



FIRST  
CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH of Essex Junction

Love. Serve. Grow.



It is with great joy that we come to the end of 2020: a rough year for the country, Vermont, and many of those we know and love. We are grieving the 300,000 plus and counting Americans [100 Vermonters] who have died from the Coronavirus and for so many who feel isolated, depressed, or fatigued. All our lives have been disrupted and we will remember these days for the rest of our lives.

But I come to you with joy because First Church has weathered the COVID storm with grace and strengthened the ties that bind us together as people of faith. With the health and safety of our members in mind, we have continued to stream our services but to an increased number of followers. Administratively, we have met through Zoom and conducted the business of the church with aplomb. Our many and varied social groups have continued to converse and support each other electronically even with new ideas coming to fruition to meet the ever-deepening isolation of some of our members. We have continued to be a beacon to food insecure folks and maintain our community outreach. And through it all, our members have kept up their giving which of course directly pays for all the many programs, staff, building upkeep and ministries.

We have weathered this storm with joy because despite it all, First Church has expanded her scope, mission, and outreach *during* these crises. **It is a tribute to your faith and dedication** and all of us on the staff and in leadership roles are grateful for your positive spirit.

Let me offer you one more opportunity to support and strengthen your church as we come to the close of a difficult year. In the Spirit of Christmas, I would like you to consider making an end of the year financial gift to the church. Last year, the governmental PPP Loan kept us in solid financial shape but next year we will not have the PPP loan to count on and our budget will be significantly tighter. With your help, we can end the year financially strong and weather next year's transition back to a more normal life with some grace.

Due to not being in church when we collected the Per Capita collection, we are also way behind in that particular offering, an offering where we pay \$ 14.50 for every member of the church to the Vermont Conference of the UCC. Ideally, everyone chips in their share but that did not happen this year so again, I am offering you the opportunity to partner with the wider church in helping us meet that obligation.

Everyone on the staff and leadership of the church wish you and yours a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. May God bless all of you and First Church as we look to the future with a confidence and joy.

*Christmas Blessings from  
Your Church Staff and Leaders*

