



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



First Service

The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction
First Sunday in Lent
February 18, 2024

We offer two different worship services: our First Service with organ and traditional choir is in-person and streamed and begins at 8:30am with access via 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 have a single service at 10am and is in-person and streamed. Our Faith Formation Program for all children is in person and starts at 10:15am. Listen Assist Headsets are available in the Narthex and next to the elevator and can be used with or without hearing aids.

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 *Pavane in f-sharp minor* Louis Couperin

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 *Kyrie [excerpt]*
Based on music by Antonín Dvořák; arr. Ruth Elaine Schram, adapt. Gary Alan Smith

Call to WorshipLead by Deacon Rusty Sargent

Leader: We are Protestants and as such we look to the Word of God for guidance in our lives. Early leaders of the reform movement sacrificed and even died to bring scripture to us in our own language.

People: Scripture is at the heart of our worship service and Faith Formation Program and Jesus' biblical teachings guide us in how we live on a day to day basis.

Leader: Come, let us explore an ancient biblical practice as we seek God's guidance in our daily lives. Come, let us worship and praise our God.

***Opening Hymn** *We Limit Not the Truth of God* #316

Deacon's Prayer of InvocationDeacon Rusty Sargent

Children's Message

Pastoral Prayer Rev. Mark Mendes

A Time of Silence for Personal Prayer

Sharing Our Prayers with God and Each Other

Unison Lord's Prayer ("trespasses")

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 and Candle Lighting

During the first five Sundays of Lent, we will provide a time for folks to come up and light a candle for a loved one who has died or for someone in your life in need of prayer. While we light our candles, one of our choir members will sing.

Sharing One's Spiritual Journey.....Terri Livak

Anthem

Deep Waters

Pepper Chopin

The Practice of Lectio Divina [A Hands on Biblical Practice]

Introduction

One Scripture engagement technique that has a long and rich history is Lectio Divina, Latin for "sacred reading," It has been in use for over a thousand years and was originally practiced by monks who noticed that at times individual words, phrases, or verses seemed to leap off of the page with a special personal importance. These special words or verses can give a sense of encouragement, comfort, thankfulness, or conviction that often applies to present situations and can draw us closer to God. The four traditional stages of Lectio Divina are lectio (reading), meditatio (meditation), oratio (prayer), and contemplatio (contemplation).

Reading the Scripture: Mark 1:9-15

The Baptism of Jesus

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

The Temptation of Jesus

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

Meditation

Rev. Mark will read the passage aloud twice. Everyone should listen and be attentive to some segment of the scripture [word, phrase, image, metaphor, etc] that is especially meaningful to them. Everyone sits in silence for 1-2 minutes reflecting on what drew your attention to the particular word or phrase. Focus intently on why the Holy Spirit might have chosen these words to speak to you today. Reflect on how it might apply to your life. Is it relevant to something that you are going through? Does it bring to mind a struggle that you have been dealing with? Do certain people come to mind that God may want you to reach out to or reconcile a relationship with? Is there a strong sense of a movement or change that needs to happen? When you are thinking about a passage in God's presence, ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate that passage so that you can grasp the message in terms of your own life.

*Then people are invited to share their thoughts or insights aloud: just a simple statement of one or a few words with **No elaboration!***

Prayer and Contemplation

Everyone now sits in silence and prays; just sit with the Divine Presence.

Scripture, Contemplation and Prayer

Our Deacon on Duty will read the scripture again. Listen anew to the scripture passage and see what draws you into the text this time. Everyone sits in silence for 1-2 minutes. During this time, everyone is asked to go deeper and reflect on what they see or hear is going on in their phrase or text and think about why this text came to the fore? Look for meaning and insight concerning what God wants for your life or the life of our church.

Sharing aloud: Anyone is free to briefly share in one or two sentences, what meaning you have drawn from your word, phrase or text. Everyone then sits in silence and just sits with the Divine Presence.

Then one last reading of the Scripture
and time of Reflective Silence

and a time to share any additional meanings

Offering Our Gifts to God

Invitation, Offering, and Prayer of Dedication

Offertory

Waltz in A Flat Major Op. 39 No. 15

Johannes Brahms

***Doxology**

#778**

**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**

Holy Spirit, Truth Divine

#63

***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 is 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, watching from above.
God now in peace, in faith and in love.**

Postlude

Gloria, 4th Couplet "Basse de trompette"
from *Messe pour les Convents*

François Couperin

**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

Dates to Remember:

February 25 ~ Pulpit Exchange with Rev. Karen Mendes & All Family Worship

March 3 ~ One service at 10am, Holy Communion

March 10~ Community Concerts @ First presents Va et Vient, 3pm in the Sanctuary

March 17 ~ Pretzel Sunday, Receiving New Members

Faith Formation (PreK-8th):

February 18 ~ This week Faith Formation is reading about The Great Commandment in Mark 12:28-34. Peer groups will be discussing rules they know, and which ones are most important to them. They will also be asked to share examples of what love looks like along with examples of how they show love to neighbors.

Last week the peer groups did a fabulous job on the Valentines for Vets! They will warm their hearts for sure.

We will also start signing a new style of *Kumbaya* at the beginning of program room time.

Reminder—next week, February 25, is All Family Worship

The Youth Calendar:

February 18 ~ JH Youth (6th - 8th) 11:30-1:30pm— working on a Good Samaritan skit & College Care Packages

February 25 & March 3 ~ off—school break weekends

Community Concerts @ First

The 2024 lineup for CC@F is here! Mark your calendars and come enjoy these fabulous artists!

- ◆ **March 10 : Va Et Vient** - Vermont trio playing traditional Québécois, French & Cajun tunes
- ◆ **April 14: Vermont Virtuosi** - Flute and piano
- ◆ **September 29: Hairpeace** - Guitar and vocal duo performing acoustic music from the 60's through today
- ◆ **November 3: Alicia Chapman**, Oboe

A portion of the proceeds for all concerts will go to non-profit organizations in our community and all take place on Sundays at 3pm in the Sanctuary. Visit the Seven Days website for tickets: sevendaystickets.com/organizations/community-concerts-at-first-congregational-church

Cabin Fever Calcutta

The Montana Service Team is hosting the 7th annual Cabin Fever Calcutta on March 9th. It is an evening of fun and fellowship, and the perfect time to shake the winter doldrums. Be sure to purchase your ticket at our table in Fellowship Hall!

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. 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. Next session is 3/7. Contact the church office for more info: 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
Andrea & Steve Sharp
Joyce Jacobs
Frank Smith
Connor Bryce and Family

Ruby and Family
Michael Flynn
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. A dedication is included 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: February 18 - February 25

Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections

Sunday, February 18

8:30 & 10:15am: Worship, Sanctuary/Streaming
10:30am: Faith Formation (PreK-8th)
11:30am: Junior Youth, Kitchen, Youth Room
1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall

Tuesday, February 20

8:30am: Sermon Talkback, Marvin Lounge
10:15am: Tai Chi, Fellowship Hall
10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall
4pm: Essex Pediatrics Workshop, West Wing
5pm: Yoga @ FCCEJ, Sanctuary
*6:30pm: BSA Three Rivers District Meeting,
Program Room & Classrooms*
7pm: CE, Marvin Lounge
Communications, Program Room

Thursday, February 22

8:30am: Food Pantry Set Up, Fellowship Hall
9am: FCCEJ Staff Meeting, Marvin Lounge
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship, Marvin Lounge
3pm: Food Pantry Distribution, Fellowship Hall
6pm: Music Rehearsal, Sanctuary
7pm: Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
Searchers, Marvin Lounge

Saturday, February 24

8am: The Vine Nepali Congregation, Sanctuary
Give It A Go Support Group, Marvin Lounge
9am: Weight Loss Support Group, Fellowship Hall
9:30am: Craft Group, Marvin Lounge
10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop
1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall

Monday, February 19

President's Day—Church Office Closed
8:30am: Food Pantry Organizing, Fellowship Hall
11:30am: Lunchtime Book Group, Marvin Lounge
Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall
7:30pm: Group Victory, Marvin Lounge

Wednesday, February 21

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
7pm: BSA Troop 624, Fellowship Hall

Friday, February 23

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

Sunday, February 25

Pulpit Exchange w/ Rev. Karen Mendes
All Family Worship
8:30 & 10:15am: Worship, Sanctuary/Streaming
1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship, Fellowship Hall

Events in italics = Local Community Groups