



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
Christ the King Sunday
November 23, 2025

The first Sunday of each month we celebrate the Lord's Supper with one unified service at 10am. 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 10:15am 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</i>	<i>Accepting and Serving All</i>
<i>In the Spirit of Christ</i>	

Order of Worship

Prelude *Cello Sonata in E Minor mvt. 1 (excerpt of piano part)* Brahms

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 Deacon Rusty Sargent
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 "Amazing Grace" arr. Sondra Tucker

Call to Worship..... Deacon Rusty Sargent
Leader: The church year starts in darkness as humanity awaits the light of Christ to enter the universe and lead us to love and life. We start with hope, experience God's birth, Christ's teaching, then his passion, death and resurrection. Then we end with the growth and spread of Jesus' movement.

People: This yearly cycle of the church year takes us through our own faith journey and reminds us of where we came from, what we believe, how we live and where we end up.

Leader: Today is the last week of the church year. We begin waiting for the Prince of Peace to enter the world and we end proclaiming Jesus as our King.

People: **Jesus, we offer you our allegiance, our loyalty, and our dedication to live into your ways of peace, justice, and love as we strive to build your kingdom on earth.**

***Opening Hymn**

Now Thank We All Our God

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Deacon's Prayer of Invocation and **Unison Lord's Prayer ("trespasses")**

Loving God, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And do not let us fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, amen.

Children's Message

The Congregation Sings as the Children Come Forward

**Jesus loves the little children, all God's children of the world.
Whether young or old or new, Jesus loves us through and through,
Teaching us to love all creatures in the world.**

The Congregation Sings as the Children Transition to Peer Groups

**God has made us all a rainbow. Colors dancing 'round and 'round.
In our hair and skin and eyes, big and little, every size,
God has made us all a rainbow dancing 'round.**

Pastoral Prayer

Sharing Our Prayers with God and Each Other

A Time of Silence for Personal Prayer

Musical Response

"Wherever I May Wander"

arr. Sondra Tucker

New Testament Scripture Readings

Gospel

Luke 23:33-43

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Epistle

Colossians 1:11-23

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Special Music

All the Praise of a Lifetime

Phil McHugh and John Elliot

arr. Don Hart

Sermon

Witness and Invitation

Rev. Mendes

Rev. Mendes invites all who wish to dedicate their lives or renew your faith in Jesus or promise to live by his Great Commandment to come forward and be blessed and anointed in the name of the Holy Spirit. As people come forward the congregation will remain seated and sing....

- # 493 *O Jesus I Have Promised*
- # 304 *All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name*
- # 503 *O Savior, Let Me Walk with You*
- # 500 *We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder*
- # 491 *Arise My Soul, Stretch Every Nerve*

Offering Our Gifts to God

Invitation, Offering, and Prayer of Dedication

Offertory

"I Come With Joy"

arr. Sondra Tucker

***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**

The Church's One Foundation

#586

***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

Sonata for Trombone and Piano (excerpt of piano part)

Eric Ewazen

***Please stand if you are able**

- ◆ Sincere thanks to Bethany Blake and the FCCEJ Sanctuary Choir, for sharing their awesome musical talents with us this morning!

OUR PRAYER MINISTRY

If you desire 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. Unless otherwise specified, prayer requests will be printed in the bulletin for a month.

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

** The flowers on the altar this morning are given by Ruth Casey
In Loving Memory of Skip Casey **

UPCOMING EVENTS—MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- ◆ Sunday, November 23: Hanging the Greens, after 2nd service in the Sanctuary
- ◆ Sunday, December 14: Blue Christmas/Healing Service at 8:30am
Christmas Pageant at 10:15am
- ◆ Sunday, December 21: One Service @ 10am featuring Sanctuary Choir Christmas Cantata, Currier Bell Choir, & Joyful Noise Children's Choir
- ◆ Wednesday, December 24: Christmas Eve Services:
5pm: Family Service—Carols, Candlelight & Special Visitors
8:30pm: Christmas Concert in the Sanctuary
9pm: Service of Lessons & Carols & Candlelight
Featuring music performed by the FCCEJ Sanctuary Choir
11pm: Service of Candlelight & Holy Communion
Featuring music performed by Finally @ First Praise Band
- ◆ Sunday, December 28: Carol Sing/Brunch/Stuffie Blessing—One Service @ 10am

Giving Tree

Once again FCCEJ has the opportunity to provide Christmas gifts to children in our community through our Giving Tree Program. There is a tree with gift tags in the Narthex as well as virtual tags on Sign Up Genius; tags will be available till November 30.

Here are the steps for the tree tags:

1. Select a tag (or two or three) from the tree
2. Fill out the sign up sheet—please include your phone number and email
3. Purchase your gift(s), wrap them, and **include the tag on the outside of the wrapping. Please use a gift bag or box for gift cards, too.**
4. Drop off your gifts at the tree on Sunday morning or the office during the week
5. Gifts are due **Wednesday, December 10**

If you prefer to use Sign Up Genius, here is the link:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0545A8AB2FAAF58-59862482-giving>

There is always great anticipation around the Giving Tree. We hope you will join us in making this Christmas a season of hope and love for many families in our community.

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 and feminine hygiene products.

We need 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 if you are interested and thank you for your support of this important ministry in our community!

November Special Offering

As you plan your Thanksgiving meal, think about making your favorite side dish, and look forward to spending time with family and friends, please remember those who are food insecure and rely on the Heavenly Food Pantry. Our special offering on November 23rd is designated for the Food Pantry. Please use the special envelopes provided and make sure they are marked "Food Pantry". Participating in the special offering can really make a difference and will go directly toward the Heavenly Food Pantry's mission. Thank you in advance for your generosity and helpful spirit!

Music Notes

Drop-In Choir

Come one, come all, to our next “Drop-In Choir” on December 7. Please warm up with the choir at 9:30 am, and then join us during the service as we praise God through music! The sheet music will be provided at those warmups, and can also be requested ahead of time if you wish. Thank you!

Joyful Noise Children’s Choir

Joyful Noise will be singing 2 songs during the Christmas Pageant on December 14, and one song during the service on December 21!

Rehearsals will be in the West Wing right before second service on:

Sunday, November 23: 9:45 - 10:05

Sunday, November 30: 9:45 - 10:05

Sunday, December 7: 9:45 - 10:05

Sunday, December 14: Time to be determined

Sunday, December 21: Time to be determined

Questions? Contact Mindy Bickford mhinsdale5@gmail.com

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 December 11.

Poinsettias for Christmas Eve

We have a lovely tradition of filling the chancel with poinsettia plants on Christmas Eve, purchased by our members and friends in honor/memory of loved ones. The order forms will be included in the December newsletter and out in the Narthex starting next Sunday, November 30. Each 6” plant is \$16 and available in red, pink, variegated, and white. Orders are due by Sunday, December 14.

You may take your plant home after the last Christmas Eve service, or you may donate it to our Call to Care ministry and it will be delivered to a home-bound member.

Weekly Calendar: November 23—November 30

Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections

Sunday, November 23

8:30* & 10:15am: Worship—Sanctuary/
Streaming*

11:30am: Decorating the Sanctuary for Advent
and Christmas

1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

Tuesday, November 25

8:30: Sermon Talkback—Marvin Lounge/Zoom:
[<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89903982036>]

9am: Organ Tuning—Sanctuary

10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop

10:15am: Intermediate Tai Chi—Fellowship Hall

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

5:30pm: Finance Committee—Marvin Lounge

7pm: Stewardship—Marvin Lounge

Thursday, November 27

Thanksgiving Day—Office Closed

*10am: The Vine Nepali Congregation—Sanctuary,
Fellowship Hall, Kitchen*

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Marvin Lounge

Saturday, November 29

8am: Give It A Go Support Group—Marvin Lounge
The Vine Nepali Congregation—Sanctuary,
West Wing

8:30am: Weight Loss Support —Marvin Lounge

10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop

1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

GMKCS—Gym, 3rd Floor, Kitchen, West Wing

Monday, November 24

9am: Food Pantry Organizing—Fellowship Hall,
Kitchen, 2nd Floor Storage Room

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

7:30pm: Group Victory—Marvin Lounge

Wednesday, November 26

8am: Food Bank Delivery—Fellowship Hall

10am: Missions Committee—Marvin Lounge

Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

6pm: Men At First Rehearsal—West Wing

7pm: BSA Troop 624—Fellowship Hall, Gym

Friday, November 28

Holiday—Office Closed

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

1:30pm: Bridge Group—Marvin Lounge

6:30pm: Blue Spruce Grange—Fellowship Hall

Sunday, November 30

8:30* & 10:15am: Worship—Sanctuary/
Streaming*

1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

Events in italics = Local Community Groups