

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  
DAVID ROBERTS, LAY READER  
SANDRA MANGSEN, GUEST ORGANIST

SEPTEMBER 3, 2023

**PRELUDE** *Nimm von uns, Herr, du treuer Gott, BuxWV207*  
- Dieterich Buxtehude

**OPENING WORDS** (responsive)

Bless the Lord, O my soul.

**Let all that is in me bless God's name.**

Mercy and justice are the Lord's.

**May God's love and peace bless us.**

**\*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)

Creator God,  
forgive our moments of ingratitude,  
the spiritual blindness that prevents us  
from appreciating the wonder that is this world,  
the endless cycle of nature,  
of life and death and rebirth.  
Forgive us for taking without giving,  
reaping without sowing.  
Open our eyes to see,  
our lips to praise,  
our hands to share.  
May our feet tread lightly on the path we tread,  
and our footsteps be worthy of following,  
for they lead to you. This we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

**ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND \*GLORIA PATRI (579)**

**FIRST LESSON** Romans 12:9-21 p. 922

**\*HYMN** *You Are Before Me, Lord* 248

This paraphrase of Psalm 139 is by Ian Pitt-Watson. He wrote the text in 1973 and revised it extensively in 1989. The new "authorized version" appears in *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (1990).

**SECOND LESSON** Matthew 16:21-28 p. 798

**SERMON** Profits and Losses

**\*HYMN** *Now to Your Table Spread* 515

The author is editor and executive secretary of the New Zealand Hymnbook Trust and in addition to being a pianist and organist, has served with Amnesty International, and a research unit of the New Zealand Parliament's Labor party. The tune was composed for the text of hymn #76 in 1918 by John Ireland on the back of a menu, during a lunch when a friend passed him a poem, asking that he write a tune for it. Ireland was an organist and prolific composer in England.

**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** *Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein, BWV 641*  
- J. S. Bach

**\*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** *Lord, Make Us Servants of Your Peace* 374

The text is a new paraphrase of Francis of Assisi's poem, by Fr. James Quinn, a Jesuit priest. He has made the hymn corporate by pluralizing the first-person pronouns. Francis was a wealthy cloth merchant's son and was imprisoned for a year during an Italian city war. Later, he heard the voice of Jesus from a crucifix asking him to repair the church; so he sold the cloth in his father's warehouse, was publicly disinherited by his father, and handed over the money to rebuild three churches and establish a religious order in 1212. The composer, from the Bristol-Myers family, was director of public relations before changing careers. He was an Episcopal lay reader and President of Westminster Choir College in Princeton. The tune was named for Dickinson College, where in 1959 Bristol received one of his 11 honorary doctoral degrees.

**BENEDICTION**

**POSTLUDE** *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott, BuxWV184*  
- Buxtehude

\* 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.**

We will be returning to regular worship hour of 11:00 AM NEXT Sunday, September 10. Choir practice will also resume on that day at 9:45 AM.

Deacons on call this month, ushers and communion servers for today's service are Jeannette Lesser and Amy Tronsen.

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

Flowers for worship are provided by Betsy Ehrenfreund.

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

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

9/11: Trustee Meeting, 5:0 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.

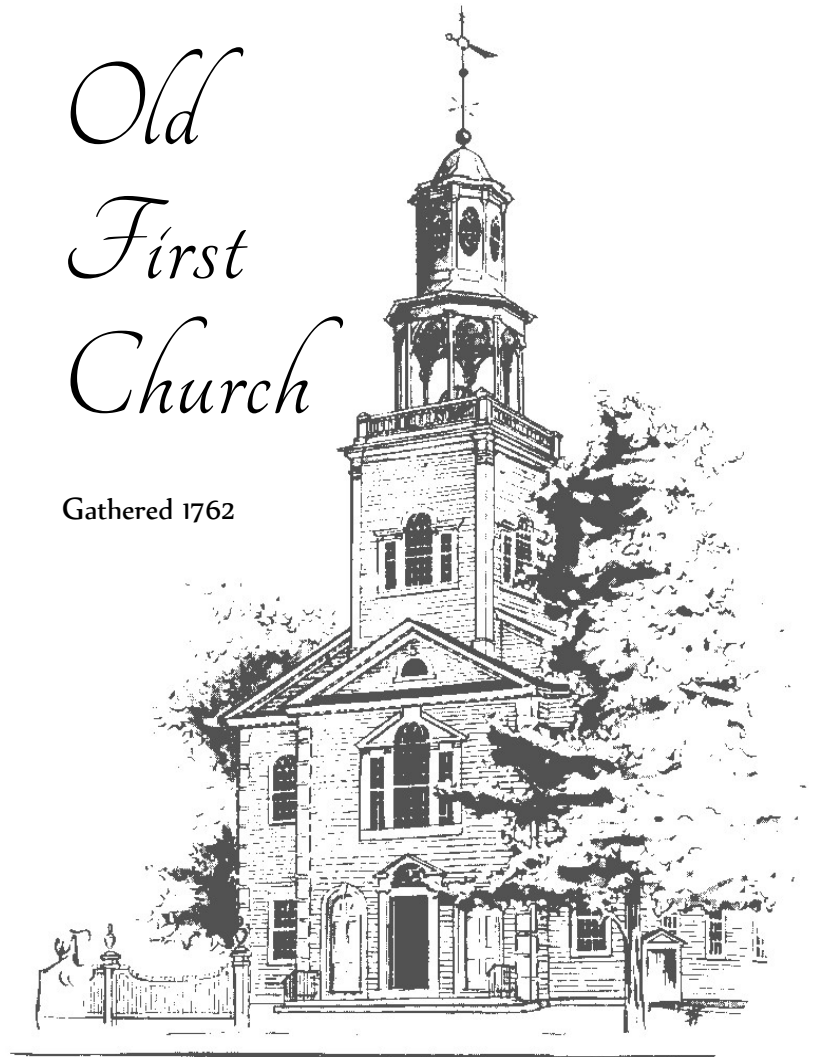
### FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

(OLD FIRST CHURCH)  
VT RTE. 9 AND MONUMENT AVENUE  
OLD BENNINGTON, VERMONT

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# Old First Church

Gathered 1762



## *You Are Before Me, Lord*

### *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!

You are before me, Lord, You are behind,  
And over me You have spread out Your hand;  
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,  
Too high to grasp, too great to understand.

Then from Your Spirit where, Lord, shall I go;  
And from Your presence where, Lord, shall I fly?  
If I ascend to heaven You are there,  
And still are with me if in hell I lie.

If I should take my flight into the dawn,  
If I should dwell on ocean’s farthest shore,  
Your mighty hand will rest upon me still,  
And Your right hand will guard me evermore.

If I should say, “Let darkness cover me,  
And I shall hide within the veil of night,”  
Surely the darkness is not dark to You:  
The night is as the day, the darkness light.

Search me, O God, search me and know my heart;  
Try me, O God, my mind and spirit try;  
Keep me from any path that gives You pain,  
And lead me in the everlasting way.

## **FIRST LESSON**

### **Romans 12:9-21**

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” No, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

## **SECOND LESSON**

### **Matthew 16:21-28**

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.” But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? “For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

### *Now to Your Table Spread*

Now to Your table spread  
we come, each one in faith  
that You alone provide the words of life or death:  
in wine and bread,  
in promised food  
we find Your loving heart, O God.

Hands of the world stretch out  
Your mystery to touch  
in longing to believe a truth beyond our reach,  
to sing in joy,  
to cry in grief,  
to know Your meaning for our life.

Here is our common wealth  
in sharing what is good,  
as though all humankind around one table stood,  
this bread to break,  
this wine to taste:  
one people in the name of Christ.

### *Lord, Make Us Servants of Your Peace*

Lord, make us servants of Your peace:  
Where there is hate, may we sow love;  
Where there is hurt, may we forgive;  
Where there is strife, may we make one.

Where all is doubt, may we sow faith;  
Where all is gloom, may we sow hope;  
Where all is night, may we sow light;  
Where all is tears, may we sow joy.

Jesus, our Lord, may we not seek  
To be consoled, but to console,  
Nor look to understanding hearts,  
But look for hearts to understand.

May we not look for love's return,  
But seek to love unselfishly,  
For in our giving we receive,  
And in forgiving are forgiven.

Dying, we live, and are reborn  
Through death's dark night to endless day:  
Lord, make us servants of Your peace  
To wake at last in heaven's light.

**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.