

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
SUSAN KATZ, LAY READER
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST
OLD FIRST CHURCH CHOIR

DECEMBER 3, 2023
FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

PRELUDE *Meditation on Divinum Mysterium* - Michael McCabe

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

Blessed is the Lord.

Who alone does wondrous things.

May the sense of the spirit fill our lives.

May we live in the light of God's love.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Liz Warner

*HYMN *When the Morning Stars Together* 486

The text's author was a Congregational minister in England from 1929 to 1972, was made a fellow of Westminster Choir College, Princeton, N.J., and honored at Westminster Abbey. The tune was a folk song that first appeared in a 1741 Cologne hymnal.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

Almighty God, in this season of Advent remind us that in the midst of our darkness you are bringing us peace to calm our anxious spirits and hectic lives. Turn our hearts again toward you. Help make us ready to receive your Son our Savior. Slow our pace, and give us the blessing of feeling your peace in our soul. Forgive us when our hearts are cold and guide us on the path leading to you. For this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON 1 Corinthians 1:3-9 p. 926

*HYMN *God of Compassion, in Mercy Befriend Us* 261

The text's author was a Presbyterian pastor in several New Jersey churches. The tune was one of several 16th and 17th century tunes that represented a modernization of church music coming from plainsong or secular melodies.

SECOND LESSON Isaiah 64:1-9 p. 606

SERMON Those Who Wait

*HYMN *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus* 1

The author of the text, who was his parents' eighteenth child, and who, as an Anglican priest, was devoted to the Methodist movement, wrote over 6,000 hymns in the mid-18th century. This tune is attributed to an early 18th century German hymnbook of Psalms.

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 *Of the Father's Love Begotten*
- 11th Century Sanctus Trope arr. C. Winfred Douglas

*DOXOLOGY (592) AND PRAYER OF DEDICATION

SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER (insert)

The congregation is invited participate in the service as found in the insert included in this order of service. (*We will come forward to partake of the bread and juice, symbolizing a continuous Table.*)

COMMUNION VOLUNTARY

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

*HYMN *Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates* 8

The hymn was written based on Psalm 42 by an early 17th century German pastor at Königsberg, Georg Weissel, who wrote about 20 hymns. The tune first appeared in *Psalmodia Evangelica* in 1789.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* - Peter Christian Lutkin

* 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, ushers, greeters and communion servers for today's service are Mary Elizabeth Groupé and Pat Ross.

Flowers for worship are provided by Kate Musso in memory of Elsie and Paul Paris.

Special thanks to Peter and Monique Geannelis for donating the holiday decorations for the church. We appreciate all who participated in decorating the meetinghouse this morning and to those who provided food for breakfast and coffee hour which follows worship this morning.

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

12/6: Deacon's meeting, Barn, 4 PM

12/10: Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols, 7 PM

12/15: Monumental Music at the Barn, 7 PM, see BLOG for more information

12/18: Trustee meeting, church parlor, 5 PM

12/24: Christmas Eve Service, 5 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!

HEALTH NOTE: Indoor air is constantly exchanged with fresh air with a LifeBreath circulation system operating during the service to maintain the healthiest standards for public gathering.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

(OLD FIRST CHURCH)

VT RTE. 9 AND MONUMENT AVENUE

OLD BENNINGTON, VERMONT

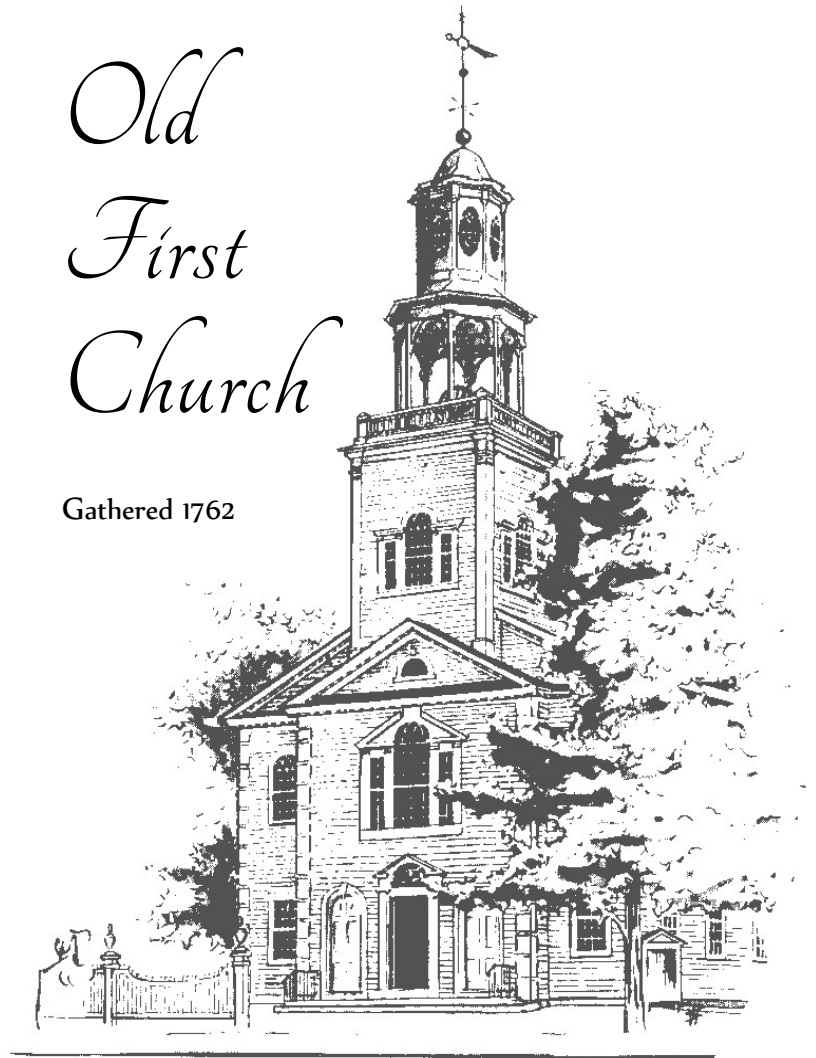
MAILING ADDRESS & CONTACT INFORMATION

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Old First Church

Gathered 1762



When the Morning Stars Together

1. When the morning stars together
Their Creator's glory sang,
And the angel host all shouted
Till with joy the heavens rang,
Then Your wisdom and Your greatness
Their exultant music told,
All the beauty and the splendor
Which Your mighty works unfold.
2. When in synagogue and temple
Voices raised the psalmists' songs,
Offering the adoration
Which alone to You belongs,
When the singers and the cymbals
With the trumpet made accord,
Glory filled the house of worship,
And all knew Your presence, Lord.
3. Voice and instrument in union
Through the ages spoke Your praise,
Plainsong, tuneful hymns, and anthems
Told Your faithful,
gracious ways,
Choir and orchestra and organ
Each sacred offering brought,
While, inspired by Your own Spirit,
Poet and composer wrought.
4. Lord, we bring our gift of music;
Touch our lips and fire our hearts,
Teach our minds and train our senses,
Fit us for these sacred arts.
Then with skill and consecration
We would serve Your, Lord, and give
All our powers to glorify You,
And in serving fully live.

FIRST LESSON

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

God of Compassion, in Mercy Befriend Us

God of compassion, in mercy befriend us;
giver of grace for our needs all-availing,
Wisdom and strength for each day do Thou send us,
patience untiring and courage unfailing.

Wandering and lost, Thou hast sought us and found us,
stilled our rude hearts with Thy word of consoling;
Wrap now Thy peace, like a mantle, around us,
guarding our thoughts and our passions controlling.

How shall we stray, with Thy hand to direct us,
Thou who the stars in their courses art guiding?
What shall we fear, with Thy power to protect us,
we who walk forth in Thy greatness confiding?

SECOND LESSON

Isaiah 64:1-9

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence— as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil— to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in their ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed.

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us;
Let us find our rest in Thee.

Israel's strength and consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver,
Born a child and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever,
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.

By Thine own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all-sufficient merit,
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates

Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates;
behold, the King of glory waits;
the King of kings is drawing near;
the Savior of the world is here!

Fling wide the portals of your heart;
make it a temple, set apart
from earthly use for heaven's employ,
adorned with prayer and love and joy.

Redeemer, come! I open wide
My heart to Thee; here, Lord, abide
Let me Thy inner presence feel;
Thy grace and love in me reveal.

**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.