



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 **Website:** www.fccej.org





The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction
The Third Sunday of Advent
Christmas Pageant Sunday - December 17, 2023

We offer two different worship services: our First Service with organ and traditional choir is streamed on the 2nd and 4th Sunday and begins at 8:30am with access on our webpage @ www.fccej.org. You can watch that service any time thereafter. Our Second Service with our praise band is live in the sanctuary at 10:15am and it is streamed on the 3rd Sunday of the month. On the first Sunday of each month we celebrate communion and only have one service at 10am and it is streamed. Our Faith Formation Program for all children is in person and starts at 10:15am.

Our Nursery is open at all services.

Currently, mask usage is up to each individual.

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

Prelude

Advent Joy

Nancy Gifford**

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

Musical Introit

Go Tell It On the Mountain

**

Marie Johnson on piano

First Service: Clarinet duet: Izzy Owens & Laura Marthaler

Second Service: Joyful Noise Choir

Lighting the Third Advent Candle of Advent: Joy

First Service: The Olson Family: Suzanna, Peter and Aaron

Second Service: Jessica Wisloski and Callie Martin

Call to WorshipDeacon Gary Hartmann

Leader: We come to worship today to experience the sacred ritual of our Christmas Pageant. Lines may be forgotten, laughter will erupt, pride will be visible, and the warmth of our God will cover us all.

People: Christ's story continues to be shared and known throughout the world. We are here to retell and remember the familiar story with new voices and in new ways. Christ is alive and his teachings still ring out.

Leader: Come, let us worship the living God.

Prayer of InvocationDeacon Gary Hartmann

Opening Hymn There's a Voice in the Wilderness #120*

Pastoral Prayer Rev. Mark Mendes

A Time of Silence for Personal Prayer

Sharing Our Prayers with God and Each Other

Unison Lord's Prayer

***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 [Choir and Congregation]

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.

Offering Our Gifts to God

Invitation, Offering, and Prayer of Dedication

Anthem

Sheep May Safely Graze

J.S. Bach**

arr. Katherine K. Davis

#148**

***Doxology for the Advent Season**

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.**



2023 Christmas Pageant - "One Busy Night"

Written and edited by Laurie Chipman and Jen Kelly

Adapted from two plays 'The Innkeeper's Busy Night' (1991) & 'Shepherds On the Hillside' (2002)

***Oh Little Town of Bethlehem**

**O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie;
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark street shineth the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all years are met in thee tonight.**

**For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth.**

**How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of God's heaven.
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.**

**O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!**

~ Scene One - The Inn ~

Come, O Long-Expected Jesus

**Come, O long expected Jesus, born to set they people free;
From our fears and sins release us; grant us your true liberty.
Israel's strength and consolation, hope to all the earth impart;
Dear desire of every nation, enter every longing heart.**

**Born all people to deliver, born a child, you came to reign!
Born to rule on earth forever, come be known to us again.
By your own eternal Spirit, come to claim us as your own;
By your all sufficient merit, let us share your cross and crown.**

~ Scene Two - The Hillside ~

***Angels, from the Realms of Glory**

Parents please move your young shepherds, angels and sheep to the Narthex.

**Angels, from the realms of glory, wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story now proclaim Messiah's birth:
Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.**

**Shepherds, in the field abiding, watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing; yonder shines the infant light:
Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.**

**Sages, leave your contemplations, brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great Desire of nations; ye have seen his natal star:
Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.**

**Saints, before the altar bending, watching long in hope and fear;
Suddenly the Lord, descending, in his temple shall appear:
Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.**

~ Scene Three - The Inn ~

Away in the Manger

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes;
I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky
and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay
close by me forever, and love me, I pray;
Bless all the dear children in they tender care,
and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.

~ Scene Four - The Manger ~

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

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

Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies;
With th'angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"
Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come, off-spring of the virgin's womb.

Veiled in flesh the God-head see; hail th'incarnate Deity,
pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

~ Final Scene ~

Joy to the World

**Joy to the world! The Lord is come: let earth receive its king;
Let every heart prepare Christ room, and heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.**

**Joy to the Earth! The Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

**Christ rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove
The glories of God's righteousness and wonders of God's love,
And wonders of God's love, and wonders, wonders of God's love.**

*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.**

Postlude

Hallelujah Chorus

G.F. Handel**

*Please stand if you are able

Cast List

In Order of Appearance:

Narrator.....	Teddy Owens
Innkeeper.....	Beth Volker
Guests at the Inn	Molly & Izzy Bourn, Addie Stein, Lillian Putnam
Mary & Joseph (1st service)	Hannah Tracy & John Wermer
Mary & Joseph (2nd service).....	Megan & Travis Bartlett
Shepherds:	
Joel.....	Jennifer Kelly
Joshua	Betty Marthaler
Eli	Addie Stein
Uncle Amos	Catherine Lapierre
Able.....	Maureen McKenzie
Angel.....	Lillian Putnam
Baby Jesus (1st service)	Evelyn Wermer
Baby Jesus (2nd service)	Asher Bartlett
Assistant Director.....	Jennifer Kelly
Director.....	Laurie Chipman

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 up to 3 y/o offered at both services—self-serve at 8:30 & staffed at 10:15
- ◆ Sincere thanks to our Audio/Visual team - Gary Hartmann, Francis Gravel, Jonah Moos, and Ed Guild
- ◆ We are thankful to be blessed with the talents of these awesome musicians this morning:
 - ⇒ Bethany Blake, FCCEJ Sanctuary Choir, Marie Johnson, Laura Marthaler, Izzy Owens, Joyful Noise, Mindy Bickford

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Special Offerings in December

The Pastor's Fund—December 17th:

In these economic uncertain times, there is a unique opportunity to help those in our local area who have financial needs. The Pastor's Fund is used at the discretion of our minister to provide support for heating bills, emergencies, food, etc. for both members and non-members. What a great way to show our caring to our community!

Veterans of the Cross—December 24th:

This Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. Thank you!

Dates to Remember:

Sunday, December 24—Christmas Eve

One Morning Service at 10am

Family Service at 5pm

Christmas Concert at 8:30pm

Lessons & Carols at 9pm

Communion & Candlelight at 11pm

Monday, December 25—Church office closed all day

Tuesday, December 26—January newsletter articles due

Sunday, December 31—One service at 10am

Committee Reports for Annual Meeting due—please email submissions to welcome@fccej.org

Monday, January 1—Church office closed all day

Sunday, January 7—One service at 10am

Sunday, January 28—New Members Class, 11:30 in Marvin Lounge

Grief Support Group

2nd Thursday of each month from 10am to 11:30am in Marvin Lounge.

This group is open to anyone experiencing the loss of a loved one. It is a place to share and connect with others. The facilitators hope to provide a safe, supportive environment in which participants learn from each other, discover ways to cope with grief, and offer the assurance that we are not alone. Grief is a normal, natural, and necessary experience!

The sessions are facilitated by Sharon Dettenrieder, MSN, RN and Mary McHugh, MAPS. Both Sharon and Mary have years of experience in leading Grief Support groups as well as personal experience with loss.

First session is Thursday, January 11.

Please contact the church office for more information: 802-878-5745 or welcome@fccej.org.

OUR PRAYER MINISTRY

If you require prayers for yourself or a loved one; or if you wish for a call from a pastor, please contact welcome@fccej.org or call (802) 878-5745.

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

Michael Flynn
Tony Lamb
Bruce Gianuzzi
Maureen Evans & Family
All those suffering due to violence in
Ukraine and the Middle East
...and all persons affected by COVID19

Flowers on the altar are a wonderful way to remember loved ones or celebrate a special day. We include a note in the bulletin about who donated the flowers and who/what they are honoring. Scan the QR code or use this link to sign up for 2024:



<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0545A8AB2FAAF58-46881013-fccej>

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



INSTAGRAM

bit.ly/3rlfgZf



INTERNET

fccej.org



YOUTUBE

bit.ly/3oPpBv9

Weekly Calendar: December 17 - December 24

Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections

Sunday, December 17

Pageant Sunday—All Family Worship

8:30* & 10:15am: Worship, Sanctuary/
Streaming*

1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall

Tuesday, December 19

8:30am: Sermon Talkback, Marvin Lounge

9am: Giving Tree Set Up & Distribution,
Fellowship Hall

10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship, Marvin Lounge

5pm: Yoga @ FCCEJ, Sanctuary

6:30pm: Eagle Scout BoR, Marvin Lounge

7pm: Communications, Conference Room

Thursday, December 21

8am: Food Pantry Set-Up, Fellowship Hall

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship, Marvin Lounge

2pm: Food Pantry Distribution, Fellowship Hall

6:15pm: Music Rehearsal, Sanctuary

6:30pm: Eagle Scout BoR, Marvin Lounge

7pm: Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary

Open & Affirming Subcommittee, Program Room

Saturday, December 23

8am: The Vine Nepali Congregation, Sanctuary

Give It A Go Support Group, Marvin Lounge

9am: Weight Loss Support Group, Fellowship Hall

10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop

1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall

Monday, December 18

8:30am: Food Pantry Organizing, Fellowship Hall

11:30: Lunchtime Book Group, Marvin Lounge

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall

3pm: Bylaws Review, Marvin Lounge

5pm: Essex Pediatrics Workshop, Fellowship Hall

7:30pm: Group Victory, Marvin Lounge

Wednesday, December 20

8am: Food Pantry Delivery Drop off,
Fellowship Hall

10am: Missions Committee, Marvin Lounge

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall

4pm-7pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop

5:30pm: Finally @ First Rehearsal, Sanctuary

6:30pm: Eagle Scout BoR, Marvin Lounge

7pm: BSA Troop 624, Fellowship Hall

7:30pm: Bell Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary

Friday, December 22

8am: Coffee Clatter, Martone's Market

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall

6:30pm: Blue Spruce Grange, Fellowship Hall

Sunday, December 24

Christmas Eve

10am: Worship, Sanctuary

1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall

5pm: Family Service, Sanctuary

8:30pm: Christmas Concert, Sanctuary

9pm: Service of Lessons & Carols, Sanctuary

11pm: Service of Candlelight & Communion,
Sanctuary

Events in italics = Local Community Groups

MINISTRY DIRECTORY

Staff

Senior Pastor: Rev. Mark Mendes [mmendes@fccej.org]

Ministers of Visitation:

Rev. Ron Faux [revronfaux@gmail.com] / Mary McHugh [mmmchugh@hotmail.com]

Christian Education Director: Laurie Chipman [lchipman@fccej.org]

Children's Ministry Coordinator: Elizabeth Miller [childrensministry@fccej.org]

Music Director: Bethany Blake [bblake@fccej.org]

Social Media Marketing Coordinator: Andrea Hickey [socialmedia@fccej.org]

Church Administrator: Jen Kelly [welcome@fccej.org]

Music

Chair of Music: Denise Keating

Finally @ First Director: Rick Dooley

Men at First Director: Bill Bickford

Officers

President: Cathy Shearer

Vice President: Judy Larrabee Pomainville

Financial Secretary: Ann Gray [finances@fccej.org]

Treasurer: Dan Petherbridge [treasurer@fccej.org]

Assistant Treasurer: Matt Clark [mclarkdiscovery48@gmail.com]

Clerk: Brenda Dawson

Historian: Ann Gray

Internal Auditor: Betsy Weischedel

Committee Chairs

Christian Education: Derek Lyman

Communications: Francis Gravel

Deacons: Alison Wermer, Judy McCullen—Co-Chairs

Finance & Pastoral Relations: Judy Larrabee Pomainville

Hospitality: Jen Dooley

Human Resources: Cathy Shearer

Missions: Paula Sargent

Stewardship: Kathryn Brennan

Trustees: Kaki McGeary

Recognized Groups

Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop: Sandy Tallman

Heavenly Food Pantry: Valerie Gabert