



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



Christmas Eve—9pm



The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction
A United Church of Christ
Christmas Eve 2025 - 9pm
A Service of Lessons and Carols

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder; and his name will be called, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end."
Isaiah 9:6-7

Pre-Service Concert

Welcome Greeting and Announcements..... Rev. Mendes and Deacon Bob Driver
*No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey
you are welcome in this place.*

Christmas Introit by Men At First

Bethlehem Spiritual

Donald Moore

Call to Worship

Leader: We meet late in the evening during the darkest season of the year to proclaim our faith in the Light.

People: **Jesus is the Light of the World.**

Leader: We come together on this sacred night to proclaim our faith in an infant child born in Bethlehem so long ago.

People: **Baby Jesus is the Incarnation of the Living God.**

Leader: We marvel that despite Jesus being the Messiah, his family couldn't find a room in which to stay, used cloths strips and a dungy cave to attend to the child, witnessed smelly shepherds attest to their son's sacredness and fled for their lives to Egypt; despite all these indignities, we still proclaim Jesus to be God's Son.

People: **Jesus is the Prince of Peace, the King of Kings and our Mighty God.**

Leader: Things are not always what they seem. Tonight, we proclaim that despite appearances, Jesus continues to be the most influential, powerful person that ever walked this earth. His teaching continues to be the touchstone of human civilization;

People: So come, let us worship and soak in the presence of the Living God made known to us in Jesus Christ. Come, let us draw strength from the Source. Come, let us celebrate and sing O Come All Ye Faithful.

A Prophecy About the Shepherd David: Ezekiel 37:24-27 Betty Busciglio

O Come, All Ye Faithful

Be sure to give a warm welcome back to the Johnson Family. Juno's parents are Emma Elizabeth and Joshua William Johnson and her older brother is Wilder who was baptized here on Christmas Eve 2021. Her Fairy God-mother is Kelsey Alderman. Her grandparents are Gordon and Lauren Starkey and Juno's great grandmother is Betty Busciglio.

The Peaceable Kingdom: Isaiah 11:1-9Nicholas Mendes

***Carol**

What Child Is This?

What child is this, who laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary.

Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christians, fear, for sinners here, the silent Word is pleading.
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary.

So bring him incense, gold and myrrh, come peasant, King to own him;
The King of Kings, salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone him.
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste, to bring him laud, the babe the son of Mary.

The Annunciation: Luke 1:26-38 Jennifer Hoy

Sanctuary Choir Anthem *Sing, This Blessed Morn* Paul C. Van Dyke

The Birth of Jesus: Luke 2:1-7 Nora Blake

***Carol**

O Little Town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie.
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars together, proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of our heaven.
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem! Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel!

Christmas Prayer and **Unison Lord's Prayer (trespasses)**

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord.

Pastor: Let us give thanks to God Most High.

People: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Pastor: Let us pray.....

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.

Musical Response ***O Come, O Come, Emmanuel***

O Come, Desire of nations bind, all peoples in one heart and mind

Bid envy strife and quarrels cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace.

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel, shall come to thee O Israel.

The Holy Child and His Visitors: Luke 2:8-20 Bill Bickford Sr.

Carol** ***Joy to the World

Joy to the world! The Lord is come: let earth receive her King;

Let every heart prepare Christ room, and heaven and nature sing,

And heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the Earth! the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ;

While fields and floods, rocks hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy,

Repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

Christ rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove

The glories of God's righteousness

And wonders of God's love, and wonders of God's love,

And wonders, wonders of God's love.

The Wisemen Come: Matthew 2:1-18 Betty Marthaler

A Brief Christmas Eve Meditation

Why a Baby?

Rev. Mendes

Spreading the Light of Christ

Rev. Mendes will light the Christ Candle and then pass Christ's light to the whole congregation. We ask each person to be careful with your candle and especially ask parents to watch their children. On the way out, please extinguish your candles and place them in the receptacles provided. Thank you.

The Light of the World: John 1:1-14..... Josh Sharp

Emmerson and Orion Stapleton will play the violin for one verse alone.

Then the congregation will sing three verses.

Then Emmerson and Orion will play one final verse alone.

*A Final Carol

Silent Night

Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright.

Round yon virgin, mother and child.

Holy infant so tender and mild,

Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night, shepherd quake at the sight

Glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing alleluia.

Christ the Savior is born! Christ the Savior is born!

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.

*Pastoral Benediction

*Please stand as you are able

The evening offering will be taken on your way out. Please give generously in the basket provided so the vital work of our congregation and our outreach to those in need may continue unabated.

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL

AND TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT!

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA DEDICATIONS

Jenny BournIn memory of Thomas Connelly
Ruth CaseyIn memory of Skip Casey
Bill CoddingtonIn memory of Lynn
Brenda DawsonIn memory of my parents
Jen & Rick DooleyIn memory of Harry Dooley, and Joe & Dot Pine
Riley & Lorinda ElliottIn memory of our parents
Noel FamilyIn memory of Carolyn Hawkes
Janne & Howard GilesIn memory of David & Anne Cozzens
Hoy FamilyIn honor of Guy and Sandra Stone
In memory of Thomas Hoy
Joanne IrwinIn memory of Ed & Virginia Irwin
In memory of Ed & Dorothea Hilbert
In honor of my children and grandchildren
David & Marie JohnsonIn memory of our parents
Mike & Suzanne LawrenceIn memory of Ruth Sumner and Ginny & Robert
Derek LymanIn memory of Phyllis Latuch & Phillis Buchanan
Laura MarthalerIn memory of Lillian Morris
Judy & Kevin McCullenIn memory of our parents
Rev. Mark MendesIn memory of George & Margaret Mendes
Sylvia NyhagenIn honor of friends and family
Elizabeth O'BeirneIn honor of my children, Robin and Noah
Linda Lou ParkerIn memory of Bruce
Jane SchneiderIn memory of Russ Schneider
Gorden & Lauren StarkeyIn memory of our parents, Gorden & Garnet Starkey,
and Rick Busciglio
Cathy StroeherIn memory of my mom, Muriel Lenhardt
In honor of my family
Beth VolkerIn memory of my parents, Charlie & Linda Volker,
and Joan McGrath Greve
Carl & Alison WermerIn memory of our parents
Arthur & Mary WinslowIn memory of Noel Winslow
Tobe ZalingerIn memory of Gary "Jake" Tomlinson

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