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
David Varker, Lay Reader
Lynn Raley, Organist
Old First Church Choir

October 4, 2026

Prelude *Voluntary No. 6 in E-flat* - Paul F. Page (b. 1947)

Opening Words (responsive)

God is our refuge and strength
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear.
Draw near and call on the Lord.

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 and most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in what we have done
and in what we have left undone.
We have not trusted in your goodness
and have allowed fear to rule us.
We have been silent when we should have spoken,
we have been deaf to the calls of the poor,
and unresponsive when we should have acted more decisively.
We have not lived with the same grace
that you have always shown us.
Forgive us and help us to serve you
by serving your world with generous spirits.
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Assurance of Pardon and *Gloria Patri (579)

First Lesson Psalm 80:7-15 p. 471

Hymn** ***The Heavens Above Declare God's Praise **166**

This new metrical paraphrase of Psalm 19:1-6 is by Christopher L. Webber. It was first published in *A Metrical Psalter* (1986). The tune, *Caithnes,* is from the Scottish Psalter (1635) with harmonization from *The English Hymnal* (1906).

Second Lesson Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20 p. 58

Sermon Gardens and Hills

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.

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 *Piece No. 2 in G Major* - Charles Wesley (1766-1837)

***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** ***For the Fruit of All Creation **553**

Though published in the English Methodist Recorder only in 1970, by 1982 Fred Pratt Green's words had already appeared in fourteen hymnals around the world. The tune by Francis Jackson (b. 1917) was written in 1957 for a different text but it never caught on until people heard it with these words.

***Benediction**

***Postlude** *Tuba Tune in D Major* - Robert J. Powell (1932-2025)

* 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 Audrey Pietrucha and Marsha Pilachowski.

Please join us for coffee hour in the Narthex after worship provided by Lisanne, James, Rory, and Marsha.

The flowers for worship today have been provided by Laurel and David Varker in memory of Frank Varker and their neighbor Bobby.

Book Group: Our first book discussion group will meet Thursday, October 15 at 4 p.m. in the parlor. We will discuss *A Voice in the Wind* by Francine Rivers. At this first meeting we will also decide together on future books and the frequency and duration of meetings so bring suggestions! Any questions Can be directed to Audrey Pietrucha at dreypie@gmail.com.

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 on Wed. evenings, 4:30 PM in the Parlor.
10/15: Book Group, 4:00 PM, Parlor
10/22: Deacon's meeting, 4:00 PM, Barn
10/23: Trustee meeting, 5:30 PM, Parlor
10/25: Harvest Meal at the Barn, 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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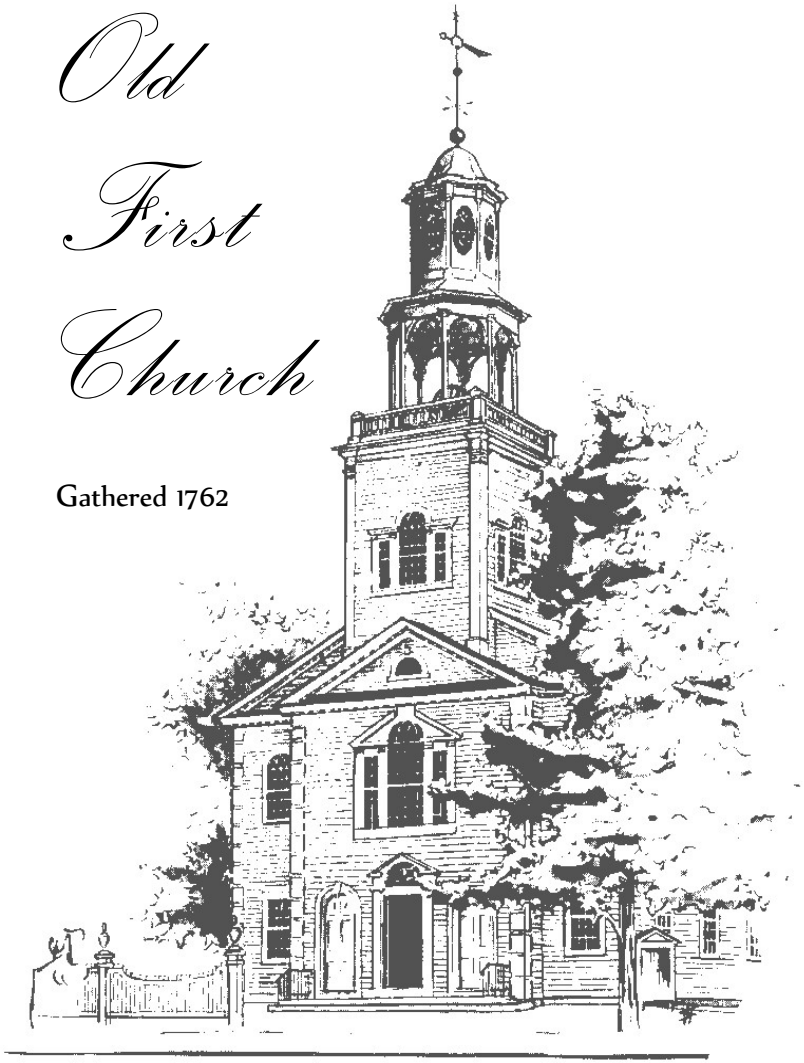
Old First Church

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 — Psalm 80:7-15

Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

You brought a vine out of Egypt;
you drove out the nations and planted it.
You cleared the ground for it;
it took deep root and filled the land.
The mountains were covered with its shade,
the mighty cedars with its branches;
it sent out its branches to the sea
and its shoots to the River.
Why then have you broken down its walls,
so that all who pass along the way pluck its fruit?
The boar from the forest ravages it,
and all that move in the field feed on it.

Turn again, O God of hosts;
look down from heaven and see;
have regard for this vine,
the stock that your right hand planted.

The Heavens Above Declare God's Praise

The heavens above declare God's praise,
the work God's hands have made;
day after day the tale is told,
and night by night displayed.

There is no utterance or speech,
no voice has ever heard,
yet to all nations comes the sound,
to every place their word.

Forth like a bridegroom comes the sun
from its appointed place,
and like a hero runs its course,
rejoicing in the race.

It runs from east to farthest west
to make its course complete,
and nothing in the world beneath
escapes its scorching heat.

SECOND LESSON — Exodus 20:1-4

Then God spoke all these words:

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.

"You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth.

"You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

"Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work.

"Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

"You shall not murder.

"You shall not commit adultery.

"You shall not steal.

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, male or female slave, ox, donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid and trembled and stood at a distance and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen, but do not let God speak to us, or we will die." Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid, for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin."

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 the Fruit of All Creation

For the fruit of all creation,
Thanks be to God.
For the gifts to every nation,
Thanks be to God.
For the plowing, sowing, reaping,
Silent growth while we are sleeping,
Future needs in earth's safe keeping,
Thanks be to God.

In the just reward of labor,
God's will be done.
In the help we give our neighbor,
God's will be done.
In our worldwide task of caring
For the hungry and despairing,
In the harvests we are sharing,
God's will be done.

For the harvests of the Spirit,
Thanks be to God.
For the good we all inherit,
Thanks be to God.
For the wonders that astound us,
For the truths that still confound us,
Most of all that love has found us,
Thanks be to God.

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.