

*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.”

One Church Street
Essex Junction, VT 05452
www.fccej.org

Phone: 802-878-5745

Fax: 802-872-8236

E-mail: welcome@fccej.org

Twitter: [1stChurchEJ](https://twitter.com/1stChurchEJ)

Facebook: [First Congregational Church of Essex Junction UCC](https://www.facebook.com/FirstCongregationalChurchofEssexJunctionUCC)



Open and Affirming means that we welcome everyone to First Church including our GLBTQ brothers and sisters.

The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction
United Church of Christ
March 12, 2017
The Second Sunday in Lent

A Welcoming Church,

Accepting and Serving All,

In the Spirit of Christ.

Order of Worship

Prelude

The Faithful Shepherd

Handel

Arioso

Bach

Largo

Vivaldi

An Extravagant Welcome

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

Welcome Greeting and Announcements

Our Ministers will welcome everyone to church and then highlight some significant events in our shared life, then the Deacon on Duty will welcome everyone and invite people to raise celebrations to the congregation or introduce yourself or a friend as a guest. We encourage everyone, both guests and members to sign the Friendship Books.

Musical Introit

Return To God

Haugen

Opening Sacred Reading and Lighting Lent's Candle of Faithful Journey

During this time, the Deacon will read the morning's sacred reading, then light a candle of Faithful Journey, then provide a brief time of silence, then strike the singing drum.

The Sacred Reading

I have come to believe that hard times are not just meaningless suffering and that something good might turn up at any moment. That's a big change for someone who used to come to in the morning feeling sentenced to another day of life. When I wake up today, there are lots of possibilities. I can hardly wait to see what's going to happen next.”

— Alcoholics Anonymous

Entering into God's Realm: Step 1.....Putting God First

The first few steps to align ourselves with God is simply to get our egos out of the way and put the Divine first....to get past our self-centered ways and admit that we are not the center of the universe and in control of all things.....to stop blaming and trying to control others and instead to seek God's will for our lives first.

Deacon's Prayer of Invocation and Unison Lord's Prayer ("trespasses")

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 as 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.

A Unison Proclamation.....An Affirmation of Our Faith

from the New Zealand Prayer Book

**You, O God, are supreme and holy.
You create our world and give us life.
Your purpose overarches everything we do.
You have always been with us.
You are God.
You, O God, are infinitely generous, good beyond measure.
You came to us before we came to you.
You have revealed and proved your love for us in Jesus Christ.
 who lived and died and rose again.
You are with us now.
You are God.
You, O God, are Holy Spirit.
You empower us to be your gospel in the world.
You reconcile and heal; you overcome death.
You are our God. We worship you.**

Children's Message

After the Children's Message, Both Services, our Nursery is open with our staff person, Kathryn. Second Service, children & youth are invited to Fellowship Hall to roll pretzels. They will then move to music time and go to their classrooms for a time of sharing and an activity. Pretzels will be delivered for snack time to the classrooms. Parents/Grandparents and older siblings are welcome to accompany the kids, help them get settled and stay or return to worship. Children in Preschool up - 2nd grade will need to be signed out of class by an authorized person at 11:30am.

**Jesus loves the little children,
All God's children of the world.
Whether young or old or new, Jesus loves us through and through
Teaching us to love all creatures in the world.
God has made us all a rainbow.
Colors dancing 'round and 'round.
In our hair and skin and eyes, big and little, every size,
God has made us all a rainbow dancing 'round.**

A Sacred Reading in Our Affirmation of God

“I simply had to believe in a Spirit of the Universe, who knew neither time nor limitation.”
—Alcoholics Anonymous

Deepening Our Relationship with God: Step 2....Our Need for Repentance

Once we determine we are not the center of the universe, it is clear that we fall short of who God has made us to be. We sin, we commit wrongs against our neighbors, we hurt others, we diminish life....there are many ways to understand it but in the end God calls all of us to take a searching and fearless moral inventory and seek forgiveness from those who we have wronged. This is the heart of Jesus' message and he demands that we not only forgive others but love them.

*Hymn of Need

Standing in the Need of Prayer

#519

A Time of Confession

Calling Everyone to Confess their Wrong Doings

Leader: We all hurt ourselves and others. We all deny God's presence and sway over our lives and the world. In order to be healthy, we must humbly acknowledge our shortcomings and seek resolution with God, our neighbors and ourselves

People: Come let us come before God as a family of faith.

Unison Prayer of Confession

Powerful and Merciful God, we pretend to be you and let our egos get in the way of a living a healthy life. We self-deceive. We make our own rules. We try to control. We fall short yet refuse to be held accountable. We are addicted to substances, people and bad habits that draw us away from you and separate us from everyone else. We escape into our own worlds. We deny ourselves love, health, maturity and meaning. Forgive us and help us to make things right with our fellows. We pray for your help to get beyond ourselves, amen.

The Assurance of Pardon

Leader: God loves us with abandon. God forgives our wayward behaviors. God inspires us to be more than we are. God always welcomes us into the waiting arms of home.

People: Thank you God and give us the courage to accept your gifts of mercy so that we might experience true joy.

Anthem

Lift Your Head, Weary Sinner

Crowder

Making Amends Right Here and Now

One of the keys to being right with God and ourselves is to have the courage and humility to make amends with those we have wronged. Not doing so, allows the wrong to fester and diminish our own spirit. Taking this step allows our acceptance of God's love to flow in and through us. Everyone is strongly encouraged to spend a few minutes writing a letter to make things right with someone you have wronged.

A Sacred Reading in Our Journey Toward Health

“We sometimes hurt those we love because they need to be “taught a lesson,” when we really want to punish. We were depressed and complained we felt bad, when in fact we were mainly asking for sympathy and attention. This odd trait of mind and emotion, this perverse wish to hide a bad motive underneath a good one, permeates human affairs from top to bottom. This subtle and elusive kind of self-righteousness can underlie the smallest act or thought. Learning daily to spot, admit, and correct these flaws is the essence of character-building and good living. An honest regret for harms done, a genuine gratitude for blessings received, and a willingness to try for better things tomorrow will be the permanent assets we shall seek.”

—Alcoholics Anonymous, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

Living into a Life of Faith: Step 3.....Daily Living

The last steps in our journey toward a deeper relationship with God is to realize that it is a life-long process. Day in and day out, we need to put God first and constantly reflect on our behaviors and take steps to make relationships right as we go. Being in a right relationship to God happens every day and with time and practice becomes a way of life.

*Hymn of Living

O Jesus I Have Promised

#493

New Testament Scripture Lesson and Reflection John 3:1-10 [page 71]

A Witness to God and Our Journey

One of the key ways in which we grow in the faith and move toward God is when we witness to God in our lives to others.....when we share the ways where we have struggled and come out stronger....when we share the ways in which our Divine Companion has journeyed with us. It has always been a vital part in following Jesus to share your faith and so I invite those of you who would like to share a part of your story to do so.

Offering Our Gifts to God

Invitation, Offering, Prayer of Dedication

Offertory Anthem

I Will Lift My Eyes

Norman

*Doxology #451 [verse 3]

Be Thou My Vision

**Riches I heed not, nor life's empty praise,
Thou, my inheritance, now and always;
You and you only are first in my heart,
High King of heaven, my treasure Thou art.**

Pastoral Prayer

Sharing Our Prayers with God and Each Other

A Time of Silence for Personal Prayer

Unison Serenity Prayer

**God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
And wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world
As it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that He will make all things right
If I surrender to His Will;
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life
And supremely happy with Him
Forever and ever in the next. Amen.**

Final Sacred Reading for Living the Faith

When I stopped living in the problem and began living in the answer, the problem went away.”
—Alcoholics Anonymous

***Hymn**

Amazing Grace

#547

Benediction

Pastoral Benediction

***Sung Community Benediction**

Go Now In Peace

**Go now in peace. Never be afraid.
God will go with you each hour of every day.
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true.
Know God will guide you in all you do.
Go now in love, and show you believe.
Reach out to others so all the world can see.
God will be there, watching from above.
Go now in peace, in faith and in love**

***Postlude:**

Allegro Risoluto

Tours

*Please stand if you are able.

*The flowers on the altar are given by Sylvia Nyhagen
in loving memory of Ed Nyhagen*

Worship Participants

Deacons: 1st Michael Bottamini; 2nd Lauren Starkey
Greeters: 1st Mary Ellen Grove & Mary Ann Warren ; 2nd
Ushers: 1st Don & Peter Gray; 2nd Gary & Val Smith

First Church's Prayer Ministry

Rachel Jarvis	Bruce Parker	Keenan Weischedel
David Tibbetts	Annette	Dee
Emily Carroll & family	Dick Leavitt	Jaime Real
Carlene Lawrence	Carol	Don Mable
Tim Frazier	Roger Kalar	Ed Constantine
Ralph Abeling	Donna	Ruth Legendre
Emily Schueren & family	Sharon Kennedy	Don Foss
Campbell Miller	George Jackson	Cathleen & Lilianna
Mike Heston	Mark Holden	Shirley Boucher

*Please let us know if you would like a name added to our Prayer Ministry, you can write it on the
Friendship Pad, call or email the office or send us a note, welcome@fcej.org*

* * * **TODAY** * * *



TODAY~ Pretzel Sunday

CE sponsors this great Sunday each year...pretzels for fellowship time
after each of our worship services!

Children and youth will start their time in Fellowship Hall rolling
pretzels before they move off to music & class time.

* * * **THIS WEEK** * * *

Mondays ~ Yoga @ First !

New to yoga? Returning? Come sit with Jonah and practice a gentle
sequence to integrate the mind, body, and soul. In each session, we
focus, breathe, build heat, strengthen, and relax. We have switched to
Monday evenings, from 5:30-6:30. Wear comfortable, nonrestrictive
clothing. Bring a mat or borrow one of Jonah's. Donations to FCCEJ
are welcomed.



Tuesday Morning Sermon Talkback

Join us on Tuesdays from 8:30-10am for coffee, home baked goods and a lively discussion of the sermon (and other topics!) that was delivered the previous Sunday. Come for the conversation, the goodies, the camaraderie, or all of the above! Join us!



Wednesday Night Searchers

We have just started our new book, "Soul Feast" by Marjorie Thompson on Wednesday, March 8th. We have the books available in the office if you would like to pick one up and get into the reading. Come and bring a friend.

* * * **Children, Youth & Family Announcements** * * *

Faith Formation Sunday School Offering 2017

The 2017 vote is in JUMP = 32; A NEW Place = 43; Humane Society = 74

You will be hearing more about the Humane Society of Chittenden County who relies completely on outside donations to stay open and help give pets a home.



Your 2017 Total is now up to \$304.21

Remember to bring your Sunday School offering each week and use an envelope in the pews for your money so that you know it will be put towards the Sunday School offering and not be confused with regular offering for the church.

\$1 a week can go a long way!



Faith Formation Sunday School Calendar

Preschool – 6th grade

March 12th ~ Pretzel Sunday & Class Time

March 19th & 26th ~ Lenten Class Time Rotation

All our First Church Youth Programs are parent supported!

1 to 3 parents/volunteers are needed at every youth group gathering!

Bulletin boards with Youth Group information can be found in the lower staff hallway.

Sign up to volunteer and/or bring a meal.

All youth, parents and volunteers ~ see a staff person to update and fill out paper work.

Talent - You're It!

FCCEJ's 2017 Celebration of the Gifts God Gave Us!

Save the date: Sunday, March 19 starting at 3 PM.

To sign up you can either use the online Google Form <https://goo.gl/forms/YreMqLYQo2OgtdFU2> - or you will find the sign up sheet in

Fellowship Hall. Whether you are coming to share something special or coming as an audience member - this is an event not to miss!





**Next Food Pantry dates are March 13th, 5:30-7:30pm
and Thursday, March 23rd, 2-6pm**

We are in need of boxes of cereal, tuna fish, fruit juice
and regular size jars of jelly to restock our cabinets.

We are ALL SET for egg cartons right now!

August 7th - 11th ~ Vacation Bible Camp 2017

Hero Central: Discover Youth Strength in God!

Monday – Friday from 9am to 11:45am; Reg. forms on Table in FH
VB Camp is a week of energy and excitement of seeing God’s Love in
Action! All are encouraged to join up and be a part of this fun week!



Station Leaders: Crafts ~ Jenny Bourn; Snack ~ Judy Allen & Ginny
Coe; Games ~ Jessica Moos; Music ~ Laura Cunningham-Firkey; Bible Drama ~ Barb
Smith; Discovery Leader ~ Trista Acebo

Group leaders & Helpers: Youth (sixth grade or older), Young Adults & Adults



Don’t Forget the Red Tent!

The Red Tent Project has become even more important as we enter a
period where funds for women's health and marginalized immigrant
groups may be significantly cut back. Donating woman's hygiene
products to JUMP is a positive way we can show that we will continue
to support those who will be facing increasingly difficult times. Look
for the Red Tent in the Fellowship Hall on Sunday mornings.

Heavenly Cents Thrift Store Hours

10 am - 3 pm Tuesday & Wednesdays, 4 - 8 pm Thursdays
Come on in and find us on Facebook!

Clean Out Your Closets & Bring Us Your Fall/Winter Donations!

We are looking for people to volunteer for the 4-6pm Thursday shift
and also one volunteer for the 6-8pm Thursday every other week shift!

Come join the Fun!



Six Week Bible Study Series ~ ROCKING THE CREDO!!!

Next meeting is Wed, March 15th at 12pm and every other week after.
This series is meant to give people the opportunity to build up their
own theology, so, perhaps you think of yourself as a Trinitarian, or
perhaps you call yourself a Unitarian, but you don’t really know why.

Maybe you think that the creation story is the most important part of the bible, or
perhaps you don’t think that Christians need to know the “Old Testament” at all. This
bible study is meant to challenge you and give you all the introductory information you
need to as to why those beliefs may be important to you and in the Christian tradition.

VT Outdoor Ministry Camp Week



Go swimming, play disc golf, camp fires, and more during a fun week at Rock Point Camp in Burlington, VT!

July 30th – August 4th for youth going into 5th - 8th grade Laura Labrie (College Street UCC) and Dave McGowan (Waterbury UCC) will be our Deans leading this week of camp! Visit Horton Center website to

register for this camp. www.hortoncenter.org **VT UCC OM Team is recruiting volunteer counselors, a lifeguard and a nurse for this week camp!**

UCC Outdoor Ministry @ Horton Center Camp, NH

www.hortoncenter.org

Join Laurie Chipman @ Horton Center~ July 9th – 15th for 7th -9th grade

Do you like to rock climb? Go caving? Sleep out under the stars? Go hiking? Laurie is counseling!



More fun camps like: Grandparent & Grandchild, Family & Friends Weekend, Middler Camp, and others. Women's Weekend will be offered with an extra day due to popular demand. Our new offerings include a Family 4th of July half week, Leader in Training, Archery Camp, and Senior High Hike Week. We can't wait to branch out and connect through Christ with you this summer at Horton Center!

THIS WEEK: March 12th - 18th

- TODAY:** **8:30 & 10:15am** Worship Services / Sanctuary
 11:30 - 1:00pm Junior Youth Group / Youth Lounge
 1:00 - 2:00 pm Brown Bag / Fellowship Hall
- MONDAY:** 9:15 - 11:30 am Tai Chi / Fellowship Hall
 12:00 noon Brown Bag / Fellowship Hall
 1:30 - 4:00 pm Food Pantry Stocking / FH & Gym
 4:00 - 8:00 pm Monday Food Pantry / FH & Kitchen (open 5:30-7:30)
 5:30 - 6:45 pm Yoga with Jonah / Gym
 5:30 - 6:30 pm Group Victory / 3rd Floor
- TUESDAY:** **8:30 - 10:00 am** Sermon Talk Back / Marvin Lounge
 10:00 am - 3:00 pm Heavenly Cents Thrift Store Open
 12:00 noon Brown Bag / Fellowship Hall
 7:00 - 9:00 pm Music Search Committee / Third Floor
 7:00 - 9:00 pm Deacons / Marvin Lounge
- WEDNESDAY:** **8:00 - 11:30 am** Food Shelf Delivery / Fellowship Hall
 9:15 - 11:30 am Tai Chi / Gym
 10:00 am - 3:00 pm Heavenly Cents Thrift Store Open
 12:00 noon Brown Bag / Fellowship Hall
 12:00 - 1:00 pm Rocking the Credo Bible Study / Marvin Lounge
 5:30 - 7:30 pm CPEC Game Night / Preschool Space

5:30 - 7:00 pm Finally @ First / Fellowship Hall
6:30 - 7:30 pm Currier Bells / Sanctuary
 6:30 - 8:30 pm Eagle Scout Board of Review / Third Floor
7:00 - 9:00 pm Wednesday Night Searchers / Marvin Lounge
 7:00 - 8:00 pm Boy Scouts / Fellowship Hall
 THURSDAY: 10:00 - 12:00 pm CE Group Meeting / Marvin Lounge
12:00 - 1:30 pm Book Discussion Group / Marvin Lounge
 12:00 noon Brown Bag / Fellowship Hall
4:00 - 8:00 pm Heavenly Cents Thrift Store Open
6:00 - 8:00pm Communications Committee / Marvin Lounge
6:30 - 7:00 pm Heavenly Harmony / Sanctuary
7:00 - 8:30 pm Sanctuary Choir / Sanctuary
7:00 - 8:30 pm Scrapbooking Journey / Third Floor
7:30 - 9:00 pm Confirmation Class / Youth Lounge
 FRIDAY: ****April Newsletter Articles Due****
 12:00 noon Brown Bag / Fellowship Hall
1:30 - 4:00 pm Bridge Club / Marvin Lounge
 SATURDAY: **9:00am - 12:00 pm Nepali Comm Worship & Meal / All Building**
9:30 - 11:30 am Women's Spirituality / Marvin Lounge
 1:00 - 2:00 pm Brown Bag / Fellowship Hall

MINISTRY AT FIRST CHURCH

Church Administrator: *Jen Dooley* [welcome@fccej.org]
 Music Director: *Catherine McMaster* [ourvinn@hotmail.com]
 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: *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: *Carl Wermer* [879-7650]
 Treasurer & Historian: *Ann Gray* [878-4088]
 Asst. Treasurer: *Dan Petherbridge* [879-0261]
 Financial Secretary: *Pat Seaver* [879-4445]

12 Steps of Spiritual Renewal

- 1. We admit we are powerless over the things of the world that keep us from God and that our lives have become unmanageable.**
- 2. We believe God / Jesus can restore us to sanity.**
- 3. We decide to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand the Divine.**
- 4. We make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.**
- 5. We admit to God, ourselves, and another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.**
- 6. We open ourselves to have God remove all these defects of character.**
- 7. We humbly ask God / Jesus to remove our shortcomings.**
- 8. We list all persons we had harmed, and become willing to make amends to them all.**
- 9. We direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.**
- 10. We continue to take daily personal inventory of the wrongs we commit, promptly admit it and work to make amends.**
- 11. We seek through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understand the divine, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.**
- 12. After our own spiritual awakening in following these steps, we try to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.**