



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





The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction
The Second Sunday of Advent
December 7, 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 *What Child is This?* arr. Tom Barabas

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 GreetingDeacon Maureen McKenzie
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 *Canon in D* Johann Pachelbel

Lighting the Second Advent Candle of Peace
Bart & Paulette Frisbee, and Maureen Evans

Call to Worship.....Deacon Maureen McKenzie
Leader: Come, let us worship the Living God with hearts, minds and voices. Come, let us pray, listen and reflect on God's presence in the world a bit. Come, let us give of ourselves to this family of faith.
People: **That is what we came here to do! I will do it with integrity, honesty and humility. And I hope and pray that my soul will be fed!**
Leader: Come, brothers and sisters, let us enter this space with a sense of sacred joy. Come, let us soak in the very Spirit of the Living God.

A Time of Confession and Assurance of Pardon

The Invitation

Leader: None of us are perfect. All of us fall short of who God made us to be. Come, let us be honest with ourselves and God and offer up the ways we fail to live into God's command to love.

People: Our individual failures remind us that all of us are on this journey together. We all fail or all thrive together. Come, let us re-commit ourselves to our Great Parent who loves us no matter what.

Unison Prayer of Confession

Loving Jesus, thank you for coming to your earth and seeking out the lost, isolated, hurting, violent, mean spirited, depraved, starving, loving, kind, merciful, rich, wicked and anguished children. All of us need you every moment of the day. All of us need your guidance, forgiveness and love. Help us to discern your ways and tap into your Presence so that our lives may more closely align to your ways. Forgive us and inspire us to be better. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Leader: You are forgiven. You are cherished. You are God's child.

People: Amen and Alleluia.

*Opening Hymn

O How Shall I Receive You

102

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 Spiritual Friends (PreK-5th)

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 and Unison Lord's Prayer ("trespasses")

Sharing Our Prayers with God and Each Other

A Time of Silence for Personal Prayer

Musical Response *Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!*

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.

Scripture Readings

Old Testament Prophetic Isaiah 11:1-10 [page 496]

New Testament Epistle Romans 15:1-13 [page 125]

Anthem *Come to the Manger, Emmanuel* Based on *Away in a Manger*
Add. words/music by Patrick M. Liebergen

Advent Meditation *Connections* Rev. Mendes

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

The Open Invitation from Christ

The Words of Institution from Scripture

Passing Out the Elements

Today, we will celebrate communion in the traditional manner by passing the bread [gluten free] and then the cup [non-alcoholic] out to the congregation. Please hold your bread until the minister directs you to partake. Once you receive the cup, partake when you would like. This difference of receiving symbolizes both the personal and corporate nature of the Christian faith.

***No matter who you are or where you are on your faith journey,
you are welcome at Christ's table.***

Final Communion Prayer of Thanksgiving

Offering Our Gifts to God

Invitation, Offering, and Prayer of Dedication

Offertory *Inner Joy* Tom Barabas

***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.**

*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

Magic in December

Tom Barabas

*Please stand if you are able

- ♦ Sincere thanks to Bethany Blake, the FCCEJ Sanctuary Choir, and the “Drop-In” singers, 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.

Megs
Jane Piper
Gracie O'Malley & Family
Rob Robinson
Allysa Williams
Kathy & Mike Murray
Colleen Kelly and Family
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 given by Betty Busciglio
In celebration of the life of her husband, Rick.***

UPCOMING EVENTS—MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

♦ **Sunday, December 14:**

- ◇ Blue Christmas/Healing Service at 8:30am—not streamed
- ◇ Christmas Pageant at 10:15am—streamed & in-person

♦ **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:**

- ◇ One Service @ 10am—Carol Sing/Bear Blessing

Poinsettias for Christmas Eve

We have a lovely tradition of filling the chancel with poinsettias on Christmas Eve, purchased by our members and friends in honor/memory of loved ones. The order forms are included as an insert in the bulletin. 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 be delivered to a home-bound member.

Giving Tree

Reminder that gifts are due on Wednesday, December 10. Please drop them off in the office this week by Wednesday at the latest. Thank you!

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 Sundays in 2026:

www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0545A8AB2FAAF58-53196874-altar#/



Bringing Heaven Down to Earth:

Join our Bible study group as we reflect on Isaiah's peaceful kingdom during this advent season. Join us December 12 from 1:30 to 3 PM in the Marvin lounge.

Annual Reports Due

Please have your annual reports for each committee submitted to the office (welcome@fccej.org) no later than **Wednesday, December 31**. Word documents or in the body of an email is preferred. Please do not send Acrobat files—source files are required for consistent formatting in the complete report. **Please send only your FINAL draft to the office.** Contact Jen if you have questions or need assistance. Thank you!

Music Notes

Drop-In Choir

Come one, come all, to our next “Drop-In Choir” on January 3. Please arrive by 9:30 am to rehearse, 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. Please note that Finally @ First Praise Band will be providing the music.

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:

Sunday December 7: 9:30 - 9:50 in the West Wing music room

11:00 - 11:30 in the Sanctuary after worship

Saturday December 13: 12:00 - 1:00 in the Sanctuary

Sunday, December 14: Pageant Sunday! 9:45-10:05 in the West Wing

Sunday, December 21: 9:30 - 9:50 in the West Wing

Questions? Contact Mindy Bickford mhinsdale5@gmail.com

Early Bird Calcutta Tickets

Early Bird tickets are now available for our 8th Cabin Fever Calcutta to be held on Saturday, March 14, 2026 at the Catamount Country Club. Each \$150 ticket includes a buffet dinner for two plus one Calcutta ball number. Those purchasing tickets prior to January 14th are entered into a drawing, to be held at the Calcutta, for a \$100 cash prize.

Letters to those who joined us last year were mailed late last week with information about how to purchase a ticket. There is also a table in Fellowship Hall where tickets can be purchased. For more information, contact Sharon Dettenrieder at Sharon.dettenrieder@gmail.com.

Proceeds from this event support our Intergenerational Service Trips. Watch for information in the spring about our 2026 domestic trip to the Blackfeet Reservation.

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: December 7—December 14

Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections

Sunday, December 7

10am: Worship—Sanctuary/Streaming
 11:30am: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop
 Service Trip Team—Marvin Lounge
1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

Tuesday, December 9

8:30: Sermon Talkback—Marvin Lounge/Zoom:
[\[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89903982036\]](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89903982036)
 10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop
 10:15am: Intermediate Tai Chi—Fellowship Hall
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall
 3:30pm: Food Pantry Committee—Marvin Lounge
6:30pm: BSA 3 Rivers District Roundtable—Fellowship Hall, 2nd Floor Program Room
 7pm: Deacons—Marvin Lounge

Thursday, December 11

10am: Grief Support—Marvin Lounge
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Marvin Lounge
12pm: Music Lesson—Sanctuary
 3-6pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop
5:30pm: Reiki Share—Marvin Lounge
6pm: Music Lesson—Sanctuary
6:30pm: Bluebird School Open House—West Wing
 7pm: Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal—Sanctuary

Saturday, December 13

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
 12pm: Pageant Rehearsal—Sanctuary
1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall
GMKCS—Gym, 3rd Floor, Kitchen, West Wing

Monday, December 8

9am: Food Pantry Organizing—Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, 2nd Floor Storage Room
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall
 1:30pm: Food Pantry Set Up—Fellowship Hall
 5:30pm: Food Pantry Distribution—Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, Sanctuary
7:30pm: Group Victory—Marvin Lounge

Wednesday, December 10

10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall
 5:30pm: Finally @ First Rehearsal—Sanctuary
 6pm: Men At First Rehearsal—West Wing
7pm: BSA Troop 624—Fellowship Hall, Gym
 Wednesday Night Searchers—Marvin Lounge

Friday, December 12

8am: Coffee Clatter—Martone's Deli
10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall
 1:30pm: Bible Study—Marvin Lounge
6pm: Blue Spruce Grange—Fellowship Hall

Sunday, December 14

Receiving New Members

8:30am: Blue Christmas/Healing Service—Sanctuary
 10:15am: Worship w/Christmas Pageant—Sanctuary/Streaming
 11:30am: Youth Group—Youth Room
 Confirmation—Marvin Lounge
1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

Events in italics = Local Community Groups