

***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

Facebook: First Congregational Church of Essex Junction UCC

Twitter: 1stChurchEJ



The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction Christmas Eve 2017

A Service of Celebration, Carols & Communion

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 *What a Glorious Night* McDonald & Frey
Mary Did You Know? Lowry & Greene

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

Introit *Do You Hear What I Hear* Regney & Baker

Call to Worship

Leader: On this quiet night you are welcome to come and sit a while.

**People: My life has been so busy. The world so full of anxiety and tension.
Tonight, I will just let God's divine spirit into my heart....** [take 3 deep breaths]

Leader: On this sacred night, come and commune with the mystery of God's presence among us. So long ago, Jesus, came to share the journey with us. Now, we open ourselves to the same spirit....[take 3 deep breaths]

People: My life is so focused on my own needs and wants. Tonight, I will think about God's needs as Jesus lies vulnerable and helpless in the manger....[take 3 deep breaths]

Leader: Come, let us commune with God and give glory to Jesus and seek to connect with the very Spirit of God. Come, let us center ourselves on God.

Opening Scripture: The Prophecy of Jesus Christ.....Isaiah 11:1-9

***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.

Unison Prayer of Confession & Lord's Prayer ("trespasses")

Creator God, you are the source of power in our universe; today we call upon you to exercise that power with humility by forgiving us when we fall short of who we were born to be. Forgive us when we ignore the plight of travelers looking for a place to stay. Forgive us when we disregard the position of the poor. Forgive us when we participate in the corporate use of brutal force. Forgive us when our actions cause others hardship. Help us to be better people and live into the birth story in ways that give glory to your world. We pray this with humility, and in the name of Jesus Christ.

The Assurance of Pardon

Leader: Jesus experiences the best and worst parts of human behavior.....AND he still loves us. Over and over and over again, God welcomes us home. God loves without limit and always forgives us.

People: Thank you Jesus. Amen and Alleluia!

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.

***A Christmas Carol**

Joy to the World

**Joy to the world! The Lord is come: let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Christ room, and heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.**

**Joy to the Earth! the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

**Christ rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove
The glories of God's righteousness and wonders of God's love,
And wonders of God's love, and wonders, wonders of God's love.**

Mary's Song the Magnificat.....Luke 1:46-55

Musical Response by Abigail Evans & Steph Field *Ave Maria* Gounod

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.

Prayer Response

O Come All Ye Faithful

Bocelli

O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him,

O come let us adore, Him, Christ the Lord

***A Christmas Carol**

Hark the Herald Angels Sing

**Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"**

**Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies;
With th'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 Sun of Righteousness!

Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.

**Mild he lays His glory by, born that we no more may die,
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"**

The Birth of Jesus Christ.....Luke 2:8-20

Communion Meditation

Mary and Herod

Rev. Mendes

Anthem by Finally at First

Christmas Hallelujah

adapted from Cohen

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

Tonight, we will celebrate Holy Communion by intinction. The minister will direct everyone to come forward to receive the elements. If you are unable to come forward, one of the Deacons will bring the elements to you. The bread is gluten free from West Meadow Bakery and the grape juice is non-alcoholic. Absolutely everyone is welcome at Christ's table!

Communion Anthem *Little Drummer Boy/Peace on Earth* Crosby & Bowie

Spreading the Light of Christ

The Minister will light the Christ Candle and then proceed to pass Christ's light to the whole congregation. We ask everyone to be careful. There are also battery operated candles in the Narthex.

A Christmas Carol

Silent Night, Holy Night

Gruber

Abigail Evans will play one verse of the carol alone on the violin

Then the congregation will sing the verses.

Then Abigail will play one final verse alone.

**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*

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

****The evening offering will be taken on your way out.
Please give generously in the baskets in the Narthex or by the elevator.*

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@fccej.org]
Interim Music Director: Marie Johnson [mdjkiln@gmail.com]
Christian Education Director: Laurie Chipman [lchipman@fccej.org]
Associate Pastor: Rev. Josh Simon [jsimon@fccej.org]
Senior Pastor: Rev. Mark Mendes [mmendes@fccej.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
or Linda Bogardus at 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.