



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
A United Church of Christ
Christmas Eve 2024 - 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

Welcome Greeting and Announcements

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

Call to Worship

Leader: Welcome to the birthday party for Jesus of Nazareth. He was born two thousand and twenty-eight years ago. Christmas is a holiday that celebrates Jesus' birth. I hope all of you are ready for his birthday party tomorrow.

People: **Thanks for the party, Jesus!**

Leader: Jesus was God's present to the world. When people opened Jesus up, they found healing, meaning, forgiveness, joy and most of all love. God's greatest gift in Jesus is love.

People: **Thanks for the party, Jesus!**

Leader: Jesus helped so many people that his friends wanted to give him presents: wise men with royal treasures, women with sacred oils, dinners in many a home. The greatest gift people gave Jesus was their devoted love.

People: **Thanks for the party, Jesus!**

Leader: On Christmas day we give and receive presents because it reflects God's gift of Jesus to the world, our gift of love back to God and our love for our neighbors. Come, let us begin the giving by singing the Birthday Song for Jesus with enthusiasm!

Happy Birthday to you. Happy Birthday to you.

Happy Birthday dear Jesus.

Happy Birthday to you.....and many more!

Lighting the Christ Candle..... Lara, Matt, Ernest & Maia Kalix-Crisafi

***Opening Carol**

O Come, All Ye Faithful

Songbook of Carols, #8

The Coming of a Messiah Foretold

The Prophet Jeremiah

***Carol**

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Songbook of Carols, #10

Christmas Prayer and **Unison Lord's Prayer (trespasses)**..... The Prophet Jeremiah

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**, and deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, amen.

Musical Response

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

Hannah from Bethlehem

***Carol**

Away in a Manger

Songbook of Carols, #2

Special Christmas Offering

Invitation, Offering, and Prayer of Dedication

Offertory

***Singing Our Praise to Our God: A Christmas Doxology**

We Three Kings of Orient Are

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.

The Visitors and Witnesses

The Guiding Stars

***Carol**

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Songbook of Carols, #5

Spreading the Light of Christ

From the Christ Candle, Jeremiah, Hannah, and Stars 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

Songbook of Carols, #11

Cooper Spaulding will play the violin for one verse alone.

Then the congregation will sing three verses.

Then Cooper will play one final verse alone.

***Pastoral Benediction**

***Please stand as you are able**

- ◆ *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 for a call from a pastor, please contact welcome@fccej.org or call (802) 878-5745.

Bethany Blake & Family
Family and friends of Nancy Hayes
Victims of gun violence and their families
Ashley Frazer and Family
Marie Benway
Carol Daigle
Chris Hathaway

Bruce Parker
Kim Sonntag
Jon Eric Lindholm
Patty Giroux
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 2025:



<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0545A8AB2FAAF58-53196874-altar#/>

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 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 5th 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 PreK-8th grade
 - ⇒ Nursery care for infants through 3 years available at both services—self-serve at 8:30 and staffed at 10:15

Dates to Remember:

Wednesday, December 25—Church office closed all day

Sunday, December 29—Intergenerational Worship at 10am

Wednesday, January 1—Church office closed all day

Sunday, January 5—One service at 10am

Sunday, January 26—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 lower-income retirees. UCC congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. 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. 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 January 9. Contact the church office for more information.



Part Time Position Opening at FCCEJ:

Youth Ministry Coordinator

The job description and other details can be found on our website:

www.fccej.org/v5/who-we-are/work-with-us/

Please email cover letter and resume to welcome@fccej.org.

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*

Jenny Bourn *In memory of Tom Connelly*

Ruth Casey..... *In memory of Skip Casey*

Brian & Laurie Chipman..... *In memory and honor of all grandparents*

The Ehler Family..... *In memory of Emily & Mike Ehler*

Howard & Janne Giles..... *In memory of David & Anne Cozzens*

Joanne Irwin..... *In memory of Alan, our parents, and our grandparents*

Marie & Dave Johnson *In memory of our parents*

Sarah Matt..... *In memory of Diane Perley and William Matt*

Judy McCullen *In memory of Ed & Peg Hurst
and Ken & Donna McCullen*

Mark Mendes *In memory of Margaret & George Mendes*

Sylvia Nyhagen..... *In honor of our family - home and church*

Elizabeth O'Beirne..... *In memory of Dorothy O'Beirne*

Linda Lou Parker..... *In memory of Erica Ann*

Andrea Sharp..... *In memory of our parents*

Cathy Shearer *In memory of Malcolm Forbes and Patricia Shearer*

June Silverman *In memory of loved ones*

Lauren & Gorden Starkey *In memory of our parents, Gorden & Garnet Starkey
and Rick Busciglio*

Tobe Tomlinson *In memory of Gary "Jake" Tomlinson*

Carl & Alison Wermer *In memory of our parents, John & Kerstin Wermer
and Robert & Dorothy Knox*

MINISTRY DIRECTORY

Staff

Senior Pastor: Rev. Mark Mendes [mmendes@fccej.org]

Ministers of Visitation:

Rev. Ron Faux [revronfaux@gmail.com] / Mary McHugh [mmmchugh@hotmail.com]

Christian Education Director: Laurie Chipman [lchipman@fccej.org]

Children's Ministry Coordinator: Elizabeth Miller [childrensministry@fccej.org]

Music Director: Bethany Blake [bblake@fccej.org]

Church Administrator: Jen Kelly [welcome@fccej.org]

Music

Music Committee: Mindy Bickford & Joanne Irwin—Co-Chairs

Finally @ First Director: Rick Dooley

Men At First Director: Bill Bickford

Officers

President: Judy Larrabee Pomainville

Vice President: Terry Stein

Financial Secretary: Ann Gray [finances@fccej.org]

Assistant Financial Secretary: Linda Bogardus

Treasurer: Dan Petherbridge [treasurer@fccej.org]

Assistant Treasurer: Matt Clark [mattclark48discovery@gmail.com]

Clerk: Brenda Dawson

Historian: Ann Gray

Internal Auditors: Betsy Weischedel, Allan Kinney

Committee Chairs

Christian Education:

Derek Lyman, Terri Livak—Co-Chairs

Communications: Francis Gravel

Deacons:

Alison Wermer, Judy McCullen—Co-Chairs

Finance & Pastoral Relations: Terry Stein

Hospitality: Jen Dooley

Human Resources:

Judy Larrabee Pomainville

Missions: Ann Marie Sullivan

Nominating: Lauren Starkey

Stewardship: Kathryn Brennan

Trustees: Kaki McGearry

Recognized Groups

Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop: Sandy Tallman

Heavenly Food Pantry: Valerie Gabert