



# SPIRIT @ FIRST

FIRST  
CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH of Essex Junction

Love. Serve. Grow.

## February 2023: In this issue...

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### Your Pastor's Ponderings.....

*Making Connections, Nurturing Hope  
Renewing Divine Connections*

The overarching theme for this year is, *"Making Connections, Nurturing Hope"* and our worship planning gathering last August thought it would lead us away from the isolation and discouragement of the pandemic to a healthier way of living. This yearly theme was fine-tuned for our Lenten Journey in 2023 with the second phrase above: *"Renewing Divine Connections"* for Lent is a time when we look for ways to deepen our understanding of and relationship to our God. Oftentimes, due to the depth of thought the passion and death of Jesus portends, we dig deeper and think a bit existentially about life, our priorities, the importance of certain relationships, our own behaviors especially those that keep us from being whom God has called us to be and the powers and principalities of the world and how they in turn affect us. Early followers of Christ had these questions brought to their attention by the master teacher of all time. As the church brought in new members, they in turn were asked to ponder these things during Lent as they prepared to make their public commitment to Christ on Easter morning.

Today in our congregation, we encourage folks to spend a little more time reflecting on life and faith as we journey from Ash Wednesday to a somber and quiet Holy Saturday when the whole world waits for the deathly silence to be broken. We provide special services to begin the Lenten Journey, as well as during Holy Week when Maundy Thursday and Good Friday become avenues for understanding Christ's radical message of love. We will also have a prayer vigil for the 40 hours from Christ's death to the moment of sunrise on Easter day; everyone is encouraged to sign up for one of those hours and be in church alone to pray, read or just sit with God. But we are also planning a Shrove [PHAT] Tuesday Pancake Dinner on Tuesday Feb. 21st from 5 to 7pm. The Palm Sunday Cantata on April 2nd is coming back this year as our new Organist / Choir Director Bethany Blake brings back "The Robe." And the Wednesday Night Searchers will be watching the fantastic new widely acclaimed series on Jesus' life entitled "The Chosen" every Wednesday during Lent. If you would like to host a "Chosen" watch group in your home, let Rev. Mark know.

All of these special activities are designed to get you to think more deeply about your relationship to God. In addition, some folks work the discipline of fasting into their weekly schedule while other folks give up particular items or aspects of their lives deemed unworthy in the presence of Christ's sacrificial love for us [alcohol, sugar, meat, restaurants, etc]. Others, tired of oppressive and dire religion, take on positive habits or behaviors in order to nurture the goodness in their hearts planted there by the spirit of the Living God [letters, vegetables and fruits, exercise, reading a gospel or book on spirituality, making peace with those with whom you have issues, prayer or meditation, etc].

As we approach Lent, let us harken back to a day and age when we took time to take stock of our lives, our faith in God, and our understanding of the most important figure in human history: Jesus Christ. Thrilled to be walking this enlightened path with all of you, I am

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Mark

## TAKE NOTE FOR FEBRUARY

### SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5

~Ask the Pastor / Annual Meeting Sunday~

**One Worship Service @ 10am - In-person and streaming**

*Holy Communion / Spiritual Friends for PreK through 2nd grade*

Each year at the Anniversary of Rev. Mark's call to be our minister, we provide an opportunity for folks to check in and ask him questions about ministry under his leadership. Questions can be theological, biblical, ethical, historical, in house church administration or even appropriate personal questions. During the sermon time, he will answer as many questions as possible: so come prepared! This is a great service to bring a friend.

**~FCCEJ Annual Meeting at 11:15 in the Sanctuary - In-person and via Zoom~**

All are welcome to attend; active members are able to vote

Copies of the Annual Report are available in the Narthex as well as online:

<https://www.fccej.org/v5/annual-meeting-2023/>

**~Community Concerts @ First presents Paul Asbell at 3pm in the Sanctuary~**

Proceeds support FCCEJ Outreach and Essex CHIPS - Suggested donation of \$20 per ticket

More information and link to tickets can be found through our website:

<https://www.fccej.org/v5/community-concert-february-2023/>

### SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12

**~Worship Services @ 8:30\* and 10:15am - In-person and streaming\*~**

Pulpit Swap with Rev. Karen Mendes

For several years the two Reverend Mendes' have been swapping pulpits. Our own Rev. Mark Mendes preaches and leads worship at 10am at the First Baptist Church of Burlington while Rev. Karen Mendes graces FCCEJ and preaches at both worship services. Rev. Karen Mendes has been the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Burlington for the last ten years but before her call there, she attended FCCEJ for many years [a balcony person].

### WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22

**~Ash Wednesday Service, 7pm in the Sanctuary~**

Easter was the first celebration of the church and rightly so! Folks remembered and highlighted that significant event from the beginning of the church. An entire liturgical season [Easter] grew out of that occasion as it became the Sunday when new members joined through the sacrament of baptism at the break of dawn when the sun was rising. The Second church season grew out of the Easter Celebration and became a time to reflect and prepare for becoming a member as well as the grand celebration. The second season was Lent and continues to be a key time when we reflect on the meaning of our Christian faith and the importance of Christ's passion and death to our faith. One scholar stated that it is impossible to grasp the true meaning of Easter unless you travel down the darkened, narrowed streets of Lent. Our Ash Wednesday Service will be on Wednesday, February 22, 2023 at 7pm. The Ashes either placed on your forehead or wrists remind us of our connections to Christ's suffering as well as the finitude of our mortal life and thus our total dependance on God/ Jesus for our eternal hope. Everyone is welcome.

### **Lent: *Renewing Divine Connections***



During the 6 weeks of Lent, the staff at FCCEJ has pledged to pray for all active members and constituents in our faith community. Each week, starting on February 26 and going until Easter, we will publish a list of names in the Sunday worship bulletin. These are the people that will be prayed for that week. If you have a specific prayer request, please send it to [welcome@fccej.org](mailto:welcome@fccej.org) or call the church office. If not, we will pray as the Spirit moves us. All prayer requests will remain confidential unless we hear otherwise.

Please feel free to pray for the folks on the list as part of your Lenten journey. By Easter morning, everyone at FCCEJ will have been lifted up in prayer.

Lent is upon us. Ash Wednesday arrives on February 22nd and our Epiphany time will be over for another year. We've heard the story again of Jesus being baptized by his cousin John. Then came Jesus calling his first disciples, fishermen, to join him and learn how to fish for people. There is a story between these two and that is Jesus going into the desert for 40 days, being tempted by evil, and then his ministry starts. This is way the season of Lent is 40 days long, not counting Sundays. Lent is followed by the period of 50 days of Eastertide, or the season of Easter, ending on Pentecost Sunday. Easter moves around each year due to its date being determined by the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the first day of Spring or the March equinox. Therefore, the date of Easter can be anywhere between March 22 and April 25th (this year is April 9th). Once you determine the day of Easter, you then count backwards on the calendar 40 days, not counting Sundays, to arrive on Ash Wednesday.

I have found the season of Lent much more meaningful when I take on something new or add a forgotten task back into my life, much more so than giving something up. When I think of Jesus' time on earth and all the stories of his life with the disciples, he took on a lot and his burdens were many. This Lent I plan to write notes, send cards and be more intentional about connecting with people in my life. I hope you too will find a way to spread the love of Christ to others, be an active disciple, reach out to those in need, volunteer where and when you can, watch for the love of God in people and be open to the Spirit moving...however and wherever it chooses. Try reaching beyond your comfort zone. I think the first disciples probably did this as well. They willingly left their job of fishing, their family and followed Jesus traveling around the area, learning and growing in their faith and supporting each other.

As you look ahead and plan your summertime and where you will spend it, I hope you will take advantage of the offerings that we have for your child, youth or yourself to continue to grow in your faith.

We all know that attending church, faith formation and youth time can help you gather and build your faith foundation and relationship with God, but it's just one hour a week or three if you are old enough for youth time. That's just 52 hours per year, if you attend every week, and another 36-48 for the youth. When you think how many hours there are in a year, this isn't much. Do we take advantage of how often we can attend and grow? Summer camps can add on more. Vacation Bible Camp (15 to 35 hours) or a UCC summer week away (around 80 hours), or one of our FCCEJ camping weekends where fellowship with other believers is fun and rewarding. A strong foundation of faith is what we all are striving for. It is what we lean on when the low times in our lives arrive, and we can't predict when they come so it's even more important to keep our foundations strong.

Here's to staying more connected to our God and each other as we walk along this journey of life with our families, our church friends which in turn keeps our ministries at FCCEJ vibrant and alive.

Blessed to be on this journey with you,  
Laurie Chipman  
Christian Education Director

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## Deacon's Corner

The Deacons were so grateful to see the church and congregation basking in the excitement of advent. We extend heartfelt thanks to our ministers and staff, and all those who helped to make it memorable "in word, song and deed!"

In February, we transition through Epiphany and ready ourselves for the Lenten season. February can be a month of contradictions. The dark and cold of winter challenge us, and we are mindful of those in our midst who need support, whether it be from illness, anxiety or loneliness.

Conversely, we celebrate the beauty of the snowy landscape, and revel in the anticipation of Lenten observations, Valentine's Day, and.....The Super Bowl! We also welcome several new Deacons into our fold, and are excited to see their contributions to our diaconate roles and responsibilities. In that vein, as I complete my two terms as a deacon, I want to thank everyone at FCCEJ for the opportunity, and especially appreciate the mentorship and support from my fellow deacons - serving in this capacity has been an extremely rewarding experience!

Sincerely,  
Peter Schmalz

# Faith Formation

**\*\*Watch for Faith@Home emails in your inbox\*\***

## Faith Formation Peer Groups for 2022-2023

All ages are encouraged to ask questions, as we learn together about Jesus and the love our God has for everyone.  
On All Family Worship days children/youth participate in the full worship service with their families.

### January Schedule

2/5—Spiritual Friends for PreK-2nd grade / Communion ~ ONE service @ 10am  
Annual Meeting follows at 11:15am; need childcare for the meeting? Contact Laurie by 2/2.

2/12—Peer Groups

2/19—Peer Groups

2/26—1st Sunday in Lent ~ All Family Worship

## 2022-23 Faith Formation Offering

### Church World Service

*Building a world where there is enough for all.*

CWS walks with families all over the world as they put food on their table, connect to clean water and build what they need to thrive.

We talked in Faith Formation gathering about putting kits together for CWS. There is an interest to do Welcome backpacks. Watch for more news on this soon. Check out their website for more information: <https://cwsglobal.org/>



### Vacation Bible Camp 2023

Mark your calendars for August 7-11, 2023

**Hero Hotline – Called Together to Serve God!**

*'So let's strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up.'*

Romans 14:19

*Outside on the church lawn or inside on a rainy day.*

**Register online coming soon! Watch your emails.**

**Morning Session: 9am to 12noon**

**You & Me Toddler (attend with an adult) up thru current 5th graders**

**Youth Assistants** – current 6th graders and older

Parents can begin dropping off campers at 8:45am and join us all morning or return for morning closing.

**Afternoon Session: 12noon to 4pm**

Parents who are looking for a full day option can add on the afternoon session for a cost of \$50 for an afternoon or \$250 for the full week. This fee covers the cost of our HS Youth or College workers. Scholarships are available.

Campers will have lunch, a movie, a VB Camp hands on activity. We are currently looking to hire 4-6 youth. First ones to sign up with Laurie get the slots.



### VB Camp Team

All volunteers arrive by 8:30am (or before) for morning team meeting and depart shortly after noon.  
Not sure where or how to get involved? Contact Laurie. There's a place for everyone at VB Camp!

**Recruitment is underway! Are you available? Contact Laurie.**

Crafts – Decorations – Music Leader – Opening/Closing – Photographer – Puppeteer – Science Leader – Snacks – Tech Crew

**Youth Assistants** – are those currently in 6th grade and older

Looking for helpers before camp starts - assemble backdrops - name tags - divide up crafts - set up Canopies (the week or weekend before camp)

# Calling ALL Youth

*A Time to Unplug - Share – Ask Questions  
Build Community – Reconnect with God  
Where All are Welcome*

## **Youth Gathering - Sunday, February 12**

### **Junior Youth - 11:30-1**

Starts with a game & mission activity, ending with a combined shared meal.

### **High School Youth - 12:30-2**

Starts with a combined shared meal, then faith & mission time.

Join Laurie and the Youth Ministry Team as we try a new format, one that other churches have had success with. Reach out to other FCCEJ youth you know, invite them and bring a friend if you'd like. We are also thinking of going outside our walls to do a mission outreach on another Sunday, so stay tuned and watch your emails.

### **Nursery Staff - high school youth**

Contact Laurie for an interview, fill out paperwork and get an orientation to the Nursery. Be on staff and earn \$20 a worship service. Possible new member class and funeral childcare also. We currently have 8 on payroll and there is room for more. Job applications available by request. Email Laurie at lchipman@fccej.org.

### **VB Camp Week - Paying Opportunity**

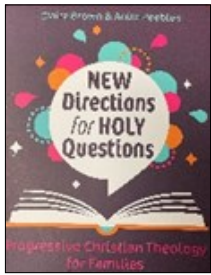
We are looking for 4 youth who would commit to working the afternoon session of VB Camp the week of August 7-11th from 11:30am to 4pm. Hurry and get your name on the list! (Going into 10th grade up thru college.) Volunteer in the mornings from 8:30 to 12noon for community service hours and a chance to know the campers before the afternoon.

### **Youth Parent Gatherings**

#### ***1st one ~ Thursday, February 23rd from 7-8pm***

Are you a parent of a youth in grades 6th-12th? Come join Laurie & Pastor Mark for a time of fellowship and conversation experiencing what youth gatherings really look like. Get to know other parents here at First Church and talk about the value of youth programming in the life of your youth. This group will gather once a month February to May. Have a suggestion for a day/time in March? Contact Laurie.

### **Parent Book Discussion**



#### ***New Directions for Holy Questions*** by Claire Brown & Anita Peebles

Starting on March 8th Wednesday nights during Lent at 7pm (hybrid). If you are a grandparent who involved in the family child care plan, you are also invited. Join Laurie for great conversations on topics like – Who am I? Who is God? What is Sin? What is Forgiveness? How do we care for each other? Creation? And many more. This book is written by two pastors, friends who love to sit and chat, as well as 'curious people who love Jesus and who want to learn all we can about how to live with justice in this world'. Laurie has 12 copies in her office. Pick up yours before March.

## FCCEJ Outdoor Ministry



The 2023 camping weekends with FCCEJ families have been set!

A bunch of sites have been booked and paid for by the funds in our FCCEJ Outdoor Ministry Fund, thanks to many of you who have given on the special offering in February. So, check your calendars and reach out to Laurie to hold a site for your family. Join the Stein, Lyman, Moos, Chipman & Mendes families for some fun in God's great outdoors.

- Friday, June 23 to Sunday morning, Jun 25 at Button Bay State Park on Lake Champlain  
<https://www.vtstateparks.com/buttonbay.html> (10 tent/RV sites and 4 lean-tos)
- Friday, August 25 to Sunday morning, August 27 at Branbury State Park on Lake Dunmore:  
<https://www.vtstateparks.com/branbury.html> (8 tent/RV sites, 1 tent only and 2 lean-tos)

## Nominations

There are several committees that still have vacancies. Both Missions and Christian Ed need more members to effectively meet their plans. We still have openings in Ushering and Stewardship. If you have interest, please reach out to me or any member of the nominations committee. The time commitments for various committees varies and most committees have virtual attendance capability for meetings. In general, meetings are once a month. We would be happy to connect you with a committee chairperson or committee member for more information. Some committees do not require church membership. Finally, if you have interest in attending the Vermont Conference, let us know. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Dick Harris

vtharris3@gmail.com, 802-233-6068

Nominations Committee:

Dick Harris (Chair), Elaine Raymond, Mary Anne Warren, Janne Giles, Lauren Starkey, Sandy Tallman

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## COMMUNICATIONS

Communications has been discussing possible roles for a Communications Technician in case FCCEJ chooses to go with a model that supports such a role. Some of the potential duties for a Communications Tech might be - Website Updates (front end content and back-end software updates), Social Media/Advertising Campaigns, Livestream Production, Livestream Technology and IT Troubleshooting as needed.

Communications has decided to work on another poster with a "He Gets Us" theme to get the word of JesUS out in a way that attracts new people to the church.

Plans for the 2023 Vacation Bible Camp are already heating up and necessary updates to the website are being discussed.

There have been some significant tech changes for live stream and in-person worship:



The most noticeable tech update for those viewing the service via YouTube would be the addition of two new high definition cameras. The resolution on the new cameras is very good and with two cameras the transition from Pulpit to Lectern is smooth.



Some really cool new tech that is less noticeable, but makes the live stream go smoother, is the addition of a joystick controller for the new cameras. The joystick controller lets the livestream team operate the cameras in a way that makes for a more pleasant viewing experience.



Last but not least, those of you who enjoy using the hearing assist headsets during in-person worship have probably already noticed that there are more headsets to go around!

### Donate to FCCEJ

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](https://paypal.me/fccej). (A PayPal account is not required to donate money.)

## Missions Committee

### THE RED TENT

Our church and the members of the missions committee have long been a supporter of The Joint Urban Ministry Project or J.U.M.P. In our November 2022 Church Newsletter, the Missions Committee members asked for new socks to be placed in the red tent display outside the Marvin Lounge. Thank you for all the donations! J.U.M.P. has enough socks to meet demand, but now has a need for **warm gloves**. The gloves can be left in the Red Tent outside the Marvin Lounge. Thank you to all who are able to help in this important outreach project.

### JUMP ANNUAL ONLINE AUCTION



JUMP is holding their 3rd Online Auction February 1-10, 2023. The theme is “Showing Love for JUMP”. Rising food, energy and housing costs, following two plus years of COVID realities, have impacted everyone, but none more than our low-income neighbors. Low-income Vermont households need the help that JUMP has a 30 plus year history of providing. JUMP services include assistance with utility payments, groceries, transportation and essentials like toiletries, clothing and cleaning supplies. JUMP needs your support of this vital mission.

Last February’s Online Auction raised over \$6,000 for JUMP and the services it provides. We hope to do the same with the third Online Auction in February 2023. <http://www.jumpvt.org/onlineauctionfundraiser.html>

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Age Well is seeking volunteers to provide regular social interaction and assistance to seniors in their homes. Help older Vermonters by delivering Meals on Wheels, providing friendly visits, shopping, errands, assistance with appointments, organizing, bill paying, respite, minor home repairs, veterans visiting veterans and more. Time is based on your availability--it can vary from one day a week to two days a month (M-F between 8am-4pm). Contact our Volunteer Department at 662-5249 or [volunteer@agewellvt.org](mailto:volunteer@agewellvt.org) for information.

Since 1974, Age Well has been part of Vermont’s Area Agencies on Aging, coordinating services and care for older adults throughout Addison, Chittenden, Franklin, and Grand Isle Counties. Age Well provides services and resources to older Vermonters (60+) such as Meals on Wheels, Community Meals, Restaurant Ticket Programs, Special Events, Care and Service Coordination, and Health and Wellness opportunities like Tai Chi. All programs and services are offered at no cost to those that receive services.

We are always looking for Friendly Visitors, Senior Companions & Meals on Wheels drivers and Respite Volunteers!



We give sincere thanks to our Snow Angels, who help keep our facility walkways and steps clear of snow. They make it safe for everyone to continue the mission and ministries of FCCEJ and we are so incredibly grateful!

Shout-outs to Dan Petherbridge, Rob Sinkewicz, Sue Wood, Carl Wermer, and Eric Lindholm who have recently been spied shoveling and salting.

If you want to be added to the Snow Angel email group, contact the church office. We’ll send an email to the group as needed. If you’re available to help out, just respond back and let the group know.

**COMMUNITY CONCERTS @ FIRST PRESENTS**

**Paul Asbell, Plays & Sings Steel-String Americana**

Sunday February 5, 2023 at 3pm in the Sanctuary ~ \$20 suggested donation - supporting Essex CHIPS  
 Please join us for the first concert of the 2023 CC@F season! Blues guitarist Paul Asbell will share fresh takes on blues and jazz standards, old-timey country tunes, and original pieces from the "American roots" tradition.

In his 50 year professional career, Paul Asbell has played and recorded with Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker, David Bromberg, Mary McCaslin, Bobby McFerrin, and many others. Paul has taught guitar for over 50 years.. He presently teaches at Middlebury College and the University of Vermont.

*"I've actually been a fan of Paul's guitar playing for quite a few years- I think he's one of the best-kept secrets in American music today!" David Bromberg, acoustic guitar legend*

*Veteran guitarist Paul Asbell fingerpicks his way through a stylistically diverse collection of tunes plucked from the great American musical canon and arranged and played with finesse, imagination, and humor." Acoustic Guitar magazine*

Concert proceeds will support Essex CHIPS and First Congregational Church of Essex Junction. Tickets are available by calling the church office or online via this link: <https://sevendaystickets.com/events/118903>.

**2023 COMMUNITY CONCERTS @FIRST CONCERT SERIES**

- ◆ February 5, 2023 @ 3pm - Paul Asbell plays & sings Steel-String Americana
- ◆ March 26, 2023 @ 3pm - David Feurzeig - "Play Every Town VT"
- ◆ July 9th @ 3pm - Jon Gailmore Family Concert
- ◆ September 24, 2023 @ 3pm - Bethany Blake
- ◆ November 12, 2023 @ 3pm - Cantiamo Choral Ensemble presents a "Musical Feast"

**FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS**

SARGENT, Rusty	02/01	PAUL, George	02/19
RUSSELL, Clint	02/02	EDWARDS, Elijah	02/20
FINNIE, Kathy	02/06	LAFLAM, Kaydence	02/20
PARKS, Maggie	02/08	BOURN, Molly	02/22
GOEDKEN, Ethan	02/09	EHLER, Duke	02/22
CHARLAND, Anna	02/12	HOLDEN, Sue	02/22
GRAY, Peter	02/12	KINNEY, John	02/22
BENTON, Mark	02/14	AHOKAS, Cheryl	02/24
EVANS, Abigail	02/14	DETTENRIEDER, Sharon	02/24
KELLY, Jennifer	02/15	DEWEY, Mae	02/24
LONGWELL, Cindy	02/15	DAVIS, Robert	02/25
WOOD, Rachel	02/15	GABERT, Valerie	02/26
POTTER, Allen	02/16	MCGEARY, Matt	02/26
BEEBE, Sharon	02/17	KOCH, Braeden	02/27
RAUT, Joy	02/17	MARSHALL, Connie	02/28
GARRAPY, Betty	02/19		



**SERMON TALKBACK**

Do you ever get home and discuss Rev. Mark or Rev. Josh’s sermon and wonder how they reached the conclusion they did, or totally disagree with how they interpreted a particular text, or have some fascinating sentiments to add that you have read from another source, or maybe have an unanswered question? Well, Sermon Talkback is the group for you! We meet every Tuesday morning from 8:30 – 10am in Marvin Lounge. Coffee is provided and sometimes we even have some tasty treats. You can also join us via Zoom, ID# 740 803 865. All are welcome.

**THE SEARCHERS**

The Wednesday Night Searchers is a group that explores our faith and how it applies to our lives and world. We have studied books of the bible, secular books, prayer life, issues of social justice, other religious traditions and so on. There is no subject off limits to where our minds reach as we journey with God in this world of ours. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to bring a friend! We meet every Wednesday night from 7-9pm in the Marvin Lounge and via Zoom ID # 853 5516 9054.

**COFFEE CLATTER**

Every Friday morning at 8m, join Pastor Mark at Martone’s Market & Café for an hour of lively conversation and friendly banter. Grab a cup of coffee and/or a tasty treat and spend some time in community.

**BRIDGE GROUP**

On the third Friday of each month, a group [1-3 tables] gets together to have some fun playing bridge. The purpose is fun and there are no master points awarded, just a jar of Pastor Mark’s yummy jam for the winner. We usually have some cookies and snacks as well as quite a bit of interesting conversations. There are all levels of players and everyone is welcome including folks who do not attend our worship services or church. In Our next gathering is Friday, February 17 from 1:30 to 4pm in Marvin Lounge.

**Yoga @ First**

Come practice a compassionate, inquisitive sequence to integrate the mind, body, and soul. In each session, we will focus, breathe, build heat, strengthen, and relax. Tuesday evenings, from 5:00-6:15 in the Sanctuary. Wear comfortable, non restrictive clothing. Bring a mat or borrow one. Donations (to FCCEJ) welcome, but not required.

**Fall Prevention - Tai Chi**

Join your faith family for Tai Chi class on Tuesday mornings at 10:15 in the Fellowship Hall. This is a beginner class of slow, controlled motions that aid in strength and balance. There is no charge for the class but donations to FCCEJ are appreciated. Contact Betty Adams for more information: adamsvt123@gmail.com. Sponsored by Age Well.

**SAVE THE DATE**

**YOU ARE INVITED – PLANNED GIVING SEMINAR**

As a component of the new Planned Giving Program to be launched in February, you are invited to a Planned Giving Seminar to be held on March 16, from 6:30 to 8:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall. Holly LeMieux, a local estate planning attorney, will be the presenter. Covered topics will include estate planning, wills, and elder law. Whether FCCEJ benefits from your planned giving or not, the Planned Giving Committee encourages everyone to have a written plan (such as a will, trust or estate plan). The Planned Giving Seminar is free and open to church members and friends of FCCEJ. Please contact the church office if you would like to attend.

**LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP**

**Sunday, February 26 from 1 to 3pm**

We have a busy church with hundreds of people volunteering to help make our church run smoothly and effectively. Well over 100 of those volunteers serve on committees which are a key component of conducting the business of the church. We all come from various churches, work settings and organizations that are organized and run differently from our church. The Leadership Retreat is for any member, especially those who serve on one of our committees or as an officer of the church, who wishes to better understand how the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction works. How do congregational church meetings run? What is the relationship between the staff and the committees? What are by-laws and what do they say about how committees should run? Do we have other policies and procedures that we need to follow? What authority does Church Council have over committees and groups? How does the church handle its money in a safe and responsible way? These questions and more will be answered at the Leadership Retreat on February 26th from 1 to 3pm. If you serve on a committee, you are strongly encouraged to come and if you just want to find out what makes this church tick, then feel free to come and discover how we do things here.

**First Congregational Church of Essex Junction**

1 Church Street  
Essex Junction, VT 05452  
Phone: 802-878-5745  
Email: [welcome@fccej.org](mailto:welcome@fccej.org)

**ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED**

**Sunday Morning Worship:**

**8:30** - In-person and streamed via [youtube.com/c/fccej](https://youtube.com/c/fccej)  
Music: Bethany Blake directs our Sanctuary Choir and provides accompaniment

**10:15** - In-person—Faith Formation for PreK - 8th grade  
Music: Finally @ First Praise Band

*\*Communion is served on the 1st Sunday of each month at each service—all are welcome at Christ's table\**

Visit us online:



FCCEJ.ORG



FCCEJ



FCCEJ\_802



FIRSTCONGREGATIONALEJ

Whatever Things

are TRUE

HONORABLE

JUST

PURE

LOVELY

of  
GOOD REPORT

if there is any virtue,  
and if there is any praise,

**THINK ABOUT**

These Things

PHILIPPIANS 4:8