



**FIRST  
CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH** *of Essex Junction*

*Love. Serve. Grow.*

*Health and Safety Precautions*

**Background:** With the spread of the coronavirus, we as a church need to be prepared to educate our people, take precautions to keep them safe and be pastorally present to our members and friends in a time of anxiety. So, the staff with some help from authorized health care experts and our own members with health expertise have come up with ways that our congregation can stay safe whilst here in the building. We think it is in everyone's best interest to be cautious now.

**General Guidelines**

1. Check with the Center for Disease Control and or the Vermont Department of Health ([healthvermont.gov](http://healthvermont.gov)) for the latest information on the spread and the behaviors citizens are expected to observe.
2. If you are sick, not feeling well, returning from an area in our country or a foreign country where you might have been exposed: Do not come to church; stay home and watch the service through Facebook. This goes for meetings as well.
3. If you are sixty or older, have respiratory or are immunocompromised issues or any other chronic underlying medical conditions [high blood pressure, diabetes, COPD, heart disease, in cancer treatment or take medicines like prednisone], please stay home. The health and actual lives of our members come first.
4. While at church, use the provided hand sanitizers, wash your hands, cough into a tissue, greet people joyfully without physical contact, and use safe practices when interacting with your friends.

## Worship

1. First Church will follow the lead of our Vermont Department of Health and if it asks for large groups NOT to meet, then we will NOT conduct communal worship services. Starting Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, instead, Josh and I will live stream the service on Facebook. Laurie will have kids' activities to go along with our service.
2. When we conduct worship for those who come we will try to limit the physical contact by the following methods.
3. The offering will be collected in a basket on the way in or out of Fellowship Hall. If possible, feel free to mail in your pledge in or drop it by the office yourself or pay through PayPal.
2. Communion will not be served for the next month or so.
3. When available, everyone will be asked to do a quick wipe down of their chairs after each service.
4. Greeters will be just as friendly as ever but model welcoming people without shaking hands or hugging. So many of us find this the most important part of the service so it will be difficult but necessary to temporarily refrain from this practice. Naturally, this means members should use non-touching actions to express their friendship and Christian love, which is actually what the practice is accomplishing.
5. Hospitality will not provide food for a while, maybe some to-go coffee for conversations in the parking lot where the ventilation is better.
6. Deacons will wipe down the microphone before and after each service and our sexton Kul will be wiping down all oft touched surfaces every day.

Worship services will be streamed to our Facebook page. The Live Stream will be available at the top of the Facebook page's announcements. Please, click the button (below) to visit our Facebook page.

[Click Here to Visit Our Facebook Page](#)

## Our Faith Formation Program and Kids

1. We will no longer have playdough, model magic or stuffed animals for the kids.
2. Teachers and kids will use hand sanitizers when they both leave and enter the sanctuary
3. Snacks and water will be served to each child instead of them reaching for themselves.
4. The youth groups will continue to meet until the Vermont Health Department says not to.
5. The water fountain will not be in use
6. If church is canceled, then Laurie will have activity /craft sheets for kids online

## Committee Life

1. If the VT. Dept. of Health says that small groups should not be meeting, then all groups and committees will be asked not to meet.
2. If your committee can do their business via e-mail or zoom, please do so!
3. If your committee can take a month or two off, then please do so.
4. After your meeting, spend just a minute or two to use sanitized wipes [will be provided] on all affected areas, including doorknobs, chairs and hard surfaces.

## Office Protocol

1. Use the provided hand sanitizer both when you come in and when you leave the office
2. Use wipes on all equipment [copier/computer, etc.] after use
3. Staff may need to work from home, be gracious with them.

## Groups

1. All groups, church, and community members will abide by advisories from the Vermont Department of Health on church grounds and in church structures.
2. Members are expected to use safe practices: wash hands, use sanitizer, tissue, etc.
3. Each group is expected to wipe down the areas and surfaces used [wipes provided] **This includes the hard-white plastic chairs!!!**
4. Each group is required to report to the church office if there is anyone in their group who has contracted the coronavirus in a timely manner.

## **Pastoral Care**

1. Our clergy may call or e-mail you instead of visiting you personally.
2. Called to Care Teams should NOT visit their charge but call more often instead
3. Members and Friends should call others they know are isolated, living alone or at risk.
4. The Deacons will check in with each member by phone.
5. If our seniors need food or medicine purchased so they can stay safe at home, then we will have younger folks helping out. Call the church office if you need help or if you want to help.
6. We are thinking of other ways we can support our members during this time. If you have ideas, please forward them to one of our pastors/staff.

[Visit Our Website](#)