



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 Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 21, 2025



Our worship opportunities for December 2025 are as follows:

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



A Christmas Musical Cantata Celebration

A Welcoming Community

Accepting and Serving All

In the Spirit of Christ

Order of Worship

Prelude

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

arr. Sondra Tucker

Featuring the Currier Bell Quartet

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 by Joyful Noise Choir

The Friendly Beasts

Pierre de Corbiel

Call to Worship.....Deacon Maureen McKenzie

Leader: God created the heavens and the earth with all its beauty, complexity and splendor.

People: We love God's magnificent creation.

Leader: God created every living creature, including every person that has ever lived and everyone in this room; all God has ever wanted from us is a relationship.

People: We love God right back!

Leader: No matter who we are or where we are on our spiritual journeys, God always welcomes us home with an embrace.

People: Love comes from forgiveness and acceptance.

Leader: Come, let us worship and praise our God with a little love today.

Deacon's Prayer of Invocation and **Unison Lord's Prayer** Deacon Maureen McKenzie

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.

Lighting the Fourth Advent Candle of LOVE..... The Kinney Family

Kim and Linda Kinney & Alan, Beth, Anna, John, and Brendon Kinney

***Opening Carol**

Angels We Have Heard On High

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The 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

A Time of Silence for Personal Prayer

Sharing Our Prayers with God and Each Other

A Musical Response *Solo Time 5—Dorian Epic*

Kathleen Wissinger

Currier Bell Quartet w/ Bethany on Piano

Arranged by Sondra Tucker

Offering Our Gifts to God

Invitation, Offering, and Prayer of Dedication

Offertory *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*

arr. Sondra Tucker

Currier Bell Quartet w/ Bethany on Piano

***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.

***Carol**

Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates

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ADVENT CANTATA: *Candles & Carols*

Music by Mark Hayes, Narration and new lyrics by Pamela Martin

Prelude: Call to Light

O come, O come, Emmanuel. Come to our hearts and in our presence dwell.

We wait in hope for peace once again. Return to us the joy of Bethlehem.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come in love our darkness to dispel.



Light of Hope

Come, Thou long expected Jesus, born to set Thy people free.

From our fears and sins release us. Let us find our rest in Thee.

Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth Thou art;

Dear desire of ev'ry nation, joy of ev'ry longing heart.

Come, Thou hope of our salvation, Promised One by prophets foretold.

With sincere anticipation, hearts like flow'rs before Thee unfold.

As the saints who came before us, patiently we call on Thee.

Lifting our voices, we join in the chorus of the faithful who long for Thee,
of the faithful who long for Thee.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!



Light of Peace

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled."

Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies.

With angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Refrain: Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King."





Lamb of God and Child of Peace, born that war and strife may cease.
Born our Brother to become, born that we might live as one.
Born that we may one day see peace on earth and harmony.
Born to us, with us to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.

[Refrain]

Hail the heav'n born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings, ris'n with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by, born that we may no more die,
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.

[Refrain]

Sing gloria to the newborn King!

Light of Joy

Born is the Child in manger small whom God has sent to save us all.
Refrain: How great our joy! Great our joy! Joy, joy, joy! Joy, joy, joy!
Glory to God Who reigns on high! Glory to God Who reigns on high!
Source of our joy, to Thee we raise our grateful songs of endless praise.

[Refrain]

Gloria, gloria in excelsis Deo! Glory to God in the heavens on high!
Gloria, gloria in excelsis Deo! Glory to God, peace on earth is born this night!
Jesus, the gift from heav'n above, fills all our hearts with joy and love.

[Refrain]

Light of Love

Love came down at Christmas, Love all lovely, Love divine.
Love came down at Christmas, star and angels gave the sign.
Love was born at Christmas in a simple cattle stall.
Love is born this Christmas in the hearts of one and all.
Love be our example, love be yours and love be mine,
love for one another with the love of God divine.

Light of Christ

Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light,
radiant beams from Thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.
Silent night, holy night, fill our hearts with Thy light.
In the darkness may we shine with the promise of love divine;
Light of heaven on earth, light of heaven on earth.



Silent night, holy night, wondrous star, lend thy light.
With the angels let us sing alleluia to our King.
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born.
The Savior is born.



***Closing Carol**

Come, O Long Expected Jesus

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***Benediction**

Pastoral 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

Third Noel (first half)

Louis Claude Daquin

***Please stand if you are able**

- ◆ Special thanks for our Sanctuary Choir, under the direction of Bethany Blake, for all the hard work they have put into this year's Christmas Cantata. They are:
 - Soprano: *Marie Johnson, Mindy Bickford, Diane Bottamini, Heather Stein, Jane Halsted, Amanda Palmer, Judy Pomainville, Beth Volker*
 - Alto: *Denise Keating, Andrea Sharp, Terri Livak*
 - Tenor: *Bob Driver, Dave Johnson, Pete Schmalz, Bill Bickford Jr.*
 - Bass: *Michael Bottamini, Francis Gravel, Doug Olufsen*
 - Narrators: *Rob Evans, Joan Faux*
 - Candlelighter: *Rev. Mark Mendes*
- ◆ A big thank you to the Currier Bell Quartet directed by Alison Wermer and the Joyful Noise Choir directed by Mindy Bickford for bringing such beautiful music into the service today.



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.

Thomas Cencer
Tatyana Szymanski
Shashannah
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 around the world
Everyone that may be
privately suffering

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!

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.

Early Bird Calcutta Tickets

Early Bird tickets are now available for our 9th 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 18th 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 with information about how to purchase a ticket. Starting in January, there will be 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 21—December 28

Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections

Sunday, December 21

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

Monday, December 22

9am: Food Pantry Organizing—Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, 2nd Floor Storage Room
9:30am: Hiawatha School Food Pantry Visit
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall
3pm: Giving Tree 2nd Distribution—West Wing
7:30pm: Group Victory—Marvin Lounge

Tuesday, December 23

8:30: Sermon Talkback—Marvin Lounge/Zoom:
[<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89903982036>]
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

Wednesday, December 24

Christmas Eve

10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall
5pm: Family Service
8:30pm: Pre-Service Christmas Concert
9pm: Service of Lessons & Carols
11pm: Service of Communion & Celebration

**All Christmas Eve Services are in the
Sanctuary & Streamed**

Thursday, December 25

Christmas Day—Office Closed

10am: The Vine Nepali Congregation—Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall, Kitchen
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Marvin Lounge

Friday, December 26

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

Saturday, December 27

8am: Give It A Go Support Group—Marvin Lounge
The Vine Nepali Congregation—Sanctuary, West Wing
8:30am: Weight Loss Support —Marvin Lounge
1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

Sunday, December 28

10am: Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming
1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

Events in italics = Local Community Groups