

***The First Congregational Church
of Essex Junction
United Church of Christ***



***A Welcoming Community, Accepting and Serving All
in the Spirit of Christ***

“We covenant one with another to seek and respond to the Word and the will of God. We agree to walk together in the ways of the Lord, made known and to be made known to us. We hold it to be the mission of the Church to witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all the world, while worshipping God, and striving for truth, justice, and peace. As in the past, we depend on the Holy Spirit to lead and empower us. We pray for the coming of the kingdom of God, and we look with faith toward the triumph of righteousness and eternal life.”

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The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction
A United Church of Christ
Christmas Eve 2016
A Service of Sacred Stories & Singing

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder; and his name will be called, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end."

Isaiah 9:6-7

The Order of Worship

Prelude

Welcome, Greeting and Announcements

*No matter who you are
or where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome in this place.*

Opening Introit by Joyful Noise

Sing to God

Huesmann

Call to Worship

Leader: Welcome to a community dedicated to spreading the love that Jesus brought to the world so long ago. Come, let us praise God, honor Christ and dedicate ourselves to spreading divine love to everyone!

People: Hooray for Jesus!

Leader: The vulnerable Jesus needed help. The stressed Holy Family needed help. The poor shepherds needed help. The Searching Magi needed help. The threatened power brokers needed help. God still needs our help.

People: Hooray for Jesus!

Leader: Jesus found love. The Holy Family found shelter, then safety. The shepherds were honored. The Magi found answers. Rulers learned about power. God still loves, protects, honors and teaches us all.....

People: Hooray for Jesus!

Leader: Hooray for Jesus whose Spirit still gives birth. Come, let's worship.

***Opening Carol**

O Come, All Ye Faithful

**O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant.
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.
Come and behold him, born the King of angels.
O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.**

**Sing choirs of angels, sing in exultation.
O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above.
Glory to God, all glory in the highest.
O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.**

A Congregational Lighting of the Christ Candle

Everyone: Today, our family of faith lights the Christ Candle. We remember the love that came into the world so long ago in the person of Jesus.

Women: Lighting this Candle remembers when Jesus was born in a manger in Bethlehem. The moment of Christ's birth changed the world forever.

Men: Heavenly beings sang praises to God. The natural universe aligned itself to show forth God's miraculous deed. From the lowliest shepherds to the wisest philosophers to a powerful king: everyone witnessed Jesus' birth.

Children: Amen and Alleluia!

One: We light this candle to remember Christ's birth and witness the enduring power of his message of love. Our world has been changed by that baby's birth and so have many of us in our family of faith.....

***Individuals are invited to share an experience of Christ's love*
*[The Deacon lights all the candles]***

Everyone: May First Church always be a place where Christ is honored, everyone is lifted up and where great things happen. Amen.

The Coming of a Messiah Foretold.....Simeon the Prophet

O Little Town of Bethlehem

**O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, the silent stars go by.
Yet in the dark street shineth, the everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.**

**O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray.
Cast out our sin and enter in; Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.**

Christmas Prayer and Unison Lord's Prayer (trespasses)

Leader: God of Light and Love.....

People: Hear our prayer.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses and we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Congregational Musical Response #122

Come, O Long Expected Jesus

**Israel's strength and consolation, hope to all the earth impart;
Dear desire of every nation, enter every longing heart.
Born all people to deliver, born a child and yet a king!
Born to reign in us forever, come, be known to us again.**

The Birth of Jesus.....King Herod

Away in a Manger

**Away in a manger, no crib for a bed
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.**

**The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love thee Lord Jesus, look down from the sky
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.**

Special Christmas Offering

Invitation, Offering and Prayer of Dedication

Special Christmas Music

***Singing Our Praise to Our God: A Christmas Doxology #159**

As With Gladness Folk of Old

**As with gladness folk of old, did the guiding star behold;
As with joy they hailed its light, leading onward, beaming bright;
So, most gracious Lord, may we ever more your splendor see.
As they offered gifts most rare, at the manger plain and bare,
So may we with holy joy, pure and free from sin's alloy,
All our costliest treasures bring, Christ, to you, our heavenly King.**

The Visitors and Witnesses..... Gathaspa from the East
--

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

**Hark! The herald angels sing, Glory to the newborn king;
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinner's reconciled!
Joyful, all the nations, rise, Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim, Christ is born in Bethlehem!
Hark! The Herald angels sing, Glory to the newborn king.
Hail the heaven born prince of peace; hail the son of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, Risen with healing in his wings,
Mild he lays his glories by, Born that folk no more may die,
Born to raise the kids of earth, Born to give them second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, glory to the newborn king.**

Spreading the Light of Christ

From the Christ Candle, Simeon, King Herod and Gathaspa will light their candles and then proceed to pass Christ's light to each family within the congregation. We ask each family to be careful with your candle and especially ask parents to watch their children. On the way out, please extinguish your candles and place them in the receptacles provided. Thank you.

*First, played on the violin without singing by Emmerson Stapleton
Second, everyone will sing all three verses
Third, Emmerson will play once more with just the violin.*

Silent Night, Holy Night

**Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright.
Round yon virgin, mother and child.
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.**

**Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight
Glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing alleluia.
Christ the Savior is born! Christ the Savior is born!**

**Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light.
Radiant beams from thy holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth. Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.**

Pastoral Benediction

**MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL
AND TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT!**

** Special Thanks to Ed Guild for playing the piano tonight. He has been playing the organ for the early service on Christmas Eve for many, many years.....thanks Ed!*

*** Thanks also to Emmerson Stapleton for her beautiful violin music!*

Tomorrow, Dec. 25th , we will have a family friendly, casual worship service at 3pm.

The Poinsettias on the Altar are Given by:

Laurie & Brian Chipman in celebration of family

The Dooley Family in memory of Dorothy & Joseph Pine and Harry Dooley

Marsha Duell in memory of Rufus Duell

Norma Edwards in memory of Lloyd Edwards

Diana & Richard Higgins & family in memory of their parents & grandparents

The Shearer Family in memory of Steve Shearer

The Starkey Family in memory of Mr. & Mrs. Gordon Starkey Sr.

Carolyn Toof in memory of loved ones

Jean Tucker in memory of loved ones

FCCEJ remembers its beloved members who have passed in 2016, Kay Stewart, Phyllis Gray, Emily Packard, Marilyn Walcott, Marjorie Faunce, Nancy Potvin, John Kirsch, Bob Ennis, Dick Shephard, Steve Wark, and Jennifer McClintock

MINISTRY AT FIRST CHURCH

Church Administrator: Jen Dooley [welcome@fccej.org]
Music Director: Catherine McMaster [cmcmaster@fccej.org]
Christian Education Director: Laurie Chipman [lchipman@fccej.org]
Bridge Part-time Associate Pastor: Devon Thomas [dthomas@fccej.org]
Youth Team: Devon Thomas & Erica Garvey [egarvey@fccej.com]
Senior Pastor: Rev. Mark Mendes [mmendes@fccej.org]

Music Ministry

Cherub Music: Kim Hamilton [khamilton@ccsuvt.org]
Currier Bell Choir Director: Carolyn Harris [899-6759]
Finally @ First Director: Rick Dooley [rickdooley5@gmail.com]
Heavenly Harmony Director: Catherine McMaster [ourvinn@hotmail.com]
Joyful Noise Director: Jessica Moos [jessicamoosvermont@gmail.com]
Men At First Director: Bill Bickford, Jr. [bill.bickford@aol.com]
Sanctuary Choir Director: Catherine McMaster [cmcmaster@fccej.org]

Committee / Church Officer Contacts

President, Chair Human Resources Committee: Brenda Crocket [881-5253]
Vice President, Chair Finance & Pastoral Relations: Tom James [879-1247]
Treasurer: Ann Gray [878-4088]
Asst. Treasurer: Dan Petherbridge [879-0261]
Financial Secretary: Pat Seaver [879-4445]
Clerk: Andrea Sharp [879-0580]
Christian Education: Jenny Bourn [802-309-7441] & Marlene Frank [872-9126]
Deacons: Mark Chadurjian [310-2399] and Rick Dooley [578-0229]
Hospitality: Judy McCullen [878-9794]
Missions: Susan Kremer [233-9932] & Sandy Tallman [879-0665]
Music: Judy Larrabee [236-0604]
Nominating: Carl Wermer [879-7650]
Stewardship: Alison Wermer [879-7650]
Trustees: Kevin Meilleur [238-4041]
Ushering: Michael Sullivan [879-6044]

Recognized Groups at First Church

Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop [879-6552]
Heavenly Food Pantry Contact: Valerie Gabert [879-0109]
Called To Care Contact: Beth Volker [879-4708]

The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction, United Church of Christ, is an Open and Affirming congregation, embracing diversity and affirming the dignity and worth of every person, because we are all created by a loving God. We seek to live Christ's call for compassion, justice, healing and wholeness in life. Therefore, we welcome into our community persons of every race, gender, age, sexual orientation, faith background, nationality, ethnicity, marital status, mental and physical ability, economic and social position, gender identity and expression, level of education and family structure. We invite all to share in the life, leadership, ordained ministry, lay ministry, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, fellowship, blessings, and joys of our congregation as we seek to grow together in faith & love.

