

OCTOBER 2019



SPIRIT@FIRST

monthly newsletter

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First Congregational Church
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Essex Junction, VT 05452
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Pastoral Ponderings

"We grow through an intellectual journey and feel empowered to challenge, question and explore our faith."

These words are from the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction's values, actually the very first one. The value that it describes is inquiry. In 2014, after an intentional and exhaustive process, participants proclaimed that this value should be listed as our first value of our life together. What does it mean for worship when we list inquiry as a foundational value of the congregation? Just thinking about the answer to that question opens up avenues of thought that should keep us on our toes as we strive to explore what God's presence means for our individual and collective lives. It surely changes to way worship is presented and or the way we understand God. To believe that each week we come to inquire about God and how God's presence influences our lives is much different than coming to church for specific answers, doctrine or liturgies.

Our by-laws state in Article 2, section 1 under faith that, "We affirm the responsibility of the church in each generation to make this faith

their own." Applying the value of inquiry and proclaiming that each generation needs to understand faith in their own terms dramatically changes the way our faith Formation operates. No longer do we sit in the class rooms and listen to what this or that scripture means, rather we strive to teach our children to claim the faith for themselves, to experience God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit for themselves and see how they apply it to their lives and our community.

Understanding scripture as a narrative where God engages people in life instead a rigid formula for defining God follows in this path of inquiry and claiming the faith in every new generation. Instead of listening to priests, prophets and sages about how we must follow God, we proclaim the purpose is to invite God into your life to comforting you when you are grieving, challenge you when you are ignoring your neighbor, saving you when despots oppress you, or simply to draw on God's strength when you are weak.

It is a change of perspective that has significant implications for our faith. It keeps God big and vital instead of a tool people use to affirm their own vision and ideals. It keeps the divine presence alive and active in our world in each new generation, nation and



people. It keeps all of us on our toes a bit, but it is part and parcel to what we believe as New England Congregationalists. Just listen to Rev. John Robinson who as the lead pastor of the Separatists in Leiden in the Netherlands shared these words as they left for a new land in 1620.....

We limit not the truth of God to our poor reach of mind, By notions of our day and sect, crude, partial and confined. No, let a new and better hope within our hearts be stirred. The Lord Hath yet more light and truth to break forth from his word.

Even in 1620, our ancestors knew that humanity had a way of turning our own beliefs into idols where self-righteousness and judgement led to most everyone else being cast into outer darkness. They had other groups do it to them and they were trying to not fall into the same trap.

We must follow in the steps of our ancestors and teach our children not to make idols of human constructs, even if they are ours. Teaching that does not make God smaller but ironically makes God more alive and bigger than ever. Come, join us on Sunday morning as we strive to experience more light and truth to lead us in our lives. It is our church's number one value, a key biblical command and religious ancestral legacy.

Glad to be asking questions and discerning with you,
Mark Mendes
Senior Pastor

Associate Pastor News

One of the great privileges I have as your associate pastor is attending events in which our youth participate. I like to say, "Outside of your family and friends, I'm one of your (youth) biggest cheerleaders." Whenever I hear about an event one of our young people is involved in, I try to show up. It's a joy to see our young people perform in a musical or play or sporting event. They put a lot of work into whichever one they do, and in the result, it shows. I think it is important for young people to have non-family in their lives, showing them support and care. As its October, again, I encourage our youngsters to let me know when you have an event. I'll show and root for you. If you're afraid I will root too loud and embarrass you, no worries I never want to embarrass.

National Youth Event

National Youth Event (NYE), organized by the United Church of Christ, happens once every four years. Youth ages 12-22 come together for four days of worship, music, and service projects, often 4,000 youth are in attendance. National Youth Event is July 22-25 in Perdue, Indiana. I'm working with the Connecticut Conference to arrange transportation to the event. At this time, I don't know when we will leave or when we will return. I'm assuming we can add two days before the start of the event and a day at the end of

the trip, so July 20-26. The cost of each person to attend NYE will be about \$250. A final number will be settled on once I hear back from Connecticut. In the meantime, we need to start planning fundraising and getting an idea on how many youth want to attend. An informational meeting is taking place Sunday, October 13 after the second service in the Marvin Lounge. Laurie and I will be there to talk about NYE. If you have questions, ask Laurie or me.

Confirmation Class

Confirmation is an intentional time in a person's life, usually a young person, to learn more about Christianity, the Bible, faith, etc. During this time, they start to intentionally form what they believe and how they want to engage society. The confirmands attend other faith tradition's worship services, participate in community service projects, and participate in some capacity at church whether if it's through helping with faith formation, reading in worship, etc. It ends with Confirmation Sunday when confirmands who want to join the church publicly do so. Anyone in 8th grade or above is welcome to join the Confirmation class. It is a one-year program. Confirmation class will take place most Thursdays, 7:30-9pm, between now and May 31st on Confirmation Sunday.

Confirmation starts with an orientation/welcome, parents and youth attend, on Thursday October 3rd, 7:30-8:30pm. Class begins Thursday, October 10, 7:30-9pm.

More Important Dates

High School Youth Group goes to *Sam Mazza's Corn Maze* on Sunday, October 20, 2:15-4:30pm. Attending? Let me know: jsimon@fceej.org

Youngish Adult (18+) Gathering Friday, October 25th, 7-9pm at Church Parsonage (3 Church St, Essex Junction)

Josh Simon
Associate Pastor

Laurie's Lens



Our Faith Formation year is up and running! Great to see many of you back and I look forward to connecting with more of you as you transition back to church. You will notice the changes around the building. New paint and windows, new bulletin boards and new artwork on the walls. Please don't hesitate to ask for a tour!

To help with being welcoming and us getting to know one another by name, the Christian Education committee decided to move the children and youth name tags out of the Peer Group rooms and down to Fellowship Hall and start a welcome table by the Name Tag board. So now when you arrive, please walk through Fellowship

Hall and stop by the table to collect everyone's name tags. The children and youth name tags will be on the table in their peer group baskets. Adults are on the name tag board. All name tags can be return to this same location on Sunday mornings before you leave. Everyone is encouraged to wear their name tags throughout the full morning. You will also see a 2nd small welcome table in the hallway of the 2nd floor. Both places have copies of our Faith Formation Registration forms and year calendars.

Our youth programs have started up! As I write this, we just wrapped up our Junior Youth Kick off. Great see those of you who were able to make it. We hope many of you will make youth events a priority on your calendar the program year and do your best to attend. Being a part of a group of youth from church allows you to really build a faith community of your peers, one that accepts you for who you are and where you can talk openly and ask questions. Looking at our long list of 5th through 8th graders, if all of you are able to make an event, we would have a group of 18! How cool would that be?! The more that come, the more fun we have and the more you can see and are reminded of who your faith peers are out in the community. Today during Kick Off we spent some time in the new Youth Room and of course played air hockey and foosball! Good times! (FYI... Youth Board of information and postings has moved up the hallway by the stairs.)

Creative Discoveries Day Care

Are you seeking quality care for your children? Creative Discoveries is a freshly opened, center-based, early educational facility. We serve children ages six weeks to five years. We offer full time care *Monday thru Friday, 7am-5:30pm*. We provide children the opportunity to learn in a space that is encouraging and promotes creativity. Our curriculum is connected to the Vermont Early Learning Standards, to assure that all children are learning the skills they need to be successful in their journey of life.

Contact Information

We are located at 39 Main Street, Essex Jct VT (in the First Congregational Church administration building.) You can reach us at: (802)598-7237; or via email at creativediscoveriesece@gmail.com.

Looking forward to meeting you!
Katie McGee
Owner/Director, CDECE

Watch for weekly news coming to your inbox soon!

Blessings!
Laurie Chipman
Christian Education Director

Carol's Corner

It's that time of year when Vermont's spectacular beauty attracts people from all over the planet, and we get to live here and see it every day! Our music groups have started the fall season and are busy working on music for Sunday worship and upcoming holidays.

We would like to remind families that we welcome student instrumentalists who might want to play special music to get in touch with Carol directly. We've

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had students ages 5 all the way through college, and their instrumental praise lights up our faces with Sunday smiles.

We are getting into the finishing phase of our organ renovations just in time for the holidays, and will make sure that our investment in the instrument is protected during winter construction with special care and plastic to seal off the organ loft.

Finally, please do feel free to check out our handbell or choir, if you feel like you might want to be part of the music program - we welcome everyone!

*Fall blessings,
Carol Spradling
Music Director*

Deacons' Corner

Adventures in Worship

As our faith community comes together after the summer months, the Deacons are already looking ahead to winter! The current plan for the capital campaign renovation is that the Sanctuary work will begin in January 2020, and will likely continue through February and possibly into March. This will mean that worship services will be held in the Fellowship Hall while this work is being done. We are excited to bring creative and flexible energy to this challenge, designing meaningful and spirit-filled worship experiences! We will be working with other committees (Faith Formation, Music and Hospitality to name a few) to coordinate efforts.

Over the past year, our Pastors and the Deacons have been holding monthly Saturday worship services in the Fellowship Hall. Those who have attended have experienced the cozy warmth of community on winter days. Over the years many have also enjoyed fellowship over meals, events, discussions, and coffee in this space. It is, after all, a space designed for "fellowship." And where two or more are gathered, God is most certainly present.

We know that there will be challenges and extra effort, but we also see this time as rich with opportunity for engaging with our faith community in new and fun ways, while maintaining the core of what we cherish in worship. If you have creative ideas, we would love to hear them! Feel free to be in touch with one of your Deacons. We hope you will join us in approaching this time with a spirit of adventure!

*With you in the spirit of
community,
Carolyn Rushford*

Capital Campaign

This week, crews began painting the interiors of the historic window casings in preparation for NEW storm windows to be installed. This is very exciting and will give quite a face-lift to the sanctuary! The new storm windows were custom-built to fit our space, so they will look less choppy and they will be clean and more efficient. Once the new storm windows are in place, the

refurbished **historic windows & shutters** will be installed (in early/mid-October).

Our new parking lot entrance & ADA bathroom are available for use and the Deacons are designing shelves for the new **storage closet**. Our entrance is more accessible than ever, featuring automated door-opener pads. However, there will be a little more minor construction as we add a small roof above the vestibule entrance. We are still awaiting final approval of a federal grant that would pay for the new parking lot light fixtures and installation. We need to wait until we have a grant contract in place before we can use those funds, so the lighting portion of the project will take a bit longer than we hoped. We are aware that this causes some inconvenience, but the delay will save us about \$10,000 if we can use federal funds for that work instead of paying for it with Campaign funds.

Asbestos removal in the preschool wing is complete, and our Trustees and new tenant are working to get the space ready for the new daycare business to open. Last but not least, our old

"I knew that as one person, I couldn't contribute much to the cause...but as part of a crowd of like-minded people, my small contribution could be greatly magnified." – Ed Steele,

From Missions: Dignity for Our Land's Strangers (adjacent page)

Capital Campaign Update: Windows, Entrance, and Vestibule



sign has been removed, and **new sign** will be installed sometime in late September/October along with some new landscaping around the peace pole.

As we wrap up a few remaining loose ends on the projects completed to date, the trustees and Capital Campaign Committee will turn our attention to the Marvin Lounge and Kitchen projects, which are the next big projects on our list.

*Yours in faith & friendship,
Kaki McGeary & David Johnson
Capital Campaign Co-Chairs*

Missions: Dignity for Strangers

Ed Steele and Josh participated in the protest march and rally at the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Data Center, located in Williston in an unmarked building. The protest was organized by the Peace and Justice Center and co-sponsored by 60+ organizations, including some of the major Jewish synagogues in the state. About 750 people attended.

One of the purposes of the event was to protest the conditions of the detention centers that are holding children, where there was not adequate food, water or sanitation and where children were taking care of children. Part of the problem is due to high numbers of those coming. Part of the problem seems to be from purposeful neglect. Part of the problem also due to not enough funds. And the mistreatment of refugees/migrants/immigrants is bipartisan by our nation's politicians. In community organizing for a better society there's a saying, "No permanent friends, and no permanent enemies." In other words, a political leader on one issue might be an ally and, on another issue, that same leader is an opponent. Some might wonder what the effectiveness is for showing up to protest outside an ICE Data Center, thousands of miles away from the detentions on the southern border. Showing up demonstrates to fellow denizens that not everyone approves of the way our government treats children at the border. As Ed wrote eloquently,

"The more people marching, the more forceful the statement the march makes. I knew that as one person, I couldn't contribute much to the cause but as part of a crowd of like-minded people, my small contribution could be greatly magnified." Regardless of immigration policy on numbers of how many people we should let in or even on needing a wall or not, there's an ethical and moral stance to treat refugees, immigrants, and migrants once they're here with dignity, many of whom are fleeing from violence. A commitment in the Christian faith to treat the strangers in our land with dignity comes when in the Gospel of Matthew Joseph, Mary, and Jesus flee to Egypt because King Herod wanted to kill the newborn Jesus. Jesus was a refugee, in a strange land. We hope he was treated well.

*Josh Simon
Associate Pastor*



Our Jamaica Missions Team: (left to right)

Sharon Dettenrieder, Kaki McGeary, Rick Dooley, Rev. Mark Mendes, Sam Dooley, Pete Schmalz, Dave & Christine Dewey, Carolyn Rushford, Caitlyn McGeary, Emma Parker, Nolan Boerger, Nick Mendes, Aliyah Watt, and Zack Schmalz.

Missions: World
Communion Sunday

The 2019 Jamaica Mission team is looking forward to sharing our experiences with you! On *Sunday, October 7th* (World Communion Sunday), we will be presenting at both services. We will be sharing photos, stories, perspectives, music, and greetings from our time in Jamaica this summer. And, we will experience communion along with Christians all over the world as we celebrate our global community of faith. According to the UCC website:

The first Sunday of October has become a time when Christians in every culture break bread and pour the cup to remember and affirm Christ as the Head of the Church. On that day, they remember that they are part of the whole body of believers. Whether shared in a grand cathedral, a mud hut, outside on a hilltop, in a meetinghouse, or in a storefront, Christians celebrate the communion liturgy in as many ways as there are congregations.

What better occasion to share with you the important work that this congregation has done in building global community?

We hope to see you there!
Carolyn Rushford

Heavenly Food Pantry

The Food Pantry is open to residents of Essex Junction, Essex Town, and Westford. Clients will need an ID for each member of the household and a utility bill to prove their residence. Clients may only visit the Pantry once per calendar month.

Dates & Hours
2nd Monday (October 14th) @ 5:30pm-7:30pm
4th Thursday (October 26th) @ 2pm-6pm

Volunteers Needed!
We're looking for people to help on Pantry days. But, we also need volunteers on other days to assist with a myriad of tasks. Short commitments are OK. Enthusiasm and a fun-loving attitude is desired. We'd love to welcome you into our Missions community. Please, contact Anita Guild (anitaguild@gmail.com) for more details.



Hours: Tuesdays & Wednesdays 10am-3pm; Thursdays 4pm-8pm. and 1st & 3rd Saturday, 9am-1pm.

Donations
We need donations for winter coats, winter boots, hats, scarfs & sweaters for both men and women.

Volunteers
Volunteers needed now for Thursday shifts. The shifts are 4pm to 6pm and 6pm to 8pm. Please, contact Elaine Raymond @ 879-7350 or ebraymond@gmail.com

Important Dates
▪ *Tuesday, Oct. 1st:* Shop re-opens for the fall/winter clothes, with all new (or nearly new) items.
▪ *Saturday, Oct. 5th & 19th:* Open 9:00 am to 1:00 pm

Faith Formation

Volunteer Opportunities

Many opportunities to volunteer and support First Church children & youth:

Nursery Volunteers/Staff

Be a friendly face to the parents and the littlest ones among us during first 1st & 2nd Service! We strive to follow our Safe Conduct guidelines for a 2:1 ratio. Help in the Nursery during our transition of finding our new Nursery staff person. HS Juniors & Seniors who would like to add Nursery worker to their resume, contact Laurie for an interview and you can be our paid second hands in the Nursery during second service.

Acolytes

Every Sunday, we carry in the light of Christ and light the worship candles. Then during our sung benediction we carry out the light of Christ to remind us all that God and Jesus are with us everywhere we go, not just here at church. Ushers are asked to help and assist the acolytes by lighting the taper, then walking with them if they are new to acolyting or would like a partner. Older children or youth are encourage to be acolytes. Families who are ushering or greeting can acolyte. Signup sheet is on the bulletin board down in the hallway on your way up to worship. Please check the board to see if someone has already signed up.

Ring the Bell

All children and their families are welcome to sign up and ring the church bell 15 minutes before worship begins. Signup sheet is located on the bulletin board before you walk up the steps to worship (beside the Acolyte signup). Instructions are at the top of the sheet as to which rope to pull and how many times to ring the bell. We love to have our church bell ring every Sunday morning before worship!

Spiritual Friends (w/ Donna Burnett, Elaine Raymond, Judy Roy)

1st Sundays of the month on the 2nd floor read a story: Have snack and great conversations with PreK &

Kindergarten children. Then a little Godly playdough time before returning to worship for communion.

Hands-On Mission Sunday Helpers (w/ Maryann Carlson, Joanne Irwin, Sandy Tallman) PreK up through eighth grade are together for a time to build community while doing a mission activity. Last year's ~ shirt baskets for our Easter breakfast tables, Church World Service Hygiene Kits, sorting donations for JUMP, Thrift Store tour, Vacation Bible Camp decorations, planting seeds for Earth Day...just to name a few.

Current Peer Group Leaders

Preschool: Paula Sargent, Makaylah Moos, Kaki & Caitlin McGeary, Marlene & Courtney Frank

Kindergarten: Jenny Bourn & Laura Marthaler

1st & 2nd Grade: Sue Conti & Lisa Clark

3rd & 4th Grade: Barb Smith & Allison VanSteenburg

5th-8th Grade: Pastor Josh & Laurie Chipman

FF Calendar

Pre K – 8th grade:

1st Sunday of each month (starting

October 6th): Intergenerational Worship. Children & youth help greet, usher, and read scripture! Also, Spiritual Friends w/ PreK & K.

October 13th: Peer Group Time

October 20th: Hands-On Mission– all peer groups gather together to hear, talk, and do mission work.

October 27th: Bible Sunday (3rd Grade & Up) & Peer Group Time.

11:30am-12:30pm: Halloween Party to follow in Fellowship Hall

November 3rd: Intergenerational & Spiritual Friends

Music Time

Cherubs: Preschool-2nd Grade

Joyful Noise: 3rd-8th Grade

Music time takes place on peer group Sundays. On these Sundays we ask parents to please greet others first in fellowship hour before moving to the peer rooms to collect your children. All

PreK-2nd graders need to be signed out by an authorized person.

Current FF Offering: *Spectrum Youth & Family Services.* We have raised **\$375.83!** Just think what you spend a \$1 on each week. Are you willing to give that amount to help a youth at Spectrum? Please, use the Bible story envelopes in the pews so your money goes to Spectrum and it will not be confused with the regular offering for the church.

Youth Ministry

All our First Church Youth Programs are Parent Supported! Meal donations and snacks for youth times are appreciated!

Junior Youth Calendar

5th-8th Graders:

Faith & Mission Focus with Fellowship & Games.

Junior Youth October 6th: 11:30am-1:30pm, help greet, usher, and read scripture during our 10:15am worship

Crop Walk October 20th: 11:30am-1:30pm

Halloween Party October 27th:

11:30am-12:30pm, help set up party and stay to clean up.

Junior Youth November 3rd & 17th

11:30am-1:30pm; help greet, usher, and read scripture during our 10:15am worship

Stay active and lend a helping hand!

Help a neighbor or a friend. If you earn an allowance? Have a job? Practice dividing your money 3 ways ~

- Save (in the bank) ~ Give to the church/offering ~ You (spend/save/give to an organization)
- Bring your Offering with you on Sunday and use the envelopes in the pews.
- Find ways and places to connect with your God & have spiritual time ~ praying in color, etc.

Volunteering? Need Info?

Contact Laurie Chipman @
P# 802 878 5745 ext. 103;
or lchipman@fcej.org

Fellowship & Learning

First Church aims to pique your interest in God & community with these programs:

Yoga @ First

Mondays, 5:30pm-6:45pm

Jonah Moos is offering a free yoga class in our Gymnasium! Jonah collects donations on behalf of our Church. All levels from beginner to experienced are absolutely welcome. You can bring your own mat or borrow one of Jonah's.

2020 Stewardship Drive



It's important to remember that it is your annual pledge that keeps our doors open, funds our programs, pays our staff, and allows us to serve God through activities in our church, our community and the wider world. Your support has a positive impact and makes our Good Work possible! The campaign runs from *September 29 to October 20*. Please help our work continue by making a pledge.

Update Your Contact Info

One small favor, please. In order to facilitate the campaign, it would be most helpful if the church office has your most up-to-date contact information, including mailing address, email address and best phone number at which to reach you. Contact the Church Administrator, Doug Ovitt, to provide this updated information.

Phone: (802) 878-5745
Email: welcome@fccej.org

Yours in Christ,
Bill Keithcart, Shannon McCullen,
Jessica Moos, and Beth Volker

Sermon Talkback Tuesdays

Tuesdays, 8:30-10am

Gather with us in the Marvin Lounge for coffee, baked goods, and a lively discussion of the sermon (and other topics!) delivered on Sunday. Join us for the conversation, the goodies, the camaraderie, or all of the above!

Wednesday Night Searchers

Wednesdays @ 7pm

Each week, a group of folks get together in the Marvin Lounge to explore the faith. We do so through books, movies, discussions with members from other religious traditions, TED talks and anything else we want to do. Books are in the office or with Mark on Sunday.

JOY (Just Older Youth)

Thursday, October 3rd @ Noon

If you are 55+ please consider joining this active church group. JOY meets at noon on the first Thursday of the month. We strive to present programs that foster learning, fun, or service. Our very own Reverend Mark Mendes will be joining us. Share your thoughts and bring those questions you've been eager to ask. Don't forget your lunch.

Bridge Club

Friday, October 18th @ 1:30pm

Join us in the Marvin Lounge. Bring snacks and drinks to share. Friends are welcome, too! Join Pastor Mendes in our Marvin Lounge for a rousing game and a chance to win some of his world-famous, homemade jam & salsa!

Coffee Clatter

Fridays @ 8am

Martone's in Essex Junction This may seem like a foolish question, but if you like to talk and drink coffee, then come down to Martone's for open conversation. Rev. Mark and/or Josh are there every week and talk about everything from camping to politics; from deep theological questions to silly jokes; from village life to great vacation spots; from business deals to the best restaurants in town. We laugh, get serious and support each other. Everyone is invited!

Women's Spirituality Group

Saturday, October 19th @ 9:30am

Please join us! Linda Lou Parker will take us on a trip to the Netherlands as she narrates slides of her trip. There will also be continued discussion of a name change for our group with voting at our November meeting.

Essex Eats Out

Friday, October 4th @ 5:30pm

This ongoing service project offers free, community-wide dinners open to all (with a special invitation to the needy & lonely) every Friday night throughout the Essex area. Donations (to help subsidize the cost of these meals) are solicited but not required of all dinner patrons. FCCEJ hosts Essex Eats Out on the first Friday of each month.

Save the D@tes

This is a list of upcoming events at our church and wider faith community:

Saturday Service

October 5th, 2019

Our special Saturday Services will begin starting October 5th at 4:30 p.m. We meet in Fellowship Hall and the service allows for more input and participation if you want. The space is transformed and the tone is a bit more intimate. We end with communion around tables where food is shared and conversation flows easily. It is a great alternative to Sunday morning....come give it a try.

Jamaica Celebration Service

October 6th, 2019

This past summer had 15 people head to Jamaica on a Mission trip where we built a playhouse and upgraded the playground facility at White Horse School where 350 children learn and grow. We partnered with the Jamaica Rotary to distribute meals to the needy as well as had some fun on the beach, mountain stream and city. On October 6th, the entire team will be there to share their experience in word, sacrament and picture. Come and see how our church has changed lives, both our own and many folks from Jamaica.

Blessing of the Animals

October 13th, 2019

God created and loves all critters in this world and out of that love comes humanity's love for their pets. So, after each service on October 13th, Rev.'s Mark and

Josh will bless any animal you bring to the church. We will pray for their health and safety as well as being a good friend to every owner. So come and bring your pets and invite a friend who loves theirs.

Stewardship Celebration Sunday

October 20th, 2019

One of the blessings of being a congregational church is that no one tells us what to do or believe. No bishop passes down orders or demands that we hire a particular minister. We determine what our church, minister and faith will look like. We are in charge of the faith, the building and the finances. We celebrate this self-determination in a financial sense on our Stewardship Celebration Sunday at both services. In the service everyone is asked to come forward and place your pledge or pledge acknowledgement card in the offering plate signifying your full participation at the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction. Some people even dance on their way up since belonging is a joyful experience!

Reformation / Bible Sunday

October 27th, 2019

Reformation Sunday remembers and celebrates our roots in the Protestant Reformation and its emphasis on allowing the word of God found in the scriptures to be front and center in our faith. Bibles were translated into native tongues and for the first time in the history of the church, every day people could read and try to understand the message that

11th ANNUAL FIVE CORNERS CHRISTMAS CRAFT FEST SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9th, 9am-3pm

Four churches--Catholic Daughters at Holy Family Community Hall, St. James Episcopal Church, Essex Junction Senior Center and First Congregational Church--celebrate the season together! To make this event a success, your assistance would be greatly appreciated within these areas:

Nearly New - Consider donating your gentle used items to the fest! We will be accepting *donations in Marvin Lounge starting October 6th*. The following is a quick list of best sellers: *Books, Holiday Items (especially Christmas!), Frames (all sizes), Games, Children Toys, Accessories (e.g. scarves, purses, and jewelry), and Dishes.*

Sweet Shoppe – This is a popular stop for Craft Fest shoppers. We welcome your contributions of unique items. As you begin planning your holiday baking, please consider making: *gluten-free options, donuts, whoopee pies, peanut brittle, homemade candy, annual faves (e.g. fudge, cookies, and various breads), pies (all kinds), jams and jellies, relishes, horseradish, salsa.*

Heavenly Spirit Café: We will again be serving a delicious lunch including homemade soups, macaroni and cheese, and Chili. Don't worry Chicken and Biscuits will be served. Cathy Goodheart will again be asking for food and drink donations.

Decorating: Need decorators of any age to help in the Marvin Lounge, Hallways and Fellowship Hall. *We will be decorating Sunday Nov 3rd from 11:30am-1pm.*

Greeters: Help our wonderful shoppers navigate our church. Please, consider signing up for a two-hour shift: 9am-11am, 11am-1pm, or 1pm-3pm.

Signup: Sunday, October 20th, 27th and November 3rd. The committee will have signup sheets after 1st & 2nd services in Fellowship Hall for making a donation or signing up to volunteer at one of our amazing areas. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Linda Bogardus at 872-8972 or lbogardus@myfairpoint.net.

Thank you to everyone for your support, Linda Bogardus, Ann Gray, Cathy Shearer, Elaine Raymond, Wendy Wark, Val Gabert & Mary Gratton

Please note: all the craft tables have been sold this year

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Jesus was bringing to the world. We celebrate that tradition by giving bibles out to our 3rd graders during each worship service. If you are older than 3rd grade and have not received your bible, tell Rev. Mark or rev Josh or Laurie and we will make sure you get one that day.

The Giving Tree

Sunday, November 24th

Christmas is coming! Once again, the members of this church will have the opportunity to provide gifts to needy children in our community. The Giving Tree will be set up the Sunday before Thanksgiving (November 24th) in the narthex with gift tags for about 50 children. Each child receives three tags – two for articles of clothing and one for a toy, book or gift card. There is always great anticipation around the Giving Tree and we hope you will join us again in making this Christmas a season of hope and love for so many children in Essex. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Elaine Raymond at 879-7350 or ebraymond@gmail.com.

FCCEJ New Member’s Class

Sunday, October 20th

Following 2nd Worship (~11:30am), Marvin Lounge

Do you like what is going on at the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction? Do you like the opportunities to join a book group or a joyful senior group or to help the hungry? Do you appreciate all the programming and focus on our children and youth? Do you like the sermons

and the way they make you think? Do you like our prophetic voice in the wider community? There is quite a bit to like here and if you want to become a full partner in our ministry, then come find out what it means! Lunch will be provided and if you need child care, please let Doug know at the church office @ 878-5745.

Birthdays

Happy Birthday to these October babies!

- PETHERBRIDGE, Bonita (63) 10/01
- AMBROSAIT, Carolyn (76) 10/02
- LAWRENCE, Carlene (92) 10/02
- WATT, Aliyah (17) 10/02
- BABINGER, Gail (74) 10/03
- PARKER, Holly (47) 10/03
- DOOLEY, Rick (51) 10/04
- GOEDKEN, Andrea (50) 10/04
- BURNETT, John (72) 10/05
- WELLS, Joe (85) 10/06
- BOYD, John (69) 10/07
- CILLEY, Jed (88) 10/07
- FRANK, Meaghan (22) 10/07
- JACOBS, Joyce (87) 10/07
- JOHN, Ethan (23) 10/07
- LEAVITT, Dick (80) 10/07
- HYDE, Paul (73) 10/09
- HAYES, Deanna (76) 10/11
- HIGGINS, Zach (25) 10/11
- MITCHELL, Marilyn (70) 10/12
- MOOS, Jonah (46) 10/12
- CURRIER, Bernie (90) 10/13
- MCCLINTOCK, Mary (16) 10/13
- SCHMALZ, Gordon (19) 10/13
- DONLEY, Kevin (20) 10/14
- CHARLAND, Kelley (52) 10/16
- DUKE, Paula (76) 10/16
- PORATTI, Jessica (22) 10/18
- HAYES, Stephen (75) 10/19
- JACKSON, Michelle (70) 10/19
- LEAVITT, Sylvia (76) 10/19
- WEISCHEDEL, Garry (62) 10/19
- FRANK, Nicole (20) 10/20
- WARREN, Ashley (22) 10/20

- GILLIAM, Samantha (23) 10/23
- WERMER, Alison (67) 10/24
- ABAKAH, Alex (12) 10/26
- CHADURJIAN, Mark (62) 10/26
- DEUTSCH, Martin (23) 10/26
- WILSON, Russell (91) 10/27
- PALMER, Liam (8) 10/29
- PAUL, Beth (69) 10/29
- HOFFMAN, Kim (49) 10/30
- KEITHCART, William (67) 10/30
- HOUGHTON, Carl (84) 10/31
- STARKEY, Gorden (71) 10/31

VT Pride Parade

We won the “Best Overall Float” award! Additionally, we received \$150 as prize money which we will be donating an LGBTQ+ charity of our choosing. Currently, our Missions committee is deciding where the money would be best sent.



Our Float! Thanks to Rev. Mark Mendes for using his truck to tow it; and thanks to the volunteers who gave it a fresh coat of paint



UCC Banner: Amanda Graves (left), Doug Ovitt (center), and Andrea Sharp (right) marching. Many other FCCEJ members were in attendance. The Dooley Family had a brief cameo on WCAX TV!

Love of Children

Our Faith, Our Voice, Our Vote

"Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality." - Romans 12:12 MSG

In 2018, the Neighbors in Need special mission offering and grant pool committee examined the ways in which it could spotlight, the UCC identity and missional initiative: 3 Great Loves campaign, **LOVE OF NEIGHBOR**. Emmaus United Church of Christ, in Vienna, Virginia, applied and received a \$3,500 NIN grant to aid them to work for justice within their community. They partnered with **VOICE** (Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement) in hopes of a securing the outcome they desired.

Photos supplied by Emmaus UCC



Emmaus UCC/VOICE public gathering

Emmaus UCC senior pastor, Rev. Kristen McBrayer shares, "In 2018 we set out to listen to our neighbors. We learned that the greatest concerns in our schools this year are student support for mental health counselors as well as the retention of 'good teachers'. From these listening sessions and meetings with key leaders, we set forth an agenda to increase the funding for mental health counselors so that students have a 250:1 ratio. This ratio is the minimum needed to provide basic support for our students. Retaining our best teachers is key to the success of our school system. Increasing teacher pay is essential to this goal."

Additionally, Rev. McBrayer reports, "In October, 1,300 people from our VOICE institutions met with Virginia's Governor and Attorney General to ask for their support on our agenda. Among those present were more than 600 students, parents, and teachers concerned about our schools. The Governor continues to work with VOICE on funding for mental health and good teacher pay and we believe the ground work we did in 2018 has set the stage for some big wins for our students in the 2019 budget cycle and general assembly."

As people of faith, we are encouraged to advocate for all those who are marginalized by institutional systems as well as individuals. Being able to use one's voice, even at the ballot box, is a key to fulfilling that biblical missional mandate. We are proud to have been a partner with Emmaus UCC as they embarked to make a difference in their community to aid their neighbors in need.

Please join us in supporting the

2019 Neighbors In Need Special Mission Offering. THANK YOU!

Two-thirds of your donations to NIN support advocacy programming and grants.

One-third of your generous gifts directly support CAIM. www.ucc.org/nin.

For more information about this event contact:

Emmaus UCC: <https://emmausucc.org/> or VOICE: <http://www.voice-iaf.org/>

To learn about the UCC's positions on Disabilities and Mental Health contact:

Rev. Sarah Lund, Minister for Disabilities and Mental Health Justice,

(216) 736-3230, lunds@ucc.org



October 2019

October 2019							November 2019						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5						1	2
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
27	28	29	30	31			24	25	26	27	28	29	30

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Sep 29 8:30am Worship Service (Sanctuary) 10:15am Worship Service (Sanctuary) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall)	30 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm Food Pantry 5:30pm Yoga @ First 5:30pm Group Victory 7:00pm BSA Troop 624	Oct 1 8:30am Sermon Talk Back (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag 5:30pm Finance 6:00pm Essex Historical 7:00pm Church Council	2 12:00pm Brown Bag 1:00pm FCCEJ Staff 5:30pm Finally@First 6:00pm Boy Scouts-PLC 6:30pm Bell Choir 7:00pm Wednesday Night	3 8:30am Essex Art League 12:00pm JOY (ML) 12:00pm Brown Bag 3:00pm Easterseals (Third Floor) 6:00pm Music@First 6:00pm Cub Scouts	4 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm Essex Eats Out (Prep Time) (Kitchen & Fellowship Hall) 5:00pm Garvey-Roddy 5:30pm Essex Eats Out	5 9:00am Thrift Store Open 9:00am Nepali Community Worship 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 4:30pm Worship Service
6 8:30am Worship Service 10:15am Worship Service 11:30am Craft Fest 11:30am Junior Youth 11:30am Music 1:00pm Brown Bag	7 12:00pm Brown Bag 1:30pm Food Pantry 5:30pm Yoga @ First 5:30pm Group Victory 6:30pm Joe's Big Band 6:30pm Craft Fest EG	8 8:30am Sermon Talk Back (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 7:00pm Deacons (Marvin Lounge)	9 12:00pm Brown Bag 3:30pm Heavenly Food 5:30pm Finally@First 6:30pm Bell Choir 7:00pm Wednesday Night 7:00pm Boy Scouts	10 8:00am Jamaica Bound 12:00pm Brown Bag 3:00pm Easterseals (Third Floor) 6:00pm Music@First 6:30pm Lion Den #10 8:15pm Music @ First	11 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 6:30pm Grange (Fellowship Hall)	12 9:00am Nepali Community Worship (Sanctuary) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall)
13 8:30am Worship Service (Sanctuary) 10:15am Worship Service (Sanctuary) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall)	14 HOLIDAY -- FCCEJ 12:00pm Brown Bag 1:30pm Food Pantry 4:00pm Food Pantry (FH) 5:30pm Food Pantry 5:30pm Yoga @ First	15 8:30am Sermon Talk Back (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 7:00pm CE Meeting 7:00pm Missions	16 8:00am Food Shelf 12:00pm Book Discussion 12:00pm Brown Bag 5:30pm Finally@First 6:30pm Bell Choir 7:00pm Stamp Club	17 12:00pm Brown Bag 3:00pm Easterseals (Third Floor) 6:00pm Music@First 6:30pm Wolf Den (2nd Floor) 6:30pm Tiger Den #9 8:15pm Music @ First	18 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm Bridge Club (Marvin Lounge)	19 9:00am Nepali Community Worship 9:30am Women's Spirituality (Marvin Lounge) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Marvin Lounge)
20 8:30am Worship Service 9:30am Flu Shots 9:30am Craft Fest Silent 10:15am Worship Service 11:30am FCCEJ New 11:30am Junior Youth	21 12:00pm Brown Bag 1:30pm Food Pantry 5:00pm BSA Troop 624 5:30pm Yoga @ First 5:30pm Group Victory 6:30pm Joe's Big Band	22 8:30am Sermon Talk Back (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 7:00pm Stewardship 7:00pm Trustees (Marvin Lounge)	23 12:00pm Brown Bag 1:00pm FCCEJ Staff 5:30pm Capital Campaign 5:30pm Finally@First 6:30pm Bell Choir 7:00pm Wednesday Night	24 8:30am Food Pantry (FH) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Marvin Lounge) 3:00pm Easterseals (Third Floor) 6:00pm Music@First 8:15pm Music @ First	25 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 7:30pm Grange (Fellowship Hall)	26 9:00am Nepali Community Worship (Sanctuary) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall)
27 8:30am Worship Service (Sanctuary) 9:30am Craft Fest Silent 10:15am Worship Service 11:30am Junior Youth 1:00pm Brown Bag	28 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm Food Pantry 5:30pm Yoga @ First 5:30pm Group Victory 7:00pm BSA Troop 624	29 8:30am Sermon Talk Back (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall)	30 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 5:30pm Finally@First 6:30pm Bell Choir 7:00pm Wednesday Night 7:00pm Boy Scouts	31 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 3:00pm Easterseals (Third Floor) 6:00pm Music@First 8:15pm Music @ First	Nov 1 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm Essex Eats Out (Prep Time) (Kitchen & Fellowship Hall) 5:30pm Essex Eats Out Community Dinner	2 9:00am Thrift Store Open 9:00am Nepali Community Worship 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 4:30pm Worship Service

MINISTRY DIRECTORY

Church Staff

Senior Pastor: *Rev. Mark Mendes* [mmendes@fccej.org]
Associate Pastor: *Rev. Josh Simon* [jsimon@fccej.org]
Music Director: *Carol Spradling* [cspradling@fccej.org]
Christian Education Director: *Laurie Chipman* [lchipman@fccej.org]
Church Administrator: *Doug Ovitt* [welcome@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: Andrea Sharp [879-0580] or Judy McCullen [878-9794]
Deacons: Betsy Weischedel [922-2094], Peter Schmalz [202-297-3625]
Hospitality: Jim Glatz [503-5076]
Missions: Joanne Irwin [878-2528], Ed Steele [871-5897]
Music: Denise Keating [345-8900]
Nominating: Barb Smith [878-6866]
Stewardship: Jessica Moos [399-8068]
Trustees: Kevin Meilleur [238-4041]
Ushering: Jessica Moos [399-8068]

Recognized Groups at First Church

Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop [879-6552] Sue Wood suewood@myfairpoint.net
Heavenly Food Pantry Contact: Valerie Gabert [879-0109]
Called To Care Contact: Beth Volker [238-2713]
Nepali Christian Community Contact: Dan Raut [310-4371]
Craft Fest Committee Contact: Linda Bogardus [lbogardus@myfairpoint.net]

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