



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH *of Essex Junction*

Love. Serve. Grow.

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.

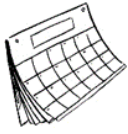
**1 Church Street
Essex Junction, VT 05452**

Phone: 802-878-5745 **Fax:** 802-872-8236 **E-mail:** welcome@fccej.org

Website: www.fccej.org



WORSHIP & FELLOWSHIP



Visit this link to view our official calendar of events: <http://fcej.org/v5/calendar>
...and our Facebook events page: <http://facebook.com/firstcongregationalej/events/>
We offer regular worship and fellowship opportunities, too! These include:

- ⊕ **Worship, Sundays at 10am; Monthly Communion, 1st Sundays @ <http://youtube.com/c/fcej>**
 - ⊕ **Christmas Eve Services: 5pm & 9pm @ <http://youtube.com/c/fcej>**
- ⊕ **Fellowship Hour, after Worship @ <http://zoom.us/j/980588369>**
- ⊕ **Faith Formation, Monthly on 2nd Sunday at 9am @ Church Grounds**
- ⊕ **Daily Devotionals, Weekdays 8am @ <http://facebook.com/firstcongregationalej/>**
- ⊕ **Sermon Talk Back, Tuesday at 8:30am @ <http://zoom.us/j/740803865>**
- ⊕ **Coffee Clatter, Thursdays at 8am @ <http://zoom.us/j/97659276694>**

DONATE TO OUR CHURCH

Please, mail payments to:
attn: Financial Secretary
FCCEJ
1 Church Street
Essex Junction, VT 05452

Your donation could support our music, youth programming (e.g. Vacation Bible Camp), missions (e.g. Jamaica Missions), adult enrichment (e.g. Sermon Talkback, JOY), Thrift Shop, Food Pantry, and more! We are also a United Church of Christ “5 for 5” participant in these fundraisers: Per Capita (\$14.10/member is our goal), One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen The Church, Neighbors In Need and The Christmas Fund. We appreciate this fundraising now more than ever! Here are some ways that you may help our ministry:

- ⊕ **Shop at Amazon.com** using Amazon Smile. We receive 0.5% of your purchases! Visit smile.amazon.com/ch/03-0212216
- ⊕ **Use PayPal!** We accept electronic donations through PayPal. Visit our donation page: paypal.me/fcej. A PayPal account is not required to donate money!
- ⊕ **Send a Check or use BillPay!** Your bank might offer Billpay, a remote service that issues one-time or recurring check payments by mail. Please, contact your banking institution for more details. All checks should be made payable to “FCCEJ.” Be sure to note the reason for your donation in the check’s memo line (e.g. “food pantry”).



Journey to Bethlehem! Worship Series...

Visit this link to pledge to our church:

bit.ly/2UQcXz9

Order of Worship

December 6th, 2020: Live Streaming

Introductory Music

Begins at 9:45 a.m.

Announcements will be shown on screen

As worship begins:

Prepare and make ready your communion elements

Light a candle at home,

Sit in a comfortable spot,

Center yourself w/ breathing.

Service Input Preparation: Text NOW to make the service run more smoothly.

1 **Thankfulness:** Text Rev. Mark one thought of gratitude [802 922-1773]

2 **Prayer Requests:** Text Rev. Josh your Prayer Requests [920 858-6601]

Prelude

Welcome

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

Welcoming God’s Light into Worship

An Opening Reading on Gratitude [w/ congregation sharing – text in]

A Few Key Announcements

Pastoral visits: simply call us up

Morning/Evening Devotions [webpage]

Faith Formation from 9 – 9:30 a.m. on line

Music: Carol, F@F and Sanctuary Choir

Hybrid services postponed with the surge of covid cases

The Governor Phil Scott’s & VT Dept. of Health Advice

The VTCUCC Strongly worded recommendation

The Decision of the Executive Committee

----hybrid will come and we are making plans, waiting

The Giving Tree.....THANK YOU....all gifts signed up for

IMPORTANT to mark each gift clearly 1-A, 1-B etc.

To minimize the # of hands on each gift

Mission Committee’s \$ 1000 Matching Gift....THANK YOU

Matched....a generous congregation

Marvin Lounge Work has begun

Insulate, new walls, bookcases, conference table

Carpet, paint, artwork

(Continued on next page...)

New Members Class, Today @ 12:30pm Online.

Web address: bit.ly/2ILCiHJ

Church Decorations / Sanctuary visits Dec 21-24

Families come and wave by Nativity

As always great to have Jonah Moos, Gary Hartman, Ed Guild,

Francis Gravel and Rev. Josh Simon orchestrating the technology today.

Musical Introit

Meeting & Greetings Along the Road.....Toni Taylor

Prayer of Invocation by Deacon.....Clint Russell

Opening Hymn

Come, O Long Expected Jesus

Organ Solo

**Come, O long-expected Jesus, born to set all people free;
From our fears and sins release us; grant us your true liberty.**

**Israel's strength and consolation, hope to all the earth impart;
Dear desire of every nation, enter every longing heart.**

**Born all people to deliver, born a child, you came to reign!
Born to rule on earth forever, come, be known to us again.**

**By your own eternal Spirit, come to claim us as your own;
By your all sufficient merit, let us share your cross and crown.**

Meetings & Greetings Along the Road.....Dan & Bonita Petherbridge

Lighting the First Advent Candle of Hope.....The Johnson Family

Children's Message.....Laurie Chipman

Offering Our Gifts to God.....Rev. Josh Simon

Invitation

Anthem

Doxology

**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.**

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Pastoral Prayer and Lord's Prayer.....Rev. Josh Simon

Text the prayers you want the minister to include during the prelude: Rev. Josh @ 920 858-6601

Sacred Readings: Luke 1:5-25, 57-80.

(Continued on next page...)

The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years.

Once when he was serving as priest before God and his section was on duty, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense. Now at the time of the incense-offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.' Zechariah said to the angel, 'How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years.' The angel replied, 'I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur.'

Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah, and wondered at his delay in the sanctuary. When he did come out, he could not speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He kept motioning to them and remained unable to speak. When his time of service was ended, he went to his home.

After those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion. She said, 'This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favourably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people.'

The Birth of John the Baptist

Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. Her neighbours and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. But his mother said, 'No; he is to be called John.' They said to her, 'None of your relatives has this name.' Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. He asked for a writing-tablet and wrote, 'His name is John.' And all of them were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. Fear came over all their neighbours, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. All who heard them pondered them and said, 'What then will this child become?' For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

Zechariah's Prophecy

Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and said: *(Continued on next page...)*

‘Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has looked favourably on his people and redeemed them.

He has raised up a mighty saviour for us
in the house of his servant David,
as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
that we would be saved from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us.

Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,
and has remembered his holy covenant,
the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,
to grant us that we,
being rescued from the hands of our enemies,
might serve him without fear,
in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.

By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,
to give light to those who sit in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.’

The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.

Anthem

I Pray on Christmas

by Harry Connick Jr.
perf. by Finally @ First

Sermon

“Zachariah and Elizabeth:
Advent Learnings”

Rev. Mark Mendes

*If you have any questions about the scripture or the sermon,
feel free to text them at any time during the sermon at 802 922-1773.*

Closing Hymn

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

perf. by Sanctuary Choir

**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 men,
From Heav’n’s all-gracious King.”
The world in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the angels sing.**

*(Continued on
next page...)*

**Still through the cloven skies they come
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heav'nly music floats
O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains,
They bend on hov'ring wing,
And ever o'er its Babel sounds
The blessed angels sing.
Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love-song which they bring;
Oh, hush the noise, ye men of strife
And hear the angels sing.**

**And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow,
Look now! for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing.
Oh, rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing!**

**For lo! the days are hast'ning on,
By prophet seen of old,
When with the ever-circling years
Shall come the time foretold
When Christ shall come and all shall own
The Prince of Peace, their King,
And saints shall meet Him in the air,
And with the angels sing.**

Benediction and blowing out of the candles

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.**



Christmas Poinsettias

Purchase deadline is Thursday, December 10th.

Due to the pandemic, supplies are limited so order by the deadline! Visit this link to buy yours!

<https://bit.ly/3pWKVjQ>

Each flower costs \$12.95 and comes in one of four colors: *red, marble, pink, or white*. Please, let us know the reason for your request (e.g. "in memory of Dad.") Questions or concerns? Email welcome@fccej.org or call 1(802)878-5745.

Payments may be mailed to:
attn: Financial Secretary
FCCEJ
1 Church Street
Essex Junction, VT 05452

Include the words "Xmas Poinsettias" with your payment
(or write it on the memo line of your check.)

PRAYER MINISTRY

Please, email your prayer requests to welcome@fcej.org or call 1 (802) 878-5745 ext. 100.

Richard Ansell

Illya
(Cathie Goodheart's friend)

Colonel John Dyke
(Paula Sargent's Son)

Roger & Sandy Daly

Malcolm Forbes
(Cathy Shearer's Father)

Cait
(Cathie Goodheart's friend's daughter)

Grandma Culley
(Dorothy Kress's Grandma)

Stacy Gaudette Hall
(Doug Ovitt's cousin)

Kristin
(Nancy & Wayne Hall's daughter)

Damaris (New resident of Essex Junction)

All persons affected by the Coronavirus



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

The altar flowers are given by
The John Family
In honor of John Murphy



Have something important to share?

Please, email your announcement to Doug Ovitt, Church Administrator: welcome@fcej.org. If you want an announcement televised during worship, then please, send a photographic representation of your announcement in either .jpg or .png file format to jsimon@fcej.org.

Find us online! Click the icon or link:



[youtube.com/c/fcej](https://www.youtube.com/c/fcej)



[facebook.com/
firstcongregationalej](https://www.facebook.com/firstcongregationalej)



[instagram.com/fcej_802](https://www.instagram.com/fcej_802)



FCCEJ.ORG

2021 Altar Flower Chart is online! Visit this link to reserve a date: bit.ly/33JWlxj

Flowers may be retrieved by their respective buyers. To arrange for a pickup, please contact our staff: welcome@fcej.org or 1 (802) 878-5745

NEWSLETTERS

SIGNUP HERE: <https://bit.ly/3dwsHji>

Our weekly update newsletter contains important weekly announcements about Food Pantry, Thrift Shop, Capital Campaign Updates, and more! Here is a link to this week's issue:

<https://mailchi.mp/fcej/2020-weekly-update-5845808>

Our "SPIRIT@FIRST" monthly newsletter is available by snail-mail and email. Hard copies are available at church, too. Visit this link to read through our archives:

<http://fcej.org/v5/category/newsletters/>

MINISTRY DIRECTORY

Church Staff

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

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

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

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

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

Committee / Church Officer Contacts

President, Chair Human Resources Committee: Maureen Evans [233-6127]

Vice President, Chair Finance & Pastoral Relations: Cathy Shearer [878-6023]

Treasurer & Historian: Ann Gray [878-4088]

Asst. Treasurer: Dan Petherbridge [879-0261]

Asst. Financial Secretary: Rob Sinkewicz [878-4470]

Asst. Financial Secretary: Pam Blake [872-8204]

Asst. Financial Secretary: Linda Bogardus [872-8972]

Clerk: Christine Sinkewicz [878-4470]

Christian Education: Lisa Clark [872-5849]

Communications: Andrea Sharp [879-0580], Judy McCullen [878-9794]

Deacons: Judy Larrabee-Pomainville [802-236-0604]

Hospitality: Jim Glatz [503-5076]

Missions: Joanne Irwin [878-2528], Ed Steele [871-5897]

Music: Denise Keating [345-8900]

Nominating: Barb Smith [310-2491]

Stewardship: Jessica Moos [399-8068], Shannon McCullen [922-8792]

Trustees: Kaki McGeary [879-2062]

Ushering: Justin King [238-6273], Jessica Moos [399-8068]

Recognized Groups at First Church

Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop Sue Wood [878-3068] OR woodsusanjane@gmail.com

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