

***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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***Open and Affirming means that we welcome everyone to First Church including our  
GLBTQ brothers and sisters.***



The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction  
United Church of Christ  
December 15, 2019

**A SERVICE OF HEALING**

*Be thoughtful, be silent, be reverent, for this is the house of the Lord. During the Prelude, speak to the Lord; during the service, let the Lord speak to you; after the service, speak to one another.*

The Order of Worship

Prelude

Words of Welcome

Call to Worship

Leader: Today we come to this place in need of the healing touch of God.

**People: We come to this place in need of our Creator's touch to center our lives and focus our spirits.**

Leader: Today we come to this place united as Vermonters, United States citizens, and civilized people of justice and mercy.

**People: We come as a community grounded in faith in God and committed to the law of love.**

Leader: And today we come to boldly proclaim God's presence in the midst of evil, God's victory in the midst of darkness.

Everyone: Our presence is testimony to God's enduring power. We are shaken but never defeated. We will sing and pray and proclaim God's glory.

**\*Opening Hymn**

***Our God Our Help In Ages Past***

A Time of Confession

Call to Confession

Leader: As followers of Christ, we are always on a journey. On our pilgrimage there is no time when we can afford to stop growing in love, in strength and in the knowledge of God. So when we gather to worship we

must confess those places in which we need to grow. In preparation for the coming of Christ, let us confess our need for repentance.

**People: Come, let us confess the times we have turned away from God.**

### Unison Prayer of Confession

**God of the past, in the wilderness you sent a messenger to prepare hearts for the coming of Christ. Forgive us for failing to make room in our hearts for the WORD and for holding on to past wrongs so tightly.**

**God of the present, even now you are among us. Forgive us for our failure to discern your presence and instead to blame you for the times when we have felt deserted and alone. Make strong in our hearts the faith that enables us to live serenely and triumphantly.**

**God of the future, you have promised that Christ's reign is coming. Teach us to live in expectation that what we are and do now may be anchored in the certainty of your tomorrow. Through the grace of Christ, we offer our prayers to You and continue with our own silent prayers of confession.**

### The Assurance of Pardon

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

**People: We lift them up to God.**

Leader: Let us give thanks that those who turn toward God and seek to live more faithful and fruitful lives may experience the wholeness and peace that comes from walking in faith with our Risen Lord and Savior.

**People: Amen and alleluia.**

### Scripture Readings

Old Testament	Genesis 1:26-31	[page 1]
New Testament	Luke 7:1-10	[page 65]
	Acts 3:1-10	[page 120]

**\*A Hymn of Remembrance and Hope**

*We Shall Overcome*

**#570**

*During this hymn, everyone is invited to come forward and light a candle to either remember someone who has died or to light it for another's healing or to light it for the renewal of your faith in a miraculous and mysterious God.*

Welcoming the Holy Spirit into our Lives and Our Request for Healing

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit, animate our growth in justice. Mend our brokenness so that we may be your peace. Strengthen us with your gifts. Come now, Blessed Spirit.

**Response:**



Leader: Come, Holy Spirit, come fill our hearts with your love. Surround us with the warmth of your presence.

**Response: Come, Holy Spirit; come Holy Spirit.**

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit, heal us and draw us close to our God. Lead us across the vast desert of uncertainty and the great unknown into a place of oasis and presence.

**Response: Come, Holy, Holy; come Holy Spirit.**

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit, move in and through us. Bind our wounds and allow your creative power to be a salve to our physical and psychological wounds.

**Response: Come, Holy, Holy; come Holy Spirit.**

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit, drive out all darkness that keeps us from life. Give us new eyes of faith and a new voice of hope.

**Response: Come, Holy, Holy; come Holy Spirit.**

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit, open our arms that we may embrace those members of our family, church, workplace and community that cause us pain. Allow your touch to empower us to live more peaceful and joyous lives.

**Response: Come, Holy, Holy; come Holy Spirit.**

Leader: As Jesus opened his arms on the cross to save us all, grace us with strength enough to embrace the suffering that we too may experience resurrection, healing and glory.

**Response: Come, Holy, Holy; come Holy Spirit.**

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit, hear our fervent desire for another's health and wholeness. Allow the distance between us to melt into a song of compassion.

**Response: Come, Holy, Holy; come Holy Spirit.**

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit, keep ever burning in us the light of Christ. Sear our hearts with Christ's victory over death that we may burn as beacons of unending love.

**Response: Come, Holy, Holy; come Holy Spirit.**

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit, give us the strength to forgive and understand the anguished pain of another and in that knowledge allow our hearts to melt, our tongues confess and our actions reflect your great love for everyone.

**Response: Come, Holy, Holy; come Holy Spirit.**

Leader: Lead us into your truth that we might come to share the glory which is ours through Jesus Christ, our Risen Savior, God forever and ever. Amen!

## A Time for Healing

### An Invitation for Personal Healing

*At this time the worship leader will ask all those who are in need of healing to come forward as directed by the Deacons and kneel or stand at one of the healing stations for a personal prayer of power and healing. Then you may return to your seat.*

*While people are receiving their prayers for healing the congregation is welcome to focus your thoughts and prayers for healing on them and softly sing the following hymns*

What a Friend We Have in Jesus	#506
There is a Balm in Gilead	#553
Amazing Grace	#547
Take My Life, God, Let It Be	#448

A Concluding Prayer of Healing and Unison Lords Prayer  
for our selves,  
our loved ones,  
our community,  
our nation,  
and our world.

**Unison Lord's Prayer (trespasses)**

**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.**

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

*Tonight, we will celebrate Holy Communion by intinction. Rev. Mendes and Rev. Simon will direct everyone to come forward to receive the elements. If you are unable to come forward, one of the ministers will bring the elements to you. The cup is filled with grape juice and there are gluten free crackers with the bread. Every single person is welcome at Christ's table.*

**\*Closing Hymn**

*Now Thank We All Our God*

**#419**

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, watching from above.  
Go now in peace, in faith and in love.**

\*Postlude

\* = Please stand if you are able

# *Sermon Notes*

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