

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
WAYNE KACHMAR, LAY READER
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST

DECEMBER 31, 2023

PRELUDE *Noel Bourguignon* - Claude-Benigne Balbastre

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

This is the day which the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Teach us the ways of peace and the path of kindness.

Be with us, O Lord, in all we do and say.

*HYMN *Go, Tell It on the Mountain* 29

After hearing the refrain, John Wesley Work II wrote the stanzas around 1900. It was included in the collection, *American Negro Songs and Spirituals* (1940). Work and his brother were leading figures in the preservation, performance and study of African-American spirituals. This carol was arranged by Work's son, who continued the work (!) begun by his father and uncle. The harmony is by the chair of the committee that organized this hymnal, Melva Costen.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
and against one another,
in thought, and word, and deed.
We are truly sorry for our pride,
and for our lack of faith, of understanding and of love.
We repent of our narrow-mindedness,
of our bitterness and our prejudices.
Pardon and forgive us,
save us and renew us,
that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Psalm 148 p. 508

*HYMN *Let the Whole Creation Cry* 256

This hymn is based on Psalm 148. The liberal views of the author, Stopford Brooke, a priest in Ireland and London, led him to leave the Anglican church in 1880. Jacob Hintze, town musician of Barnam, Germany, may have written the tune, first published in 1678. J. S. Bach harmonized it.

SECOND LESSON Luke 2:22-40 p. 833

SERMON Let Us Now Praise

*HYMN *All Beautiful the March of Days* insert

Wile, Mrs. Frances Whitmarsh. (Bristol Centre, New York, December 2, 1878--July 31, 1939, Rochester, N.Y.). Married A.J. Wile in 1901. Her lovely hymn for use in winter, beginning "All beautiful the march of days" was written about 1907 while she was a parishioner of Rev. William C. Gannett, in Rochester, N.Y., in consultation with him, and was included in Gannett and Hosmer's revised edition of *Unity Hymns and Chorals*, 1911, from which it passed into *The New Hymn and Tune Book*, 1914, and *Hymns of the Spirit*, 1937.

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 *Quittez, Pasteurs* - Franklin D. Ashdown

*DOXOLOGY (592) AND PRAYER OF DEDICATION

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

*HYMN *All Creatures of Our God and King* 455
(verses 1, 3 and 6)

The text is based on St. Francis' *Canticle of the Sun*, considered the first religious Italian poem, written in 1255, one year before Francis' death, when he was blind and ill. The translator and adapter, William Draper, was an Anglican priest. The composer is unknown, although the first line is the same as a 16th century tune. Ralph Vaughan Williams wrote the harmony in 1906 for the hymn, "Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones".

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Joy to the World* - Ann Slowins

* 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 and ushers for today's service are Mary Elizabeth Groupé and Pat Ross.

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

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

Choir practice, Sunday mornings, 9:45 AM in the choir loft

1/7: Council meeting, following worship, meeting in the Parlor

1/17: Trustee meeting, 5:30 PM, meeting in the Parlor

1/18: Deacon meeting, 4:00 PM, meeting in the Barn

The blanket drive continues during the winter months. Donations of new and gently used blankets are greatly appreciated. Please know that we cannot accept electric blankets. Donations can be left in the foyer of the church or downstairs in the parlor.

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!

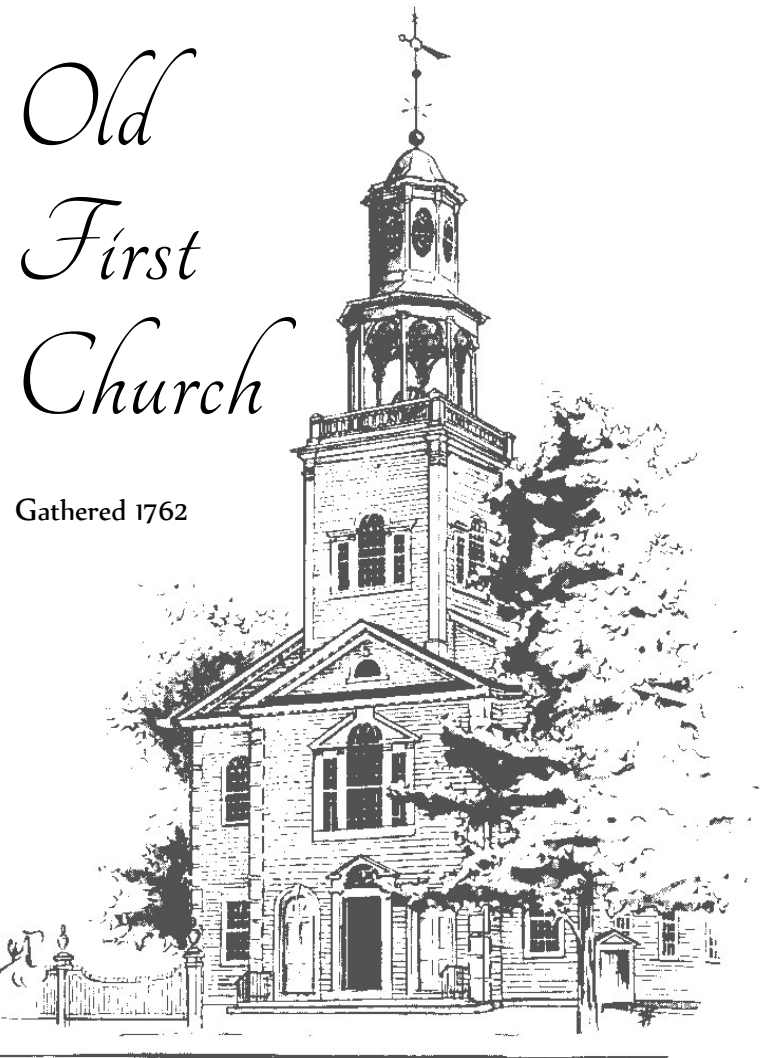
To maintain the healthiest standards for public gathering, indoor air is constantly being exchanged with fresh air with a LifeBreath circulation system operating during the service today.

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



Go, Tell It on the Mountain

Refrain:

Go, tell it on the mountain
Over the hills and everywhere;
Go, tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born!

While shepherds kept their watching
O'er silent flocks by night,
Behold throughout the heavens
There shone a Holy light. *[Refrain]*

The shepherds feared and trembled
When lo! Above the earth,
Rang out the angel chorus
That hailed our Savior's birth. *[Refrain]*

Down in a lowly manger
The humble Christ was born,
And God sent us salvation
That blessed Christmas morn. *[Refrain]*

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his glory is above earth and heaven.

He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his faithful, for the people of Israel who are close to him. Praise the Lord!

Let the Whole Creation Cry

Let the whole creation cry,
"Glory to the Lord on high."
Heaven and earth, awake and sing,
"God is our eternal King."
Praise God, all ye hosts above,
ever shining forth in love;
sun and moon, uplift your voice;
night and stars, in God rejoice!

Men and women, young and old,
raise the anthem manifold;
join with children's song of praise
worship God through length of days.
From the north to southern pole
let the mighty chorus roll:
"Holy, holy, holy One,
glory be to God alone!"

FIRST LESSON

Psalm 148

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights!
Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host!
Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars!
Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!
Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created.
He established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.
Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,
fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!
Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!
Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!
Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!
Young men and women alike, old and young together!

SECOND LESSON

Luke 2:22-40

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being

said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too." There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

All Beautiful the March of Days

All beautiful the march of days,
As seasons come and go;
The hand that shaped the rose has wrought
The crystal of the snow;
Hath sent the hoary frost of heaven,
The flowing waters sealed,
And laid a silent loveliness
On hill and wood and field.

O'er white expanses sparkling pure
The radiant morns unfold;
The solemn splendors of the night
Burn brighter through the cold;
Life mounts in every throbbing vein,
Love deepens round the hearth,
And clearer sounds the angel hymn,
"Good will to men on earth."

O Thou from whose unfathomed law
The year in beauty flows,
Thyself the vision passing by
In crystal and in rose,
Day unto day doth utter speech,
And night to night proclaim,
In ever changing words of light,
The wonder of thy name.

All Creatures of Our God and King (verses 1, 3 and 6)

All creatures of our God and King,
lift up your voice and with us sing,
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Thou burning sun with golden beam,
thou silver moon with softer gleam,
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thou flowing water, pure and clear,
make music for thy Lord to hear,
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Thou fire so masterful and bring,
that givest us both warmth and light,
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

All creatures, your Creator bless,
and worship God in humbleness.
O sing ye! Alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
and praise the Spirit, Three in One!
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!