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
Audrey Pietrucha, Lay Reader
Lynn Raley, Organist Old First Church Choir

November 1, 2026

Prelude *Voluntary in G* - Charles Wesley (1766-1837)

Opening Words (responsive)

We are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses.
Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.
The righteous live for evermore;
Their reward also is with the Lord.

Hymn** ***Shall We Gather at the River **insert**

A Baptist pastor wrote this hymn while seated at his parlor organ. Created as an alternative to gloomy "river of death" hymns, it is a celebration of the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Revelation 22:1 KJV).

Opening Prayer (unison)

Almighty God, you have knit your people together in one family across time and space. We confess that we often live as though we are isolated and alone, forgetting the heritage of faith passed down to us. Remind us of our connections, to you and to all who have shown your presence to others by living lives of love and service. Grant that we may have the courage of those who walk by faith.

Forgive us for the times our witness has fallen short of your glory. Break down the barriers that separate us from one another and from you, and heal our broken relationships. May we actively seek your kingdom, care for the vulnerable, and walk together in genuine community. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Assurance of Pardon and *Gloria Patri (579)

First Lesson 1 John 3:1-3 p. 990

Hymn** ***Thy Mercy and Thy Truth, O Lord **186**

This paraphrase of Psalm 36 was number 94 in *The Psalter* (1912). In that volume it had an additional stanza that read: The workers of iniquity Are fallen utterly; They shall not triumph in their pride, or drive my soul from Thee.

Second Lesson Revelation 7:9-17 p. 999

Sermon A Great Multitude

Hymn** ***Now to Your Table Spread **515**

The author is editor and executive secretary of the New Zealand Hymnbook Trust and in addition to being a pianist and organist, has served with Amnesty International, and a research unit of the New Zealand Parliament's Labor party. The tune was composed for the text of hymn #76 in 1918 by John Ireland on the back of a menu, during a lunch when a friend passed him a poem, asking that he write a tune for it. Ireland was an organist and prolific composer in England.

Moment For Stewardship **JW Brooks**

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 *Christus, der uns selig macht* - Marcel Dupré (1886-1971)
(Christ Jesus, Who Maketh Us Glad)

***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 *Gather Us Together* - Robert Lau (b.1943)
Eat this Bread, Drink This Wine - Old First Church Choir

Closing Prayer and the Lord's Prayer (debts/debtors) p. 16

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

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** Giga, in G Minor - Domenico Zipoli (1688-1726)

* Stand if able

We extend a warm welcome to our guests and visitors, we are delighted to have you worship with us this morning. Please fill out a visitor's card found in the pew and be sure to identify yourself so we can present you with a visitor's bag.

Deacons on call this month and ushers, greeters and communion servers for today's service are Pat Ross and Wendy Schmitt.

Please join us for coffee hour in the Narthex after worship provided by Marsha Pilachowski and Pat Ross.

Today's flowers have been provided by JW and Mary Brooks in honor of their church family.

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS: (All meetings are open to members of the church)
Christian Education Program, 10:00 AM every Sunday in the Parlor
Bible study Wed. evenings, 4:30 PM in the Parlor (**no Bible Study on Nov.4**)
11/18: Deacon's meeting, 4:00 PM, Barn
11/19: Trustee meeting, 5:30 PM, Parlor

The annual **Bennington Empty Bowls Fundraiser** is tonight from 5-7 PM at Mount Anthony Union Middle School. At Empty Bowls, members of the community come together to share a simple meal of soup and bread, donated by local restaurants and organizations, to raise funds to support the Kitchen Cupboard at GBCS while bringing awareness about food insecurity. In addition to a meal of soup and bread, the event includes live music and a raffle for handmade artisan bowls created by local artists. Tickets will be sold at the door for $25/ticket; children 6 & under free.

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!

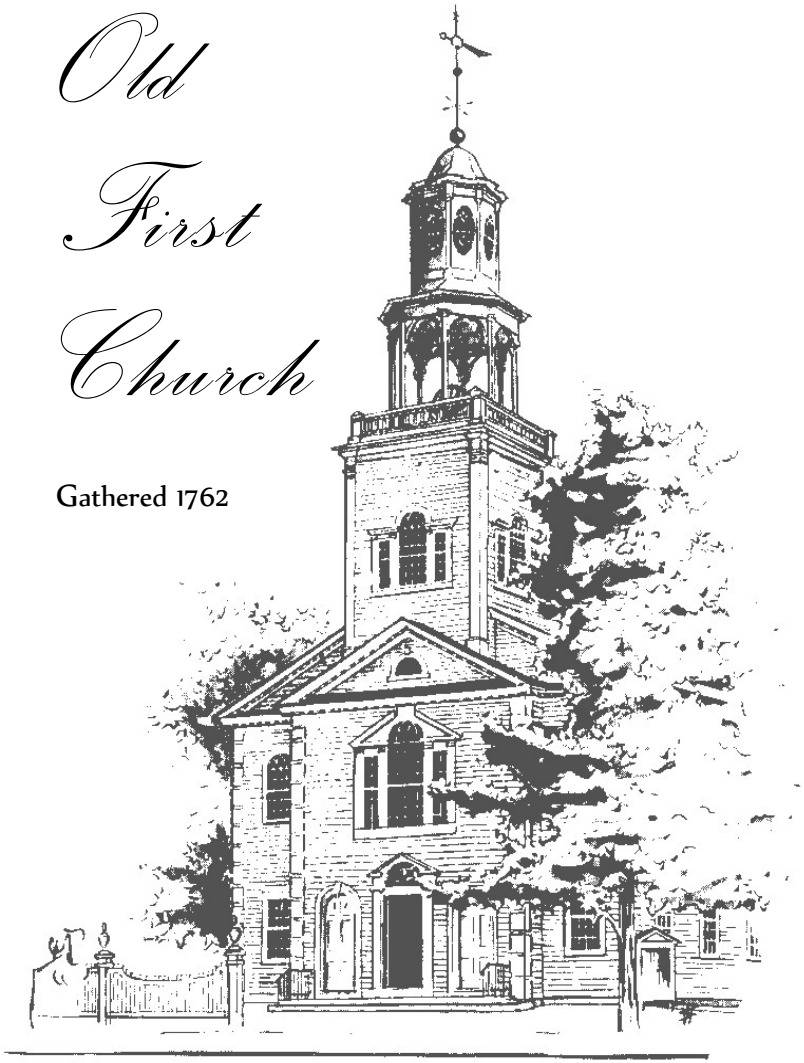
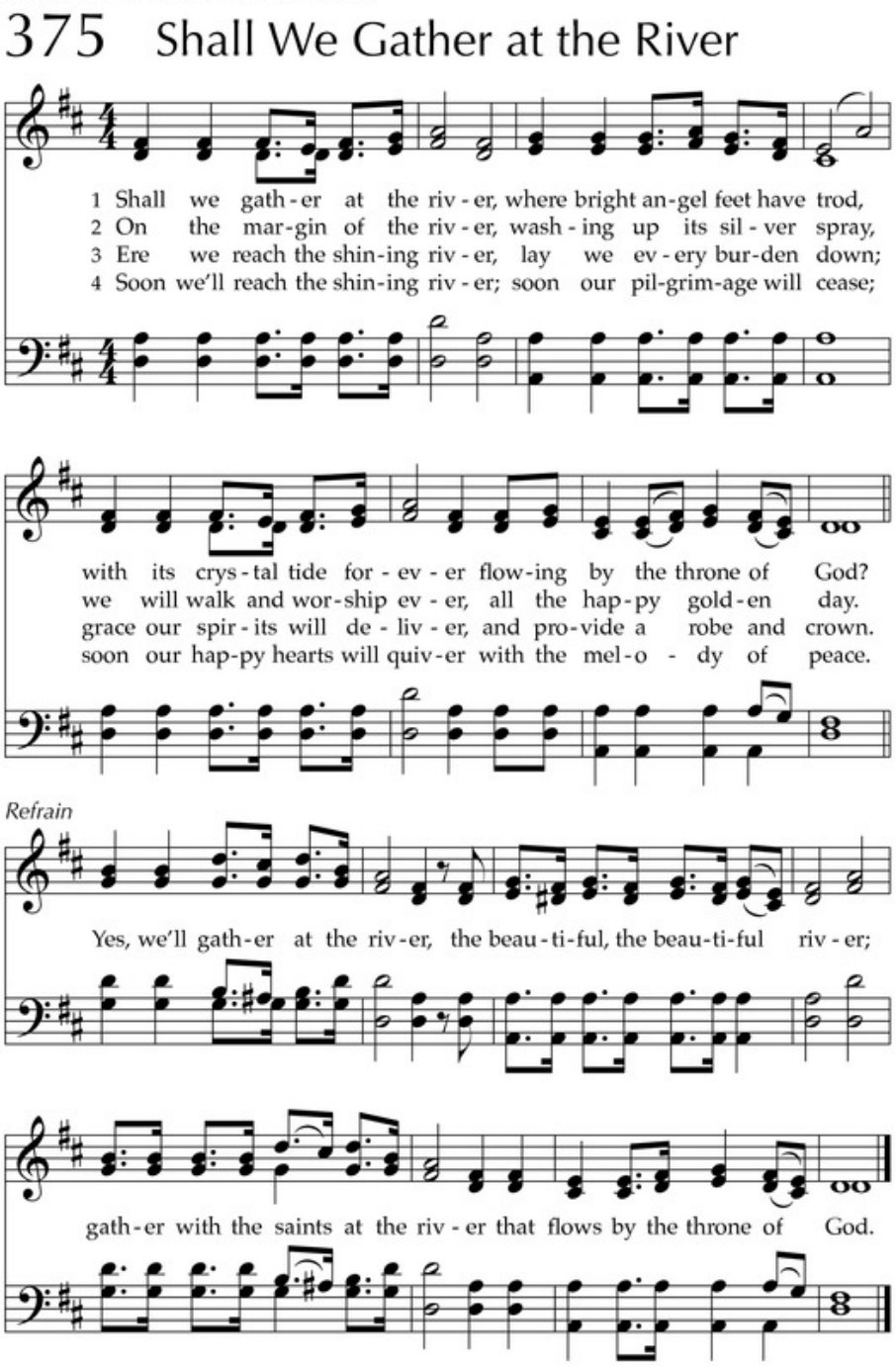
To maintain the healthiest standards for public gathering, indoor air is constantly being exchanged with fresh air with a LifeBreath circulation system operating during the service today.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
VT RTE. 9 AND MONUMENT AVENUE
OLD BENNINGTON, VERMONT

MAILING ADDRESS & CONTACT INFORMATION
1 MONUMENT CIRCLE • BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201 • (802) 447-1223
office@oldfirstchurchbenn.org • www.oldfirstchurchbenn.org

Old First Church

Gathered 1762



First Lesson — 1 John 3:1-3

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Thy Mercy and Thy Truth, O Lord

Thy mercy and Thy truth, O Lord,
Transcend the lofty sky,
Thy judgements are a mighty deep,
And as the mountains high.

Lord, all Thy creatures Thou wilt save.
Since Thou art ever kind,
Beneath the shadow of Thy wings
We may a refuge find.

With the abundance of Thy house
We shall be satisfied,
From rivers of unfailing joy
Our thirst shall be supplied.

The fountain of eternal life
Is found alone with Thee.
And in the brightness of Thy light
We clearly light shall see.

From those that know Thee may Thy love
And mercy ne'er depart,
And may Thy justice still protect
And bless the upright heart.

Second Lesson — Revelation 7:9-17

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb!" And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, singing, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom

and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?" I said to him, "Sir, you are the one who knows." Then he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason they are before the throne of God and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat, for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Now to Your Table Spread

Now to Your table spread
we come, each one in faith
that You alone provide the words of life or death:
in wine and bread,
in promised food
we find Your loving heart, O God.

Hands of the world stretch out
Your mystery to touch
in longing to believe a truth beyond our reach,
to sing in joy,
to cry in grief,
to know Your meaning for our life.

Here is our common wealth
in sharing what is good,
as though all humankind around one table stood,
this bread to break,
this wine to taste:
one people in the name of Christ.

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!

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.