

***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.

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The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction
Christmas Eve 2019
The 11:00 p.m. Service

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

*Rejoice
What a Glorious Night*

Tomlin
Frey & McDonald

Welcome Greeting and Announcements

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

Musical Introit

Christ is Come

Weaver

Call to Worship

Leader: We gather in the quiet of the night to remember the Christ child who came to the world to bring peace.

People: We come to sit in the quiet and soak up the faith in the sacred stories and carols of Christ's birth.

Leader: We gather in the dark of night to remember the light of love that Jesus brought into the world at his birth.

People: We come to sit with our fellow sojourners and draw strength from belonging to a community of faith.

Leader: Tonight, 2023 years later, the infant of Bethlehem draws us together in peace so that God's extravagant gesture might nurture and empower our love to light others on their way. Come, let us worship our God and King.

Opening Carol

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

**It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold;
Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heaven's all gracious King.
The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.**

**For lo, the days are hastening on, by prophets seen of old,
When with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold;
When peace shall over all the earth, its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world sends back the song which now the angels sing.**

A Time of Confession

It is an ancient tradition of the church to ask for the forgiveness of your sins and to amend all broken relationships before receiving the sacrament of Holy Communion. On this night of all nights, we confess as a community of faith and as individuals our shortcomings, hoping that Christ's continued entrance into our lives might create healthier and more joyful people.

Call to Confession

Leader: Let us come and lay our hearts, minds and souls before the Prince of Peace, let us confess our wrongful behaviors before God's throne of love.

People: Thank you God for sending a Son that would care and understand our plight. We now lay before you our brokenness, our willful acts of self absorption, our hurts and worries and all those things that cause us to suffer from our separation from you.

Leader: Let us now lay our burdens down.

Unison Prayer of Confession ("trespasses")

All Powerful Creator, as a child laying in a manger you have taught us the importance of being vulnerable and in need of care from others.....

**.....forgive us for thinking that we are the center of the universe
.....forgive us for honestly believing that we can do everything ourselves
.....forgive us for rejecting the warm embrace of others
as we journey through a world that is often dark
and filled with demons and distractions
.....forgive us for not crying out in hunger for a parent that is out of sight**

Adoring and Doting Parent of us all, help us to break the walls of isolation and find the depths of love in relationship to you and our neighbor. Help us to offer our lives in building a kingdom of hope, peace, joy and love. In Christ's name, amen.

The Assurance of Pardon

Leader: For thousands of years, God has 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!

A Christmas Carol

Joy to the World

Joy to the world, the Lord is come
Let earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him 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 Special Christmas Offering

Invitation, Offering and Prayer of Dedication

Anthem

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, Christ 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!

***Singing Our Praise to Our God**

We Three Kings of Orient Are

**We three kings of orient are, bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and Fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star
O star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.**

The Prophecy of Jesus Christ.....Isaiah 9:1-7 [page 494]

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: Gospel Amen

A---men, A---men, A---men, A-men, A-men.

Finally at First Christmas Anthem

Light of the World

Daigle

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

Christmas Carol

Away in the Manger

**Away in a manger, no crib for a bed
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.**

**The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love thee Lord Jesus, look down from the sky
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.**

Communion Meditation

Jesus is the Way, Every Which

Rev. Mendes

Anthem by Finally at First

Christmas Hallelujah

Cohen, adapted by F@F

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

Tonight, we will celebrate Holy Communion by intinction. The ministers 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 and the grape juice is non-alcoholic. Absolutely everyone is welcome at Christ's table!

Communion Anthem

O Come All Ye Faithful

Wade

Lighting the Christ Candle.....The McCullen Family

Advent Candle Reader: Tonight, we remember the Advent journey. For the last four weeks we have lifted-up Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. These are gifts from God that bring meaning, purpose and passion into our lives.

Advent Candle Reader: We light these candles tonight to proclaim that all of us in this church will strive to live into these divine ideals for humanity.

[light four candles]

Advent Candle Lighter: Tonight, with humility, awe and appreciation, we remember Jesus of Nazareth. God's son embodied the attributes of hope, peace, joy and love and showed us how to live into our faith in God.

Advent Candle Lighter: We light the Christ Candle tonight to proclaim that Jesus is our King, our Friend, our Companion, our Teacher and our God.

[light Christ Candle]

People: We will seek to live with hope, peace, joy and love in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen and Alleluia!!!

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

Gruber

**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, shepherd 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 they birth.**

Pastoral Benediction

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL
AND TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT!



FCCEJ remembers its beloved members lost in 2019:

*Charles Thomas West
Harold Henry Bergeron
Alberta Martha Rand Reed
Nancy Witherell Hunt
James W. Gray II
Mary Elizabeth "Beth" Terry*



Christmas Poinsettias

*Karen & Mark Mendes
In honor of
Margaret & George Mendes
And grandparents*

*~
Josh Simon
In honor of
His mother Kelly Simon's birthday*

*~
Laurie & Brian Chipman
In honor of all grandparents*

*~
Cathy Shearer
In honor of the holiday*

*~
Andrea & Steve Sharp
In loving memory of their parents
Lee & Joan Dawley
and Bob & Helen Sharp*

*Tim Carney & Cathie Goodheart
In memory of Marty Hayes*

*~
Alison & Carl Wermer
In memory of Bob Knox and
Kerstin Smitterberg*

*Lauren & Gordon Starkey
In memory of their parents*

*~
Mary Johnson
In memory of Judy Johnson*

*~
Myrna Doney
In memory of family*

*~
Connie Marshall
In memory of loved ones*