

*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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*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
April 2, 2017**

A SERVICE OF HEALING

Be thoughtful, be silent, be reverent, for this is the house of the Lord. During the Prelude, speak to the Lord; during the service, let the Lord speak to you; after the service, speak to one another.

The Order of Worship

Prelude

Words of Welcome

Call to Worship

Leader: Oh God, will you take us back into the embrace of your creation?

People: Hold us loving God

Leader: Jesus Christ: our Savior, will you lay your hand upon our weary souls and broken bodies and still call us your people?

People: Jesus, lay your healing hands upon us.

Leader: Spirit of God, will you enliven us with the strength to face the world each day?

People: Holy Spirit, give us strength.

Leader: The answer, brothers and sisters, is yes . . .

*Opening Hymn

There is a Balm in Gilead

#553

April 14, 3pm-April 16, 7am ~ Good Friday-Easter Sunday Prayer Vigil

One of the interesting insights of the current church growth occurring these days is how new models incorporate very old rituals. There are churches meeting in automotive garages that chant their liturgies.

There are churches with traditional liturgies for Holy Communion that load the various altars in the room with food for guests to take home with them, a sacred food pantry! There are small communities that worship together in their homes with no

intention of buying land and building a worship space; returning to the “house church” model. This Lent, we are again venturing down the same road as we offer a

Prayer Vigil. Starting at 3:00 p.m. on Good Friday and running through Easter sunrise at 6am, we will offer 40 one hour slots for people to come into the church to pray, meditate, sing, read scripture or just sit quietly with their God. You can come alone or with a partner; you can come with a friend or your children. When your time is up, we invite you to let the next person into the church so that the building can

remain locked and safe. During the wee small hours between 2 – 5 a.m. we encourage people to come in pairs. There are only forty slots so sign up quickly and if you are a night owl, please sign up for the middle of the night. The sign-up sheet will be available Sunday mornings or you can call the church office. Last year was our first year offering this old tradition and it was so popular that people requested it back again for this year! Although relatively new to our tradition, this practice follows a tradition that goes back thousands of years and remembers the disciples trying to stay awake with Jesus as they prayed in the garden.

Easter Services

6:00 a.m. Sunrise Ecumenical @ Holy Family Gazebo

8:30 Regular First Worship Service with Sanctuary Choir

10:15 Regular Second Worship Service with Finally at First

Easter Breakfast

The Youth will be hosting the annual sunrise Easter Breakfast. Sunrise is at 6:07 a.m. so breakfast will be starting to be served here at First Church after the Sunrise Ecumenical Service is over. Come on over and have a wonderful, hearty breakfast any time between 6:30 and 10:00am. All the proceeds will go toward the youth activities for the year.

Lenten & Easter Services & Spirituality

April 9, Both Services ~ Palm Sunday: Cantata

We are blessed to have a tremendous Sanctuary Choir under the direction of our Director Catherine McMaster. They have been practicing for weeks and this will be our last opportunity to hear a cantata under the direction of our much loved Catherine for at the end of May, she will be leaving us for the greener hills of the Northeast Kingdom!

April 13, 7pm ~ Maundy Thursday

Maundy Thursday is the day when we remember that Jesus took on the religious authorities and won. The people honored him as a great prophet and Messiah much to the chagrin of the Jewish leaders. He met with the disciples in an upper room full of positive energy and dreams of the future; finally their movement was mainstream and had the potential of changing the temple and world. Jesus met with them to celebrate the power of God displayed at Passover and to share an intimate meal of friends. On Maundy Thursday, we will step into this heady yet positive atmosphere and focus on their celebration and dreams for the future. We will also see how their energy and dreams continue to be ours. We will meet downstairs in Fellowship Hall for dessert and conversation from 7-8:00 p.m. Come and experience this ancient, yet new interpretation of one of Christianity's sacred rituals.

April 14, 7pm ~ Good Friday

Good Friday is the time when we remember Christ's suffering and death. This has been remembered in many different ways over the years depending on the culture and theological perspective. Like other Lenten practices, there has been a movement away from sacrifice and the negative toward a more positive understanding. So instead of the blood of sacrifice making us right with God, many have focused on how God's sacrificial love for humanity was offered so that our lives would be better or how Jesus on the cross teaches us another model of power and its use. Part of this shift came about as the meaning and power of blood animal sacrifice decreased to the point of meaninglessness; more and more people even find the old blood language to drive them away from God or at the very least the Good Friday service. This year, we will not focus on the blood but rather the depth of God's sacrificial love and how Jesus models how to claim power in this world differently. With everything going on in our nation and world, Christ's model is deeply needed more now than ever. Come on Friday April 14th at 7:00 P.M. and experience Good Friday in a new and different, yet powerful way.

Unison Prayer of Invocation

Loving Companion, be a friend to us in times of trouble, be a crutch on which we can lean our tired bodies. Be a light to guide our souls out of still darkness. Heal us oh God and give us an opportunity to start again from where we are. God, help us to love ourselves, help us to love one another and help us to love you.
Amen

A Time of Confession

Call to Confession

Leader: Jesus healed wherever he went. He did not always heal the body but always he would heal lives.

People: Jesus, heal our tired hearts, heal our weary minds and heal our broken bodies.

Leader: Jesus takes you as you are and sees God in you, let us pray to our God.

Unison Prayer of Confession

Leader: God, hear our confession.

People: Oh, God, you call us to love and yet we hate, you call us to give and yet we steal and hoard, you call us to try and yet we do not try. We confess that we have fallen short of the vision you had for us. We confess that we have not been our best selves. We confess that we have not looked after our bodies and minds and we confess that we have not been there to help our brothers and sisters be their best selves.

We confess that we have made a world that has fallen short of you and we pray for you to forgive us and heal us.

Leader: Know that God sees us for who we are and that we are all forgiven with the hope that we will go forward to become better than we ever were before.

A Time for Silent Confessions

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.

Scripture Reading

Old Testament	Jeremiah 8: 18-22	[pg. 549]
New Testament	Mark 2: 1-12	[pg. 28]

A Meditation for Healing

A Balm in Gilead

Devon Thomas

A Time for Healing

An Invitation for Personal Healing

At this time the worship leader will ask all those who are in need of healing to come forward as directed by the Deacons and kneel at the kneeling benches or sit in the provided chair for a personal prayer of power and healing and an anointing with oil if desired. Then you may return to your seat.

*While people are receiving their prayers for healing,
the organist will softly play some favorite hymns.*

A Community Feast of Life and Unity

Everyone is invited to this table regardless of your tradition. All of the great religious traditions have feasts that remind us of God's abiding presence and continued reign. For Christians we remember Christ at the Last Supper. For folks of Jewish descent, we remember the Passover meal. Adherents of Islam feast after fasting during the holy days of Ramadan. And so regardless of your tradition, come to this feast confident that the God of all creation will join us and transform this simple meal into a sacred feast of life and unity.

The Invitation

Sharing the Feast of Life and Unity

Everyone is invited forward to share in this sacred meal of bread and juice. The bread is gluten free and the grape juice is non-alcoholic. Everyone is welcome. As you come forward, take a piece of bread and dip it into the juice and partake immediately. If you are here with a loved one or friend, you are free to come and partake together. Then return to your seats. The Deacon on Duty will direct you.

The Closing Prayer of Thanksgiving

Closing Hymn

My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less

#403

Communal Benediction

At this time all are invited to join the worship leaders at the front of the sanctuary as we form a prayer circle to pray together for health, hope, peace and life.

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

**Please stand if you are able.*