



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
Epiphany Sunday
January 7, 2024

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

Yuletide Fires

Diane Loomer**

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

The People Who in Darkness Walked Hymn tune "Dundee"***
music by Thomas Ravenscroft

Call to Worship Deacon

Leader: Come, let us gather together to ask the Lord to join us in this place, to enter every longing heart and to bless us all with gifts beyond measure.

People: Spirit of the Living God: walk through our doors, sit beside us in our pew, come and rest in our hearts and minds this morning.

Leader: Gracious God, enliven us with your songs, educate us to your ways in scripture, challenge us in our attention to our neighbors and help us feel connected to your family of faith found at the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction.

***Opening Hymn**

We Three Kings

[insert]**

**We three kings of Orient are; bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.**

Refrain:

**O star of wonder, star of light, star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.
Born a King on Bethlehem's plain, gold I bring to crown him again,
King forever, ceasing never, over us all to reign.**

[Refrain]

**Frankincense to offer have I; incense owns a Deity nigh;
prayer and praising, voices raising, worshipping God on high.**

[Refrain]

**Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume breathes a life of gathering gloom;
sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying, sealed in the stone-cold tomb.**

[Refrain]

**Glorious now behold him arise; King and God and sacrifice:
Alleluia, Alleluia, sounds through the earth and skies.**

[Refrain]

A Children's Message

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 -2nd transition to Spiritual Friends.*

A Time of Confession

Call to Confession

Leader: It is good to have a fresh year to make resolutions and begin afresh to live into our better selves. The new year reminds us that we always strive to grow into self-actualized adults.

People: To fall short and then get up to try again is the way of life that draws us to meaning, maturity and God. Come, let us lift up this fundamental nature of life and commit to the journey.

Unison Prayer of Confession

Everyone: God of inspiration, come to us and encourage our weak spirits to soar. Give us discerning hearts that we might love more fully. Stimulate our minds that we might use our intellect in our search for wisdom. Empower our bodies toward exercise and health that we might have the strength to enjoy this world and mold it into your kingdom of kindness, mercy and peace. Spirit of the Living God, draw us into your future.

The Assurance of Pardon

Leader: The Creator of the Universe welcomes you into a life of purpose. Come, commit to a journey of reflection, growth and change. Come, and follow Jesus Christ on the adventure of a lifetime.

Pastoral Prayer and **Unison Lord's Prayer ("trespasses")** Rev. Mark Mendes

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

Sevenfold Amen

Peter Christian Lutkin**

Scripture

Epistle

Ephesians 3:1-12

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Gospel

Matthew 2:1-11

A Dramatic Presentation
*Maureen Mackenzie, Beth Volker,
Betty Marthaler, Teddy Owens,
and Jenny Bourn*

Anthem

Take Now My Voice

Douglas Nolan**

Communion Meditation

Jesus Likes Change

Rev. Mendes

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

The Invitation and Words of Institution

Music

Northern Lights

Ola Gjeilo**

Sharing the Bread and the Cup

*Today, we will partake of communion by passing the bread and cup out to each person. The Minister will direct everyone to partake of the gluten free bread together. The Deacons will then pass out the non-alcoholic grape juice where everyone is welcome to partake when they choose. This symbolizes both the individual and corporate nature of our faith. **All are welcome at Christ's table.***

Offering Our Gifts to God

Invitation, Offering, and Prayer of Dedication

Anthem

Baptized in Water

Trad. Gaelic melody**

***Doxology**

**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God for all that love has done;
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. Amen.**

***Hymn**

We Would Be Building

#607**

***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

He Shall Feed His Flock Like A Shepherd
(from *The Messiah*)

G.F. Handel**
arr. William Stickles

*Please stand if you are able

- ◆ We are thankful to be blessed with the talents of these awesome musicians this morning:
 - ⇒ Bethany Blake and the Sanctuary Choir

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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.

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

*The flowers on the altar are given by Beth Volker,
in remembrance of John Denver on what would have been his
80th birthday.*

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

Dates to Remember:

Sunday, January 7—One service at 10am

Sunday, January 21—Pulpit Exchange with Rev. Devon Thomas

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

Montana Service Trip

Tickets are available now for the *Cabin Fever Calcutta* happening on March 9th. Names of those who purchase tickets on or before 1/15/24 will be entered into a drawing for a \$100 cash prize. Don't miss out on this opportunity to support the Montana Service Trip.

Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop

The Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop will be open on the first Sunday of each month, beginning today, January 7, from 11am to 12pm. Stop by after worship and pick up a treasure or two!

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.

New Members Class Offered

Have you found a place where you are welcomed? Do you appreciate a faith that encourages you to use your mind? Are you looking for a church that teaches values of love, kindness, inclusion and forgiveness to your children? Do you appreciate great music from multiple choral or musical groups? Do you feel the warmth and support of our staff and members? Do you want to be a part of an organization that helps to better the structures and tone of the wider Essex community?

If you have answered yes to any of these questions, then we would love you to come and explore what membership in our church means. On January 28, after second service, around 11:30am, we are offering a New Members Class where you can learn about our church and her many ministries. You will learn about our history, as well as what our denomination, the United Church of Christ, stands for and how they operate. Lunch is provided. Childcare is available with advance notice. Please contact the church office at 802-878-5745 and we'll be happy to arrange it.

Weekly Calendar: January 7 - January 14

Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections

Sunday, January 7

10am: Worship, Sanctuary/Streaming
10:15am: Spiritual Friends (PreK-2nd)
11am-12pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop
11:30am: Music Committee, Sanctuary
Junior Youth, Kitchen, Youth Room
Montana Team, Marvin Lounge
Racial Justice Team, 2nd Floor Program Room
1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall

Tuesday, January 9

8:30am: Sermon Talkback, Marvin Lounge
10am: Missions, Conference Room
10:15am: Tai Chi, Fellowship Hall
10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall
3pm: By Laws Review, Marvin Lounge
5pm: Yoga @ FCCEJ, Sanctuary
6:30pm: BSA Three Rivers District Roundtable, Fellowship Hall & Program Room
7pm: Deacons, Marvin Lounge

Thursday, January 11

9am: FCCEJ Staff Meeting, Marvin Lounge
10am: Grief Support, Marvin Lounge
11am: Youth Ministry Team, Conference Room
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall
12pm: Calcutta Committee, Program Room
6pm: Music Rehearsal, Sanctuary
7pm: Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary

Saturday, January 13

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, January 8

8am: Food Pantry Setup, Fellowship Hall
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship, Marvin Lounge
5:30pm: Food Pantry Distribution, Fellowship Hall
7:30pm: Group Victory, Marvin Lounge

Wednesday, January 10

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall
4pm-7pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop
5:30pm: Finally @ First Rehearsal, Sanctuary
6pm: BSA Troop 624 Leaders, Marvin Lounge
7pm: Wednesday Night Searchers,
Marvin Lounge
BSA Troop 624, Fellowship Hall

Friday, January 12

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

Sunday, January 7

8:30 & 10:15am: Worship, Sanctuary/Streaming
10:30am: Faith Formation (PreK-8th)
11am-12pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop
11:30am: J.A.M. (Jesus And Me), Program Room
Senior High Youth, Kitchen, Youth Room
1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall

Events in italics = Local Community Groups