

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

DAVEY PILACHOWSKI, LAY READER

LYNN RALEY, ORGANIST

March 1, 2026

PRELUDE *Pavane* - William Byrd (1543-1623)

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

We come together for worship.

God is our refuge and our strength.

God's word calls to us.

May God's peace be with us this day.

***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)

Heavenly God, your Son confronted the powers of darkness that obscure your compassion and love for all of creation: help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer, so that we may witness to that saving love proclaimed in Christ. We are human. Forgive us where we fall short and lift us up to where your light can shine. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND *GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Psalm 121 p. 498

***HYMN** *Jesus, Lover of My Soul* 303

The text was written by Charles Wesley in 1740. This hymn is often regarded as his best. Yet it did not appear in an official Methodist hymnal until nine years after his death. The story goes that Charles was inspired to write these words when a dove flew to him as protection from a hawk. Another story describes a seabird that took refuge from a storm in his room.

SECOND LESSON John 3:1-17 p. 863

SERMON Allopathy

***HYMN** *Come, O Spirit, Dwell Among Us* 129

Janie Alford of Nashville wrote the text of this hymn in 1979 at the age of 93. She served as a medical secretary to a doctor for 40 years; wrote poetry all her life; and was a charter member of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Nashville. The renowned church music composer Hal Hopson urged her to write hymns based on the seasons of the church year, of which this is one. The tune was first published in 1890. Its tune name stems from an unsubstantiated legend that the tune was found in a bottle washed up on the Welsh coast.

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 *Adagio for Glass Harmonica*
- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

***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** *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling* 376

This hymn was written by Charles Wesley and was first published in 1747. Wesley was the 18th child of Samuel and Susanna ("She Must Have Been a Saint") Wesley. Charles was an Anglican priest, dedicated to the Methodist movement, and he wrote between 6,000 and 6,500 hymns. Rowland Hugh Pritchard wrote the Welsh tune *Hyfrydol* in 1831 before his 20th birthday. He was an assistant loom tender for the Welsh Flannel Manufacturing Company. An interesting point about the melody is that with one exception, it lies within the first five notes of the scale.

***BENEDICTION**

***POSTLUDE** *Voluntary* - Samuel Wesley (1766-1837)

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, greeters and communion servers for today's service are Kate Musso and Marsha Pilachowski.

Please join us for coffee hour after worship today graciously provided by Mary Elizabeth Groupé, Kate Musso, Audrey Pietrucha, and Marsha Pilachowski.

Flowers for worship are provided by Wendy Schmitt.

The Bennington Historical Society will host a presentation on the preservation of our church on Sunday, March 15 at the Bennington Museum, 2-3 PM. Wayne Kachmar who has been overseeing the construction and serves as the clerk of the works for the restoration will discuss the challenges and processes involved in preserving our historic building. There is no charge for this event and all are welcome. For more information, speak with Wayne or contact the Bennington Museum.

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

- 3/1: Deacon's meeting following worship today, meeting in the Parlor
- 3/4; 3/11; 3/18, 3/25: Bible Study, 4:30 PM, Parlor
- 3/8: Old First hosts the Free Sunday Supper @ Second Congregational
- 3/19: Trustee meeting, 5:30 PM, Parlor
- 3/22: St. Patrick's Luncheon, following worship

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!

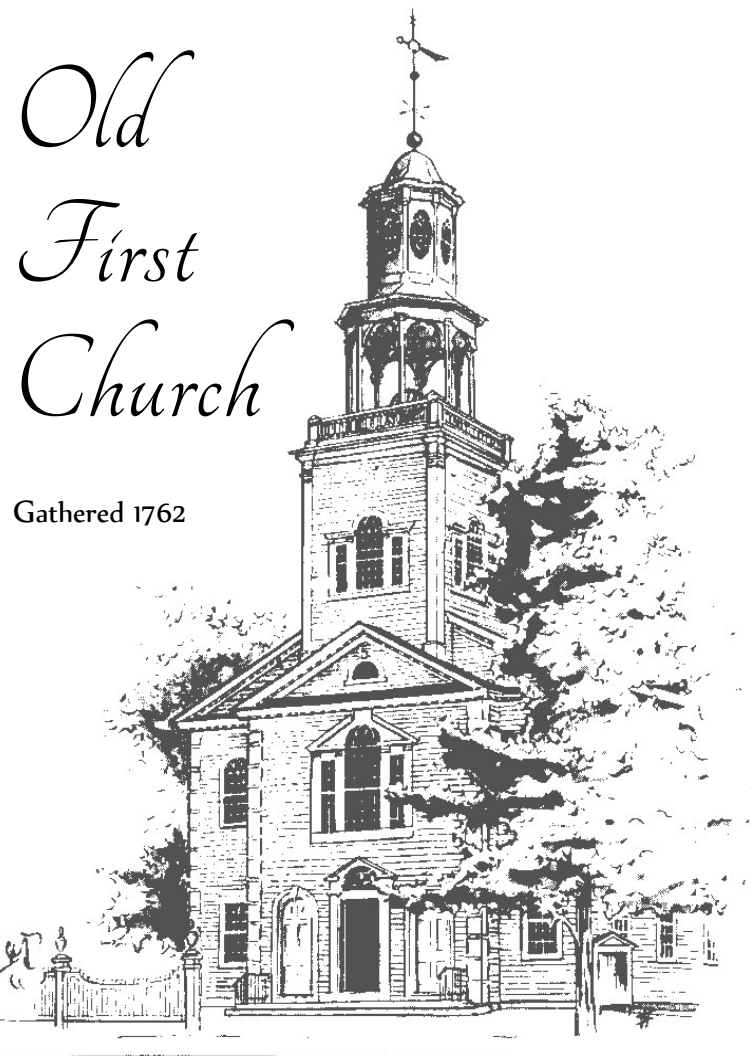
To maintain the healthiest standards for public gathering, indoor air is constantly being exchanged with fresh air with a LifeBreath circulation system operating during the service today.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

VT RTE. 9 AND MONUMENT AVENUE
OLD BENNINGTON, VERMONT

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Jesus, Lover of My Soul

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!

FIRST LESSON

Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills-- from where will my help come?

My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.

He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade at your right hand.

The sun shall not strike you by day nor the moon by night.

The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.

The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.

1. Jesus, lover of my soul,
let me to thy bosom fly,
while the nearer waters roll,
while the tempest still is high;
hide me, O my Savior, hide,
till the storm of life is past;
safe into the haven guide,
O receive my soul at last!
2. Other refuge have I none;
hangs my helpless soul on thee;
leave, ah! leave me not alone,
still support and comfort me.
All my trust on thee is stayed,
all my help from thee I bring;
cover my defenseless head
with the shadow of thy wing.
3. Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
more than all in Thee I find:
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
heal the sick, and lead the blind.
Just and holy is Thy name:
I am all unrighteousness;
false and full of sin I am,
Thou art full of truth and grace.
4. Plenteous grace with thee is found,
grace to cover all my sin;
let the healing streams abound;
make and keep me pure within.
Thou of life the fountain art;
freely let me take of Thee;
spring Thou up within my heart,
rise to all eternity.

SECOND LESSON

John 3:1-17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews.

He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God."

Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above."

Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?"

Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.

What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.'

The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?"

Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?"

"Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony.

If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?

No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Come, O Spirit, Dwell Among Us

Come, O Spirit, dwell among us,
come with Pentecostal power;
give the church a stronger vision,
help us face each crucial hour.
Built upon a firm foundation,
Jesus Christ, the Cornerstone,
still the church is called to mission
that God's love shall be made known.

We would raise our alleluias
for the grace of yester years;
for tomorrow's unknown pathway,
hear, O God, our humble prayers.
In the church's pilgrim journey
you have led us all the way,
still in presence move before us,
fire by night and cloud by day.

Come, O Spirit, dwell among us;
give us words of fire and flame.
Help our feeble lips to praise You,
glorify Your holy name.
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Three in One: what mystery!
We would sing our loud hosannas
now and through eternity.

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven to earth come down,
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,
All Thy faithful mercies crown!
Jesus, Thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit
Into every troubled breast!
Let us all in Thee inherit,
Let us find the promised rest;
Take away the love of sinning;
Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith, as its beginning,
Set our hearts at liberty.

Come, Almighty to deliver,
Let us all Thy life receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more Thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve Thee as Thy host above;
Pray, and praise Thee without ceasing,
Glory in Thy perfect love.

Finish, then, Thy new creation;
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see Thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in Thee;
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.

**Order of Service for
The Lord's Supper or Communion**

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.