



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—5pm



The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction
Christmas Eve, 2023 - 5pm
A Service of Sacred Stories & Singing

"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

Gathering Music

Various Christmas Carols

Ed Guild, accompanying**

Welcome Greeting and Announcements

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

Lighting the Fourth Advent Candle of Love & the Christ Candle.....The Isham Family
Ira, Barb, and Easton

Call to Worship

Leader: Tonight is the birthday of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thank you, God, for sending the Messiah our way.

People: Happy Birthday, Jesus!

Leader: When Jesus was born, the piercing light of Christ's love diminished the darkness.

People: Happy Birthday, Jesus!

Leader: The light continues to grow and has made its way across centuries and continents to make its home in our hearts here at the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction.

People: Happy Birthday Jesus!

Leader: Christ still brings light and love into our lives and reminds us of the lengths to which God will go to save and protect us. **Come: let us sing Happy Birthday to Jesus.**

Deacon's Prayer of Invocation

***Opening Carol**

O Come, All Ye Faithful

**

The Coming of a Messiah Foretold

The Prophetess Anna

***Carol**

O Little Town of Bethlehem

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 Birth of Jesus

The Innkeepers Daughters: Ruth and Abigail

***Carol**

Away in a Manger

**

The Visitors and Witnesses

Joseph of Arimathea

A Christmas Offering

Invitation, Offering, and Prayer of Dedication

Offertory *Angels We Have Heard on High*
 Featuring Nora Blake on violin

A French Carol**

***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.**

***Carol**

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Spreading the Light of Christ

From the Christ Candle, the Prophetess Anna, the Innkeeper's Daughters, Ruth and Abigail, and Joseph of Arimathea will pass Christ's light to each person in the crowd. We ask each person to be careful with your candle and especially ask parents to watch their children. On the way out, please extinguish your candles and place them in the receptacles provided. Thank you.

***A Final Carol**

Silent Night

*Featuring Kinlee Spaulding on piano and Cooper Spaulding on violin
First, our musicians will play Silent Night through once by themselves
Then the congregation will sing the verses
Then the musicians will play it through again by themselves*

***Pastoral Benediction**

Rev. Mark Mendes

***Please stand as you are able**

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- ◆ *Special thanks to Ed Guild for playing the organ for tonight's service. He has been playing for the Christmas Eve Family service for many, many years!*

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL

AND TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT!

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

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*
5pm: Finance Committee, Marvin Lounge

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