



SPIRIT @ FIRST

monthly newsletter

FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH of Essex Junction

Love. Serve. Grow.

November 2021: In this issue...

- Your Pastor PondersCover
- Associate Pastor News.....2
- Laurie's Lens.....3
- Faith Formation, Youth Ministry4
- Deacons, Capital Campaign, Communications.....5
- Trustees, Stewardship6
- Missions7
- Worship & Connection..... Insert

Your Pastor Ponders...

The end of November brings the entrance of Advent into our lives: the time when we begin to turn our attention to the arrival of God's son Jesus Christ into the world and our lives. The coming Messiah will bring peace into the world and all things will be drawn into the Divine Kingdom of love. As followers of this new king, we know the radical form of forgiveness and inclusion he brought into the world. Jesus welcomed gentiles and Samaritans, lepers and the diseased, women and children, and all who committed to follow his great commandments.

*You shall love the Lord your God
with all your heart, mind, soul and strength
and your neighbor as yourself.*

Jesus then even went so far as to demand that we even love our enemies. This graceful message was a welcome relief to a religious tradition that used God's law as a means of separation, judgement and power accumulation. Christ's message of grace is the reason why we say at the beginning of every worship service that

*No matter who you are
or where you are on your spiritual journey
you are welcome in this place.*

Of all the sermons and sentiments we live by, this one statement, grounded in Jesus' greatest commandments is mentioned more than any other reason why people are drawn to our faith community. Personally, I try to live into Christ's grace with my whole being. Naturally I fall short plenty of times but it is the gold standard of interaction and disposition to which I strive. The Messiah's grace-filled message is why people love the Advent/Christmas season so much and why people through the ages have been drawn to Christ's Way.

But as my theology professor liked to remind us crazy liberal divinity students, Jesus is not simply sloppy agape! The rich young ruler had to give away all his belongings. The lepers had to show themselves to the priests and be grateful. Paul had a thorn in the flesh and lost some ego as he got knocked off his horse. The disciples had to stay awake and pray in Gethsemane. Those who listened to Jesus' teachings were challenged to sin no more and follow Jesus on his way. Faith in Jesus demands one's all in living into the divine message of grace. Love, as we all know, takes consistent, long-standing alterations of behavior that slowly pull us closer to God.

This tension is seen in the ongoing theological and ecclesiastical debate between grace and works, love and judgement. This purposeful tension holds both sides of the spectrum accountable; people who believe in the free gift of grace must put that grace into concrete acts of following Christ's way. People who are drawn to holding others accountable for their actions must temper that attitude with the gift of unearned grace.

In scripture, the wider church and in our personal relationship with God, this tension allows our relationship to God to grow, our communities to live in peace and our faith better able to meet ever changing circumstances. As we approach Advent, let us all welcome Christ's message of unmitigated love and the accountability that invariably comes from such a dramatic gift.

As always, I look forward to exploring this tension with you all in a spirit of graciousness.

Blessings,
Rev. Mark



Associate Pastor News - Rev. Josh Simon



We are standing up for racial justice. We are all created in the image of God. On Sunday, November 7 at 1pm, and the first Sunday of each month going forward, members of the Racial Justice Task Force will hold a silent vigil on the front lawn of the church to bring awareness around racial justice. We'll hold signs with Black Lives Matter and other messaging to show our local community that we support all of God's people. An injury to one is an injury to all. When we stand up for the rights and dignity of people of color, we are confirming our commitment that God loves all. When we let our economic and government structures mistreat and impoverish the lives of people of color, the well-being of everyone is diminished.

The Racial Justice Task Force also will host meetings every second Thursday at 7pm in the Youth Room on the 3rd floor. These will focus on reflection, solidarity, accountability, and action. It's important to have a safe space to connect with like-minded folks. These meetings provide opportunities for you to vent and to reflect and to receive, if you want, thoughts and suggestions on how to have more productive dialogues with our community. We've probably all have had a moment when we've tried to engage a friend or family member about the importance of racial justice and realized that the conversation went poorly. We probably all have had moments when we didn't know what racial justice legislation we could support. You don't have to be well-versed in racial justice issues, just come with a commitment to support racial justice. This is a meeting where we will research which national, state, and local legislation we can advocate for passage to our elected officials. Join us every second Thursday at 7pm for support, education, and ways to take action.



Minister of Visitation - Rev. Ron Faux

"I have enjoyed visiting with and getting to know some of the members of FCCEJ. Sharing our stories of where we grew up and of our employment is something I look forward to.

As the new "Minister of Visitation" or the "Visitation Pastor", I hope to visit you in your home or workplace before the end of this year. If you are open to have me visit or if you think of someone else whom I could (or should) visit, please contact me or the church office."

Rev. Ron Faux

Email: revronfaux@gmail.com

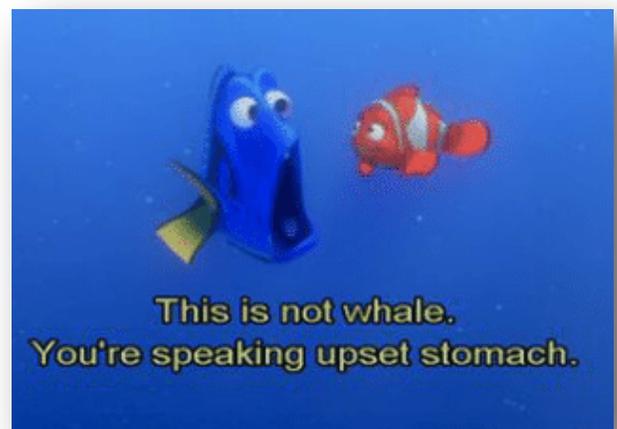
Cell: 909-856-4823

**I have told you this so that
my joy may be in you and
that your joy may be
complete.**

John 15:11

Welcome Jen Kelly - Church Administrator

Jen has an eclectic professional background with experience in marketing, printing, stage management, church administration, and camp operations. She enjoys camping, cooking, reading, watching movies, and going to the theater. Jen lives in Essex Junction with her family and considers herself multi-lingual – she can speak movie quotes, song lyrics, and occasionally whale. Jen feels incredibly blessed to be part of FCCEJ!



Laurie's Lens

We were so excited to have our Faith Formation programs back in person this fall outside on the Church Street side lawn and we continue to adapt as best we can with cooler temperatures and rainy days, keeping everyone safe. With this in mind, the Christian Education Committee submitted a request for the use of endowment interest funds to purchase air purifiers for the rooms used for our programs with children and youth, since our church does not have a filtered HVAC system. I am thrilled to announce that the request was granted, air purifiers were ordered, have arrived and are now in place! Many thanks to the CE Committee members who spent a good hour on Sunday, October 24 prior to our Faith Formation program time setting them up and turning them on. Currently the two allocated for the Marvin Lounge and the 2nd floor Program room are being used in the Fellowship Hall, which the CE committee feels is our safer space. Once the majority of the 5 - 11 year olds are vaccinated, the plan will be to transition again and move into our peer rooms. At this time these two larger units will go back to their respective rooms. The other six units have been placed in our Faith Formation rooms on the 2nd and 3rd floor. During our program everyone continues to wear masks and snacks are currently being handed out at the end of faith formation time to take with you when you go. We continue to adapt our program as needed to keep everyone safe and healthy and hope you will feel comfortable joining us when you are ready.

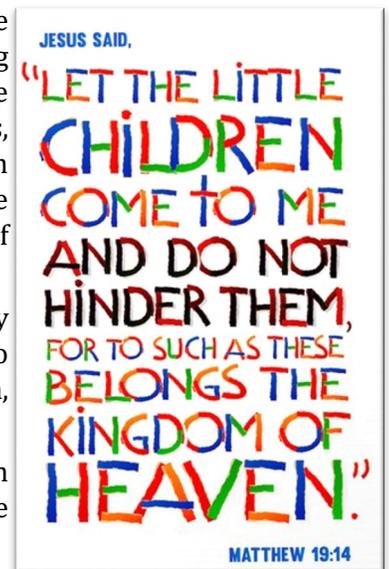
We have been blessed with wonderful volunteers (all fully vaccinated) who have been helping us this fall and are planning to continue. As the months move along and when the time comes for us to transition to our peer group rooms, we will be needing a few more (vaccinated) volunteers to help lead and assist our peer groups, helping us stay in good standing with our safe conduct guidelines of two adults in each room. If you are interested and are just waiting for this day to arrive, please be in touch with me now. Thank you. This will save me several phone calls. For those of you who are wondering if this is you, please reach out as well.

On Sunday, October 31, along with Halloween, we celebrate Reformation Sunday and passing out of bibles to our 3rd graders and any older children or youth who do not yet have a bible of their own. If you were not able to be here with us in person, please reach out and let me know so that we have a bible ready for you.

As always, I look forward to connecting with you all and hearing your thoughts on how our programs are going, and passing along any feedback and thoughts as we continue to move forward in this ever changing world.

Blessings to be in ministry with you all,

Laurie Chipman, Christian Education Director



Outdoor Ministry Camp



Horton Center is closed for the season, but will reopen in the spring by May. Just like at a church, program planning and prep for the next season are always happening so please hold the staff and leadership folks in your prayers, as well as those who will be attending and keep this cool UCC camps alive and well. Watch this: <https://youtu.be/rLZm8fzCV2Y>

Please remember that here at FCCEJ we have a camp scholarship fund and we would love to help support those who would like to attend outdoor ministry camps in New England, whether it's at Horton Center, Silver Lake or Pilgrim Lodge. Scholarship money is available to pay some or all of the cost. Attending a camp is a powerful way to connect with God. Just like VB Camp is a full week of programming during the morning, outdoor ministry camp is a 24/7 experience that is life changing experience for all who embark on this adventure. Speak to Laurie or one our pastors for more information.

Notes from Deacons

Fall is a busy time for Deacons as we begin to make plans for the Advent season. We are happy to be back in the sanctuary, participating in worship.

An announcement was made in October about the development of our new Sexual Harassment Policy. We already had "Safe Church Guidelines" in place. But with changing times and awareness that "guidelines" are not enforceable "policies" the Deacons formed a sub-committee to update and expand the document.

The first of several discussions was held Sunday October 24 to allow church members to give input, voice their concerns and ask questions about this important topic. Deacons plan to host more gatherings, some with mental health professionals from our community, to continue the conversation with the congregation.

This is the time of year, as leaves fall and days get shorter, that we often become more introspective and move the focus of our attention indoors. Let us be grateful for the sanctuary and community we have in our church family.

Alison Wermer

Co-Chair, Deacons

Our Home, Our Future, Our Time - Capital Campaign News

We are thrilled to report that the last two major projects of the Capital Campaign are complete! Stop by to check out the newly remodeled kitchen AND our updated elevator. THANK YOU to everyone for giving so generously to the Capital Campaign - your gifts have made Our Home more welcoming, safe, and beautiful – now and for future generations! Together, we have raised \$1.13 million in pledges, far exceeding our initial goal of \$822,000 and even surpassing our \$1.09 million stretch goal! In three short years, we have been able to complete almost ALL our projects, even during a pandemic and with the addition of a major elevator project. Our Home is ready to welcome YOU!

We do anticipate having some funds remaining to complete one or more of the flooring projects left on our list. The 2nd Floor Admin Hall floors are in the worst shape and there are a few trip hazards, so those will be at the top of the priority list.

If you want to see a complete recap of all the projects your investment has made possible, visit our website – look under Capital Campaign/Projects (<https://www.fccej.org/v5/capital-campaign/projects/>). A friendly reminder... we continue to accept pledge payments for initial pledges and Phase 3 elevator pledges. If you have any questions about your balance due, or if circumstances have changed, please contact Campaign Treasurer Dan Petherbridge. Blessings,

Kaki McGeary & Dave Johnson, Capital Campaign Co-Chairs

Communications

Greetings! Several updates were made to our fccej.org website including:

- Missions Committee block for the CROP Hunger Walk was added to the home page.
- Usher/Greeter volunteer sign-up genius link is on the home page.
- Information about two services is on the home page.
- Information on the 2022 Stewardship drive is accessible.
- The staff page now includes our new Church Administrator, Jen Kelly. Welcome!
- The adult enrichment page has information on Wednesdays Night Searchers and Bridge.

The committee is discussing creating social media guidelines to manage and maintain a cohesive church social media presence. We plan to include recommendations on creating and managing authorized posters for accounts as well as a system to review posts before they go live. There will also be guidance on general social media etiquette and best practices. The committee is reviewing social media guidelines from other churches while reflecting on the needs of our church.

The website is a great way to see what is happening at the church; please take a moment to browse the site at www.fccej.org. Contact the church office via e-mail at welcome@fccej.org or call 878-5745 with questions.

Respectfully submitted by Hannah Tracy

Committee Members: Francis Gravel, Doug Olufsen, Hannah Tracy and Andrea Sharp

Trustee News

Now that the last two major capital campaign projects are complete, the Trustees are focusing more on the general maintenance of the church properties. Our goal is to be as proactive as possible in order to save money and major headaches down the road.

We recently updated the electrical wiring in the daycare wing and in Pastor Josh's office, to reduce the use/need for extension cords for large appliances and ease the load on a circuit shared by the church and our tenant in the daycare wing. This improvement was needed in order to improve safety and to make our rental space more functional. The Trustees received \$3,500 from the Endowment to complete this capital improvement. The other major project is working at the Sawyer House apartment to stabilize areas of deteriorating lead paint, as required by state law. We hired Claypoint Associates to do testing and consultation, and we hired Heritage Environmental Projects to do the lead stabilization work. The apartment interior had a few minor areas that needed attention, and that work has been completed. Next, Heritage will stabilize all deteriorating lead paint areas on the exterior of Sawyer House. Although the Thrift Shop interior is not covered by the state laws around lead paint (because it is not a residential rental property), we will have Heritage touch up a few areas there as well. The work will be paid for using a mix of Endowment funds, Thrift Store contributions, and capital/maintenance reserve funds.

Other smaller projects include the addition of sound panels to reduce noise in the youth lounge, replacement of the bathroom floor at the Sawyer House (due to a tub leak), adding fire-caulking in the basement (recommended by contractors doing elevator/electrical work) and replacing the back barn door to remove a lead-paint hazard.

Kaki McGeary, Trustee Chair

Stewardship is Sustainability - by Jon Roddy

What is Stewardship? Stewardship is the task of taking care of something, such as a person, property, or the world in general. As stewards of the church we are tasked with taking care of the church. Generating funds for the church so that it may continue its mission of serving the people of God, maintain its infrastructure, and continue to make a positive impact on our community is vital to the life of the church. The Stewardship Committee accomplishes this through our Pledge Drive and finding new ways to bring money, and people, into the church. Why do we do this? Because all of us love our church and our community. We want to see it continue to grow, to be a safe haven for all those seeking an accepting, nurturing place to worship together, and to form lasting communal bonds.

What is Sustainability? Merriam-Webster's dictionary describes it as: "of, relating to, or being a method of harvesting or using a resource so that the resource is not depleted or permanently damaged". In relation to the church, we are harvesting donations and managing them responsibly to ensure that they are not depleted, and that there will be enough for future harvests and future generations. We are also using our church in a way that will ensure that it will remain strong for years to come.

This may not be, by any means, a new church, but it is a robust and thriving faith community, rooted in love and nurtured and cultivated by the love and generosity of its congregation. Like good stewards, every generation that came before has prepared our church for the next generations to come. This is not just our church, but our children's church, and their children's church, and through proper stewardship, and sustainability, we can ensure that our church endures so that all generations can experience the love of Christ, and each other.

Donate to our Church

Your donations support music, youth, missions, adult enrichment, Thrift Shop, Food Pantry, and more! We are also a United Church of Christ "5 for 5" participant in these fundraisers: Per Capita, One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen the Church, Neighbors in Need and The Christmas Fund. Here are a few ways that you may help our ministry:

- ⇒ **Send a Check or use BillPay.** This is a remote service that issues one-time or recurring check payments by mail. Please contact your banking institution for details. Please note the reason for your donation in the check's memo line (e.g., "missions").
- ⇒ **Shop using Amazon Smile.** We receive 0.5% of your purchases! To start, visit <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/03-0212216>
- ⇒ **Send money via PayPal.** We accept electronic donations! Visit paypal.me/fccej.
(A PayPal account is not required to donate money.)

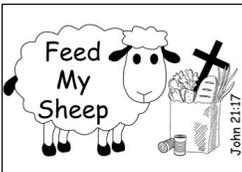
Missions Committee

Your Missions Committee is pleased to share with you our recent news and upcoming events.



- **CROP Hunger Walk** – On October 17th, a group of community members met at the church at noon. After making signs in support of ending hunger, participants walked to Five Corners and displayed their signs. Over \$1700 has been raised so far, including a \$500 donation from the Missions Committee funds. Thank you to all who participated and all who donated to this worthy cause!

- **Holiday Love Letters to Soldiers Deployed** – Last month, Sue Wood on behalf of the Missions Committee, asked people to participate in a letter writing campaign. Many of you know Jenny and Phil Bourn, church members. Phil was deployed earlier this year, along with around 70 Vermont Army National Guard soldiers to Djibouti, Africa. Their work is a security mission 24/7: they have no days off, no leave time and will be away about 10 months total. Their expected return date is late January 2022. The letters to these Vermont National Guard Soldiers were sent to lift their spirits this holiday season. Over 70 letters were sent. We thank all letter writers who participated.



- **November 21st Holiday Offering for Food Pantry** – Members of the Missions Committee are asking you to donate to the Heavenly Food Pantry with this special offering. The Heavenly Food Pantry at First Congregational Church has been providing food support to our neighbors since 1998. Please consider giving to this important aspect of our church's outreach. Please clearly mark your donation as a contribution to the Food Pantry.

Winter Coat Drive – A Winter Coat Drive is underway to include coats, snowsuits, snow pants, hats, mittens, scarves, and boots for children and adults. These will be distributed during the Heavenly Food Pantry on November 18, with coats also going to the Dismas House. Items must be clean and in good repair. Please do not include sweaters or other winter clothing. Donation deadline is November 15. We also need volunteers to help on the day of distribution. Please drop donations in the box in the hallway of the administrative offices marked 'Winter Coat Drive'. Contact Sue Conti at sueconti@comcast.net for more information. Thank you for your support of this program and for helping our neighbors in need.

Jamaica Service Program News

Despite having to postpone our next service trip to 2023, the Jamaica Leadership Team is excited about continuing to build the relationship between our church community and the White Horses Primary School community in Jamaica. We are brainstorming with the principal there about creative ways we can learn more about each other. For example, we are hoping to facilitate letters or song videos or other communication between the children (via school and church staff) so that they can learn more about each other's culture. We will keep you posted about these opportunities. If there are things you'd like to learn about Jamaica, let us know!

We'd also like to share news from White Horses Principal, Ray Howell, who wrote:

"I am sharing our most recent achievement with you. I am so elated! We have the best performing girl student in the entire country based on the last national exam. You and your team have contributed to her success."

Congratulations to this student and the White Horses community!

Looking forward, we are starting the planning process for our Annual Cabin Fever Calcutta! We're hopeful that we'll be able to hold the event this year. Save the Date: March 12, 2022!

Worship & Connection



Reminders:

- Daylight Saving Time ends on Sunday, November 7. Set your clocks back an hour. This is also a great time to check all the batteries in your smoke detectors!
- The Church Office will be closed on Thursday, November 25 and Friday, November 26 as we celebrate Thanksgiving.
- We are currently asking everyone, regardless of vaccination status, to continue to wear masks while inside the church buildings. If you realize you've forgotten your mask, we have them available at the entrances. We appreciate your cooperation.
- Please remember to contact Jen in the church office to schedule meetings and events in the facility: welcome@fccej.org—thank you!



*Dear Church Family,
Thank you for the beautiful rose I received for my birthday.
It means a lot to be remembered.*

*With gratitude,
Alma Wilson*

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

MCMASTER, Catherine	11/01	PARKS, Kevin	11/20
CLARK, Debra	11/03	OWENS, Edward	11/21
FRANKENBURG, Peter	11/03	WARK, Wendy	11/21
IRISH, Ginger	11/03	WILLEY, Maura	11/21
CARNEY, Tim	11/04	RELYEA, Dennis	11/22
HARRIS, Ann	11/04	WOLINSKY, Ava	11/22
LEVANWAY, Malcolm	11/05	GORNIAK, Aaron	11/23
ALLEN, Judy	11/09	KING, Lauren	11/24
BUCHSPICS, Lew	11/09	MOOS, Jessica	11/24
FRIVOLL, Erik Yoan Woo	11/09	SHEARER, Jamie	11/24
JOHNSON, Mark	11/09	PORATTI, Beth	11/26
GABERT, Conor	11/11	SPINNER, Marcia	11/26
DEWEY, Sam	11/12	TALLMAN, Sandy	11/26
CHIPMAN, Troy	11/15	CELIA, Rich	11/27
SMITH, Frank	11/15	KELLEY, Scott	11/27
TURNER, Sally	11/15	DEAN, Linda	11/28
FAUX, Ron	11/18	CATE, Jina	11/29
GROVE, Mary-Ellen	11/18	STEIN, Adelaide	11/29
ISHAM, Easton	11/18	MINADEO, Tony	11/30
LAPIERRE, Cathy	11/19	STIMSON, Scarlet	11/30

Thanksgiving Humor

*What is the best thing to put into pumpkin pie?
Your teeth*

*Why can't you take a turkey to church?
They use fowl language.*

*turkey has the most feathers?
The outside!*

*turkey in suspense?
I'll tell you later.*

Which side of a

How do you keep a

Sunday Worship - Two Services - 8:30am* and 10:15am

*First service streamed via [youtube.com/c/fccej](https://www.youtube.com/c/fccej)

We are pleased to offer in-person worship with COVID precautions in place. This includes masking and social distancing regardless of vaccination status.

Communion served in the Sanctuary on the 1st Sunday of each month. The elements will be sealed and passed out to the congregation.

Ushers & Greeters Needed

Our ushers and greeters perform a vital function in the life of our faith family and we extend our heartfelt thanks to all who currently serve in this capacity! You have helped create a warm and welcoming environment for everyone.

We are looking to expand our ushering and greeter teams. It's a fun way to interact with everyone and serve our church. If you are interested in learning more, please contact Marlene Frank at marlene.frank@uvmhealth.org or feel free to sign up via this link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60b0a48aaad2ca2ff2-fccej2>.



Friday Coffee Clatter

Everyone is invited to meet at Martone's in downtown Essex Junction on Friday mornings from 8 to 9. Get some coffee and baked goods with Rev. Mark and other faith friends and talk about absolutely anything! The mask policy is determined by Martone's. We laugh often while discussing whimsical aspects of life and significant issues of the day. It's a great way to start your day!

Monthly Bridge Group

The Church Bridge Group is back! We meet in Marvin Lounge on the 3rd Friday of each month from 1:30 to 4pm. As always, we will have some goodies to munch on AND a jar of Rev. Mark's jam for the winner. Come, whether you are an old pro or someone who just like to talk and have some fun. Next date is Friday, November 19.

Sermon Talk Back

(Hybrid Format)

Join us on Tuesday mornings from 8:30 to 10 to talk about the Sunday scripture and message. This is an opportunity to delve deeper into scripture and hear the perspectives of others in our faith community. Sermon Talkback meets in the Marvin Lounge and via Zoom:

<http://zoom.us/j/740803865>

Five Corners Christmas Craft Fest - Saturday, November 13, 9am to 3pm

To make this event a success at our church we appreciate your assistance with the following areas:

Nearly New—Here is a quick list of best sellers: Books, Holiday Items (especially Christmas); Frames; Games & Puzzles; Dishes; Children's Toys; Accessories (Scarfs, pursues, jewelry)

All Items can be dropped off in the second floor Gym starting Saturday, October 30

Sweet Shoppe—We welcome your contributions of unique items such as: Donuts; Whoopee Pies; Peanut Brittle; Home-Made Candy; Gluten Free Options; Favorites such as fudge, cookies, and various breads. Sign-up Sheet is in the Fellowship Hall. Please bring items to the church Nursery from 9am-5pm on Friday, Nov. 12. Please contact Mary Gratton at mgrat14@comcast.net.

Crafters—We are looking for 2 crafters to fill the Gym. The cost to church members is only \$20 for the table. Please contact Ann Gray at grayann8@aol.com to reserve a table.

Silent Auction—Due to COVID19 and current status of business, we are relying on church members for Silent Auction items. We will not be doing our usual blanket solicitation of businesses. We encourage members who are friends with business owners to ask for a donation.

Donation Suggestions: Event Tickets (theater, arts, sporting); Golf/tennis lessons; Baking a cookie/pie/cake/bread of the month; Sewing/babysitting/cleaning/yard work; Original art; Homemade quilt; Antiques. Pastor Mark is going to have one of his famous sermons be auction item! Silent Auction contributions can be left at the church office. If you have a donation, contact Wendy: wbwark@gmail.com.

Heavenly Spirit Café—Please assist by making homemade soups, mac & cheese, or chili. Also consider donating a case of water, soda or paper products. Please mark the donations "Craft Fest" when left in the kitchen. Contact Linda Bogardus at lbogardus@myfairpoint.net with any questions.

First Congregational Church of Essex Junction
1 Church Street
Essex Junction, VT 05452
Phone: 802-878-5745
Email: welcome@fccej.org

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
BURLINGTON, VT
PERMIT #598

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

Please help us clean up our mailing list! If you no longer wish to receive our newsletter, or would rather receive it electronically simply:

- E-mail an “unsubscribe” message to welcome@fccej.org
- Phone us at 802-878-5745 **OR**
- Mail this page back to us at the address above

FIND US ONLINE!



FCCEJ.ORG



FCCEJ



FIRSTCONGREGATIONALEJ



FCCEJ_802