



# 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](mailto:welcome@fccej.org) **Website:** [www.fccej.org](http://www.fccej.org)





**The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction**  
**The First Sunday of Advent**  
**November 30, 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).*

*A Welcoming Community                      Accepting and Serving All  
In the Spirit of Christ*

*Order of Worship*

Prelude    *In the Sweet By and By*    Joseph Webster

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.*

*A Special welcome to Tom and Laura Chadwick  
who are leading music today*

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    *Your Love, O Lord*    Mac Powell

Call to Worship..... Deacon Rusty Sargent  
**Leader:** We all begin in the womb of darkness: safe, warm, nourished and intimately connected to our Creator. Then we are thrust into the light of day and forced to find food, family, fulfillment and faith.

**People:** Life can be difficult and yet rewarding with delights to the senses, explorations of the mind, passions of the heart and ecstasies of the spirit. It is well worth leaving the safety of home.

Leader: God is in both the darkness and the light. God gives us birth and walks with us throughout our lives. And God welcomes us home when we come to the end.

People: **Come, let us worship a God who is always with us and offers us hope every moment of our lives.**

Lighting the First Advent Candle of Hope

First Service

Sermon Talkback

Second Service

Phil, Jenny, Molly, and Isabelle Bourn

**\*Opening Hymn**

***Come, O Long Expected Jesus***

**# 122**

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 Return to Their Families**

**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

*Alleluia*

George Sinclair

New Testament Scripture Readings

Gospel

Matthew 24:36-44

[page 21]

Epistle

Romans 13:11-14

[page 124]

Matt Maher

Rev. Mendes

Chris Tomlin

**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.**

# #126

## \*Sung Community Benediction

Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.  
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be!  
With God our Creator, family all are we,  
Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.  
Let peace begin with me. Let this be the moment now.  
With ev'ry breath I take, let this be my solemn vow;  
To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally!  
Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.

Chris Tomlin

- ◆ Sincere thanks to Laura and Tom Chadwick, 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](mailto:welcome@fccej.org) or call (802) 878-5745. Unless otherwise specified, prayer requests will be printed in the bulletin for a month.

Megs  
Jane Piper  
Gracie O'Malley & Family  
Rob Robinson  
Allysa Williams  
Kathy & Mike Murray  
Colleen Kelly and Family  
Danair Williams  
Joe Shields  
Heather Rogers

Sean Garvey  
Josh Winslow  
Victims of gun violence  
and their families  
Carol Daigle  
Patty Giroux  
Everyone experiencing uncertainty and fear  
in their communities  
All those affected by the violence in  
Ukraine, Gaza, and around the world  
Everyone that may be privately suffering

***The flowers on the altar this morning are in remembrance of the birthday of  
Robert Ferris from his children.***

### UPCOMING EVENTS—MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- ◆ 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.

## **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 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](mailto: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.

## **Weekly Calendar: November 30—December 7**

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

<p><b><u>Sunday, November 30</u></b>  8:30* &amp; 10:15am: Worship—Sanctuary/  Streaming*  <i>1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i></p>	<p><b><u>Monday, December 1</u></b>  9am: Food Pantry Organizing—Fellowship Hall,  Kitchen, 2nd Floor Storage Room  11:30am: <i>Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i>  7:30pm: <i>Group Victory—Marvin Lounge</i></p>
<p><b><u>Tuesday, December 2</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  10:15am: Intermediate Tai Chi—Fellowship Hall  11:30am: <i>Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i>  5pm: <i>BSA Troop 624 Leaders—Fellowship Hall</i>  6:30pm: <i>BSA Troop 624 District—Fellowship Hall</i>  7pm: Church Council—Marvin Lounge</p>	<p><b><u>Wednesday, December 3</u></b>  10am: <i>Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall</i>  11:30am: <i>Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i>  5:30pm: Finally @ First Rehearsal—Sanctuary  6pm: Men At First Rehearsal—West Wing  <i>BSA Troop 624 PLC—West Wing</i>  7pm: <i>BSA Troop 624—Fellowship Hall, Gym</i>  Wednesday Night Searchers—Marvin Lounge</p>
<p><b><u>Thursday, December 4</u></b>  8:30am: <i>Essex Art League—Fellowship Hall</i>  9am: FCCEJ Staff Meeting—Marvin Lounge  11am: <i>Music Lesson—Sanctuary</i>  11:30am: <i>Brown Bag Fellowship—Marvin Lounge</i>  3-6pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop  6pm: <i>Music Lesson—Sanctuary</i>  6:30pm: <i>Cub Scouts Pack 630 Den Meetings—Fellowship Hall, West Wing, 3rd Floor</i></p>	<p><b><u>Friday, December 5</u></b>  8am: Coffee Clatter—Martone’s Deli  10am: <i>Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall</i>  11:30am: <i>Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i>  1:30pm: <i>Bridge Group—Marvin Lounge</i></p>
<p><b><u>Saturday, December 6</u></b>  8am: <i>Give It A Go Support Group—Marvin Lounge</i>  <i>The Vine Nepali Congregation—Sanctuary, West Wing</i>  8:30am: <i>Weight Loss Support —Marvin Lounge</i>  10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop  1pm: <i>Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i>  GMKCS—Gym, 3rd Floor, Kitchen, West Wing  <i>Clair Black Studio Recital—Sanctuary</i></p>	<p><b><u>Sunday, December 7</u></b>  10am: Worship—Sanctuary/Streaming  11:30am: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop  Service Trip Team—Marvin Lounge  1pm: <i>Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i></p>

*Events in italics = Local Community Groups*

# 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]

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

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

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

## Music

Chair of Music: Mindy Bickford

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, Alan Kinney

## Committee Chairs

### Christian Education:

Derek Lyman, Terri Livak—Co-Chairs

### Communications:

Francis Gravel, Beth Warren—Co-Chairs

### Deacons:

Alison Wermer, Judy McCullen—Co-Chairs

Finance & Pastoral Relations: Terry Stein

Hospitality: Sue Conti

### Human Resources:

Judy Larrabee Pomainville

Missions: Ann Marie Sullivan

Nominating: Lauren Starkey

Stewardship: Kathryn Brennan

### Trustees:

John Burnett, Rob Gibson—Co Chairs

## Recognized Groups

Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop: Sandy Tallman

Heavenly Food Pantry: Valerie Gabert