

***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**  
**Christmas Eve 2017**  
*A Service of Lessons and Carols*

*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*

Prelude	Sing We Now at Christmas	Currier Bell Choir
	What Child Is This?	Currier Bell Choir
	Mary Did You Know	Heavenly Harmony
	Come, Emmanuel	Sanctuary Choir
	We Wait	Sanctuary Choir
	There's a Light A Comin'	Men at First

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

Introit by the Men at First *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming* Praetorius

Call to Worship

Leader: On this most sacred of nights, we remember the ageless story of the very presence of God coming into the world in the form of a vulnerable child.

**Women: The belief in God's presence is as vulnerable today as it was then. Giving birth renews our hope in God, humanity and our shared future.**

**Men: Today, faith in God needs protection just like our small children. Baby Jesus offers us a challenge and a calling.**

**Everyone: Most of us just want to curl up in the warm embrace of God and sense the divine presence as it grows within us throughout our journey.**

Leader: God pictured as a child gives us an opportunity to be good parents as we protect, nurture and learn about life and love. Come, let us lift up baby Jesus in our lives that our faith may grow during these times of great need.

The Prophecy Foretold: Isaiah 9:1-7.....Confirmand Zach Schmalz

**\*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.  
Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning,  
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;  
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;  
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 remind 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 Annunciation: Luke 1:26-38.....Rev. Mark  
and Mary's Response: Luke 1:46-55.....Deacon Lauren Starkey

Anthem by Heavenly Harmony

*I See a Star*

Gilpen

The Birth of Jesus: Luke 2:1-7.....Confirmand Caitlin McGeary

\*Carol

*Good Christian Friends Rejoice*

**Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;  
now give heed to what we say; Jesus Christ is born today;  
Ox and ass before him bow, asleep within the manger now.  
Christ is born today, Christ is born today!**

**Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;  
now you know of endless bliss: Jesus Christ was born for this!  
God has opened heaven's door, and you are blessed forevermore.  
Christ was born for this, Christ was born for this!**

**Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;  
now you need not fear the grave: Jesus Christ was born to save!  
Calls you one and calls you all to gain the everlasting hall.  
Christ was born to save, Christ was born to save!**

Christmas Prayer and **Unison Lord's Prayer (trespasses)**

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

**People: And also with you**

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

**People: We lift them to the Lord.**

Pastor: Let us give thanks to God Most High.

**People: It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

Pastor: Let us pray.....

**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.**

Musical Response by the Men at First

*Glory Hallelu*

Besig

The Holy Child and His Visitors: Luke 2:8-20.....Deacon Josh Sharp

**\*Carol**

***The First Nowell***

**The first Nowell the angel did say  
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;  
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,  
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.  
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born is the King of Israel.  
They looked up and saw a star shining in the east, beyond them far;  
And to the earth it gave great light, and so it  
continued both day and night.  
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born is the King of Israel.  
And by the light of that same star  
Three magi came from country far;  
To seek for a king was their intent,  
And to follow the star wherever it went.  
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born is the King of Israel.**

The Wisemen Come: Matthew 2:1-11.....Rev. Josh Simon

Sanctuary Choir Anthem *Noel Festival* Larson

Christmas Meditation *Herod and Mary* Rev. Mendes

**Spreading the Light of Christ**

*Revs. Mendes and Simon will light the Christ Candle and then pass Christ's light to the whole congregation. We ask everyone to be careful with your candles 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.*

Christmas Solo by Bill Bickford Jr. *Oh Holy Night* Adams

**\*A Final Carol**

***Silent Night, Holy Night***

*First, Abigail Evans will play one verse by herself  
Then the congregation will sing the verses,  
Then Abigail will play by herself as we enjoy the light, music and community.*

**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

*\*Please stand if you are able*

*\*\*The evening offering will be taken on your way out.*

*Please give generously in the basket provided at each of the exits so the vital work of our congregation and our outreach to those in need may continue unabated.*

*\*\*\*Thanks to Abigail for her beautiful violin music!*

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

*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]  
Currier 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.*