



SPIRIT @ FIRST

Monthly Newsletter

FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH of Essex Junction

Love. Serve. Grow.

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We need to rebrand life transitions. Instead of dismissing them as hostile terrain we need to soldier through, we should see them as fertile terrain we can gain sustenance from. "We regard discomfort in any form as bad news," writes Buddhist nun Pema Chodron. But feelings like disappointment, embarrassment, irritation, resentment, anger and despair, instead of being bad news," she writes, "show us, with terrifying clarity, exactly where we're stuck." And therein lies the power. Transitions are filled with tumult and unrest, but they are also filled with helpful purging and dazzling creativity. If we view these periods as aberrations, we risk their becoming missed opportunities.

From Bruce Feiler's book,
Life is in the Transitions, page 312-313

Our Searchers Group read this book earlier this year and the author surmises that we find meaning, joy, love, direction and all the good things in life when we journey through life's transitions. Yes, they can be hard. Yes, they demand changes in the way we live. But we naturally go through transitions, and instead of avoiding or bemoaning or complaining about them, we need to intentionally go through them with eyes wide open gleaning the kernels of truth, meaning and direction as we go. Doing so will enhance our lives and enrich us in ways beyond measure. Not embracing change will get us mired in the muck and stuck with unhealthy baggage that makes life a living hell.

Last year when Laurie Chipman retired as our Christian Education Director, we were lost. She did a tremendous job of keeping the program together, and inspiring our children to learn about God and explore the Christian faith. There have been struggles and I am confident that we will suffer through a number of programs that she always supervised and orchestrated. However, Elizabeth O'Beirne has begun to step more confidently into her role as Directing our Faith Formation Ministry with our younger children. The Christian Education Committee is beginning to re-claim tasks that they had forgotten were theirs. Volunteers are stepping up to help with the Junior Youth Group. New ideas are beginning to surface as we look to the future with hope. Even I am enjoying returning to my employment roots of Christian Education and youth group leadership! What Bruce Feiler talked about in terms of personal transitions is also true in the church or any corporate setting.

It saddens me to say that two of our great members will be moving to New Hampshire to be closer to family, a move I cannot help but applaud and support. Francis and Elaine Raymond have graciously and quietly invested their time and talent to ensure that some of our vital ministries at FCCEJ would be successful. One of those examples is the Giving Tree, our church's program that distributed clothing, toys and certificates to needy families for Christmas. Many of us have taken tags, bought merchandise, wrapped it up and brought it to the church well labelled so that we could then give it away to some family. Elaine with the help of many orchestrated the entire program for years and years. We will miss her organization, tender heart and calm demeanor as she waded through phone calls, forms from families and volunteers to make it happen. Just a couple of weeks ago, we were not sure we would be able to pull all her work off this year but guess what, we now have three people stepping up to make it happen. The new volunteers are learning new ways about how best accomplish the task and I am confident that the new manifestation of our older ministry will be just fine.

continued on next page...

Change, transitions, adaptations, new initiatives, quiet retiring programs and activities: all of these are opportunities to re-envision, improve, strengthen and enhance the future whether we are individuals or a church. My departure in summer of 2027 as your Senior Pastor will be a significant transition for FCCEJ. It is my hope that it will be a time of growth and re-imagining as FCCEJ looks to the future with the next senior pastor. Sure it will be difficult but it also offers unique and very powerful opportunities for maturation and an expansion of ministry.

Laurie would be thrilled to see Christian Education and the Junior High Youth doing some new things and beginning to form an identity without her. Elaine will be thrilled when the Giving Tree ministry takes on new shape. I'd love nothing better than to see your next pastor double the membership and build a 50 person youth group along with an advocacy group that is known throughout Vermont for standing up for justice. Change is naturally occurring and should be seen as a positive way to expand our ministry to an ever changing future.

So hold on for there are plenty of changes going on in our church now. Cheer up for it means growth and meaning is coming. Speak up, volunteer, and attend more so that you can be a part of it. I'll enjoy the beginning of the birth pangs, but will leave the best for you.

Looking forward to these next two years,
I am yours in Christ,

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

We are an active church with lots of activities, groups using our facilities, and myriad ways that we help people in our community and beyond. With such a dynamic community, there are many opportunities to help nurture and grow our ministry and live into Christ's way. OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS lifts up specific needs of our church and ways our members and friends can help. If you feel called to help in one of these asks, please call Jen or Mark at the church office at 802-878-5745. And thanks in advance!

We are looking for someone to.....

1. Help with Freeze Drying. We have a senior in our FCCEJ community needing help learning the steps in a freeze-drying app.
2. Mittens & Hats for Giving Tree Kids. Every year we are fortunate to have knitters in our church who donate items for children. If you are interested in making items, please contact church office by October 10th. This will help in our planning for our distribution in December. No scarves please!
3. Coordinate the Easter Breakfast. Plenty of people like to pitch in and help with this project that FCCEJ has been doing for decades. It involves securing and organizing the volunteers to plan, cook, and then clean up after the Easter Breakfast.
4. Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper. This relatively recent addition to the church's schedule is when we gather to enjoy a pancake meal for dinner the night before Lent begins (Tuesday, February 17th, 2026). We need someone to coordinate this event.
5. A Meal Ministry Team. One of the great losses for the church and wider community during COVID was the loss of the Essex Eats Out Program where we offered a free meal to anyone who walked in on the first Friday of each month. It was a highly successful program and well needed for both food insecurity and fellowship. The second aspect of this dinner ministry would be to have a second meal each month where we charge and make money for our effort. This would be a fund raiser. We need one to two teams to oversee each of these meal ministries.
6. Audio/Visual Support. We're looking for a few more people to assist with streaming our worship services. It is not difficult or time intensive. Streaming our services is crucial to reaching out and providing a connection to folks who no longer drive AND to people checking us out before they come in person. We also receive requests to stream memorial services, so that family and friends who are not able to attend in person may still celebrate the life of their loved one.

Needs Fulfilled

Facilitate the Giving Tree Program. **FULFILLED**

Jen Dooley, Linda Bogardus, and Jen Kelly are leading this effort with some new ideas and energy.

SPECIAL SUNDAYS IN OCTOBER

Communion will be on October 5th at the single service at 10am.

It will be observed in the traditional way w/ the elements being passed out to the congregation.

MISSION SUNDAY

One Service at 10am on October 5, 2025

One of the key aspects of FCCEJ is our mission and outreach ministries. The Thrift Store and Food Pantry lead the way, but we support all sorts of local social service agencies in Vermont and around the world. Around issues of race, gender, LGBTQ+ rights, immigrant safety, addictions, environmental degradation, indigenous oppression and many more, we strive to live into Christ's message of love, justice and inclusion. On Sunday, October 5th immediately after the 10am service, we will honor our many missions and focus on a couple.

- ♦ The Blackfeet Service Trip to Montana Group will be selling 50 meals at \$20 each to raise funds for their upcoming 2026 trip. There are still available slots if you are interested; check out the table in Fellowship Hall.
- ♦ We will be compiling Homeless Care Bags of staples and goodies so that our members can put them in their cars and offer them to the homeless in their travel around Vermont and beyond. Michael Sullivan [BIG THANK YOU] made a great shelving area to keep them by the front doors of the church so when you leave each week, you can pick up another bag to replace the ones you gave away.
- ♦ We will be celebrating World-Wide Communion Sunday which is the one day of the year when churches around the world celebrate Holy Communion on the same day. Be sure to come and experience what should be an incredible Sunday.

BIBLE, REFORMATION, CELEBRATION SUNDAY

October 26, 2025

When Martin Luther posted his 95 theses on October 31, 1517, he pulled the Roman Catholic Church into a period of soul searching and the Protestant Reformation began in earnest. Many seminal Reformation figures with deeply held beliefs put their lives on the line to worship the way they believed the Holy Spirit was calling them to worship. They challenged the way the church was organized, how they interpreted the bible, observed communion and basic theological beliefs. This split the church and offered Christ's followers the freedom to worship as their conscience, personalities and intellect afforded. We are an outgrowth of that movement and so as Congregationalists, we honor the freedom to read the bible ourselves, go to the church we want and determine just how much of our money we want to offer the church to do their work.

So we give free bibles to any third grader or above who wants one. This invites these youngsters into the greatest story ever told and the hands down best seller of all time.

We also invite folks to come down to the altar and pledge their financial support to the many and varied ministries at FCCEJ. We call this Celebration Sunday because of generous pledgers who offer their gifts to the church in order that our ministry might be strong and expansive. Financial giving, pledging, gifts, whatever you call giving to the church; it is the crucial element that dictates the range and breadth of our ministry. An email will be going out with all sorts of information about giving at FCCEJ.

The Stewardship Committee will also be

- Giving a Stewardship Teaser on Oct 5, 2025
- Why I Give to the Church Witness on Oct. 12, 2025
- The Stewardship Skit [*It's a Blunderful Life*] Presented on Oct. 19th
- Celebration Sunday on Oct. 26th

NOMINATIONS

Discover Where You Belong: Committee Fair on October 19

Our church runs on the gifts, talents, and energy of its members, and there's a place for everyone to serve! On Sunday, October 19, come to Fellowship Hall between services and after the second service for our annual Committee Fair. Learn more about the committees that make our church thrive—from music to missions, education, and more. Committee members will be on hand to answer your questions and share what they do.

Whether you're ready to join or just curious, this is a wonderful chance to connect and get involved.

✝ ELIZABETH'S EPISTLE ✝

Faith Formation Curriculum ~ miniRevolutions ~ Year C

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost through the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

The Season after Pentecost is the period between the Day of Pentecost and the First Sunday of Advent. This season makes up half of the calendar year, and its liturgical color is green. It is a time to focus on the life and growth of the Church in the world, empowered by the gift of the presence of the Holy Spirit. 12th-century mystic Hildegard von Bingen captured the essence of this season when she wrote, "The Holy Spirit is the greening power of God. Our task is to blossom."

Faith Formation Offering

Please discuss ideas with your children for the 2025-2026 faith formation offering. We encourage the children to also discuss meaningful organizations in their peer groups to support through their faith formation offering.

****We received an acknowledgement of the 2024-2025 Faith Formation donation of \$599.47 to Heifer International. Heifer applied a match to total \$1198.94!****

You may continue to use the white envelopes in the Narthex for the Faith Formation offering, or write "Faith Formation" on the memo of your check .

Volunteer Sign-up for the 2025-2026 Program Year

The recruiting for Faith Formation volunteers is an open invite. If you have been attending FCCEJ for more than 6 months, you are qualified. Reach out to Elizabeth at ChildrensMinistry@fccej.org.

Upcoming Dates to Highlight

Peer Groups—October 19 and 26

Bible Sunday—October 26

Third graders will receive their Bible

Prayer

Our God, who notices the world is full of sadness. When we encounter sorrow, remind us we never have to face it alone. Without rushing through or pretending it doesn't exist, fill us with the courage to hold grief together in love. Amen. (miniRevolutions)

Keep smiling,

Elizabeth - Children's Ministry Coordinator

JUNIOR HIGH YOUTH GROUP

Despite not having a paid Youth Group Leader, our JHY continues to meet. Rev. Mark will temporarily help lead the group, along with the very capable assemblage of adult advisors including Micah, Carl, Jenny, Terri, Gretchen, and Jessica. We get together the 2nd and 4th Sundays of every month from 11:30am – 1:30pm [right after second service]. We hope to have some fun activities where we will get to know each other and share a meal.

Our October events are:

- **October 12th: Cookie Making & Eating and PIZZA**
- **October 26th: Scary Movie in the Lounge & Dominoes!**

As a new incentive, Rev. Mark will give anyone \$5 who brings a friend to the Scary Movie and Pizza event

STEWARDSHIP

Our Stewardship theme this year is:

Nutrition = Healthy Body, Giving = Healthy Church!



The Cast Rehearsing Diligently

Eating the right foods allows your body to accomplish all you want to do at work, at home, and at church. For the church to function in the same way it needs to have the appropriate fuel. What can you give so that we have a healthy, happy, thriving church?

Our comical Stewardship skit asks the question: *What would our church community look like if we skipped all the reminders, sending emails, heartfelt messages from the pulpit, and distributing pledge cards?*

Come find out on Sunday, October 19th as a talented FCCEJ cast presents “It’s a Blunderful Life” at both services. What would our church community look like if we all didn’t pledge and bring in most of the operating budget? Would we be a healthy church?

Your Stewardship Committee is:

Kathryn Brennan, Lorrie Driscoll, Emily Guziak, Ann Gray, Alex John, Rev. Mark Mendes, Dan Petherbridge, Heather Stein, Beth Volker

Please note there will be no pledge envelopes this year.

Pledge packets will be distributed via email for most members.

DEACONS

Wow! Fall is certainly starting off busy for everyone! Our church is buzzing with activity all the time, committees are starting to meet and plan their year’s events, school has started – Fall is in full swing! And the Deacons are already talking about Advent which will be here sooner than we expect. And for those who keep track, this year’s color is burgundy! While we deal with all this busyness of life, make sure you take some time to enjoy the cool breezes, the changing foliage, the fruits and vegetables that are ripening in our gardens and farms. Reach out to those who might need that extra hug or smile. Take a deep breath for yourself and know that your Church family is here for you. As always, if you or someone you know needs something, please reach out to your Deacons or church staff. We are here for you.

-Judy McCullen, Deacon

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION/FORMATION

Wow! What a great time was had by all during Welcome Back Sunday! The Christian Education/Formation Committee would like to thank everyone who stepped up to help us pull out a wonderful all-church event.

And what weather! I’m not sure we can fully appreciate how great it was for people driving past to see our church outside having such a super time of fellowship.

A huge thank-you goes out to each committee who participated in the first annual Dessert Challenge. Congratulations to the Nominating Committee, whose Christmas cookies the youth of our church felt were the best. But I think all of us enjoyed many of the treats that were available. An event like this doesn’t happen without many people helping out, and again, our committee thanks everyone who did.

The Faith Formation year has started, and we’re grateful for volunteers who have stepped up to help us keep our programs going for our youth. There are already plans in the works for the annual Christmas pageant. As always, if you feel called to help out, we would appreciate it.

-Terry Livak, CE/F Co-Chair

MISSIONS

Sincere thanks goes to the Lions Club and the Heavenly Food Pantry. The Lions Club gave all their left-over soda from their fair booth to the Food Pantry. The Food Pantry then gave it to the Missions Committee for the Josh Pallotta House. You should have seen the smiles from veterans when we arrived at the house with the soda!

We will continue to collect soda donations throughout the next few months. The house is unable to provide free soda due to federal cutbacks, so your donations make the world of difference to these veterans. Remember, soda with sugar—thank you!

The Executive Director of the Josh Pallotta House will in Sunday worship soon to thank FCCEJ for our support. She also will be available after each service to answer any questions you may have about the organization.



***THANK YOU to everyone that donated soda
for the Josh Pallotta House!***



Care Kit Cubbies

Huge thanks to Mike Sullivan, who built and installed cubbies in Narthex to store care kits! These are available to pass out to people we come into contact with who may be unhoused or in need of support and care. We have made summer kits which included water bottles, snacks, hygiene items, soaps, hand sanitizer, food, tooth brushes. Now in the winter season kits will also include hats, gloves and hand warmers.

Heavenly Food Pantry

The Food Pantry continues to need reusable shopping bags as well as baked beans, chunky soups, peanut butter, canned pasta, cereal, and empty dozen-sized egg cartons.

We are looking for volunteers! The pantry has two distribution days each month and we're looking for people to help our guests navigate through the process. We also need people that will deliver to our clientele who are unable to visit the food pantry in person. The time commitment isn't extensive, but the rewards to your spirit definitely are! Please contact the Church Office or Anita Guild at anitalguild@gmail.com if you are interested and as always, thank you for your support of this meaningful and important ministry in our community!

Dismas Volunteer Appreciation Dinner—Join Us for a Night of Gratitude and Community

Vermont Dismas is excited to invite all dedicated Dismas volunteers to a special evening to celebrate you! As a heartfelt thank you for your time, talent, and commitment, Dismas is hosting a free spaghetti dinner on Thursday, October 23 at the Holy Family Parish Hall, 30 Lincoln St., Essex Junction.

Dismas volunteers from First Congregational Church of Essex Junction and Holy Family, St. Lawrence and St. Pious churches are invited to the event, as well as people interested in becoming a volunteer.

Event Details:

- Date: Thursday, October 23
- Time: 5-6:30 pm
- Location: Holy Family Parish Hall, 30 Lincoln St.
- Cost: Free for all volunteers/potential volunteers

Expect a delicious meal, good company, and a chance to connect with fellow volunteers and Dismas staff and learn more about the organization.

If possible, please RSVP by October 8 (guziakemily335@gmail.com) to help us with food preparation. Bring your appetite and your inspiring spirit! Thank you for making a difference.

MONTANA SERVICE TRIP

✧ Save the Date: Montana Service Trip Kickoff BBQ

Sunday, October 5th, after the 10 AM service

- ◆ To launch our 2026 Montana Service Trip adventure, we're hosting a **Community To-Go Barbecue**—and you're invited! Each delicious meal will feature Rick Catering's famous chicken or pork barbecue sandwich, coleslaw, fruit salad, chips, a cookie, and a drink.
- ◆ **Suggested donation: \$15 per meal**
- ◆ Your support helps fuel our journey of service and connection
- ◆ Weather permitting, we'll have tables set up on the FCCEJ lawn so you can enjoy your meal with friends and neighbors.

➤ Looking Ahead: Montana Service Trip 2026

As the days grow shorter, evenings cooler, and autumn colors remind us that change is in the air... are you dreaming of future travel and adventure?

- ◆ **Mark your calendar: June 20–27, 2026**
- ◆ Join us for an unforgettable intergenerational journey to Montana—a week of service, spiritual growth, and deep connection with our church community.
- ◆ This isn't just a trip. It's a chance to:
 - * Build lasting relationships across generations
 - * Serve with purpose and compassion
 - * Explore new places and perspectives
 - * Return home with a fuller heart and renewed spirit

✦ Trip Details

- ◆ Dates: June 20–27, 2026 (Saturday to Saturday)
- ◆ Cost: \$1,000 per person (spread over 4 months)
Includes all expenses except personal souvenirs and sundries. Scholarships available.
- ◆ Sign-Up Info: Visit fccej.org → Serving Others → Montana Service Trip
Find the application, trip policies, team covenant, and key dates

We truly need people like you—your energy, your compassion, your willingness to serve. Whether you're new or returning, young or young-at-heart, this trip is for you.


Come be part of something powerful. We can't wait to hear from you!

Lisa Clark (lcmclark@gmail.com) & Betsy Weischedel (eweischedel@gmail.com)

ANNUAL CRAFT FEST & TOY DRIVE

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8TH

Time to start thinking about our big Craft Fest event coming up in November and how you can help. There are ample opportunities for everyone!



Sweet Shoppe: If anyone is doing some canning, a jar or two of pickles, relish, jams & jellies, or other items would be welcomed. Homemade pies are especially popular. For more information or to sign up for an item, please email Mary Gratton at mgrat14@comcast.net.

Luncheon: The luncheon would appreciate donations of the following:

Homemade Items: Butternut Squash Soup, Chil (Meat, Veggie, Green), and Mac & Cheese

As Well As: Hot Dog Rolls, Cans of Soda, and Bottled Water & Lemonade

These donations can be made to the church anytime.

Accessory Room: Time to sort through your jewelry boxes! Donations can include pins, necklaces, earrings, and bracelets. In addition, we will have a kids table, so any glitzy items including barrettes and headbands. The room includes donations of scarves and pocketbooks.

Crafters: All the crafter spaces are full. Returning are the familiar faces and a few new ones. All of them invite you to stop by Fellowship Hall and see what they have done during the last year.

Nearly New: We will be accepting donations starting Sunday, October 26th at 1pm through Friday, November 7th at 5pm and can be brought directly to the gym on the second floor. We are looking for gently used items and will not be accepting any furniture. We are also looking for paper bags and reusable bags to use at the sale.

Silent Auction: Please consider making your own theme basket with a variety of items. The basket can also include a gift card to a favorite retail store or restaurant. The basket can be dropped off at the church office or at the signup table in the Fellowship Hall on Sunday mornings. Please note the baskets should be completed by November 2nd.

Toy Drive: Consider donating a children's book, game, Legos or craft kit to the toy drive. All toys will be given to the Church's Giving Tree. Everyone who donates a new toy will be entered into a drawing for a special gift basket.

Sign-up sheets will be available in Fellowship Hall on October 19th, October 26th, and November 2nd after both services. The table will have sign-ups for sweet shoppe, luncheon items, silent auction and volunteering the day of the event. All donations for silent auction and non-food items for the luncheon will be accepted on these Sundays.

Thank you from the Craft Fest Committee!

Cathy LaPierre, Mary Gratton, Gail Cromie, Susan Turner, Maureen McKenzie, Janne Giles, Ruth Casey, and Linda Bogardus.

For further information, please contact Linda at lbogardus@myfairpoint.net or the church office.

HEAVENLY CENTS THRIFT SHOP NEWS

New Hours!

Beginning Thursday, October 2nd, the Shop will be open Thursdays from 3-6.

The Shop hours will be Tuesday, 10-1, Thursday 3-6 and Saturday 10-1.

We will continue to be open the first Sunday of each month for churchgoers to bring their donations and/or shop.

As of this writing, the Shop is having its final sales to clear out inventory and get ready for the switch over to Fall/Winter. We appreciate the continued support our community at large provides and always welcome donations of gently used items in good resalable quality. Currently we need household items, such as baskets, art, good quality kitchen items, including small appliances, flatware sets, and pots and pans in excellent condition. Please no plastic and/or glassware.

We sincerely appreciate the many generous community members who make donations, so we may continue to meet our mission of serving others, both with sale items and financial donations to local organizations.

Please spread the "good word" of the Shop's mission with your friends and if you are interested in volunteering, contact Sandy Tallman, 802-879- 6552.



As summer comes to a close, I thank everyone who provided a birdbath and/or a hummingbird feeder during the spring and summer months. Your efforts most certainly made a difference in the lives of birds, and other critters, who made use of this water and food supply.

During these next few months, I will begin focusing more on our domestic friends ~ the dogs, cats, birds, reptiles and amphibians who share our homes with us.

But first, many of you are aware that I am a volunteer wildlife transporter. This means that I may get a call to go to St. Albans, for instance, because someone has found an injured bird, squirrel or chipmunk that I need to pick up and bring to the appropriate state licensed rehabilitator ("rehabber"). Some rehabbers specialize in songbirds, others in waterfowl, some in small mammals and a select few are licensed to rehab "rabies vectors," those who may carry rabies. So, some days, this means that if I pick up an injured duck in Enosburg, I then have to take it to the waterfowl rehabber who is all the way down in Poultney. It pretty much eats up my entire day, but it has to be done if the duck is going to have a chance to survive and be released back into the wild.

Most recently, I have sadly responded to calls for cat-caught birds, squirrels, chipmunks and bunnies ~ the most heartbreaking of all, as their survival is rarely achieved. They are so very delicate to begin with. Here is where I **implore you to keep your cats indoors, and to spread this plea on to your friends and family members!!** You CAN turn a former outdoor-only cat into an indoor-only cat. It just takes time and patience. In addition to saving wildlife, it is healthier and safer for the cat as well. If you need help with this, please contact me.

Cats (and dogs) have a bacteria in their saliva called Capnocytophaga. It is incredibly difficult to save an animal that has been bitten by a cat or dog, even if an antibiotic is administered shortly after rescue. Once in the bloodstream, the poor creature has little chance of survival and is in extreme pain ~ it's gut-wrenching to witness. Many end up being euthanized. In addition, if you are bitten by a cat or dog (fully vaccinated or not), you too can become sick, so please seek medical attention right away!

In the United States alone, an estimated 1.4 to 4 BILLION birds are killed by domestic cats each year. In addition, annually in the US, cats kill an estimated 6.9 to 20.7 BILLION small mammals, including mice, rats, moles, voles, chipmunks, rabbits and squirrels. Keep in mind that killing these critters is NOT the cat's fault, it is the owner's fault. The cat is only doing what instinct dictates. So, PLEASE be responsible and keep those kitties indoors. Thank you very much!

SERMON TALKBALK

Join us every week on Tuesday mornings to discuss Sunday's message and the various elements of the service from the previous week. The group discusses a wide variety of subjects, eats scones from a masterful pastry chef, enjoys fresh coffee, tea, or water, and simply enjoys being in community together. Everyone is welcome. Tuesdays at 8:30-10am in Marvin Lounge.

COFFEE CLATTER @ MARTONE'S—Every Friday Morning from 8-9am

Each week, there is a group of five to ten people that come together to enjoy coffee, a breakfast goodie, enjoyable company, and conversations about whatever people want to talk about, including politics and religion! We meet at Martone's from 8-9am and everyone pays their own way. Everyone is welcome to come and tell us what you really think! Everyone is welcome to not only come but to bring a friend.

LUNCHTIME BOOK GROUP

The midday book group has chosen *BRITT-MARIE WAS HERE*, by Fredrik Backman for October.

Britt-Marie can't stand mess, but that's just what her life has become. She leaves behind an unfaithful husband and a lifetime of taking care of everyone else before herself and moves to the backwater town of Borg where she takes on the job of looking after the town's crumbling rec. center. Will this be the place where Britt-Marie can truly belong?

We will meet in the Marvin Lounge on Monday, October 20th at 11:30 am.

Newcomers are always welcome. Bring your lunch if you'd like and join us for the discussion.

BRIDGE FOR FUN

Looking for a friendly game of bridge where there is a wide variety of skill levels and yet everyone present is just there to have some fun? We have it at FCCEJ! We have snacks and coffee and usually get a couple of tables. We play three rounds of six hands and even have a prize for the high score: home made jam from our pastor! We play from 2:30 to 4pm on the first and third Friday of each month and the group is open to both members of the church and community folks that are just looking for a good time playing some bridge. It is a good group to bring a friend.

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

BABINGER, Gail
BOYD, John
BURNETT, John
CHADURJIAN, Mark
CURRIER, Bernie
DOOLEY, Rick
GIBSON, Margie
GOEDKEN, Andrea
HAYES, Deanna

HEWETT, Anne
HOFFMAN, Kim
HOPKINS, Marti
HOUGHTON, Carl
JACKSON, Michelle
KEITHCART, William
LEAVITT, Dick
LEAVITT, Sylvia
MCHUGH, Mary

MITCHELL, Marilyn
MOOS, Jonah
PALMER, Liam
PAUL, Beth
PETHERBRIDGE, Bonita
PUTNAM, Lillian
STARKEY, Gorden
WATT, Aliyah
WERMER, Alison

GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

This is a time of the year during which the loss of someone we love can be particularly painful. The shortening of daylight hours and the approaching holidays can be somewhat overwhelming. It is our hope that offering a monthly support group may be helpful to you or someone you know - and possibly a source of healing. You are welcome to come for yourself or to come learn how to better support a grieving family member or friend. You can just sit and listen if you don't want to talk. We trust learning will occur through our sharing. There is a wisdom in the group!

This is an open group. So you, along with any friends, family members and neighbors are invited to join us. All are welcome!

Sharon Dettenrieder and Mary McHugh are facilitating this group. Both have personal experience with loss along with professional education and experience in leading grief support groups.

Wherever you are along this road of grief, may you experience God's healing presence and love. It is a hard time, but a sacred time. Grief Support Group meets the 2nd Thursday of each month. Next meeting is Thursday, October 9 at 10am in Marvin Lounge.



Wow! It's that time of year again. FCCEJ will have the opportunity to provide Christmas gifts to children in our community through the Giving Tree. There will be a "tree" set up in the Narthex with gift tags on it starting on Sunday, November 23. Tags will be available till November 30.

Each child will receive three gifts – two articles of clothing and one toy, book, game or gift card. Once again, if you or your family wants to purchase all three gifts for a child, you will have that option. Remember to mark down on the sign-ups sheets which tag number/letter you select so that the gift goes to the correct child.

There is always great anticipation around the Giving Tree and we hope you will join us again in making this Christmas a season of hope and love for so many children in the City and Town of Essex and Westford.



Taize Worship ~ Prayer in Troubled Times

This hour long service combines sung and spoken prayer, meditative readings from Scripture and other sources, along with silence, to allow ourselves space to slow down and simply 'be'. Selections primarily from the Taize Community in France supply the musical framework for this service. Icons and images at this service are wide-ranging examples of past and present witnesses to troubled times who were called to sometimes heroic responses and act as beacons. Be with us for a time of quiet contemplation and the opportunity to connect with The Holy One. We hope you can join us!

- Sunday, October 12, 2025 at 7pm at The Cathedral Church of St. Paul, 2 Cherry Street, Burlington
- In person or via this YouTube link (<https://www.youtube.com/@cathedralchurchofstpaulvt/streams>)
- Free Parking in the Cathedral lot from 5 pm to 9 pm
- Free Parking all day in the Hotel Vermont lot across the street

First Congregational Church of Essex Junction



1 Church Street
Essex Junction, VT 05452
Phone: 802-878-5745
Email: welcome@fccej.org

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP:

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

with Holy Communion and Sanctuary Choir ~ Spiritual Friends for PreK-5th

~Other Sundays Throughout the Month~

8:30am - In-person & streamed via YouTube

Music: Bethany Blake directs our Sanctuary Choir and provides accompaniment

10:15am - In-person—Faith Formation for PreK - 8th

Music: Finally @ First Praise Band ~ Streamed on the 3rd Sunday of each month

VISIT US ONLINE:



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youtube.com/c/FCCEJ