



# 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.*

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The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction  
Ash Wednesday Service  
*February 17, 2021*

The Order of Worship

Prelude    *\*Be sure to have some type of ash or soil to use later*

Welcome, Introduction and Opening Words.....Rev. Mark Mendes, *Senior Pastor*

A New Perspective on Ash Wednesday

We are made from the good earth  
We are fed by the good earth  
We make livings using the good earth  
We are grounded on the good earth  
We know beauty from the good earth  
We are inspired by the good earth  
We are healed by the good earth  
We find God through the good earth

Opening Hymn Praising Earth    To You, O God, All Creatures Sing    by Sanctuary Choir

St. Francis of Assisi, 1225; Miriam Therese Winter, Adapted, 1993

LASST UNS ERFREUN, Tune

Word Adaptations © 1993 Medical Mission Sisters;

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**To You, O God, all creatures sing,  
and all creation, everything  
sings Your praises, alleluia!  
Your burning sun with golden beam,  
Your silver moon with softer gleam  
sing Your praises, alleluia,  
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.**

**To You, O God, day after day,  
Your planet earth in every way,  
sings Your praises, alleluia,  
as savory fruit and fragrant flower  
show forth Your glory and Your power,  
singing praises, alleluia,  
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.**

*(continued on next page...)*

**Now we who are of tender heart,  
forgiving others, take our part,  
sing Your praises, alleluia!  
To You we lift our pain and care,  
receive the burdens that we bear,  
singing praises, alleluia,  
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.**

Litany of Gratitude..... Rev. Josh Simon, *Associate Pastor*

Leader: From stardust gathering to form our planet,  
to the primordial mud of our own bodily creation,  
to the abundance of food the good earth yields upon the land,  
to the healing power of nutrient rich mud,  
to the infinite nature of life found in dirt.....God is present

People: **Thank you Divine Creator of the earth...  
for the life you have breathed into us  
for the beauty of the earth that inspires us  
for the food which sustains us  
for fellow travelers that journey with us  
for the anguish and ecstatic joy of life that gives us meaning  
for families and friends that love us  
for work that gives us purpose  
for an eternity that calls us to hope....**

Leader: Everything we are and everything we do is grounded upon God's good earth. Come,  
let us worship the God of Creation

The Muddy Beginning of Humanity: Genesis 2:4b-7.....Rev. Josh Simon, *Associate Pastor*

In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

*Perhaps highlighting one of the ways we experience the good earth  
From one of the following sentiments*

We are made from the good earth  
We are fed by the good earth  
We make livings using the good earth  
We are grounded on the good earth  
We know beauty from the good earth  
We are inspired by the good earth  
We are healed by the good earth  
We find God through the good earth

Anthem

Ashes

by Sanctuary Choir

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**We rise again from ashes,  
from the good we've failed to do.  
We rise again from ashes,  
to create ourselves anew.  
If all our world is ashes,  
then must our lives be true,  
An offering of ashes,  
An offering to You.**

**We offer You our failures,  
we offer You attempts;  
The gifts not fully given,  
the dreams not fully dreamt.  
Give our stumblings direction,  
give our visions wider view,  
An offering of ashes,  
An offering to You.**

**Then rise again from ashes,  
let healing come to pain;  
Though spring has turned to winter,  
and sunshine turned to rain.  
The rain we'll use for growing,  
and create the world anew,  
From an offering of ashes,  
An offering to You.**

The Application of God's Ashes.....Rev. Josh Simon, *Associate Pastor*

*Tonight's Ashes will be self applied,  
either using the ashes from a last year's palm or  
some dirt that you have been able to find around the house*

Leader: Come and allow the touch of your dust  
to enliven us anew to your presence.

"Remember that you are God's dust,  
and to God you shall return."

People: **God shaped and molded us out of the ingredients of the good earth.  
The rich soil feeds us, heals us and grounds us in the very presence of God. The  
law of gravity keeps us, like a magnet, ever connected to the source of all being.  
We long for the day, when like Christ, we rise from the dust to walk and play,  
talk and eat with our God and Creator in the garden of beauty and abundance  
beyond measure.**

Leader: May the star dust on our foreheads and hands remind us to whom we belong.  
May we always feel the presence of God as we stand on the good soil of God's creation  
and may our faith be renewed daily as we stand on Holy Ground. Amen and Alleluia.

Closing Anthem

Dirt

by John Gailmor

Pastoral Charge and Benediction.....Rev. Josh Simon, *Associate Pastor*

