



# SPiRiT @ FiRST

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FIRST  
CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH *of Essex Junction*  
*Love. Serve. Grow.*

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## Your Pastor's Ponderings.....

The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction is 156 years old and as a congregational church we celebrate local autonomy and treasure the many people that allow our church to be a vibrant healthy place. If our members did not attend church, serve as officers and on committees and volunteer with absolutely every aspect of our church ministry, then we would close. Our members and friends fill the financial coffers, sing in the choirs, teach our children about Christ's love, paint the walls, provide cookies for funerals, lead book discussions, and reach out to make our little corner of God's universe a better place. You all are an incredible groups of talented, capable and devoted people and I am grateful for each and every one of you!

Our church is a member of the Champlain Association of the United Church of Christ, a loose grouping of churches whose ministers get together each month to support each other and share resources and ideas about church life. We meet together as the Champlain Association twice a year to conduct business: elect officers, pass budget, vote on initiatives and proposals, support candidates for ordination and hear about fellow churches. Currently, I serve as the Treasurer of the Champlain Association and as such serve on the Board of Directors of the association.

FCCEJ and the Champlain Association both are a part of the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ which consists of 137 UCC Churches throughout the state. Some of these churches are federated which means that they have two different denominational backgrounds that came together to make things work. We also have a number of community churches that often serve smaller communities too small to support multiple churches/denominations. About fifty of our churches have fewer than 50 members; another fifty fall between the 50-100 mark; another 25 or so have between 100-200 members and then we have about a dozen or so that have more than 200 members. Having roughly 400 members makes us one of the larger churches of the conference along with First Congregational Burlington, Rutland, Middlebury, and Dorsett.

Once a year, most of the churches send delegates to the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ's [VTCUCC] Annual Meeting where we pass budgets, elect officers, share ideas about what is working in our churches, catch up with friends, hear about the State of the Conference, vote on resolutions of conscience, go to workshops, and commune with our covenantal partners. At one of these meetings, Mary Richer and Suzanne Reardon heard about the great need of establishing food pantries and brought the idea back to church, rolled up their sleeves and got to work creating the Heavenly Food Pantry.

This year, our church is hosting the VTCUCC Annual Meeting: Yes our church is the setting for all of these delegates from across the state coming and talking shop. The theme is ***Christians Engaging with Artificial Intelligence*** and the Rev. Robin Junker-Boyce from the Thetford Hills UCC Church will be the keynote speaker. There are a number of great workshops that include:

- ◆ Global Ministries: Partnering with Other Denominations Across the Globe
- ◆ The Hope Fund: Initiative for Churches Reaching Out into the Community
- ◆ Christian Nationalism: Learning about the Negative Mix of Church and State
- ◆ Digital Ministry: Taking the Message to a Wider Audience
- ◆ Indigenous Issues: How Can the Church Speak Out and Help
- ◆ Emerging Churches or Deconstruction

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And then there is the food! On Friday night, Essex's Red Panda, owned and operated by our Nepali Pastor Dan Raut, will have a buffet of fabulous Nepalese food. On Saturday afternoon, food will be coming from Williston's Panera, which is always tasty! Breakfast on Saturday morning will come from all of us bringing bagels, banana bread, muffins, fruit and the like. During the entire conference, we will also provide munchies and drinks to tide people over as they run here and there for the workshops, plenaries and conversations.

Because we are hosting, our folks can pay for only the food [no registration costs] which ends up being around \$64 per person. If you do not want to spend the money on food, then come to the workshops, business meetings and worship services for free. Come and just talk to fellow UCCers from around the state and pick their brains about what is working in their churches.

Being the host means we also need volunteers to help orchestrate all of this. There is a sign up sheet going around the church or you can answer my email and tell me if you want to sign up to attend with or without food, help usher people around the church, help with the technology, help register folks, help set up, serve or clean up one of the three meals, sit at the concession table and make sure the snacks are readily available, or clean up after everyone has left. And if you want to get paid, you can sign up to provide childcare to the young children in the nursery.

We need your help!

I am convinced that anyone who comes for part or all of the meeting will learn a great deal about our denomination as well as our own church. Hoping that many of you will avail yourselves of this great opportunity, I am

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Mark

## **Important Facility Reminders**

### **Parking**

The FCCEJ parking lot spaces have been laid out to maximize traffic flow. It's crucial to only park in these designated spaces, except for active loading or unloading. When drivers park outside the lined spaces, it creates dangerous conditions for other drivers, pedestrians, and emergency vehicles if they were needed. Remember that we have a contract with the medical offices across Church Street to use their parking lot for overflow parking. Particularly on our single service Sundays, please consider parking in that lot and leave the FCCEJ spaces open for visitors and those that may be dealing with mobility issues.

### **Scheduling**

All groups must schedule their meetings and events through the church office. Weekly calendars are posted at the entrance to the Fellowship Hall and Church Office, as well as printed in the bulletin, sent via the weekly email, and available online through our website. One look and it will be apparent that our facility is a busy one. Please remember to keep the office updated with your schedule so that our calendars are as accurate as possible.

### **Facility Safety**

Access to our buildings is via key cards, which can be programmed for a single door, or multiple, depending on the need. If you currently have an access card, but no longer need it, please contact the office. Conversely, if you are chairing a committee and now need a card, we're happy to provide one. Please remember to lock whatever entrance(s) you use when your event is complete, regardless of whether there are other groups meeting or not. Thank you!



Are you praying like I am that with the arrival of April our spring weather truly arrives with warmth, perennials popping up from the ground (I live in Jericho), more sunny days and lots of green?! I'm also praying for clear skies on April 8th and save travels for everyone. Some of you are going to be traveling during April break and I'm sending you prayers for a safe journey, along with rest and renewal. April may also be time to make more plans for summer and I hope you will sign up for VB Camp—registration is online for campers, youth, and volunteer helpers (see link in VB Camp info). Please pass along the link with friends you know, as VBC is open to all in our community. So far I have one senior high youth who has applied to work the afternoon. We need at least 3 more so if you are thinking about this, please fill out the application (also online or on the youth board) and send it in. Interviews will be starting in April. August also has a fun weekend of outdoor camping set for Button Bay State Park and we have more camping sites that have already been booked. Reach out to me and I'll put one in your name. April 21st is a special offering Sunday for Outdoor Ministries and by giving you will support more camping trips like this one, along with scholarships for campers who could use assistance attending a full day VB Camp.

Do you like drama? Maybe you are looking to try something new or you've done this before. Either way we are looking to form a drama team (adults and youth) to help put bible stories together and record them on video for our 2024 VB Camp. Speaking and non-speaking parts are available, along with a narrator.

It would be nice to start working on this in April or by early May, practice a couple times and then record them to a video can be shown to campers during VB Camp. Yes, we will also need volunteers who can record the stories on video. When this team gathers will be determined in April when many of you will reach out and sign up, so if this might be you (or for questions) please reach out to me soon.

Make sure you check out the Faith Formation calendar for April, there has been an update. April 21st will now be All Family Worship and April 28th will be Peer Groups for PreK-8th grade. J.A.M will gather on April 7th along with JHY. The groups will start together and then break to do their own thing. SHY will meet on April 14th for some cookie baking and more. I'm looking for more feedback from youth and parents on dates for Spare Time fun and Summer Service Project (email went out March 20th). We need to book soon. Please look for the email and send me back a reply.

Blessing & Peace on your faith journey,  
Laurie Chipman  
*Christian Education Director*

## **Vacation Bible Camp**

Mark your calendars now!

August 5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Mornings 9am-12noon OR All-Day 9am to 4pm (\$100 / camper ~ scholarships available)

**Campers** ~ Toddlers with a Parent & PreK up through current 5th graders

**Register Online!** Take a moment and sign up today! Campers and all volunteers can register on this link: [www.fcej.org/v5/grow-in-faith/vacation-bible-camp/](http://www.fcej.org/v5/grow-in-faith/vacation-bible-camp/)

**Volunteer Youth (6th – 12th grade) & Adults of All Ages**

**Music Station ~ Science Station ~ Craft Station ~ Game Station ~ Reflection & Snack Station**

**Drama folks ~ Puppeteers**

Be a Camper Group Leader ~ Station Leaders or Helper ~ Set up the weekend before Camp ~ Work on a project before camp week.

Yes! We are recruiting for VB Camp and it takes many volunteers to make this program run. Connect with Laurie or another VBC volunteer. We are happy to chat and answer your questions. Volunteer for the full week or on the mornings/days that work for you.



# Faith Formation News

**\*\*Watch for Family Ministry emails in your inbox\*\***

Lent has been a time for the children to reflect on Jesus' ministry and the events that led up to Easter Sunday. Palm Sunday was a good reflection of the joy we all share of Jesus' love for us.

During April, peer groups will learn about Peter's commission, and how we are called to serve God's people. We will also be learning about keeping the Sabbath to honor God and care for people. May we share the good news of Jesus to those around us, during this Easter season.

The cards and offering were received with much gratitude by the children of Lahaina. The founder of Ice Cream Aunties commented, "What a wonderful blessing to receive!"

I appreciate the FCCEJ community in supporting the children's faith journey!

Elizabeth Miller, *Children's Ministry Coordinator*

## Faith Formation April Calendar

**April 7** ~ Spiritual Friends (PreK—2nd)  
One Service at 10am

**April 14** ~ Peer Groups

**April 21** ~ All Family Worship

**April 28** ~ Peer Groups

## J.A.M. (Jesus And Me)

April 7 at 11:15ish (after our 10am single worship service).

All 3rd – 5th graders are invited to stay after church with a parent. Come build community and get to know each other better.

Join Elizabeth and Laurie, along with the JHY.

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## Faith Formation Offering

### 2023-2024—Lahaina Fire Relief

**Current total \$652.75** (includes \$617.75 sent in February)

Remember to use the small white bible story envelopes on the Narthex shelf so that your offering goes to help those in Lahaina. Loose money in the offering plate goes to our general church budget.

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## Youth Ministry

**A time to build self-confidence. Unwind. Build Community with those around you.  
Come feel the love that God hands out to all so freely.**

### 'Our Youth' Bulletin Board

Thanks for sharing pictures of your youth. Come see who's on the board! Have a picture of what you love to do? Drop it off or email Laurie. What's coming up on your calendar? Let Laurie know.

### Youth Ministry Info Board

Located in the office hallway by the stairs. You can find JHY & SHY calendars, Youth Registration forms, Nursery & VB Camp job applications, and Adult Volunteer Safe Conduct forms for anyone volunteering in our programs.

### Youth Calendar:

**April 7** ~ JHY 11:30-1:30pm ~ put together props for Good Samaritan skit

**April 14** ~ SHY 11:30-1:30pm ~ cookie making for a local organization/group

**April 21** ~ enjoy your spring break

**April 28** ~ ? ?

**Spare Time Fun for Youth & Parents** ~ early or midafternoon on Sunday, April 28th or Sunday, May 19th ~ reach out to Laurie with your input

### Save the Dates:

**May 5** ~ COTS Walk ~ JHY & SHY

Registration begins at 1pm in Battery Park. Walk starts at 2pm. Leave after church and have lunch in Burlington. Watch for registration link in Laurie's weekly emails to help gather sponsorships/donations for COTS.

### Nursery Staff (Senior High Youth & College Students)

We are currently focusing on the 2nd service, 10:15 (10am on first Sunday of the month) and the 8:30am service on special Sundays, like Palm Sunday and Easter.

Interested in working in our Nursery and being on staff? Send an email to Laurie (or call the church) and set up an interview. Pay is \$20 per worship service and the joy of getting to know the young ones.

# Missions Committee

## **2024 COTS Walk-Join Us!**

**Sunday, May 5**

- ◆ 1pm—Check In
- ◆ 2pm—Walk Begins

Founded in 1988, the COTS Walk is one of the oldest and most important of their peer-to-peer fundraisers. Every year around 2,000 walkers of all ages from businesses, schools, religious organizations, and neighborhoods come together to participate. The Walk begins and ends in Battery Park, with music, Bey & Jerry's ice cream, and fun activities.



This family-friendly event guides walkers along a 3.6-mile route through downtown Burlington, visiting some of the shelters and facilities that COTS operates. At this event, COTS seeks to illustrate the path a person experiencing homelessness might take when utilizing COTS services to educate our community about homelessness in our region. Bring your friends, family, co-workers, dogs, and strollers.....ALL ARE WELCOME!

New on the route this year.....COTS is thrilled to share that the construction will be complete on their new housing, which is co-located with Main Street Family Shelter. This year, you will be able to walk by Main Street Family Housing, a multi-family apartment building that will provide 16 unites of permanent, highly affordable housing for families experiencing homelessness.

Register at [www.cotsonline.org/cots-walk](http://www.cotsonline.org/cots-walk) and join the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction team!

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## **Called to Care**

“Called to Care” is a visitation ministry that we are restarting. Some of you may have been active in this ministry before it stopped due to Covid. “Called to Care” involves a pair of church members visiting a member who is homebound or in a care facility in our area. These visits take place at least once a month.

The benefits of “Called to Care” are that the visiting team provides a consistent outreach to our members who are unable to attend church in person. These members will benefit from the care and interest shown to them as it will create a concrete sense of belonging. The volunteers that participate in this visitation ministry will benefit by being fed spiritually. It is often the case that we recognize we receive more than we give in these visits.

Visitation Pastor Mary McHugh is organizing “Called to Care.” If you have questions, please contact the church office or Mary. Sunday, April 21, Mary will be available in the Fellowship Hall to answer questions after each service. There will be a training session on Monday, April 22 in Marvin Lounge from 10 – 11:30AM. Registration is appreciated either by contacting the office or emailing Mary at [mmmchugh@hotmail.com](mailto:mmmchugh@hotmail.com).

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## **Montana Service Trip**

What a wonderful celebration we had at the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Cabin Fever Calcutta held at the Catamount Country Club with approximately 130 people in attendance. After a 4 year hiatus, everyone was ready for an evening of fellowship and entertainment. Our favorite emcee, Jamie Polli, kept the evening lively as we raised \$10,498 in support of our intergenerational Montana Service Team.

These funds will help the FCCEJ team travel to the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana where we will engage in service projects that have been identified by members of the Blackfeet community. Our intergenerational team of seventeen FCCEJ members is excited to get to the reservation and to learn more about their culture.

The team is most grateful to all of those who made this fundraiser such a success. From the people who sold tickets and those who bought them, to those who solicited prizes, to the cupcake bakers and to those who created the decorations, we extend our heartfelt thanks. There are also a number of people who supported us in multiple ways behind the scenes to whom we extend our sincere gratitude. This event would not happen without all of these groups working together. It does take a village.

With Gratitude

Sharon Dettenrieder for the Montana Service Team

# Quarterly Fun with Finance

The following is a summary of our 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter finances at FCCEJ. We are currently in a very favorable financial position. Our income is ahead of budget by about 8% mainly due to pledges and loose income. A year over year comparison of Q1 income reflects in 2024 the church is at 33% compared to 2023 where the church was at 26%. Our expenses are where we would expect them to be at the end of Q1. At this time last year, the church was at 28% in 2023 compared to 24% in 2024.

Income and expenses vary daily, so we continue to monitor our financial position. We are in this position due to the generosity of our members and friends along with astute budget management by our staff and committees.

If you have additional questions, please contact Dan or Matt.

Respectfully,

Dan Petherbridge – Treasurer

Matt Clark – Assistant Treasurer

Summary:				As of 3/30		
	MAR 2023	Year End 2023	%	MAR 2024	2024 Budget	%
Income	\$ 124,214	\$ 471,730	26%	\$ 154,279	\$ 473,935	33%
Expenses	\$ 125,718	\$ 446,220	28%	\$ 113,401	\$ 473,935	24%
Var +/-	\$ (1,504)	\$ 25,510		\$ 40,878	\$ -	
Details:						
	MAR 2023	Year End 2023	%	MAR 2024	2024 Budget	%
Income						
Pledges	\$ 104,971	\$ 345,433	30%	\$ 122,541	\$ 358,000	34%
Loose	\$ 10,377	\$ 41,183	25%	\$ 11,806	\$ 26,000	45%
Rental Income	\$ 4,005	\$ 55,140	7%	\$ 13,805	\$ 60,420	23%
All Other Income	\$ 4,862	\$ 29,975	16%	\$ 6,127	\$ 29,515	21%
	\$ 124,214	\$ 471,730	26%	\$ 154,279	\$ 473,935	33%
Expenses	MAR 2023	Year End 2023	%	MAR 2024	2024 Budget	%
Admin	\$ 664	\$ 4,132	16%	\$ 1,630	\$ 4,850	34%
CE	\$ 475	\$ 7,738	6%	\$ 657	\$ 8,400	8%
Communication	\$ 300	\$ 798	38%	\$ 496	\$ 1,500	33%
Deacons	\$ 436	\$ 1,862	23%	\$ 477	\$ 2,600	18%
Finance	\$ 4,306	\$ 38,851	11%	\$ 427	\$ 37,450	1%
Hospitality	\$ -	\$ 757	0%	\$ -	\$ 750	0%
HRC	\$ 80,453	\$ 301,723	27%	\$ 84,461	\$ 324,849	26%
Mark	\$ 248	\$ 3,160	8%	\$ 435	\$ 2,860	15%
Mission	\$ -	\$ 3,000	0%	\$ 250	\$ 6,000	4%
Music	\$ 1,272	\$ 3,749	34%	\$ -	\$ 7,600	0%
Planned Giving	\$ -	\$ 171	0%	\$ -		
Stewardship	\$ -	\$ 163	0%	\$ -	\$ 425	0%
Trustees	\$ 37,564	\$ 80,116	47%	\$ 24,567	\$ 76,651	32%
	\$ 125,718	\$ 446,220	28%	\$ 113,401	\$ 473,935	24%

<b>Reserves:</b>	
Reserve Target	\$ 142,181
Current Reserves	\$ 119,923
Add in Capital Fund	\$ 161,724
<b>Bank Account Balances:</b>	
2022 Year End Bank Account Balances	\$ 339,978
2023 Year End Bank Account Balances	\$ 278,002
2024 MAR Bank Account Balances	\$ 300,305
<b>Memorial Fund Tracking:</b>	
2020 Year End	\$ 30,600
2021 Year End	\$ 22,300
2022 Year End	\$ 19,900
2023 Year end	\$ 8,800
2024 MAR	\$ 8,800

\*added 2023 surplus to Capital Fund to be used for West Wing construction

<b>Endowment Fund Balances:</b>	
March 2024 Market Value	\$ 738,993
March 2024 Book Value	\$ 670,248

<b>Restricted Fund Balances:</b>	<b>MAR 2023</b>	<b>MAR 2024</b>
Capital Fund	\$ 16,911	\$ 41,801
Christmas Fund	\$ -	\$ 150
Faith Formation	\$ 273	\$ 47
Endowment donation	\$ -	\$ 100
Flower Fund	\$ 804	\$ 1,266
Food Pantry	\$ 33,596	\$ 18,251
Hand Bell Choir	\$ 1,451	\$ 1,451
Memorial Fund	\$ 19,990	\$ 13,191
Men at First	\$ 1,450	\$ 1,520
Missions Reserve	\$ 3,181	\$ 1,183
One Great Hour of Sharing	\$ -	\$ 540
Music Committee	\$ 7,940	\$ 7,260
Organ Fund	\$ 7,700	\$ 11,700
Pastor's Fund	\$ 18,073	\$ 19,603
Sabbatical	\$ 3,375	\$ 3,750
Senior Choir Robe Fund	\$ 363	\$ 363
Combined Youth	\$ 8,955	\$ 9,598
FCCEJ Camp Scholarship	\$ 2,921	\$ 1,821
Family Camp	\$ -	\$ (14)
Vacation Bible Camp	\$ 435	\$ 485
Essex Eats Out	\$ 1,960	\$ 1,971
Mission - service trip	\$ 40,129	\$ 28,092
Outdoor Ministries	\$ 446	\$ 786
Music series	\$ 1,695	\$ 2,305
Jacob Mission Fund	\$ -	\$ 6,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 171,647</b>	<b>\$ 173,719</b>

# **Stewardship is Everything!**

In a recent meeting of the Stewardship Committee, we explored the different areas of stewardship. We are all familiar with financial stewardship and stewardship of our environment, and while both are very important, there is another area of stewardship that is perhaps the most important of all, and that is our stewardship of each other.

None of us can know what another person is thinking, feeling or dealing with on a daily basis. Therefore, I would like to ask you to try something that many of you are likely already doing. It's a very simple thing, but it could mean so much to another person. When you pass by a stranger in the store or when you're out walking, simply offer a smile, or better yet, say "hello" or a few words, such as, "Isn't this a beautiful day?" or "That's a beautiful sweater," or my favorite, "What a cute dog, can I pet him?" This person may be having a very bad day or days, or they may live alone with no one at home to talk to, so that bit of human contact you've made, could turn their entire day around. People need to be acknowledged and appreciated. They need to be "seen."

This kind of stewardship is extremely important in church. If you notice a visitor at coffee hour, never hesitate to introduce yourself and welcome them to our church. Because I don't always recognize everyone who is either a frequent visitor or a member, I may say, "Please forgive me if you've been attending this church for a while, but I don't believe I've ever met you. My name is Beth, what's your?" I'd rather do this and be momentarily embarrassed, than miss an opportunity to make someone feel welcome.

God gave us each other for a reason....so we would be watched over and cared for. We do a great job of that here at FCCEJ, but we shouldn't limit ourselves to just here. It's a big world out there, with many lonely people, so please take every opportunity to make a connection. And, let's encourage our young people to get their heads out of their phones and do the same. They are missing so many opportunities to make lifelong friendships, that we adults were lucky to have made in the pre-technology world. So please, text less and talk more...and remember stewardship is everything!

Respectfully Submitted,

*Beth Volker*

## **Deacons**

Greetings to all in this magical month of April. As we say hello to spring, I always marvel at the way the world comes alive once again after a long and quiet winter. And we couldn't have started this month off better than with the celebration of our risen Christ. What a busy and special time we've had at First Church through the Lenten and Easter seasons, with so many special services and such beautiful music. And as we move forward this month, busying ourselves for all that spring has in store, I am reminded of Pastor Mark's favorite question, "Where did you see God today?" In spring, I think, it is especially easy to see that God is everywhere.

As a reminder, you can also often find one or more of the deacons just about anywhere. Please do not hesitate to seek us out with questions or concerns you may have regarding our church services. If we cannot answer, we have direct access to those who can, and will get back to you!

We would also like to ask that those that are able consider parking in the extra lot across from the Church Street entrance during our joint services the first Sunday of each month. These Sundays present a fabulous opportunity for all members of the church to join together in conversation and communion. And while we are thrilled to see the church so full, we do want to ensure there is enough parking near to the building to allow easy access for all.

With warm blessings and excitement for spring,

*Allison Van Steensburg*

## **Ushers & Greeters**

We are still looking for ushers and greeters to assist at our worship services. This is a great opportunity to see members of our faith community, as well as make visitors feel welcome. Here are the time commitments:

- First of the Month Single Service: 9:40-11:15
- First Service: 8:10-9:15am
- Second Service: 9:55-11:15am

Contact the church office or use this link to the Sign-Up Genius:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60BoA48AAAD2CA2FF2-fccej2#/>

# Important Upcoming Events

## **All Church Leadership Workshop-Rescheduled for Saturday, April 27**

As a Congregational Church, we have new committee members and officers come on board every year as we rotate new members into our administrative structure. Folks who have served for a certain period of time are rotating off of their respective roles to either take a break or switch to another role. Each year, our new members bring new ideas and energy to their tasks, which is one of the great gifts of our way of doing things. However, the downside is that we need to teach everyone how our system of church governance works. How do committees relate to staff members? How do you submit reimbursements for expenses? Where does Church Council fit into the mix? Who is responsible for making the day to day decisions of the church? Who elects chairs, and is there help in learning how to run a meeting? All of these questions and more will be answered at the All Church Leadership Retreat. Everyone interested in learning about how the church runs is welcome to attend but we especially encourage all officers and committee members to attend. It will be held on Saturday, April 27 from 9-11am in the Fellowship Hall.

## **SAVE THE DATE - YOU ARE INVITED**

### **PLANNED GIVING SEMINAR**

As a component of the New Planned Giving Program launched in 2023, you are invited to a Planned Giving Seminar to be held on May 23, from 6:30 to 8pm in the Marvin Lounge. Holly LeMieux, a local estate planning attorney, will be the presenter. Covered topics will include estate planning, wills, and elder law.

There is no charge to attend this seminar. To reserve your spot, please notify Jen in the church office.

## **FCCEJ Family Camping Weekend**



**Friday, August 9 - Sunday, August 11, 2024**

**Button Bay State Park**

13 sites are already booked!

If you would like to contribute to the cost, you can mark your check "FCCJ Outdoor Ministries".

**Our weekend looks like this:** Arrive Friday afternoon/evening (time that works for you) and set up your site. Join the group for an evening campfire in our common area around our large red canopy. We'll move a couple of close by picnic tables so

we can have a couple of meals together (lunch & supper of BYO to the table and a dish or item to share if you wish). Saturday will be a day of fun and activities, on your own and/or with others. Last year some took a bike ride, others with the pool. We played corn hole, cards and got a little crafty. Glow sticks were a favorite of many. It's a very relaxed weekend with no set schedule. There will be great koinonia (fellowship) with others here from your First Church family.

**FCCEJ Camp Scholarships await you!** For children, youth, adults or families. Connect with Laurie or Rev. Mark if you are planning to attend one of our UCC summer camps - Horton Center (NH), Silver Lake Conference Center (CT) or Pilgrim Lodge (ME). Scholarships can also go toward sending your child for full day VB Camp in August.

Attending a week of camp is a powerful way to connect with God, get to know others while enriching your own faith. If you like VB Camp then you are really going to enjoy your overnight time at camp. This life changing experience is one you will never forget and when your week is over you won't want to come home. You'll want to sign up every summer for a week at a UCC camp!

## Grief Support Group

2nd Thursday of each month ~ 10-11:30am 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 4/11. Please contact the church office for more information: 802-878-5745 or [welcome@fccej.org](mailto:welcome@fccej.org).

## Yoga @ First

Come practice a compassionate, inquisitive sequence to integrate the mind, body, and soul. In each session, we will focus, breathe, build heat, strengthen, and relax. Join us Tuesday evenings, from 5-6:15 in the Sanctuary. Wear comfortable, non restrictive clothing. Bring a mat or borrow one. Donations (to FCCEJ) welcome, but not required.

## Lunchtime Book Group

The Lunchtime Book Group will meet on April 15 at 11:30am in the Marvin Lounge. This month we will discuss Women in Black by Madeline St. John. This book is about four women who work together in a department store. By the end of the Christmas rush each woman's life will be changed forever. It's a witty, humorous story that explores the importance of female friendship. One reviewer said it's the book she gives to friends who need to feel better. Bring a brown bag lunch and join us for a lively discussion and good fellowship.



SPECTRUM MENTORING PROGRAM

**They don't need  
a superhero**

They just need a friend

**Change your life and  
the life of a youth!**

With just a few hours a month, you can make a difference in the life of a young adult. It is as easy as inviting them along on a bike ride or walking your dog together.

**SPECTRUM MENTORS** spend time doing activities and setting goals with a young person between the ages of 12 and 22.

**Talk to us!**

For more information about becoming a mentor, contact our mentoring team:

(802) 864-7423 x321  
[mentoring@spectrumvt.org](mailto:mentoring@spectrumvt.org)  
[www.spcvt.org/Mentoring](http://www.spcvt.org/Mentoring)

## BECOMING A MENTOR What We Ask:

- ◆ Commit to spending 4 hours per month together spread out over 2-4 visits that fit both of your schedules
- ◆ Commit to your match for a minimum of one year
- ◆ Be at least 21 years of age
- ◆ Have access to an insured automobile and current license or have access to reliable means of transportation
- ◆ Be willing to attend 8 hours of training in 1 to 2-hour increments (offered at your convenience)
- ◆ Pass a background check



## **SERMON TALKBACK**

Have you ever heard Rev. Mark say something in his sermon that piqued your interest or curiosity? Did you ever hear a sermon where you wanted to argue a bit about what was said or have a deeper conversation around the themes and lessons gleaned from God? Do you ever just want to belong to a group that supports each other and talks about significant issues of life and faith? Did you ever want to go to a group and receive free coffee and goodies? Well, if you answered yes to any of these questions, then feel free to come to Sermon Talkback every Tuesday morning from 8:30 to 10am. We get 15 to 25 people each week in the Marvin Lounge and we have some pretty enlightening conversations. We laugh a lot, and when someone is in need of some extra support, we give it.

## **COFFEE CLATTER**

Do you like to talk? Do you like to drink coffee and enjoy a muffin or scone? Well if you do, then come to Martone's on Friday morning from 8-9am for a time of communing with other folks from the church. There are no pre-arranged subjects or study materials so come and bring up anything you'd like to discuss and be assured, there will be others interested in expressing their opinion!

## **CHRISTIAN BRIDGE**

On the first and third Fridays of every month, we meet in the Marvin Lounge to have some fun playing bridge. There are all types of skill sets playing and we have snacks, drinks [non-alcoholic] and fun!

In February, we will meet on Feb 1 and 15 from 1:30 – 4pm. We generally have two to three tables and play two to three rounds. The high score gets a free homemade jam from the minister's stores. We are also blessed to have a number of non-church players who just come to play, laugh and enjoy life. This is a great group to bring a friend.

## **WEDNESDAY NIGHT SEARCHERS**

Our Searchers Group is currently studying *The Awakened Brain* by Lisa Miller. In her book she proposes scientific proof that religion and spirituality are not only a part of humanity's DNA but both help mitigate better than any other form of treatment the negative aspects of depression and anxiety. The subject matter allows anyone to come and participate in the discussion whether or not you have read the book or come to all sessions. We have just discussed the first two chapters so there is a lot more material to go over.

Once we complete the book, or if the group so desires, we will turn our attention to the 4th season of *The Chosen*, a great series of presentations on Christ's life and ministry. They are very well done and if possible, starting on February 21, we will watch an episode each week and discuss it. Be sure to avail yourself of this tremendous group and bring a friend with you. We meet every Wednesday night from 7-9pm in Marvin Lounge.

## **APRIL BIRTHDAYS**



MESSIER, Carla	04/01	KING, Genevieve	04/14
HENNESSEY, Barbara	04/03	CLARK, Ashley	04/15
SAVAGE, Cheryl	04/03	COBURN, Bob	04/15
DORN, Kevin	04/05	MUDGETT-RUSSELL, Barbara	04/16
SILVERMAN, June	04/05	BELIVEAU, Lyn	04/18
SULLIVAN, Mike	04/05	COE, Ginny	04/18
KOCH, Darryl	04/06	HAYES, Nancy	04/18
GRENON, Katherine	04/07	ADAMS, Betty	04/19
LYMAN, Derek	04/07	GOEDKEN, Linus	04/20
MCGEARY, Caitlin	04/07	PORATTI, John	04/22
HAMILTON, Kim	04/08	MARTIN, Callie	04/23
KINAMAN, Lilo	04/08	MITCHELL, Steven	04/24
VOCK, Steve	04/08	BRENNAN, Ciaran	04/25
FOSS, Suzanne	04/09	PORATTI, Rob	04/25
GRENON, Nova Louise	04/09	HARRIS, Dick	04/26
COOLIDGE, Peg	04/10	WERMER, Carl	04/26
SIEVERS, Arnd	04/10	PETTINGILL, Davin	04/27
HOPPER, Jan	04/11	BROOKS, Adam	04/28
NOEL, Blakely	04/12	DONEY, Myrna	04/28
BLAKE, Abigail	04/14	CLARK, Ryan	04/30

**First Congregational Church of Essex Junction**  
1 Church Street  
Essex Junction, VT 05452  
Phone: 802-878-5745  
Email: [welcome@fccej.org](mailto:welcome@fccej.org)

## **ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED**

### **Sunday Morning Worship:**

**~First Sunday of Each Month~  
One Service at 10am**

with Holy Communion and Sanctuary Choir

**~Other Sundays Throughout the Month~**

**8:30** - In-person and streamed via [youtube.com/c/fcej](https://youtube.com/c/fcej)

Music: Bethany Blake directs our Sanctuary Choir and provides accompaniment

**10:15** - In-person—Faith Formation for PreK - 8th  
Music: Finally @ First Praise Band

### **Visit us online:**



FCCEJ.ORG



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**FIRSTCONGREGATIONALEJ**

Keep my anger  
from becoming meanness.  
Keep my sorrow  
from collapsing into self-pity.  
Keep my heart  
soft enough to keep breaking.  
Keep my anger  
turned towards justice,  
not cruelty.

Remind me that all of this,  
every bit of it,  
is for love.

Keep me fiercely kind.



Laura Jean Truman