

***The First Congregational Church
of Essex Junction***
United Church of Christ



***A Welcoming Community, Accepting and
Serving All in the Spirit of Christ***

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 and love.

**One Church Street
Essex Junction, VT 05452**

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The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction
A United Church of Christ
December 1, 2019

A Welcoming Community, Accepting and Serving All
In the Spirit of Christ

Order of Worship

Prelude

An Extravagant Welcome

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

Welcome Greeting and Announcements

Our Ministers will welcome everyone to church and then highlight some events in our shared life, then the Deacon on Duty will welcome everyone and invite people to raise significant celebrations to the congregation or introduce yourself or a friend as a guest. We encourage everyone to sign the Friendship Book.

A Musical Introit

Advent Song

Lighting the Advent Candle: HOPE

Leader: Today, we begin anew our journey with Jesus. We remember a time long ago when the people waited in darkness for the word of God to come on the lips of God's Sacred Messenger.

People: The darkness of the world oppressed everyone: poverty, hunger, violence, corruption, avarice, addiction, prejudice, political unrest and despotic control.....these were all forces that drew people away from God.

Leader: Prophets said a messenger from God was coming to draw people back to the Divine and teach everyone how to live in peace with justice.

People: The prophet's message brought hope into the lives of the oppressed. That Sacred Hope brought a ray of light into a dark world and kept the people longing for God's Peaceable Kingdom.

Leader: Today, we light this advent candle and remember the hope Jesus still brings into our troubled world. We need it and long for a better day.

A Time of Confession

Call to Confession

Leader: Come, let us confess our distance from God.

People: Come, let us be honest with our God and ourselves.

Unison Prayer of Confession

People: We confess, O God, that we do not take seriously your coming into our lives. We act as if salvation is not near; we do not act uprightly, loving you, our neighbors, or ourselves; nor do we bend our swords and spears. Forgive us, we pray, that we might once again walk in your light, choosing for the world of our Christ. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Pastor: God chooses us, forgives us; lights our paths with the serenity of starlight, and sends us as messengers of hope.

People: Amen!

Children's Message

Our Nursery is for children under 3 years and the room has a speaker for you to listen to the service and it is streamed to Fellowship Hall. After the 2nd service's children's message, children in preschool through 2nd grade are invited for a time of Faith Formation on the 2nd floor with our Spiritual Friends. Adults are welcome to accompany the children, help them get settled and stay or return to worship. All will return for Communion.

**Jesus loves the little children,
All God's children of the world.
Whether young or old or new, Jesus loves us through and through
Teaching us to love all creatures in the world.**

**God has made us all a rainbow.
Colors dancing 'round and 'round.
In our hair and skin and eyes, big and little, every size,
God has made us all a rainbow dancing 'round.**

Pastoral Prayer and Unison Lord's Prayer

A Time of Silence for Personal Prayer

Sharing Our Prayers with God and Each Other

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

Gospel Amen

[music insert, next page]



Hymn

In the Bleak Midwinter

#128

Scripture Readings

Old Testament

Isaiah 2:1-5

[page 489]

New Testament

Matthew 24:36-44

[page 21]

Musical Anthem

Keep Your Lamps

Sermon

Present Hope

Rev. Simon

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

The Invitation

Words of Institution

At the First Service, the bread will be passed out to the congregation; please wait for the minister to invite you to eat it so that we can all eat it together. This symbolizes our unity in Christ. Drink the cup as the Spirit moves each person to do so, as a sign of the unique gifts we bring to our ministry. Our faith is both an individual and corporate reality.

At the Second Service, the bread and cup will be offered to everyone up front. Everyone is asked to come forward and dip the bread into the cup, then partake immediately. Please try to NOT dip your fingers but just a bit of the bread: this will diminish the spreading of germs. People are free to come up to one of the ministers alone, in a family group or with a friend and partake together.

Special note: Our bread is gluten free and all the juice is non-alcoholic grape juice.

All Are Welcome at Christ's Table

Offering Our Gifts to God

Invitation, Offering, and Prayer of Dedication

Anthem

Who Would Send A Baby

***The Doxology # 778**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
 Praise God, all creatures here below;
 Praise God for all that love has done;
 Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.**

Benediction

Pastoral Benediction

***Sung Community Benediction**

Go Now In Peace

**Go now in peace. Never be afraid.
God will go with you each hour of every day.
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true.
Know God will guide you in all you do.
Go now in love, and show you believe.
Reach out to others so all the world can see.
God will be there, holding you in love.
Go now in peace, in faith and in love.**

*Postlude

* = Please stand if you are able.



*The flowers on the altar are given by
Nancy Engle & John Ferris
In loving memory of Robert Ferris.*

Today's Ushers & Greeters

(1st Service) Greeters: N/A

Ushers: Maureen & Rob Evans

(2nd Service) Greeters: N/A

Ushers: N/A

Interested in ushering/greeting? Register by visiting this link: shorturl.at/LSWZ5



***** IMPORTANT WORSHIP SERVICE FLOWER INFORMATION:**

The 2020 Flower Chart is posted on the *Mission: Possible* board in the hallway between the Narthex and Fellowship Hall.

Please, write your request on the chart by **Sunday, December 15th.**



***** CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS:** Order your poinsettias for Christmas services in memory or honor of a loved one or special event. They will be the same as last year, \$12.95 and come in red, white, pink and a marbled variety. Please place your order by **Sunday December 15th.** Your dedication will be remembered in the Christmas bulletins. Please remember to take them home as well and enjoy them after the Christmas Eve services. ***

First Church's Prayer Ministry

Marion Schneider	Russ Dettenrieder	John A
Richard Ansell	Bob Ursiny	Aidan W
Karla	Jennifer Morse	Jeff Noel
Rick Busciglio	Tom Gibbs	John Burnett
Robert & Claire Deal		

Please, let the office know if you would like a name added to our Prayer Ministry. You may write it on the Friendship Pad; call the office @ 878 5745; or email at welcome@fccej.org. Additionally, prayer requests will

Coats and Shawls

Coat Closet Full? Additional storage is available in the Narthex.
Feeling Chilly? We have a large stock of warm, hand-made prayer shawls to keep you cozy this year, and they are free to keep! Ask our Ushers/Greeters for help.



Burlington Ecumenical Gospel Choir

We are excited to be reviving this choir and encourage you all to help us spread the word to members new and old! Rehearsals for the Burlington Ecumenical Gospel Choir will be held at New Alpha Missionary Baptist Church (38 So. Winooski Ave, Burlington, 05401) on the following dates and times:

- December 21 from 1-3pm
- January 11 from 1-3pm
- February 1 from 1-3pm
- February 28 from 6-7:30pm (tentative)
- February 29 from 1-3pm
- March 6 from 6-7:30pm (tentative)
- March 7 (call times and sound checks to be announced)

Signup at this link: shorturl.at/erGMT

TODAY



Adult Mission Trip to Puerto Rico! Anyone 18 or older is welcome. PR needs our helps with repairing cement roofs.

We'd work five days, two days for travel, and one for Sunday worship at a local church. Looking to do this over the course of one week. Potential dates are April 18th-25th. Cost will be \$800-850 per person.

Talk to Josh for more information.

Hannaford Cards

Reload your Hannaford Cards (up to \$500!) OR

purchase new ones in \$25, \$50, \$100, and \$200 increments. Next reload is Sunday, December 16th.



BELLS ARE RINGING... AGAIN!

After a hiatus, our team of handbell ringers will begin practicing every Wednesday night @ 6:30pm in our Sanctuary and playing at services throughout the year. No experience or musical training is necessary and all are welcome! If you are interested, email Organist Carol Spradling (cspradling@fcej.org) for details.

Support JUMP!

Part of our church's mission to JUMP (Joint Urban Ministry Project) is to provide deodorant. Our Red Tent Project has been very successful, but we need your donations! Please, find the red tent in the church's Marvin Lounge or Fellowship Hall (depending on construction.)

Thank You from Winter Coat Drive

Thank you to all for your generous donations to our annual Coat Drive. Through our community efforts, we were able to collect 160 coats, as well as ski pants, hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, and boots. During the November 22nd Food Pantry Distribution, 38 families received winter gear to include 55 adult coats and 45 children's coats. 10 coats were given to the Dismas House, with the remaining coats going to Sweetwaters for their Thanksgiving Coat distribution. A big "Thank You!" to Barb Smith, Faith Truax, Grace Jones and Dennis Conti for their help during this event. Thank you again for helping our neighbors in need! ~ Sue Conti

Revised Music Director Position!

The Warren United Church, an Open and Affirming congregation of the United Church of Christ, is seeking a part time, paid Music Director/pianist to prepare and lead music during worship and special services and lead a small, but experienced choir. Bring your musical skills to this enthusiastic congregation in an acoustically rich sanctuary. Extensive music library available. Directing a choir on Sunday during rehearsals and worship a plus. Knowledge of diverse church music genres preferred. Hours and pay negotiable. Please respond to: Rev. Erin Reardon: esr1250@hotmail.com

FAITH FORMATION (PreK-8th Grade)

Interested in Volunteering to help our children & youth?

Contact Laurie Chipman, CED: 878-5745 ext. 103; or lchipman@fccej.org.

Faith Formation Conversations

PreK – 2nd will be hearing the Christmas story and talking about it during Spiritual Friends and Peer Groups on December 1st and 8th.

3rd – 8th are in worship on December 1st and on December 8th they will hear from Isaiah 11:1–10 Isaiah’s vision of God’s kingdom and imagine what a perfect world would look like. 5th – 8th will identify signs of God’s peaceable kingdom around them and plan ways to live as peacemakers.

Save the D@tes!

Christmas Pageant Rehearsal

Sunday, December 8th at 11:30am

PreK – 4th grade are encouraged to attend the first 20-30 minutes of pageant rehearsal and sign up to be an angel, shepherd or sheep and follow the youth. Rehearsal continues for youth until 2pm.

December 15th ~ Christmas Pageant

Sunday during both our worship services. Youth arrive at 7:30am.

Sunday Morning Calendar

- **December 1st** ~ (on 1st Sundays of the month) Intergenerational Worship & Spiritual Friends
- **PreK – 2nd grade who are looking for more movement can join the Spiritual Friends for a story time and activity. All will return for communion.**
- **December 8th ~ [Peer Group Time](#)**
- **December 15th ~ Pageant Sunday** at both worship services
- **December 22nd ~**
Intergenerational Worship & sing Carols
- **December 29th ~**
Intergenerational Worship
- **January 5th ~ 1st Sundays ~**
Intergenerational Worship & Spiritual Friends

Faith Formation Music Time

Cherubs ~ Preschool ~ 2nd grade

Joyful Noise ~ 3rd ~ 8th grade

Music time takes place on peer group Sundays. Children and youth then move to peer groups until 11:30am. On these days we encourage parents to move from worship to coffee hour and then up to collect the children. All PreK through 2nd grade need to be signed out by an authorized person. Older children will be excused at 11:30am. Parents can update their list of authorized persons by emailing Laurie.

Sunday School Offering

Spectrum Youth & Family Services

2019 Total — \$642.82

Remember to bring your offering each week, \$1 a week can go a long way! Please use the envelopes in the pews so your \$ goes to the right place.



YOUTH MINISTRY (5th-12th Grade)

FCCEJ Confirmation Class

Thursdays @ 7:30-9pm @ Marvin Lounge

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.

Junior Youth Calendar

Have a wonderful holiday break with family & friends.
JY time starts back up in January.

January 5th ~ JY time ~ 11:30am to 1:30pm

Sunday morning ~ Help Greet/Usher/Read Scripture during 10:15am worship

January 17th ~ JY Overnight ~ 6pm to 9am

Meal donations and snacks for youth times are appreciated! Visit this link to list your contribution:
Snack/Meal donation sign up:

shorturl.at/tBEPZ

High School Youth

Have a great holiday break with family & friends.
Watch for emails to pick our day/time to meet in January!



Rehearsal Schedule for JY & HS Youth

December 1st ~ 5 to 7pm

December 8th ~ 11:30 to 2pm

December 14th ~ 3-6pm

December 15th ~ Pageant Sunday
during both services. Arrive by
7:30am!

Pageant Rehearsal Helpers

*Leo Wermer
Bill Bickford, Jr.
Gretchen Owens
Kaki McGeary*

Still time to join in and have
a fun time with our youth!

National Youth Event

July 20-26, 2020

Calling all youth ages 12-20 by July. Travel with Pastor Josh & Laurie to Purdue University. Four (4) days of worship, music & service project. We need at least 5 youth to make trip happen. Sign up by December 1st with Pastor Josh or Laurie.

<http://www.uccpages.org/nye2020/>

Cost is \$250 per youth
Fundraising Event in early 2020.

@ the Lake UCC Camp at Rock Point

For those going into
5th – 8th grade in the
fall of 2020. ***Sunday,
July 26 at 2pm to Fri-
day, July 31st at 4pm.***

Recruiting now for
counselors, lifeguards,
CIT's and a nurse.

THIS WEEK

Yoga @ First

Mondays, 5:30pm-6:45pm

Jonah Moos, FCCEJ member, 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.

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 delivered on Sunday, and much more! Join us for the conversation, the goodies, the camaraderie, or all of the above!

JOY (Just Older Youth)

Thursday, December 5th @ 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.

Coffee Clatter Fridays

Fridays @ 8-9am

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!**

Essex Eats Out

Friday, December 6th @ 5:30-6:30pm

A free, community-wide dinner open to all (with a special invitation to the needy & lonely) every Friday night throughout the Essex area. FCCEJ hosts Essex Eats Out on the 1st Friday of each month. Donations (to help subsidize the cost of these meals) are solicited but not required. Visit essexeatsout.org for more details.

Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop

37 Main Street in Essex Junction

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

Phone: 879-6552.

News: The shop will now be open every Saturday from 9 am to 1 pm. A Big Thanks to our volunteers for making this happen. Spread the word to your family, co-workers, friends and neighbors. The Shop has been receiving many requests for more men's *clothes*. Please think about the Thrift Shop when cleaning out your closets. and volunteers needed now for Thursday shifts at 4pm-6pm and 6pm-8pm.

Please, contact Elaine Raymond @ **879-7350** or ebraymond@gmail.com.

Saturday Worship

Saturday, December 7th @ 4:30pm

Our alternative Saturday afternoon worship service continues on December 7th. We gather in Fellowship Hall at 4:30 and discuss the scripture and figure out how it applies to our lives. We pray for each other and light candles for those we mention. Then we have a time of fellowship and or communion with each other as we break bread AND enjoy some goodies to eat. We would love to have you come join us.

SAVE THE D@TE!

1st Annual Holiday Pet Remembrance Service *Sunday, December 8th @ 4pm*

Our animal friends are integral members of our families and teach us about love, loyalty and compassion. They ease our anxieties, draw us into loving relationships and are always there for us when we need a soothing purr or exuberant home welcome. John Workman at A.W Rich Funeral Home approached the church last month to see if we would like to co-sponsor a Pet Remembrance Service and we wholeheartedly agreed. So on Sunday December 8th at 4:00 p.m. we will gather to remember our pets who have died. There will be music, scripture a brief message and a reception. John has also created a way to receive a Christmas Ornament with your pet's picture in it to bring home; simply send him a picture via the computer to service@awrfh.com and there will be an ornament for you to retrieve at the service.

Heavenly Food Pantry

Thursday, December 9th @ 5:30-7:30pm

The Pantry would appreciate these donations: *spaghetti sauce, cereal, and chicken noodle soup, and one-dozen egg cartons.* Also, we have several volunteering opportunities! See our church's newsletter for more details; or contact Val Gabert directly @ val.gabert@gmail.com.

Noontime Book Group

(3rd Monday of each Month)

Monday, December 16th @ 11:30am

In December, we will meet at Joanne Irwin's house. As has become our tradition we will each choose a short Christmas story to share with the group. It could be an old favorite, a children's story or a new one that you've just found this year. There are many available online if you Google "Holiday Short Stories." We will share a pot luck lunch. Please let Joanne know what you would like to bring so we don't end up with a dozen desserts and no main course!

The Searchers Invite Dr. Kathy Fox to Speak

Wednesday December 11th @ 7-8:30pm

The Wednesday Night searchers will be hosting Dr. Kathy Fox from UVM to speak about why our society should be strongly encouraging our prison population to get a college education. Dr. Fox is from the Sociology Department of UVM and has spoken extensively on the subject and clearly spells out how spending money educating prisoners saves money in the long run and creates a stronger society. Dr. Fox also speaks about how educating our prisoners fulfills a spiritual role of their lives. Her presentation and Q&A has been very well received. The public is invited so feel free to invite a friend.

Christmas Pageant

Sunday, December 15th @ Both Services

This time honored classic is a chance to hear the birth of Jesus from the perspective of our children. They get dressed up and dramatize the story at the heart of our faith. Over the generations, it is a joy to remember the various interpretations and presentations from our kids. There is always plenty of joy as we laugh, cry and remember that God came to us in the form of a child. This is a great Sunday to bring a friend and know that there are plenty of folks who live all around you that are looking for a place to go and celebrate the season.

A Healing Service

Sunday, December 15th @ 7pm

The Christmas season often brings a mixture of profound joy and a deep sense of grief: joy at the wonder in our youngster's eyes and sadness that those we dearly love who are far away or no longer with us. Emotions are more poignant all around with struggles in relationships, addictions, depression and financial worries taking on even more meaning. Our church would like to offer you a quiet hour where you can focus your attention on our need for hope and healing. The service will start at 7:00 p.m. and everyone is welcome.

DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS GREAT WAY TO GIVE TO FCCEJ?



If you are over age 70 ½ and have Traditional IRA assets, you can satisfy your required minimum distribution (RMD) requirements by making a Qualified Charitable Distribution to First Church!

By directing some (or all) of your IRA distribution to the church, you can support the congregation and our missions in a tax-advantaged way. The distribution amount is not included in your adjusted gross income, which can help you potentially avoid increased taxes on SSI, higher premiums on Medicare, and the loss of

deductions/exemptions. If you use the standard deduction on your taxes, this allows you still to get a tax benefit on your gift to the church.

If you haven't taken your RMD for 2019 or want to get a jump-start on your 2020 planning please reach out to Pat Seaver (878-4445, vtri2@aol.com) to find out more information.

WHILE WE'RE TALKING ABOUT SAVING ON TAXES...

Another great way to support the amazing work being done at FCCEJ is by making a gift of appreciated stock. If you happen to own stocks that have grown in value and you would like to avoid the capital gains taxes on selling those stocks, you can gift them instead! Satisfy or increase your annual pledge by gifting these shares of stock directly to the church. You save on taxes and the church can use those funds to further our ministry.

A GREAT stocking-stuffer idea from your Stewardship Committee!



Many of you routinely purchase Hannaford cards through the church for yourselves, on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month. But have you ever thought about purchasing them as Christmas gifts? We think it's a great idea AND it's a win-win....you'll be putting something extra special in someone's stocking and the church earns "free" money from your purchase. FCCEJ receives \$5 for every \$100 worth of cards it sells.

And, it just so happens that the cards are on sale TODAY in the Fellowship Hall, and they'll be on

sale again on Sunday, the 15th. They can be purchased using cash or a check.



Thank you for considering this awesome gift idea.

Capital Campaign Update

By Kaki McGeary



COMING SOON:

The Sanctuary Restoration Project!

Our historic windows are in the process of being put back - hooray! The big Sanctuary Restoration Project will begin January 1. As we shared before, the plaster ceiling must be totally removed and replaced. This work will require temporary scaffolding and we will not be able to use the sanctuary during this time. The entire project should take about 2 months, assuming no major hiccups. The ceiling work will be done first and then it must cure for several weeks, during which time the walls will be patched. Once that is done, painting can begin!

Worship services will be held in Fellowship Hall starting on December 29.

Our goal is to be back in the sanctuary **BEFORE PALM SUNDAY**, if not before. Our staff and several committees are working on plans to make this temporary move as seamless and comfortable as possible. We ask for prayers that we move through this time of transition and mess with patience, kindness, grace and humor, and that this experience might draw us closer together as one body of Christ. We appreciate your flexibility and patience!

Lighting Update - We are working with the electrician to install parking lot, sign and steeple lights as soon as possible. Federal grant funds will pay for the parking lot fixtures.

Pledge Payments...Your continued pledge payments are vital to our efforts! We have budgeted for bridge loan financing. While we have not needed it yet, our cash balance is getting low and we will likely need to secure a bridge loan for the Sanctuary Restoration. As always, early pledge payments are welcome to help minimize bridge loan interest.

Special Note: For your convenience, charts containing completion date projections for the Capital Campaign's various projects are posted on bulletin boards throughout the church.

MINISTRY DIRECTORY

Church Staff

Senior Pastor: Rev. Mark Mendes [mmendes@fceej.org]

Associate Pastor: Rev. Josh Simon [jsimon@fceej.org]

Music Director: Carol Spradling [cspradling@fceej.org]

Christian Education Director: Laurie Chipman [lchipman@fceej.org]

Church Administrator: Doug Ovitt [welcome@fceej.org]

Music Ministry

Cherub Music: Jenny Bourn [jennybourn4@gmail.com]

& Laura Marthaler [Laura.marthaler@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@fceej.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 Sue Wood [879-6552] suewood@myfairpoint.net

Heavenly Food Pantry Contact: Valerie Gabert [879-0109]

December 1, 2019
First Sunday of Advent (Year A)

Called to Gift
Matthew 24:36-44
World AIDS Day

December 1st is World AIDS Day. In the nearly four decades since we have learned about HIV, more than 35 million people have died of the virus, making it one of the most destructive pandemics the world has ever known. On World AIDS Day, we remember those who have died of the disease, we demonstrate support for those living with HIV & AIDS and we recommit to combatting HIV & AIDS. Perhaps most importantly of all, we pledge to end the stigma that is still attached to a diagnosis of the virus.

UCAN is the United Church of Christ HIV & AIDS Network, providing Faith-based leadership for ending the HIV & AIDS epidemic. According to the UCAN website* “Much progress has been made since we first learned about HIV more than 35 years ago and we have made it through some very difficult times. We remember with thanksgiving those we have lost to this disease and for those who grieve, we pray God’s peace and comfort. Although medical advances have made it possible to prevent HIV from attacking the immune system, saving millions of lives, we recognize that we have not sufficiently scaled-up our responses to meet the need for prevention, treatment, care and support for all those living with and affected by HIV.”

One of the difficulties in fighting this disease has been, and continues to be, discrimination and stigma. With treatment, people can live healthy lives with AIDS. The first step to getting treatment is to get tested and diagnosed, but for many, stigma is a major barrier to testing. Everyone can help knock down that barrier.

Today’s scripture reminds us of all that we do not know. Jesus tells us that in most important ways, we do not know what the future will bring. But one thing we do know is that we can help end the stigma of getting help for this disease. We can all be tested for HIV & AIDS,

even if we do not consider ourselves at risk. Getting tested is one way that each of us can be involved in combatting and eradicating HIV & AIDS.

First Sunday of Advent - Prayer for Hope

O come, O come Emmanuel!

We look at the world and all its brokenness
And we are too often tempted to give up.

Grant us the audacity of hope.

Save us from easy cynicism and despair.
Remind us that while none of us can do all things,
all of us can do some things.

Place before us the things we can do,
and give us the courage to do them. Amen.

*UCAN Call to Action. Accessed July 24, 2019.
https://www.ucc.org/ucan_call_to_action

**December 2, 2019 -
December 8, 2019**

FCCEJ WEEKLY CALENDAR

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

January 2020						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Monday, December 2

- 12:00pm - 1:30pm **Brown Bag** (Fellowship Hall) ☺
- 1:30pm - 4:00pm **Food Pantry Stocking** (Fellowship Hall & Gym) ☺
- 5:30pm - 6:45pm **Yoga @ First** (2nd Floor Programming Room) ☺
- 5:30pm - 6:30pm **Group Victory** (Fellowship Hall) ☺
- 5:45pm - 7:15pm **Girl Scouts** (3rd Floor (Coral & Blue))
- 6:30pm - 9:30pm **Joe's Big Band** (Fellowship Hall) ☺
- 6:30pm - 8:00pm **Thrift Shop Meeting** (2nd Floor Programming Room)
- 7:00pm - 8:30pm **BSA Troop 624** (3rd Floor Youth Lounge) -

Tuesday, December 3

- 8:30am - 10:00am **Sermon Talk Back** (Marvin Lounge) ☺
- 12:00pm - 1:30pm **Brown Bag** (Fellowship Hall) ☺
- 5:30pm - 7:00pm **Finance Committee** (Marvin Lounge) ☺
- 7:00pm - 9:00pm **Church Council** (Marvin Lounge) ☺

Wednesday, December 4

- 12:00pm - 1:30pm **Brown Bag** (Fellowship Hall) ☺
- 1:00pm - 2:30pm **FCCEJ Staff Meeting** (Marvin Lounge)
- 5:30pm - 7:00pm **Finally@First** (Fellowship Hall) ☺
- 6:00pm - 7:00pm **BSA PLC** (Third Floor) ☺
- 6:30pm - 8:15pm **Handbell Choir** (Sanctuary) ☺
- 7:00pm - 8:30pm **Boy Scouts** (Fellowship Hall) ☺

Thursday, December 5

- 8:30am - 11:30am **Essex Art League** (Fellowship Hall) ☺
- 12:00pm - 2:00pm **JOY** (Marvin Lounge) ☺
- 12:00pm - 1:30pm **Brown Bag** (Fellowship Hall) ☺
- 3:00pm - 4:00pm **Easterseals** (Third Floor) ☺
- 6:00pm - 9:00pm **Music@First** (Sanctuary) ☺
- 6:00pm - 8:00pm **Cub Scouts Pack 630** (Fellowship Hall) ☺
- 7:30pm - 9:00pm **Confirmation** (Marvin Lounge) ☺
- 8:15pm - 9:15pm **Music @ First** (Fellowship Hall) ☺
- 8:30pm - 9:30pm **Men @ First** (Fellowship Hall) ☺

Friday, December 6

- 12:00pm - 1:30pm **Brown Bag** (Fellowship Hall) ☺
- 1:30pm - 8:00pm **Essex Eats Out (Prep Time)** (Kitchen & FH)
- 5:30pm - 7:00pm **Essex Eats Out Community Dinner** (Fellowship Hall & Kitchen) ☺

Saturday, December 7

- 9:00am - 1:00pm **Thrift Store Open** ☺
- 9:00am - 11:00am **Nepali Community Worship** (Sanctuary & Fellowship Hall) ☺
- 1:00pm - 2:00pm **Brown Bag** (Fellowship Hall) ☺
- 4:30pm - 5:45pm **Worship Service** (Sanctuary) ☺

Sunday, December 8

- 12:30am - 2:00am **Sanctuary Choir, Rehearsal** (Sanctuary)
- 8:30am - 9:30am **Worship Service** (Sanctuary) ☺
- 10:15am - 11:30am **Worship Service** (Sanctuary) ☺
- 12:00pm - 1:30pm **Sanctuary Choir, Rehearsal** (Sanctuary)
- 1:00pm - 2:00pm **Brown Bag** (Fellowship Hall) ☺
- 1:30pm - 2:00pm **Heavenly Harmony, Rehearsal** (Sanctuary)



Additional Sunday, December 8th Events
 ☺ 4pm: 1st Annual Pet Remembrance (Sanctuary)
 ☺ 5pm: Pageant Rehearsal (Church-wide)
 ☺ 6pm: Venture Crew (Marvin Lounge)