox, London, in 1841, for use in his chapel. Of these hymns the most widely known are— "Nearer, my God, to Thee," and "He sendeth sun, He sendeth shower." The remaining eleven, most of which have come into common use, especially in America.

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 *This Day* - Bob Chilcott

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

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

***HYMN** *Day Is Done* 544

This evening hymn was written by Roman Catholic James Quinn and published in *New Hymns for All Seasons* (1969). This collection was edited completely by Quinn. It contained one hundred hymns, some translations and some originals. James Quinn (1919 - 2010) is a Lauriston Jesuit Father from Edinburgh, Scotland.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Toccata in E Minor* - Johann Pachelbel

* Stand if able

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 Jeannette Lesser and Amy Tronsen. Ushers and greeters for today's service are David and Laurel Varker.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments in the foyer after the service. Our thanks to Sandy Bechtel, Betsy Ehrenfreund and Vicky Printz for hosting and to Marsha Pilachowski for setting up.

Flowers for worship have been provided by Marsha Pilachowski.

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

9/11: Trustee meeting, 5:30 PM, Parlor

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!

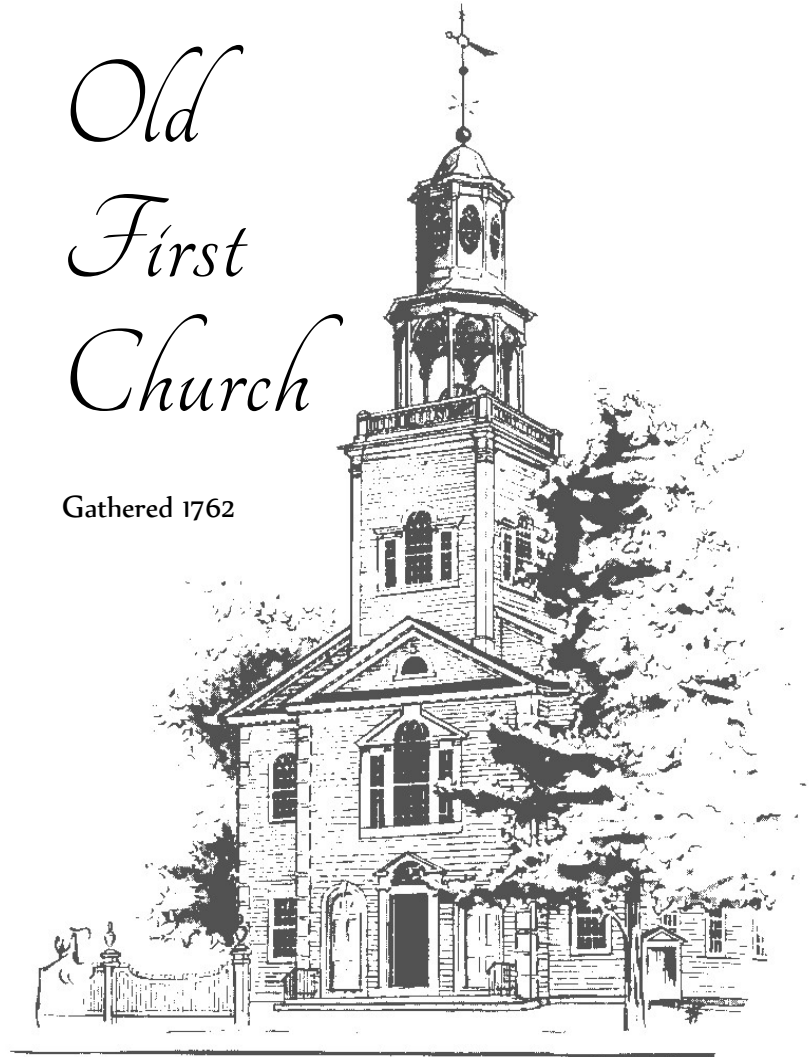
To maintain the healthiest standards for public gathering, indoor air is constantly being exchanged with fresh air with a LifeBreath circulation system operating during the service today.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
(OLD FIRST CHURCH)
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OLD BENNINGTON, VERMONT

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Old First Church

Gathered 1762



My Country, 'Tis of Thee

My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrims' pride,
From every mountainside let freedom ring!

My native country, thee,
Land of the noble free, thy name I love;
I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills;
My heart with rapture thrills, like that above.

Let music swell the breeze,
And ring from all the trees sweet freedom's song;
Let mortal tongues awake;
Let all that breathe partake;
Let rocks their silence break, the sound prolong.

Our fathers' God, to Thee,
Author of liberty, to Thee we sing;
Long may our land be bright
With freedom's holy light;
Protect us by Thy might, Great God, our King.

Give Praise to the Lord

Give praise to the Lord, and sing a new song,
amid all the saints God's praises prolong;
a song to your maker and ruler now raise,
all children of Zion, rejoice and give praise.

With timbrel and harp and joyful acclaim,
with gladness and mirth, we praise Your great name;
for now in Your people good pleasure You seek,
with robes of salvation You cover the meek.

In glory exult, all saints of the Lord;
with song in the night high praises accord;
go forth in God's service and strong in God's might
to conquer all evil and stand for the right.

For this is God's word: the saints shall not fail,
but over the earth their power shall prevail;
all kingdoms and nations shall yield to their sway.
To God give the glory; sing praises for aye.

FIRST LESSON

Romans 13:8-14

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

SECOND LESSON

Matthew 18:15-20

"If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

Nearer, My God, to Thee

Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me,
still all my song shall be,
nearer, my God, to thee;
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

Though like the wanderer, the sun gone down,
darkness be over me, my rest a stone;
yet in my dreams I'd be
nearer, my God, to thee;
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

There let the way appear, steps unto heaven;
all that thou sendest me, in mercy given;
angels to beckon me
nearer, my God, to thee;
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

Then, with my waking thoughts bright with thy praise,
out of my stony griefs Bethel I'll raise;
so by my woes to be
nearer, my God, to thee;
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

Or if, on joyful wing cleaving the sky,
sun, moon, and stars forgot, upward I fly,
still all my song shall be,
nearer, my God, to thee;
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

Day Is Done

Day is done, but love unfailing
Dwells ever here;
Shadows fall, but hope, prevailing,
Calms every fear.
God, our Maker, none forsaking,
Take our hearts, of Love's own making,
Watch our sleeping, guard our waking,
Be always near.

Dark descends, but light unending
Shines through our night;
You are with us, ever lending
New strength to sight:
One in love, Your truth confessing,
One in hope of heaven's blessing,
May we see, in love's possessing,
Love's endless light!

Eyes will close, but You unsleeping,
Watch by our side;
Death may come, in love's safekeeping
Still we abide.
God of love, all evil quelling,
Sin forgiving, fear dispelling,
Stay with us, our hearts indwelling,
This eventide.