



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.

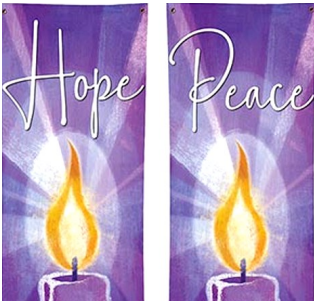
1 Church Street

Essex Junction, VT 05452

Phone: 802-878-5745 **E-mail:** welcome@fccej.org **Website:** www.fccej.org



Christmas Eve—10am



**The First Congregational Church
of Essex Junction**

**Christmas Eve Morning
December 24, 2023**

A Service of Lessons & Carols



*"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder; and his name will be called, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end."
Isaiah 9:6-7*

Order of Worship

Prelude *PROCESSIONAL NO. 2* Paul A. McKlveen
Featuring the FCCEJ Currier Bell Choir and the UCU Mansfield Ringers

Welcome Greeting and Announcements
*No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey
you are welcome in this place.*

Introit *The King Shall Come* arr. Cathy Moglebust
Featuring the FCCEJ Currier Bell Choir and the UCU Mansfield Ringers

Lighting the Fourth Candle of Advent: LoveSermon Talkback Family

Call to Worship Led by Deacon Rusty Sargent

Leader: This morning, we remember the old story of how Jesus was born: angels and shepherds, kings and magi, a manger and a star leading the way. Today, Mary and Joseph re-enter our lives to teach us about God.

People: I love the angels appearing to Mary and Joseph, the star coursing through the sky, the wise men fooling Herod, and the Innkeeper making room in his barn.

Leader: I love Saint Nicholas giving away gold, Christmas trees of light, carolers bracing the cold and going to church with our families.

People: Two thousand years after its first telling, the story of Christ's birth still enlivens our lives and teaches us about God's way. Come, let us re-enter the amazing old story and let God's love wash over us again and again...

Leader: Come, let us worship the Living God.

Prayer of Invocation Led by Deacon Rusty Sargent

***Opening Carol**

O Come, All Ye Faithful

The Prophecy Foretold

Isaiah 9:1-7

Read by Bill & Mindy Bickford

***Carol**

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

The Annunciation

Luke 1:26-38

Read by Judy Allen

Anthem

Angel's Carol

John Rutter

The Birth of Jesus

Luke 2:1-7

Read by Ginny Coe

Children's Message

Rev. Mark Mendes

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.**

Christmas Prayer and Unison Lord's Prayer (trespasses)

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 (Choir & 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.**

The Holy Child and His Visitors

Luke 2:8-20

Read by Riley Elliott

***Carol**

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

The Wisemen Come

Matthew 2:1-11

Sue Wood

***Carol**

Hark, the Herald Angels Sing

A Christmas Offering

Invitation, Offering, and Prayer of Dedication

Offertory *The Birthday of a King (v.2)*

William H. Neidlinger

***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.

Final Reading of Light and Life

John 1:1-14

Read by Betty Marthaler

Christmas Meditation

We Should Really Thank Jesus

Rev. Mendes

***A Final Carol**

Silent Night

*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

'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime

arr. Cathy Moglebust

Featuring the FCCEJ Currier Bell Choir and the UCU Mansfield Ringers

People are invited to remain seated & listen to the beautiful music of the postlude

****Streamed with permission under ONE LICENSE, License #728093-A. All Rights Reserved.**

*Please stand as you are able

◆ Sincere thanks this morning to our musicians who provided the amazing music!

⇒ Bethany Blake, the Sanctuary Choir, the FCCEJ Currier Bell Choir and UCU Mansfield Ringers, under the direction of Amy Dandurand

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.

Safe travels for everyone
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
Connor Bryce and Family
Bernie Currier

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

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 care for infants through 3 years available at both services—self-serve at 8:30 and staffed at 10:15

Dates to Remember:

Monday, December 25—Church office closed all day

Tuesday, December 26—January newsletter articles due

Sunday, December 31—One service at 10am

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

Special Christmas Eve Offering—Veterans of the Cross

This fund has been caring for active & retired clergy, and lay employees of the UCC for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “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!

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.

Weekly Calendar: December 24—December 31

Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections

Sunday, December 24

Christmas Eve

10am: Worship, Sanctuary
11am: *The Vine Nepali Congregation, 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

Tuesday, December 26

11:30am: *Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall*
5pm: Yoga @ FCCEJ, Sanctuary
5:30pm: Finance Committee, Marvin Lounge
7pm: Trustees, 2nd Floor Program Room

Thursday, December 28

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall
4:30pm: *Marie Johnson Recital, Sanctuary*

Saturday, December 23

8am: *The Vine Nepali Congregation, Sanctuary*
Give It A Go Support Group, Marvin Lounge
9am: *Weight Loss Support Group, Fellowship Hall*
1pm: *Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall*

Monday, December 25

Christmas Day—Office Closed All Day

11:30am: *Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall*
7:30pm: *Group Victory, Marvin Lounge*

Wednesday, December 27

11:30am: *Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall*
5:30pm: *Finally @ First Rehearsal, Sanctuary*

Friday, December 22

11:30am: *Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall*

Sunday, December 31

10am: All-Family Worship, Sanctuary
1pm: *Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall*

Events in italics = Local Community Groups

IMPORTANT REMINDER

Annual committee reports are due to the office by **December 31**.

Please email your submissions to welcome@fccej.org.

Christmas Poinsettia Dedications

- Anonymous..... *In honor of the FCCEJ Faith Family*
- Rebecca Beerwald..... *In memory of Charles W. Saum*
- Marie Benway..... *In memory of my parents*
- Brian & Laurie Chipman..... *In honor of all grandparents*
- Brenda Dawson..... *In memory of my parents*
- Jen & Rick Dooley..... *In memory of Harry Dooley and Dorothy & Joe Pine*
- Riley & Lorinda Elliott..... *In memory of Bob Vincent*
- Janne & Howard Giles and Family..... *In memory of David & Anne Cozzens*
- Martha Hopkins..... *In memory of my parents, Arthur & Lois Anderson*
- Joanne Irwin..... *In memory of Alan Irwin and our parents*
In honor of my children
- Linda Jackson..... *In memory of George Jackson*
- Marie & David Johnson..... *In memory of our parents*
- Derek Lyman..... *In memory of Brian Latuch and Phyllis Buchanan*
- Mark Mendes..... *In celebration of George and Margaret Mendes*
- Elizabeth Miller..... *In memory of my grandmother, Dorothy Hart*
- Sylvia Nyhagen..... *In honor of my family*
- Judy Pomainville..... *In memory of Wesley & Virginia Larrabee*
- Sanctuary Choir..... *In honor and appreciate of Bethany Blake*
- Jane Schneider..... *In memory of Russ Schneider*
- Andrea & Steve Sharp..... *In memory of our parents, Lee & Joan Dawley*
and Robert & Helen Sharp
- Thomas & Cathy Shearer..... *In honor of Corrine Hassett*
- Gorden & Lauren Starkey..... *In memory of our parents, Gorden & Garnet Starkey*
and Rick Busciglio
- Carolyn Toof..... *In memory of Renee Boucher and Dick Toof*
- Beth Volker..... *In memory of Linda J. Volker*
- Alison Wermer..... *In memory of our parents*
- Phyllis Willey..... *In memory of our parents*