

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
ANASTASIA GAUTHIER, LAY READER
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST
OLD FIRST CHURCH CHOIR

NOVEMBER 12, 2023

PRELUDE *Prelude on I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord* - Matthew Corl

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

Let us give thanks to God with heart and voice.

Refresh us with new hope and faith.

God's wisdom gives peace.

Let us rest in the love of God.

***HYMN** *Awake, My Soul, and with the Sun* **456**

Thomas Ken (1637-1711) was born at Little Berkhamstead, Hertfordshire, England, but went to live with his brother-in-law, Isaak Walton, after his parents died when Ken was nine years old. He was educated at Winchester and New College, Oxford. He was curate for Little Easton in Essex for three years after his ordination in 1662 and served for one year as a domestic chaplain to Bishop Morley. King James II of England declared the author of this hymn, Thomas Ken, the most eloquent preacher among Protestants of his time.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

Lord God, your love for humankind present in the beginning of all things, extends throughout history and touches even this hour. Your love sees failings and forgives. Your love feels pain and wipes away our tears. Your love knows grief and comforts the sorrowful. Your love sees sin and still loves the sinner. Forgive us when we fail to live lives that reflect your love. Forgive us the many times when we take for granted all that you have done for us.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Wisdom of Solomon 6:12-20

***HYMN** *Let Us with a Gladsome Mind* **244**

John Milton wrote this paraphrase of Psalm 136 in 1623 at the age of 15. He was an English Puritan. While touring France he met the imprisoned Galileo in 1638. Upon returning, he opened a school at Aldersgate. He was Latin Secretary to the Council of State of Oliver Cromwell from 1649-59. By age 44 (1652) he was blind, and he had to dictate his greatest literary works. He wrote 19 Psalm paraphrases. The tune was first published in 1704 with no attributed

SECOND LESSON

Matthew 25:1-13

p. 806

SERMON

"The Foolish and the Wise"

***HYMN** *Eternal Light, Shine in My Heart* **340**

The Latin text of this hymn is from a prayer attributed to Alcuin (c. 735-804). Born in Northumbria, he was educated at the Cathedral school in York, where he spent most of his life. He became master of the school in 766 and at the time of his death was abbot of the monastery of St. Martin at Tours. Alcuin was a counselor and cultural adviser to Charlemagne and inspired the Carolingian Renaissance. He revised the Roman lectionary in Gaul and composed votive masses. He is also credited with the introduction of the Feast of All Saints.

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.)

MOMENT FOR STEWARDSHIP

Kristin Roessner

OFFERING

OFFERTORY *In our Distress, O God, We Cry*

- English melody arr. Ralph Vaughn Williams, Text by S. T. Kimbrough, Jr.

In our distress, O God, we cry in terror's darkest night,
for thousands have been forced to die; we search for what is right.
Should we not now for vengeance yearn to wipe out evil hate?
Should we the evil now return? Is this our only fate?

"Your foes," said Jesus "love you must," but God of love, we ask,
"How can such love be truly just? Is this our earthly task?"
Your ways are not our ways, O God, yet this may not excuse
our acting now against your Word and giving love refuse.

We search for meaning at this hour, for we are in despair;
show us that love's the greatest power, transform us, help us care.
Replace the anger in our hearts with love to give and heal;
draw us together, not apart, that love, not hate, we'll feel.

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

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

***HYMN** *Let All Things Now Living* **554**

The text's author, Katherine Davis, a 1914 Wellesley College graduate, wrote hundreds of choral pieces including "The Little Drummer Boy," often under a pseudonym. Davis wrote the text for this tune, a Welsh folk melody, which was harmonized by the organist at Canterbury Cathedral and director of the Royal School of Church Music.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Concluding Voluntary* - R. G. Thompson

* 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 Janet Van Derpoel-Andrea and Susan Katz.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments in the foyer after the service. Our thanks to Janet Van Derpoel-Andrea, Anastasia and Fischer Gauthier, Jeannette Lesser and Vicky Printz for providing coffee hour this morning.

Flowers for worship are provided by Wendy Schmitt.

Keep the church's blanket drive for the homeless, as well as hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, socks and jackets for the grade school kids in mind when you are shopping or doing your fall cleaning of closets. All items should be new or gently used and can be left in the Narthex for Jeannette or Anastasia to pick up and distribute to those in need.

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

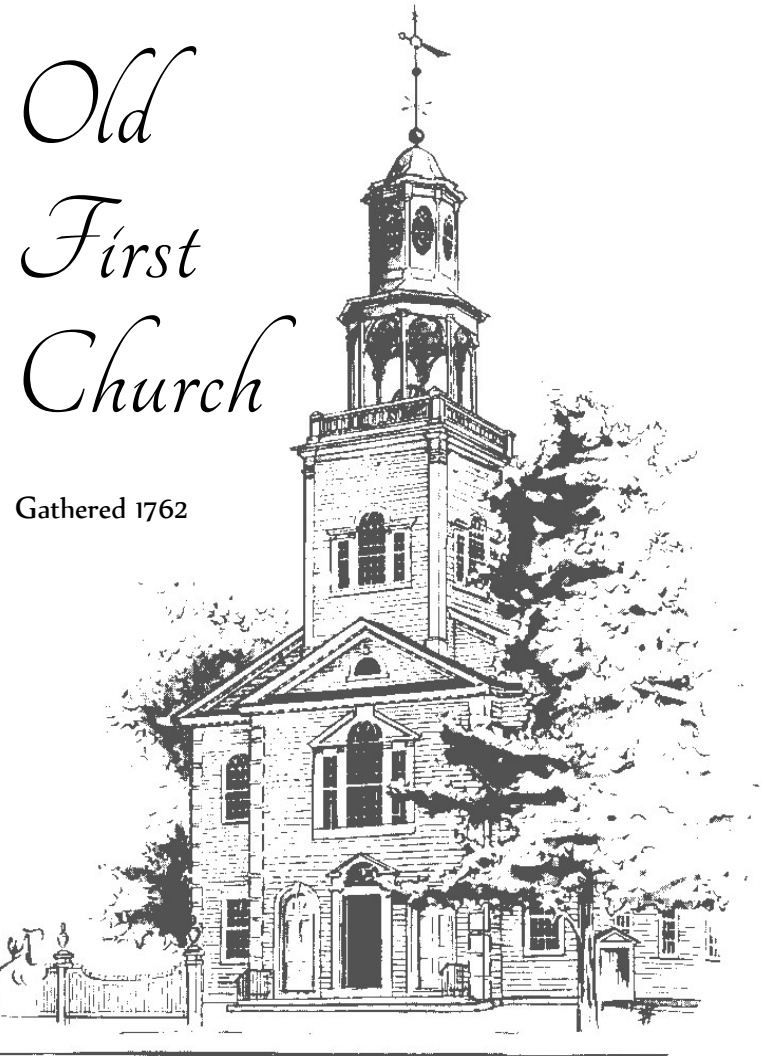
- 11/12: Council meeting, following worship, Parlor
- 11/18: Capital Campaign Kickoff Reception, 4:00 – 7:00 PM at the Church
- 11/20: Trustee Meeting, 5:30 PM, Parlor
- 11/21: Monumental Music concert at the Barn, 7:00 PM

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
1 MONUMENT CIRCLE • BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201 • (802) 447-1223
office@oldfirst.comcastbiz.net • www.oldfirstchurchbenn.org



Awake, My Soul, and with the Sun

Awake, my soul, and with the sun
your daily stage of duty run;
Shake off dull sloth, and joyful rise
To pay your morning sacrifice.

Lord, I my vows to You renew.
Disperse my sins as morning dew;
Guard my first springs of thought and will,
And with Yourself my spirit fill.

Direct, control, suggest, this day,
All I design or do or say;
That all my powers, with all their might,
in Your sole glory may unite.

FIRST LESSON

Wisdom of Solomon 6:12-20 Description of Wisdom

Wisdom is radiant and unfading,
and she is easily discerned by those who love her,
and is found by those who seek her.
She hastens to make herself known to those who desire her.
One who rises early to seek her will have no difficulty,
for she will be found sitting at the gate.
To fix one's thought on her is perfect understanding,
and one who is vigilant on her account will soon be free from care,
because she goes about seeking those worthy of her,
and she graciously appears to them in their paths,
and meets them in every thought.

The beginning of wisdom is the most sincere desire for instruction,
and concern for instruction is love of her,
and love of her is the keeping of her laws,
and giving heed to her laws is assurance of immortality,
and immortality brings one near to God;
so the desire for wisdom leads to a kingdom.

Let Us with a Gladsome Mind

Let us, with a gladsome mind
praise the Lord, who is so kind:
for God's mercies shall endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.

God, with all-commanding might,
filled the new-made world with light:
for God's mercies shall endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.

All things living God does feed,
with full measure meets their need:
for God's mercies shall endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.

Let us with a gladsome mind
praise the Lord who is so kind:
for God's mercies shall endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.

SECOND LESSON

Matthew 25:1-13

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise replied, ‘No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you.’ Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

Eternal Light, Shine in My Heart

Eternal light, shine in my heart;
eternal hope, lift up my eyes;
eternal power, be my support;
eternal wisdom, make me wise.

Eternal life, raise me from death;
eternal brightness, help me see;
eternal Spirit, give me breath;
eternal Savior, come to me:

Until by Your most costly grace,
invited by Your holy word,
at last I come before Your face
to know You, my eternal God.

Let All Things Now Living

Let all things now living a song of thanksgiving
To God our Creator triumphantly raise;
Who fashioned and made us, protected and stayed us,
By guiding us on to the end of our days.
God's banners are o'er us, Pure light goes before us,
A pillar of fire shining forth in the night:
Till shadows have vanished, all fearfulness banished,
as forward we travel from light into light.

By law God enforces. The stars in their courses,
The sun in its orbit obediently shine;
The hills and the mountains, the rivers and fountains,
The depths of the ocean proclaim God divine.
We, too, should be voicing our love and rejoicing
With glad adoration a song let us raise:
Till all things now living unite in thanksgiving,
To God in the highest, hosanna and praise.