

***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 2017**  
*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

Call to Worship

Leader: Tonight is the birthday of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thank you God for sending the Messiah our way.

**People: Happy Birthday Jesus!**

Leader: When Jesus was born, kings and wise men, angels and stars proclaimed the glory of our God.

**People: Happy Birthday Jesus!**

Leader: When Jesus was born, the piercing light of Christ's love diminished the darkness.

**People: Happy Birthday Jesus!**

Leader: The light continues to grow and has made its way across centuries and continents to make its home in our hearts here at the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction.

**People: Happy Birthday Jesus!**

Leader: Christ still brings light and love into our lives and reminds us the lengths to which God will go to save and protect us. Come; let us sing Happy Birthday to Jesus.

**\*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**

Leader: Our Advent journey has slowly filled the manger with all sorts of beings. Tonight, we remember Christ's universal message of love for all creation.

**Men: From the animals that welcomed Jesus into the world to the stars that led the Magi to the manger; God loves and cares for the created order.....and so should all of us.**

**Women: The working class shepherds appeared next in the manger. Their appearance reminds us that using our talents fulfills a basic human need and opens us up to the presence of God.**

**Men: The angels guided folks throughout the birth narrative and remind us that God is still guiding us through the difficult times of life.**

**Women: This morning we welcomed Mary and Joseph to the manger recognizing that God works in and through our families to spread the love of God.**

**Everyone: Tonight we place the Christ child in the manger knowing that new life connects us to our Creator and gives us hope for the future.**

Leader: The manger is full. Christ's birth spreads God's love to everyone and everything. Let us be grateful in such divine interest in our lives.

The Coming of a Messiah Foretold.....Anna the Prophetess

**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.**

Special Christmas Offering

Invitation, Offering and Prayer of Dedication

Special Christmas Music

**\*Singing Our Praise to Our God: A Christmas Doxology**

**We Three Kings**

**Born a King on Bethlehem's plain  
Gold I bring to crown Him again,  
King forever, ceasing never,  
Over us all to reign.**

Refrain: **O star of wonder, star of night,  
Star with royal beauty bright,  
Westward leading, still proceeding,  
Guide us to thy perfect light.**

The Birth of Jesus.....Joseph, the Father of Jesus

**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.**

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 Visitors and Witnesses..... Akiiki Akbar

**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, Anna the Prophetess, Joseph & Akiiki 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. There are also battery operated candles in the Narthex. 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 & Abby Evans  
Second, everyone will sing all three verses  
Third, Emmerson & Abby 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 & Abby Evans for their beautiful violin music!*

*The Poinsettias on the Altar are Given by:*

*Carol Bishard in loving memory of Thomas Michael Hunn*

*Carol Bishard in loving memory of Bruce Bishard*

*The Chipman Family for family near & far*

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

*Norma Edwards in memory of Lloyd Edwards*

*Diana & Rich Higgins in loving memory of their parents and grandparents*

*Joanne Irwin in memory of loved ones*

*Connie Marshall in loving memory of her father, Edward Rhame*

*Betty & Lily Marthaler in honor of great-grandma's, Betty & Lillian*

*The Parker Family in loving memory of Erica Ann*

*The Polanshek Family in loving memory of John Polanshek*

*June Silverman in memory of Ron and loved ones*

*Sally Turner in loving memory of family*

*FCCEJ remembers its beloved members who have passed in 2017  
Ernest Wilfred Drost Jr., Rachel Herbig Jarvis, William F. Meyer,  
Daniel Kevin McMaster, Hazel Ruth Billheimer and Doris 'Dodie' Farnsworth*

## MINISTRY AT FIRST CHURCH

Church Administrator: Jen Dooley [welcome@fcej.org]  
Interim Music Director: Marie Johnson [mdjkiln@gmail.com]  
Christian Education Director: Laurie Chipman [lchipman@fcej.org]  
Associate Pastor: Rev. Josh Simon [jsimon@fcej.org]  
Senior Pastor: Rev. Mark Mendes [mmendes@fcej.org]

### Music Ministry

Cherub Music: Jenny Bourn [jennybourn4@gmail.com]  
Carrier Bell Choir Director: Carolyn Harris [899-6759]  
Finally @ First Director: Rick Dooley [rickdooley5@gmail.com]  
Heavenly Harmony & Sanctuary Choir Director: Marie Johnson [mdjkiln@gmail.com]  
Joyful Noise: Jessica Moos [jessicamoosvermont@gmail.com]  
Men At First Director: Bill Bickford, Jr. [bill.bickford@aol.com]

### 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]  
Clerk: Alison Wermer [879-7650]  
Christian Education: Jenny Bourn [802-309-7441]  
Communications: Kevin Dorn [878-3696]  
Deacons: Rick Dooley [578-0229] Mike Bottamini [879-0763]  
Hospitality: Jackie Parks [324-9206]  
Missions: Sandy Tallman [879-0665]  
Music: Judy Larrabee [236-0604]  
Nominating: Carl Wermer [879-7650]  
Stewardship: Kathy Finnie [878-3696]  
Trustees: Kevin Meilleur [238-4041]  
Ushering: Michael Sullivan [879-6044]

### Recognized Groups at First Church

Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop [879-6552] Sue Wood [suewood@myfairpoint.net](mailto:suewood@myfairpoint.net)  
or Linda Bogardus at [lbogardus@myfairpoint.net](mailto:lbogardus@myfairpoint.net)  
Heavenly Food Pantry Contact: Valerie Gabert [879-0109]  
Called To Care Contact: Beth Volker [879-4708]  
Nepali Christian Community Contact: Dan Raut [310-4371]

*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.*