

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
DAVE PILACHOWSKI, LAY READER
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST
OLD FIRST CHURCH CHOIR

OCTOBER 29, 2023

PRELUDE *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* - Michael Praetorius

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

Give thanks to the Lord, for God is good.

God's love endures forever.

This is the day the Lord has made.

We will rejoice and be glad in it.

***HYMN** *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* **260**

The text and tune became the rallying cry of the Protestant Reformation. It is based on Psalm 46. Luther was a monk, priest, and doctor of divinity. His formal protests against what he considered distortions of the church and abuse of power by the Pope began in 1517; he was excommunicated in 1520, and banned from teaching in 1521. His protector was Elector Frederick, in whose protection he translated the New Testament from Greek into German. The tune may have been Luther's adaptation of a Gregorian melody. The harmonization is by J.S. Bach, who used the tune in Cantata 80.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

Look to this day:

For it is life, the very life of life.

In its brief course

Lie all the verities and realities of your existence.

The bliss of growth,

The glory of action,

The splendor of achievement

Are but experiences of time.

For yesterday is but a dream

And tomorrow is only a vision;

And today well-lived, makes

Yesterday a dream of happiness

And every tomorrow a vision of hope.

Look well therefore to this day;

Amen

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9

***HYMN** *Out of the Depths* **240**

This versification of Psalm 130 is by Martin Luther. Four stanzas were in circulation in 1523 and published in *Etlich Christlich lider Lobgesang un Psalm* (1524) and set to the tune ES IST DAS HEIL. The second stanza was expanded to two stanzas and appeared in Johann Walther's *Geystliche gesangk Buchleyn* (1524) and set to the present tune. The English translation is by Richard Massie from his English translation of *Martin Luther's Spiritual Songs* (1854).

SECOND LESSON John 6:37-40 p. 868

SERMON Like Sparks Through the Stubble

***HYMN** *O Word of God Incarnate* **327**

The text was written by William Walsham How. William How (1823-1897) was born in Shrewsbury, England and educated at Wadham College, Oxford and was ordained in 1846. He wrote all his hymns while in the parish of Whittington and was joint editor of several hymnals including *Psalms and Hymns* (1854), *Supplement to Psalms and Hymns* (1867), and *Church Hymns* (1871). He died while on vacation in Ireland.

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 *Sing Praise to God, Our Strength of Old*
- Haydn arr. SJMP editors

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

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

***HYMN** *For All the Saints* **526**
(verses 1-4)

The text was written for All Saints' Day, 1864, as a commentary on the phrase in the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in the communion of saints." The original (set to another tune) contained 11 verses. Today's tune ("sine nomine" means "without a name") was composed for this text, but was at first rejected by some as being "jazz music." Ralph Vaughan Williams is known as the most important English composer of his generation. He died in 1958.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* - 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 Sandy Bechtel and Sue Philpott. Ushers and greeters for today's service are Fischer Gauthier and Jim Pullman.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments in the foyer after the service. Our thanks to Courtney Cowan, Joyce Goeke, Jeannette Lesser, Darlene Munson and Vicky Printz for providing coffee hour this morning.

Flowers for worship are provided by Darlene Munson in memory of her husband Jeff.

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

11/9: Deacon Meeting, 4:00 PM at the Barn

11/12: Council Meeting following worship at the Church

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!

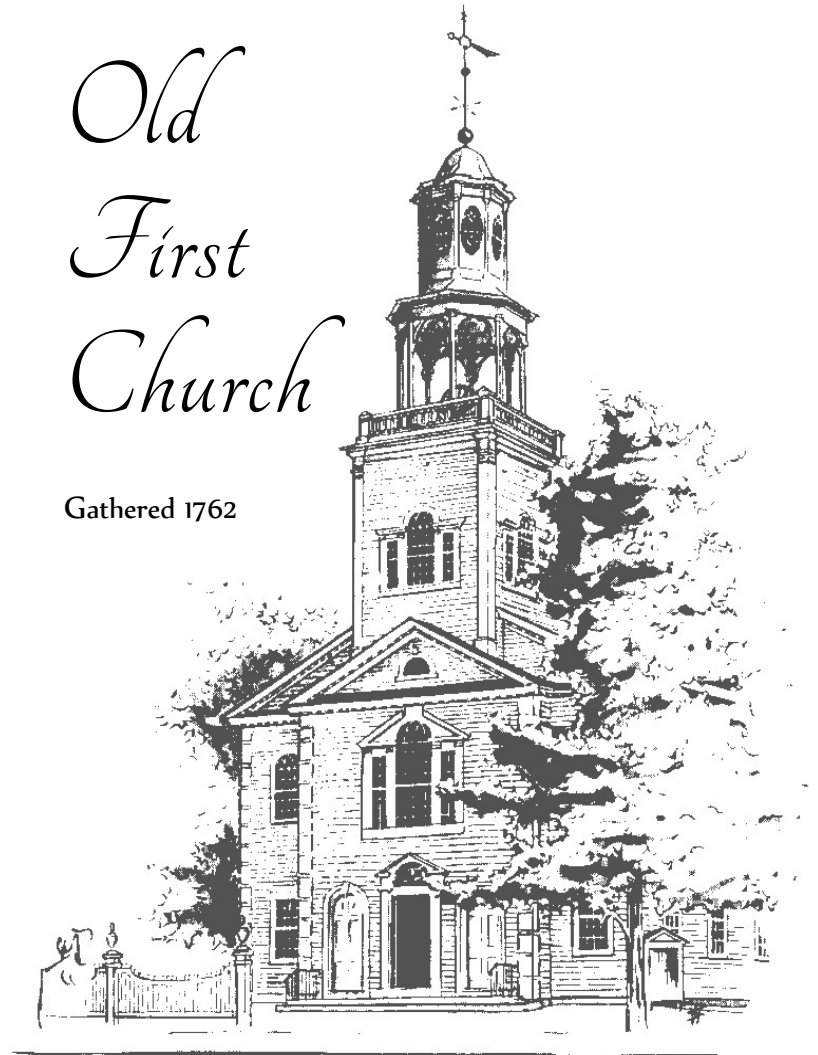
To maintain the healthiest standards for public gathering, indoor air is constantly being exchanged with fresh air with a LifeBreath circulation system operating during the service today.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
(OLD FIRST CHURCH)
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Old First Church

Gathered 1762



A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our helper He amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great,
And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side,
The Man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He,
Lord Sabaoth His name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo! His doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly powers,
No thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours
Through Him who with us sideth;
Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also;
The body they may kill,
God's truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever.

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,
and no torment will ever touch them.
In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died,
and their departure was thought to be a disaster,
and their going from us to be their destruction;
but they are at peace.
For though in the sight of others they were punished,
their hope is full of immortality.
Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good,
because God tested them and found them worthy of himself;
like gold in the furnace he tried them,
and like a sacrificial burnt-offering he accepted them.
In the time of their visitation they will shine forth,
and will run like sparks through the stubble.
They will govern nations and rule over peoples,
and the Lord will reign over them for ever.
Those who trust in him will understand truth,
and the faithful will abide with him in love,
because grace and mercy are upon his holy ones,
and he watches over his elect.

Out of the Depths

1. Out of the depths to Thee I raise
The voice of lamentation;
Lord, turn a gracious ear to me,
And hear my supplication.
If Thou shouldst count our every sin,
Each evil deed or thought within,
O who could stand before Thee?
2. To wash away the crimson stain
Grace, grace alone prevaieth.
Our works, alas! are all in vain;
In much the best life faileth.
For none can glory in Thy sight,
All must alike confess Thy might
And live alone by mercy.
3. Therefore my trust is in the Lord,
And not in mine own merit.
On God my soul shall rest; God's work
Upholds my fainting spirit.
God's promised mercy is my fort,
My comfort, and my strong support;
I wait for it with patience.
4. What though I wait the live-long night,
And till the dawn appeareth,
My heart still trusteth in God's might;
It doubteth not nor feareth:
So let the Israelites in heart,
Born of the Spirit, do their part,
And wait till God appeareth.

SECOND LESSON

John 6:37-40

Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.”

O Word of God Incarnate

1. O Word of God incarnate,
O Wisdom from on high,
O Truth unchanged, unchanging,
O Light of our dark sky:
We praise You for the radiance
That from the hallowed page,
A lantern to our footsteps,
Shines on from age to age.
2. The church from You, dear Savior,
Received this Gift divine,
And still that light is lifted
On all the earth to shine.
It is the chart and compass
That, all life’s voyage through,
Amid the rocks and quick-sands,
Still guides, O Christ, to You.
3. O make Your church, dear Savior,
A lamp of purest gold
To bear before the nations
Your true light, as of old;
O teach Your wandering pilgrims
By this our path to trace,
Till, clouds and storms thus ended,
We see You face to face.

For All the Saints

For all the saints who from their labors rest,
who thee by faith before the world confessed,
thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thou wast their rock, their fortress, and their might;
thou, Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight;
thou, in the darkness drear, their one true light.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

O blest communion, fellowship divine!
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast,
through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Alleluia! Alleluia!