

# **FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH** *of Essex Junction*

*Love. Serve. Grow.*

***A Welcoming Community, Accepting and Serving All in the Spirit of Christ***

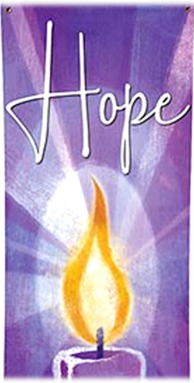
*The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction, United Church of Christ, is an Open and Affirming congregation, embracing diversity and affirming the dignity and worth of every person, because we are all created by a loving God. We seek to live Christ's call for compassion, justice, healing and wholeness 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 **E-mail:** [welcome@fccej.org](mailto:welcome@fccej.org) **Website:** [www.fccej.org](http://www.fccej.org)





**The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction  
First Sunday of Advent  
December 3, 2023**

*We offer two different worship services: our First Service with organ and traditional choir is streamed and begins at 8:30am with access on our webpage @ [www.fccej.org](http://www.fccej.org). You can watch that service any time thereafter. Our Second Service with the Finally @ First Praise Band is live in the sanctuary at 10:15am and is not streamed. On the first Sunday of each month, when we celebrate Holy Communion, we offer one service at 10am where everyone worships together. Our Faith Formation Program for PreK through 8th is in person and starts at 10:15am in worship and then breaks out into peer groups. The Nursery is available at both services—self serve at 8:30 and staffed at 10:15.*

***Currently, mask wearing is determined by the individual.***

*A Welcoming Community, Accepting and Serving All  
In the Spirit of Christ*

*Order of Worship*

Prelude

An Extravagant Welcome    *No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey  
you are welcome in this place.*

Greeting and Announcements

Introit

Lighting the First Candle of Hope.....The Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop Family

Call to Worship Psalm 100.....Led by Deacon Gary Hartmann

Leader: Today, we enter the season of Advent, the beginning of the journey that ends with a baby at a manger in Bethlehem.

**People: We may not be headed to David's royal city, but we are on a journey both with and toward the Living presence of God made known to us in Jesus Christ.**

Leader: This story of "Emmanuel" or "God with us" is an ancient one and yet fresh and new as we wait for God to enter our lives. Come, let us connect the old and the new as we worship the living presence of God.

**\*Opening Hymn**

***O Come, O Come Emmanuel***

***#116, vv. 1, 3, 5\*\****

Deacon's Prayer of Invocation..... Deacon Gary Hartmann

## A Time of Confession

### Call to Confession

Leader: The people lived in great darkness; God's presence and demands for living were not embraced by humanity. Injustice and a lack of righteous behavior resulted in all sorts of evil. People longed for divine light.

**People: Today, our world teeters on the brink of chaos. It's hard to discern a clear way forward. We struggle to find joy and meaning as our society tinkers with chaos, apathy and self absorption. Come, let us confess our need for God's help.**

### Unison Prayer of Confession

**Despite our effort to embody lives of goodness and love, we all fall short and fail to love ourselves, our neighbors, our enemies and even You, God. Wars are raging, people are suffering from violence, greed rules much of our lives, busyness draws us away from your presence, divisions and demonization roil civil society, and our world slowly moves further away from You. We often feel overwhelmed and powerless. Help us Jesus!**

### The Assurance of Pardon

God sent Jesus long ago to help move humanity from darkness to light. Christ's Spirit continues to challenge us to live justly and treat everyone with kindness, forgiveness and love. I declare to you all that God continues to come to us and inspire us to change the world for the better. Come, let us repent and soak in God's grace that we might be better followers of Jesus Christ. Your sins are forgiven. Enjoy the fullness of life in the name of our risen and reigning Savior:  
Amen and Alleluia!

Children's Message

*Introductions and Authorization*

Rev. Mark

Laurie Chipman

Elizabeth Miller

### **The Congregation Sings as the Children Come Forward**

**Jesus loves the little children, all God's children of the world.  
Whether young or old or new, Jesus loves us through and through,  
Teaching us to love all creatures in the world.**

### **The Congregation Sings as the Children Return to Their Families\***

**God has made us all a rainbow. Colors dancing 'round and 'round.  
In our hair and skin and eyes, big and little, every size,  
God has made us all a rainbow dancing 'round.**

*\*PreK through 2nd transition to Spiritual Friends\**

Pastoral Prayer and **Unison Lord's Prayer** ..... Mary McHugh, Visitation Minister

A Time of Silence for Personal Prayer

Sharing Our Prayers with God and Each Other

**Loving God**, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. **And do not let us fall into temptation**, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, amen.

Musical Response      **O Come, O Come, Emmanuel**      #116

O Come, desire of nations, bind  
All people's in one heart and mind;  
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease  
Fill the whole world with heavens peace  
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel, shall come to you O Israel.

Scripture

Old Testament Prophetic      Isaiah 64:1-9      [page 538]

New Testament Gospel      Mark 13:24-37      [page 39]

Anthem

Sermon      *Waiting*      Rev. Mendes

Offering Our Gifts to God

Invitation, Offering, and Prayer of Dedication

Offertory

**\*Doxology for the Christmas Season**      #148

**What Child is This**  
Bring gifts of incense, gold and myrrh,  
Come peasant, king, to own him  
The king of kings salvation brings  
Let loving hearts enthrone him.  
This, this is Christ the king,  
whom shepherds guard and angels sing  
Haste, haste to bring him laud,  
the babe the son of Mary.

**\*Hymn**

**Hark, The Herald Angels Sing**

**Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King;  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"**

**Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies;  
With the angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"  
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King!"**

**Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord!**

**Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; Hail the incarnate Deity,  
Pleased with all, with all to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.  
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King!"**

**Hail the heaven-born Prince of peace! Hail the Sun of righteousness!**

**Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings,  
Mild he lays his glory by, born that folk no more may die,  
Born to raise the folk of earth, born to give them second birth.  
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King!"**

**\*Benediction**

**Pastoral Benediction**

**Rev. Mark Mendes**

**Sung Community Benediction**

**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.**

**\*Please stand as you are able**

- ◆ Sincere thanks this morning to our musicians who provided the great music!**  
⇒ Bethany Blake and the Sanctuary Choir

## OUR PRAYER MINISTRY

If you require prayers for yourself or a loved one; or if you wish a call from a pastor, please contact the church office.

Those impacted by the fires in Hawaii  
Everyone affected by the recent floods  
Victims of gun violence and their families  
Family and friends of Alma Wilson

Albert  
Ruby and Family  
Michael Flynn  
Tony Lamb

Family and Friends of Norma Edwards  
Bruce Gianuzzi  
Sandy Tallman  
Maureen Evans & Family  
Bernie Currier  
All those suffering due to violence in  
Ukraine and the Middle East  
...and all persons affected by COVID19



***\*The flowers on the altar this morning are given  
by Melissa Ward in honor of her nephew, Owen David Benson\****



### CONNECTIONS:

Signup Online! <https://bit.ly/3dwsHji>

Our "Weekly Update" eConnection: <http://bit.ly/3rlslSv>

Our monthly "SPIRIT@FIRST" eNewsletter\* <http://fccej.org/v5/category/newsletters/>

\*available in a printed, snail-mailed format

### ONGOING PROGRAMS!

- ◆ **Sermon Talk Back**, Tuesdays at 8:30am in Marvin Lounge & Zoom:  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89903982036#success>
- ◆ **Tai Chi Class**, Tuesdays at 10:15am in the Fellowship Hall
- ◆ **Yoga @ First**, Tuesdays at 5pm in the Sanctuary
- ◆ **Coffee Clatter**, every Friday @ 8am at Martone's
- ◆ **Lunchtime Book Group**, 3rd Mondays @ 11:30am in Marvin Lounge
- ◆ **Bridge Group**, 1st & 3rd Fridays @ 1:30pm in Marvin Lounge



FACEBOOK

[bit.ly/39039ht](https://bit.ly/39039ht)



INSTAGRAM

[bit.ly/3rlfgZf](https://bit.ly/3rlfgZf)



INTERNET

[fccej.org](http://fccej.org)



YOUTUBE

[bit.ly/3oPpBv9](https://bit.ly/3oPpBv9)

## **A Few Key Announcements**

- ◆ On the first Sunday of each month, we offer a single worship service at 10am. This provides us the opportunity to connect with our faith family as we celebrate Holy Communion together.
  - ⇒ This service is in-Person & Streamed with organ and Sanctuary Choir
  - ⇒ Staffed nursery care is available
  - ⇒ Spiritual Friends for PreK through 2nd grade offered after Children's Message
- ◆ Two Morning Services on Other Sundays
  - ⇒ 8:30am—In-Person & Streamed with organ and Sanctuary Choir.
  - ⇒ 10:15am—In Person with Finally @ First Praise Band & Faith Formation for children
  - ⇒ Nursery for infants through 3 years available at both services—self-serve at 8:30 and staffed at 10:15.

## **The Giving Tree**

Due to the challenges with the Sign Up Genius app, we have printed the remaining tags for the Narthex tree. Please consider stopping on your way through and picking up a tag or two.

Important Reminders:

- ◆ Please secure tags to each wrapped gift.
- ◆ If you choose to give a gift card, please place it in a small wrapped box or bag with the tag attached. Gift cards can easily be misplaced among all of the larger gifts. This makes it easier for us to keep track of them.
- ◆ All gifts must be dropped off to FCCEJ by Sunday, December 10.

We hope you enjoy this wonderful opportunity to provide a few bright moments during the holidays for children in the City and Town of Essex and Westford. Thank you!

Elaine Raymond, Anita Guild and Sharon Dettenrieder

## **Grief Support Opportunities**

As a result of our Holiday Grief Support session, participants made 2 suggestions for follow-up. A session for men will be offered on Thursday, December 7 at 10 AM in Marvin Lounge.

Men's Experience of Loss will focus on just that – men's experience! Loss can come in many forms: job loss, loss of home, and loss thru the death of a loved one.

Beginning January 11th, we will offer a monthly grief support group meeting on the 2nd Thursday of each month in Marvin Lounge. This is open to anyone in our community experiencing loss. Sharon Dettenreider and Mary McHugh will be facilitating. Please contact Mary with any questions: 920-664-5230 or mmmchugh@hotmail.com.

# **Weekly Calendar: December 3—December 10**

\*Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections\*

## **Sunday, December 3**

9:30am: Pageant Music Rehearsal, Marvin Lounge  
10am: Worship, Sanctuary & Streaming  
10:15am: Spiritual Friends (PreK—2nd)  
11:30am: Pageant Rehearsal, Sanctuary & Gym  
Music Committee, 2nd Floor Program Room  
Montana Team, Marvin Lounge  
*1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall*

## **Tuesday, December 5**

8:30am: Sermon Talkback, Marvin Lounge  
10am: Tai Chi, Fellowship Hall  
10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop  
*11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall*  
5pm: Yoga @ First, Sanctuary  
*6:30pm: BSA Troop 624 District Meeting, Fellowship Hall*  
*Eagle Scout BoR, 2nd Floor Program Room*  
7pm: Church Council, Marvin Lounge

## **Thursday, December 7**

*8:30am: Essex Art League, Fellowship Hall*  
10am: Grief Support, Marvin Lounge  
*11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall*  
6:15: Music Rehearsal, Sanctuary  
*6:30pm: Eagle Scout BoR, Marvin Lounge*  
7pm: Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary  
*Cub Scout Den Meetings, Fellowship Hall, Gym, Program Room, Classrooms*

## **Saturday, December 9**

*8am: The Vine Nepali Congregation, Sanctuary*  
*Give It A Go Fellowship, Marvin Lounge*  
*9am: Reiki Class, Marvin Lounge*  
*Weight Loss Support Group, Fellowship Hall*  
10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop  
*1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall*

## **Monday, December 4**

8:30am: Food Pantry Organizing, Fellowship Hall  
*11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall*  
*5pm: Essex Pediatrics Parent Workshop, Fellowship Hall & West Wing*  
*7:30pm: Group Victory, Marvin Lounge*

## **Wednesday, December 6**

*11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall*  
4pm-7pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop  
5:30pm: Finally @ First Rehearsal, Sanctuary  
*6pm: Boy Scouts Troop 624 PLC, Marvin Lounge*  
*7pm: BSA Troop 624, Fellowship Hall*

## **Friday, December 8**

8am: Coffee Clatter, Martone's  
*11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall*  
*6:30pm: Blue Spruce Grange, Fellowship Hall*

## **Sunday, December 10**

9:30am: Pageant Music Rehearsal, Marvin Lounge  
8:30\* & 10:15am: Worship, Sanctuary & Streaming\*  
10:30am: Faith Formation (PreK—8th)  
11:30am: Pageant Rehearsal, Sanctuary & Gym  
*1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall*

*Events in italics = Local Community Groups*