



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



Second Service



The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction
The Third Sunday of Advent
December 14, 2025



Our worship opportunities for December 2025 are as follows:

December 14:

1st Service Blue Sunday and Healing Service; 2nd Service Christmas Pageant

December 21st:

ONE Service at 10am w/ Christmas Cantata, Currier Bells and Joyful Noise

December 24th:

5pm—Family Service with Guest Story Tellers

9pm—Lessons and Carols w/ Pre-Service Concert @ 8:30pm

11pm—Communion, Carols & Finally @ First Praise Band

All three services are candlelight services with the sacred birth story shared

December 28th:

ONE Service at 10am with The Blessing of the Bears and Carol Sing



CHRISTMAS PAGEANT SUNDAY

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

Order of Worship

Prelude

*Recit de tierce
from Mass for the Convents*

François Couperin

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 Andrea Sharp

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

*Offertoire sur les grands jeux
from Mass for the Convents*

François Couperin

Call to Worship..... Deacon Andrea Sharp

Leader: Jesus came into the world to create justice, challenge people to live into fullness of life and build a community grounded in love. A key element in that love is to experience joy.

People: **Jesus demands that we joyfully celebrate life and beauty; Jesus wants us to laugh, dance and feel good about ourselves. Jesus wants us to know the length, breadth, and depth of unadulterated joy.**

Leader: Come, let us rollick in the joy of new birth found in the babe of Bethlehem as we watch our children present the age old story in their own way.

Lighting the Third Advent Candle of Joy.....Erin, Greg, Wade, and Twyla DeVries

***Opening Carol** *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* **# 144**

Deacon's Prayer of Invocation Deacon Andrea Sharp

Welcoming our New Members

Samantha Caruso

Matt & Lara Kalix-Crisafi [Ernest and Maia]

Mike & Suzanne Lawrence

Bill Nedde

Cathy Stroeher [joining in absentia]

Sallie Wager [Dave]

Unison Response: Samantha, Matt, Lara, Mike, Suzanne, Bill, Cathy and Sallie, we welcome you with joy in the communion life of this church. We promise you our friendship and prayers as we share the hopes and labors of our church. By the power of the Holy Spirit, may we continue to grow together in God's knowledge and be witnesses of Christ's love in this world.

***Carol** *O Little Town of Bethlehem* **# 133**

Christmas Scripture Luke 2:1-20 [page 44]

O u r 2 0 2 5 Children's Christmas Pageant

Joyful Noise performs "*Friendly Beasts*"

The Best Christmas Pageant Never

written by Adam Thomas

Producer: Jenny Bourn

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Music: Mindy Bickford

Cast:

Director.....	Teddy Owens	Angels.....	Vera Chenvert,
Luke.....	Molly Bourn		Charley Zachorewitz
Matthew.....	Betty Marthaler	Magi.....	Abby & Blake
Mary.....	Isaac Lyman	Joyful Noise Choir	Wade De Vries,
Joseph.....	Izzy Bourn		Twyla De Vries,
Lead Magi	Nora Blake		Liam Palmer,
Lead Shepherd	Twyla De Vries		Eli Palmer,
Gabriel	Lily Marthaler		Nora Johnson,
Herod.....	Abbie Lyman		Nora Blake,
Small Shepherd.....	Nora Johnson		Abby Blake,
Small Angel.....	Lillianna Zachorewitz		Molly Bourn,
Donkey.....	Wade De Vries		Izzy Bourn,
			Ernest Kalix-Crisafi,
			Maia Kalix-Crisafi

We Three Kings of Orient Are

We three kings of orient are,
bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and Fountain, moor and mountain,
following yonder star
O star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.

*Carol

Away in a Manger

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Pastoral Prayer and Unison Lord's Prayer

A Time of Silence for Personal Prayer

Sharing Our Prayers with God and Each Other

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.

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

Offering Our Gifts to God

Invitation, Offering, and Prayer of Dedication

Offertory

Somewhere In My Memory

John Williams

***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.**

***Closing Carol**

Go, Tell It On the Mountain

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***Benediction**

Pastoral Benediction

***Sung Community Benediction**

Let There Be Peace On Earth

**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.**

Postlude

Dialogue sur les grands jeux

François Couperin

***Please stand if you are able**

- ♦ Sincere thanks to Bethany Blake, Denise Keating, Jenny Bourn, Mindy Bickford, and all the participants (and families) for their contributions to an amazing worship service!

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 in celebration and appreciation
of this amazing FCCEJ Faith Family.*

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#/



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 is 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 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 January 8.

Weekly Calendar: December 14—December 21

Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections

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
*2:30pm: The Vine Nepali Congregation—Sanctuary,
Fellowship Hall, Kitchen*

Tuesday, December 16

8:30: Sermon Talkback—Marvin Lounge/Zoom:
[<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
7pm: Trustees—Marvin Lounge
Communications—2nd Floor Program Room

Thursday, December 18

8:30am: Food Pantry Organizing & Set Up—
Fellowship Hall, Kitchen
9am: FCCEJ Staff Meeting—Marvin Lounge
11am: Music Lesson—Sanctuary
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Marvin Lounge
12pm: Music Lesson—Sanctuary
3-6pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop
Food Pantry Distribution—Fellowship Hall, Kitchen,
Sanctuary
5:30pm: Reiki Healing—Marvin Lounge
6pm: Music Lesson—Sanctuary
6:30pm: Cub Scouts Pack 630 —Fellowship Hall
7pm: Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal—Sanctuary

Saturday, December 20

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, December 15

9am: Food Pantry Organizing—Fellowship Hall,
Kitchen, 2nd Floor Storage Room
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall
Lunchtime Book Group—Marvin Lounge
7:30pm: Group Victory—Marvin Lounge

Wednesday, December 17

8am: Food Bank Delivery—Fellowship Hall
10am: Missions Committee—Marvin Lounge
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 19

8am: Coffee Clatter—Martone's Deli
10am-6pm: Giving Tree Gift Distribution—
West Wing
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 21

10am: Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming
1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall
5pm: Marie Johnson Piano Recital—Sanctuary

Events in italics = Local Community Groups