

***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***  
***United Church of Christ***  
***Good Friday 2019***

*This year's Good Friday service will focus less on Christ's blood and sacrifice saving us for our sin and more on how Christ's death on the cross challenged the political and religious powers of the day. This theology of the cross is less in line with the ancient Hebrew theology of blood sacrifice and more in line with our understanding of Jesus's teaching about power and justice. This theology of the cross emphasizes a different model of power: one of love, humility and sacrificial action. Both models spring from scripture, highlight Christ's teaching and rely on the Holy Spirit.*

<i>A Welcoming Community    -    Accepting and Serving All In the Spirit of Christ</i>
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Prelude

**GOD'S VISION STATED IN WORD, SONG AND PRAYER**

*Greeting and Welcome*

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

An Early Vision of God's Peaceable Kingdom.....Isaiah 65:17-25

*From the earliest days of the Hebrew people, God called individuals into the wilderness to create a different type of community, one grounded in a relationship to God. The natural outgrowth of that relationship is a people that live in peace, righteousness and love. The Divine continually draws people back to the Garden, Holy Mountain, Peaceable Kingdom, wilderness, exiled remnant, the apocalyptic vision, or the New Heaven and New Earth.....always away from the ways of the world and into a place where God's love rules.*

*Isaiah's ancient vision connects Jesus and his message to the ancient calling.....*

**\*Opening Hymn**

***Praise to the Living God [song sheet]***

**Beach**

Call to Worship

Leader: Jesus preached love and justice for all God's children in Galilee. He healed wounds, offered hope, fed and filled them with the very presence of God.

**People: We flock to Jesus for he treats us with dignity and respect. He invites us into God's presence and we swarm to the divine with fervor. Our God loves us with abandon and we love the Sacred Presence back.**

Leader: Jesus turned to Jerusalem and the religious leaders, inviting them to join him in sharing God with the people. They declined and instead put the threat to their power to death. They thought they had won.

**People: But God is more powerful than self-absorbed people. Divine love is victorious over death, injustice, greed, division and apathy. Jesus' cross lives even now and challenges us to follow.**

Leader: Come, let us worship the glory found in Christ's cross.  
Come, let us follow in its challenging footsteps of power.  
Come, let us ground our lives in the power of Christ our Lord!

#### **Unison Prayer of Invocation**

**Creator God, thank you for loving us deeply enough to invite us into your beautiful world. For warming our hearts, providing us sustenance, challenging our intellect, creating a yearning spirit and planting a divine seed in our souls...for these things we are grateful. Thank you for re-setting these foundational callings in each generation and continuing to offer us your love through prophets, poets, sages and saints of all stripes. Thank you for showing us the depth and power of your love through Christ's cross and how it continues to echo through the centuries causing change, chaos and conscription. Convict us that we might step up and join Jesus in making this world a better place. Give us the strength to carry our crosses and walk with you and in your ways.**

#### **GOD'S VISION CORRUPTED BY HUMAN BEHAVIOR**

Scriptures of Contrasts and Power    Mark 7:1-9    [page 32]  
Mark 10:32-45    [page 36]

*The cross was a symbol of shame and defeat. Everyone believed that Christ's death signaled the end of his movement. Disciples, Jewish leaders and Roman authorities all believed that power was grounded in might and right, not humble, sacrificial love. After the humiliating cross, the disciples hid in the upper room while the Jewish leadership believed his death would calm the crowds and cement the delicate balance of power and privilege enjoyed by the Jewish elite and their Roman overlords. All too often, we still view the world through the eyes of the Disciples vying for glory, the Jewish leadership fighting for their privilege or the Roman overlords maintaining the status quo. For this reason we need to turn our hearts, minds and souls to God in confession.*

**\*Hymn**

***Just A Closer Walk With Thee***

**Spiritual**

**I am weak but Thou art strong. Jesus, keep me from all wrong;  
I'll be satisfied as long, as I walk, dear Lord, close to Thee.**

**Refrain**

**Just a closer walk with Thee. Grant it Jesus, if you please;  
Daily walking close to Thee. Let it be, dear Lord, let it be.**

**Through this world of toil and snares, if I falter, Lord, who cares?  
Who with me my burden share? None but Thee, dear Lord, none but Thee.**

**Refrain**

**When my feeble life is o'er, Time for me will be no more;  
On that bright eternal shore, I will walk, dear Lord, close to Thee.**

**Refrain**

**A Prayer of Confession and Ritual of Cleansing**

*After the prayer, Carol will play ancient hymns of confession. As she plays, everyone is invited to write (on the cream, smaller paper) the ways that we are overwhelmed and/or discouraged by the ways of the world: its violence, hatred, corrupt systems, economic injustice, racial and class divisions and threatening chaos. Once written, please bring your worries and confessions up to the altar and place them in the large bowl of water where the specially made paper will disintegrate, taking the sins of the world and our own worries away. This symbolizes your desire for a different world and your accompanying repentance.*

Sanctuary Choir Anthem.....*When Christ Comes To Die*  
*Gretchen Owens , oboe soloist*

## **GOD'S VISION RESTORED IN THE POWER OF CHRIST'S CROSS**

A Scripture of Christ's Humble Power      Philippians 2:1-11      [page 152]  
I Corinthians 1:18-31      [page 127]

*Despite how the world viewed the cross, the early church and generations that followed viewed it as Jesus modelling a different way to understand power and reality. Paul, brilliantly turns the table on humanity's understanding of defeat and transforms the cross into a sign of power and victory. Christ's sacrificial love and forgiveness displays a power that challenges and ultimately will defeat the darkness and incomprehensibly corrupt world.*

**\*Hymn**                                      *What Wondrous Love [song sheet]*                                      **Folk Hymn**

### **A Prayer of Hope and Engagement**

*After the prayer, Carol will play quietly. As she plays, everyone is invited to write (on the yellow, larger paper) actions and ways that might lead to positive changes in the way the world claims power and accomplishes tasks. These changes could be initiated in our homes, at the church, locally, as a nation or in the world. Please be as concrete as possible. Once written, please bring your hopes for a better world and place them in the basket on the altar. As you return to your seat, you are invited to light a candle or two in the windows to symbolize your hope for the world coming from Christ's counter cultural ways.*

**\*Hymn**                                      *Once To Every One And Nation*  
Tune: *Come Thou Font of Every Blessing*

**Once to every one and nation, Comes the moment to decide,  
In the strife of truth with falsehood, For the good or evil side;  
Some great cause, God's new Messiah, Offering each the bloom or blight,  
And the choice goes by forever, 'twixt that darkness and that light.**

**By the light of burning martyrs, Jesus' bleeding feet we track,  
Toiling up new Calvaries ever, With the cross that turns not back;  
New occasions teach new duties, Time makes ancient good uncouth,  
They must upward still and onward, Who would keep abreast of truth.**

**Though the cause of evil prosper, Yet 'tis truth alone is strong;  
Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne;  
Yet that scaffold sways the future, And behind the dim unknown,  
Standeth God within the shadow, Keeping watch above God's own.**

Benediction

Pastoral Benediction

**\*Sung Community Benediction     #77**

**Lord, Dismiss Us With Your Blessing**

**Lord, dismiss us with your blessing; fill our hearts with joy and peace.**

**Let us each your love possessing, triumph in redeeming grace.**

**Oh, refresh us, oh, refresh us, travelling through this wilderness.**

**We give thanks and adoration for your gospel's joyful sound.**

**May the fruits of your salvation in our hearts and lives abound.**

**Ever faithful, ever faithful, to the truth may we be found.**

\*Postlude

*On your way out of the sanctuary, please take one of the papers written to help affect change  
in the world and try to put the behavior of change into motion in your own life.  
They will be located in a basket in the back of the church.*

*\* Please stand as you are able*

### **Easter Services**

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

6:30 a.m. Breakfast served at First Church until 10:00 a.m.

8:30 a.m. First Worship Service

10:15 a.m. Second Worship Service

