

***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 2018

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 *Hope Was Born This Night* McDonald & Frey

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* Baker

Call to Worship

Leader: Tonight, we remember the old story of how Jesus was born. Tonight, angels and shepherds, kings and magi, Mary and Joseph re-enter our lives to teach us about God.

People: I love the angels appearing to Mary and Joseph, the star coursing through the sky, the wise men fooling Herod and the Innkeeper making room in his barn.

Leader: I love Saint Nicholas giving away gold, Christmas trees of light, carolers bracing the cold and going to church with our families.

People: Two thousand years after its first telling, the story of Christ's birth still enlivens our lives and teaches us about God's way. Come, let us re-enter the amazing old story and let God's love wash over us again and again...

Leader: Come, let us worship the Living God.

Opening Scripture: The Prophecy of Jesus Christ.....Isaiah 9:2-7

***Opening 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.**

A Time of Confession

The Call to Confession

Leader: The people lived in darkness and ignored God's will in their lives. Like a loving parent, God never gave up on saving humanity, but sent a Son to lead them into a land of meaning and joy.

People: We too ignore God in our lives and often find ourselves in the darkness of introspection, insubordination and invention. We still need God's grace to set us free.

Leader: Come, let us confess our shortcomings before God.

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

Forgiving God, you come to us by way of a manger and charge us to be vulnerable, open to new ideas, full of awe, and totally dependent upon you. Instead we seek power over our own lives; we close ourselves to new ways of being; we have lost any sense of the divine breaking in upon us and we like to control our own lives. Forgive us and offer us the gifts of the manger once again that we might leave this sacred place with a bit more peace, hope, joy and love. We pray this with humility, mercy and devotion to Jesus, amen.

The Assurance of Pardon

Leader: For thousands of years, God sought us out over and over again. In both dramatic and quiet ways, the Divine Presence continues to seek us out for relationship. My precious children, God forgives you and always welcomes you home.

People: We accept God's forgiveness and love. Amen and Alleluia!

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 by Finally @ First

Amen, See the Little Baby

***A Christmas Carol**

Angels We Have Heard on High

Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o’er the plains,

And the mountains in reply echo back their joyous strains.

Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Shepherds why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?

What the gladsome tidings be, which inspire your heavenly song.

Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Come to Bethlehem and see, Him whose birth the angels sing;

Come adore on bended knee, Christ, the Lord, the new born king.

Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

The Birth of Jesus Christ.....Luke 2:1-20

Communion Meditation

Light in the Darkness

Rev. Mendes

Anthem by Finally at First

Adapted by Rick Dooley

Light of the World

One Day

O Come All Ye Faithful

Daigle

Matisyahu

Webbe

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

O Holy Night

Adam & Coltrane

Lighting the Christ Candle

Leader: Jesus came into the world to bring hope, peace, joy and love into our lives. He preached about these things and embodied them in his everyday life.

Light the candles of hope, peace, joy and love

People: Jesus wants our lives to be richer, fuller and more meaningful. If we follow his teaching we will know more abundant life.

Leader: Loving and forgiving God, thank you for sending Jesus to teach us how to live. As Jesus came into the world long ago, so let him enter our hearts and teach us how to live with hope, peace, joy and love.

People: Creator God, thank you for sending Jesus into this world and into our hearts. Amen.

Light Christ Candle

Spreading the Light of Christ

Now that the Christ candle has been lit, the ministers will proceed to pass Christ's light to the whole congregation. We ask everyone to be careful.

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:

Betty & Bill Adams in loving memory of friends

Myrna Doney in loving memory of her mother, Fern and Mr Bob

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

Marsha Duell in loving memory of Rufus Duell

Norma Edwards in memory of family

Erica Garvey & Jon Roddy in memory of loved ones

Cathie Goodheart & Tim Carney in memory of loved ones

Joanne Irwin in memory of loved ones

Shannon McCullen in loving memory of Ed & Peg Hurst

The Noel Family in loving memory of parents, Mary & Larry Noel

Carolyn Rushford in memory of loved ones

The Sanctuary Choir & Heavenly Harmony in honor of Carol Spradling

The Shearer Family in loving memory of family and friends

The Starkey Family in loving memory of Mr & Mrs Gorden Starkey Sr.

Carolyn Toof in loving memory of Dick Toof & Renee Boucher

Carl & Alison Wermer in loving memory of family

FCCEJ remembers its beloved members who have passed in 2018

*Frances Christensen, Joyce Daniels, George Dunbar Jr., Norman Faunce, Marion Ferris,
William Harris, Diana Higgins, Carol Mauger, Gerald Lee Nadeau & Alice Williams*

MINISTRY AT FIRST CHURCH

Church Administrator: Jen Dooley [welcome@fccej.org]
Music & Choir Director: Carol Spradling [cspradling@fccej.org]
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]
Joyful Noise: Jessica Moos [jessicamoosvermont@gmail.com]
Men At First Director: Bill Bickford, Jr. [bill.bickford@aol.com]
Sanctuary Choir/Heavenly Harmony Director: Carol Spradling[cspradling@fccej.org]

Committee / Church Officer Contacts

President, Chair Human Resources Committee: Carl Wermer [879-7650]
Vice President, Chair Finance & Pastoral Relations: Maureen Evans [879-7517]
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 [777-9446]
Deacons: Betsy Weischedel [922-2094], Peter Schmalz [202-297-3625]
Hospitality: Mary Jane Allen [557-1335], Jim Glatz [503-5076]
Missions: Sandy Tallman [879-0665]
Music: Judy Larrabee [236-0604]
Nominating: Barb Smith [878-6866]
Stewardship: Kathy Finnie [734-9688]
Trustees: Kevin Meilleur [238-4041]
Ushering:

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]
Craft Fest Committee Contact: Linda Bogardus [lbogardus@myfairpoint.net]

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.