



# 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**

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**The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction**  
**A United Church of Christ**  
**September 7, 2025**

*The first Sunday of each month we celebrate the Lord's Supper with one unified service. The remaining Sundays of each month we offer two distinct worship services. Our first service, at 8:30am, is traditional with our Sanctuary Choir and organ music. Our second service begins at 10:15 and is more contemporary with music from our Finally @ First Praise Band. Our first service is streamed every week, and our second service is streamed on the third Sunday of each month. Our Faith Formation Program for PreK-8th grade occurs during our second service. Our nursery is open for children 6 months-3 years at both services (self-serve at 8:30 and staffed at 10:15).*

<i>A Welcoming Community      Accepting and Serving All In the Spirit of Christ</i>
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*Order of Worship*

Prelude

An Extravagant Welcome and Announcements

Rev. Mark Mendes

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

The Deacon's Greeting ..... Judy McCullen

*Our Deacon will welcome everyone to our community of faith; ask if anyone has special joys to share; invite any guest to introduce themselves if they want to, and encourage anyone to fill out the welcome sheet found in the pew to lift up any needs and place it in the offering plate.*

Introit

*Father We Praise Thee Hymn*

arr. David Blake

Call to Worship..... Judy McCullen

Leader: Jesus invites all of you to follow in his Way, a way of life where God comes first as we care for our neighbors and friends, the strangers and sojourners, the oppressed and even our enemies.

**People: Jesus' demands are tough, but we pledge to try to apply Jesus' Great Commandment to our behaviors, thoughts and emotion.**

Leader: Come, let us explore our faith together and draw strength from our God and each other. Come, Holy Spirit and help us.

**\*Opening Hymn**

***God Is Made the Sure Foundation***

**# 400**

## Unison Prayer of Confession

**Commanding God, thank you for challenging us to lead lives of meaning, joy and love. We are grateful that in the midst of our inadequacies, you forgive us and stay with us with your pokes and prods so that we might live better lives. Please continue to encourage us to live into our better selves as we strive to overcome hatred, fear, prejudice, apathy and greed. Give us the strength and courage to wake up each morning with optimism and hope for the future. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ who taught us to be your humble servants, amen.**

### The Assurance of Pardon

Leader: Our journey toward you remains the heart of who we are as people of faith. We follow well and fall short over and over again and yet you welcome us home with a warm embrace, food for our bodies, a robe for our comfort and a ring as a symbol of our inheritance.

**People: Thank you, God, for your forgiveness and continued inspiration. We receive your extravagant love and re-commit ourselves to the journey.**

Leader: On behalf of Jesus Christ, I declare to you that your sins are forgiven. Accept God's mercy and love and move forward in a better place toward a healthier life.

## Children's Message

### Pastoral Prayer and Unison Lord's Prayer ("trespasses")

Sharing Our Prayers with God and Each Other

A Time of Silence for Personal Prayer

**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

*Melody Thomas Arne*

arr. David Hegarty

### \*Congregational Hymn of Choice

### New Testament Scripture Readings

Epistle                      Philemon                      [page 169]

Gospel                      Luke 14:25-33                      [page 59]

Special Music

*The Ninety-First Psalm*

James MacDermid

arr. Eugene Mott and L. Emile Côté

## The Sacrament of Holy Communion

*We celebrate communion this morning by passing the elements out to the congregation. First, the Deacons will pass out the gluten-free bread; please hold it until the minister directs you to partake. Then the Deacons will pass out the cup of non-alcoholic grape juice, which you are free to partake anytime thereafter. This symbolizes both the individual and corporate nature of our faith. No matter who you are or where you are on your spiritual journey, you are welcome at Jesus' table.*

## Offering Our Gifts to God

Invitation, Offering, and Prayer of Dedication

Offertory

*Andante*

F. Sor

**\*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***Like a Mother Who Has Borne Us*

# 583

**\*Benediction**

Pastoral Benediction

**\*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***Abschied (Farewell)*

Liszt

**\*Please stand if you are able**

- ◆ Sincere thanks to Francis Gravel and Bethany Blake for sharing their awesome musical talents with us this morning!

# 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](mailto:welcome@fccej.org) or call (802) 878-5745. Unless otherwise specified, prayer requests will be printed in the bulletin for a month.

Mark Benton & Family	Danair Williams	Patty Giroux
Rob Robinson	Joe Shields	Everyone experiencing uncertainty and fear in their communities
Sylvia Nyhagen	Heather Rogers	All those affected by the violence in Ukraine, Gaza, and around the world
Allysa Williams	Sean Garvey	Everyone that may be privately suffering
Kathy & Mike Murray	Josh Winslow	
Colleen Kelly	Judy Moreau	
Gracie O'Malley and family	Victims of gun violence and their families	
Janet Warden	Carol Daigle	

*The flowers on the altar this morning are given by Riley Elliott  
In memory of his parents.*

### Altar Flowers

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 the remaining Sundays in 2024:



### SAVE THE DATE—SEPTEMBER 14 IS WELCOME BACK SUNDAY

- ◆ On September 14th, we leave behind our summer worshipping schedule and enter our program year with two services at 8:30 and 10:15am, except for the first Sunday of each month where we have one unified service at 10am.
- ◆ Join us after 2nd service for a barbeque lunch, hosted by our CE Committee, as well as a bouncy house, and a chance to catch up with friends about summer vacations, school plans and fall activities. This is a great Sunday to invite a friend or a neighbor to church.

## **WELCOME BACK SUNDAY: THE CE/F COMMITTEE DESSERT CHALLENGE!**

Greetings one and all! One part of the planning for Welcome Back Sunday is always soliciting for desserts. This year the CE/F Committee is challenging all other committees to bring a dessert for everyone's enjoyment as well as engage in a friendly competition. We're looking for a dessert that's easy to serve that would feed a dozen or so people. Here's an opportunity for each committee to not only highlight their baking skills, but they could also feature what they are planning for the coming program year. Of course, anyone wanting to participate by bringing a dessert on their own is always welcome, as well as anyone who wants to pitch in on set-up, clean-up or even flipping burgers! We look forward to your entries. Happy Baking!

### **Scripture Study Group**

Scripture Study Group, led by Mary McHugh, will begin exploring the book of Revelation.

#### **Please note the adjustment to the schedule and location:**

The group will start on Friday, September 26 and meet each Friday through October 24.

1:30 to 3pm in West Wing.

All are welcome—come to any or all sessions!

### **Community Concerts at First**

CC@F presents Tracy Grammer on Sunday, September 21 at 3pm in the Sanctuary

Called "a musician and singer of dazzling versatility" (No Depression), Tracy Grammer is among contemporary folk music's most beloved artists. Renowned for her pure voice, deft guitar and violin work, and incantatory storytelling, Grammer has recorded and performed with Joan Baez and Mary Chapin Carpenter, headlined several of the nation's top folk festivals and enjoyed 12 consecutive years as one of folk radio's 50 top-played artists, both solo and with the late Dave Carter. Join us to enjoy this incredible show!

*"One of the finest singers and musicians anywhere in folkdom."* - Boston Globe

*"A brilliant artist"* - Joan Baez

A portion of the 2025 CC@F concert proceeds will support Red Cross Disaster Relief.

\$20 suggested donation, free for kids 18 and under.

Tickets are available online via the link below or by phone through the FCCEJ office.

Purchase online at <https://www.sevendaystickets.com/e/tracy-grammer>

### **Grief Support Group**

2nd Thursday of each month from 10 to 11:30am in Marvin Lounge.

This is open to anyone experiencing the loss of a loved one. The sessions are facilitated by Sharon Dettenrieder, MSN, RN and Mary McHugh, MAPS. Next session is September 11.

### **Burlington Pride Parade 2025**

TODAY, September 7, FCCEJ is participating in the Burlington Pride Parade along with other ONA churches in the Vermont UCC Conference. This year's theme is "Power in Resilience". Here are the details:

Lineup Location: St. Paul Street between Main & College (same as last year)

Lineup Time: 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Parade Start: 12:00 PM

Please contact the church office if you would like to join us representing our faith family!

### **Josh Pallotta House Soda Drive**

**When:** Now through the Fall

**What:** Soda with sugar

**Where:** Big Blue Bin in the Fellowship Hall

**Why:** Many veterans depend on alcohol to cope with anxiety or negative emotions. When they stop drinking, their brain may start looking for "other forms of stimulation". This is sometimes called a "replacement addiction,". Sugar, especially sucrose, the simplest form of sugar often found in sour candies and soda, is often a welcome substitute in these scenarios, because it triggers the release of dopamine and increases feelings of pleasure.

**Who:** Josh's House—an organization that combines local and national resources, emergency services, and research to provide veterans the resiliency, transition and reintegration tools to help them sustain or return to full and healthy lives.

### **Heavenly Food Pantry**

The Food Pantry continues to need reusable shopping bags as well as baked beans, canned veggies, chunky soups, canned pasta, peanut butter, and cereal.

We are also in need of volunteers who can deliver to our clientele that are unable to visit the food pantry in person. Please contact the Church Office if you are interested and as always, thank you for your support of this meaningful and important ministry in our community!

### **Wednesday Night Searchers**

On Wednesday September 10<sup>th</sup>, Searchers begins meeting again with the 5<sup>th</sup> season of *The Chosen*: a widely acclaimed dramatization of Jesus and his ministry. This season features Jesus in Jerusalem toward the end of his life when he took on the religious authorities, taught the disciples about the true discipleship, and shared the Last Supper. These experiences as reported in the gospels helped to shape our understanding of faith in significant ways. Everyone is welcome at this eight week [Sept 10 – Oct 29<sup>th</sup>] session. We meet from 7-9pm in Marvin Lounge.

## Weekly Calendar: September 7—September 14

**\*Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections\***

<b><u>Sunday, September 7</u></b> 9am: All-Family Worship—Sanctuary/Streaming 10am: Craft Fest Committee—Marvin Lounge <i>1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i> 12pm: Burlington Pride Parade	<b><u>Monday, September 8</u></b> 9am: Food Pantry Organizing—Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, 2nd Floor Storage Room <i>11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i> 1pm: Food Pantry Set Up—Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, 2nd Floor Storage Room 5:30pm: Food Pantry Distribution—Kitchen, Fellowship Hall, Sanctuary <i>7:30pm: Group Victory—Marvin Lounge</i>
<b><u>Tuesday, September 9</u></b> 8:30: Sermon Talkback—Marvin Lounge/Zoom: <a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89903982036">[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89903982036]</a> 10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop <i>11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i> 3:30pm: Food Pantry Committee—Marvin Lounge <i>6:30pm: BSA Troop 624 District Roundtable—Fellowship Hall, 2nd Floor Program Room</i> 7pm: Deacons—Marvin Lounge	<b><u>Wednesday, September 10</u></b> <i>10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall</i> <i>11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i> 4pm-7pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop 5:30pm: Finally @ First Rehearsal—Sanctuary 6pm: Men At First Rehearsal—West Wing 7pm: Searchers—Marvin Lounge <i>BSA Troop 624—Fellowship Hall, Gym</i>
<b><u>Thursday, September 11</u></b> 9am: FCCEJ Staff Meeting—Conference Room 10am: Grief Support—Marvin Lounge <i>11am: Music Lesson—Sanctuary</i> <i>11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i> <i>5:30pm: Reiki Share—Marvin Lounge</i> <i>6:15pm: Music Rehearsal—Sanctuary</i> <i>6:30pm: Eagle Scout Review—West Wing</i> 7pm: Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal—Sanctuary	<b><u>Friday, September 12</u></b> 8am: Coffee Clatter—Martone's <i>10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall</i> <i>11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i> <i>6pm: Blue Spruce Grange—Fellowship Hall</i>
<b><u>Saturday, September 13</u></b> <i>8am: Give It A Go Support Group—Marvin Lounge</i> <i>The Vine Nepali Congregation—Sanctuary, West Wing</i> <i>8:30am: Weight Loss Support —Fellowship Hall</i> 10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop <i>1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i>	<b><u>Sunday, September 14</u></b> 8:30* & 10:15am: Worship—Sanctuary/Streaming* 10:30am: Faith Formation (PreK-8th) 11:30am: Welcome Back BBQ—FCCEJ Grounds <i>1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i>  <i>Events in italics = Local Community Groups</i>