



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 after Christmas
January 4, 2026

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).

<i>A Welcoming Community Accepting and Serving All In the Spirit of Christ</i>

Order of Worship

An Extravagant Welcome and Announcements

*No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey
you are welcome in this place.*

The Deacon's Greeting

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

Angels We Have Heard on High

Edward Hippen Barnes

Call to Worship

Leader: God came to humanity physically by infusing the Cosmos with the Spirit of the Living God and bringing order to our world.

People: **Thank you, God, for instilling such an intelligent design to the chaos, anarchy and randomness of space.**

Leader: God came to humanity physically when Yahweh introduced morality, laws and concepts of justice to help guide humanity into healthy ways of treating each other.

People: **Thank you, God, for helping civic society mature into your ways.**

Leader: God came to humanity physically when Jesus became flesh and personally brought God's message of love to our world.

People: **Thank you, God, for sending Jesus to be our guide.**

Leader: Come, let us hold up the ways God has been enfleshed in our world and keep our hearts open to sense what God is up to these days.

***Opening Hymn**

Go, Tell It On the Mountain 🦋

Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere;

Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!

While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,

Behold thru-out the heavens there shone a holy light.

[Refrain]

The shepherds feared and trembled when lo! above the earth

Rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth

[Refrain]

Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born,

And God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn.

[Refrain]

Unison Prayer of Confession and Lord's Prayer ("trespasses")

Loving God, we come before you sorry that we allow the darkness of the world to hide our light under a bushel. Forgive us when we allow the valley of the shadow to hide our true character of Holy love. Help us to not let the chaos of the world shape our moral character. Keep our hearts true so that mercy will continue to replace judgement, and forgiveness will continue to trump hatred. Help us to be true to you, true to your law, true to Christ's love and true to the Spirit's guidance. We pray this all and more in the name of Jesus Christ who taught us to say when praying.....

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.

The Assurance of Pardon

Leader: God Created you. You remain the apple of God's eye. God continues to love you with abandon. God offers mercy, peace, and forgiveness to all who will accept it.

Amen and Alleluia!

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 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

Sharing Our Prayers with God and Each Other

A Time of Silence for Personal Prayer

A Musical Response O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

**O Come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

New Testament Gospel Reading:

John 1:1-18

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A Theological Birth Narrative

Anthem by Finally @ First

Light of the World

Lauren Daigle

Christmas Meditation

Baby Jesus for Today

Deacon Bob Driver

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

The Open Invitation from Christ

The Words of Institution

Communion Anthem

God of Wonders

Marc Byrd/Steven Hindalong

Passing Out the Elements

We will celebrate communion today by passing the elements out to the congregation. First, the Deacons will pass out the bread; please hold it until the minister directs you to partake. Then the Deacon will pass out the cup, which you are free to partake anytime thereafter. This symbolizes both the individual and corporate nature of our faith.

**No matter who you are or where you are on your spiritual journey,
you are welcome at Jesus' table.**

Final Communion Prayer of Thanksgiving

Offering Our Gifts to God

Invitation, Offering, and Prayer of Dedication

Offertory Hymn

The First Noel

The first Noel the angel did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay,
in fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

[Refrain]

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star shining in the east beyond them far;
and to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day and night.

[Refrain]

And by the light of that same star three wise men came from country far;
to seek for a king was their intent, and to follow the star wherever it went.

[Refrain]

*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.

*Hymn

City of God
[handout]

Dan Shutte

*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.

*Please stand if you are able

- ♦ A big thank you to Finally @ First Praise Band, under the direction of Rick Dooley for providing the fabulous music 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.

Elaine Tornello
Patty Geiger
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

Presented in accordance with our Royalties for Spirituals Project: a practice of valuing musical contributions of enslaved Africans to American worship and song. We honor unrecognized musicians who created these pieces by singing them with reverence, gratitude, and open hearts. Royalties set aside for the use of these songs today will go to a local organization that supports African American musicians.

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#/



Stay Connected!

Our weekly EConnection contains timely information about the FCCEJ faith community including children/youth happenings, special events, links to online bulletins and worship services, and our current calendar.

Our monthly newsletter “SPIRIT@FIRST” is available by “snail mail” and email, as well as posted on our website.

You may provide your contact information via the Friendship Pad and indicate which communications you are interested in receiving. We promise not to overwhelm your inbox.

Community Concerts @ First

The CC@F presents Tracy Grammer on Sunday, January 11 at 3pm in the FCCEJ Sanctuary. Called "*a musician and singer of dazzling versatility*" (No Depression), Tracy Grammer is among contemporary folk music's most beloved artists. Renowned for her pure voice, deft guitar and violin work, and incantatory storytelling, Grammer has recorded and performed with Joan Baez and Mary Chapin Carpenter, headlined several of the nation's top folk festivals, and enjoyed 12 consecutive years as one of folk radio's 50 top-played artists, both solo and with the late Dave Carter. Join us to enjoy this incredible show!

"One of the finest singers and musicians anywhere in folkdom." - Boston Globe

"A brilliant artist" - Joan Baez

\$20 suggested donation, children 12 and under are free.

A portion of the concert proceeds will support Red Cross Disaster Relief. Tickets are available online via the link below or by phone through the FCCEJ office.

www.sevendaystickets.com/e/tracy-grammer.

Free Dinner for Young Families

It's Friday night and you've had a long week and do NOT feel like cooking. On Friday, January 9, FCCEJ is hosting a free dinner for families with elementary-age children. No agenda, no program - just come and enjoy a meal that you don't have to cook or clean up! We're still finalizing the details, but the menu will probably be pasta. Vegetarian and gluten-free options will be offered.

5pm to 6:30pm in the Fellowship Hall.

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.

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.

Weekly Calendar: January 4—January 11

Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections

Sunday, January 4

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

Monday, January 5

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

Tuesday, January 6

8:30: Sermon Talkback—Marvin Lounge/Zoom:
[<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89903982036>]
10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall
5pm: BSA Troop 624 Leaders—Fellowship Hall
6:30pm: BSA Troop 624 District Meeting—Fellowship Hall
7pm: Church Council—Marvin Lounge

Wednesday, January 7

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
BSA Troop 624 PLC—West Wing
7pm: Searchers—Marvin Lounge
BSA Troop 624—Fellowship Hall

Thursday, January 8

8:30am: Essex Art League—Fellowship Hall
10am: Grief Support—Marvin Lounge
11am: Music Lesson—Sanctuary
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall
3-6pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop
6pm: Music Lesson—Sanctuary
7pm: Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal—Sanctuary

Friday, January 9

8am: Coffee Clatter—Martone's Deli
10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

Saturday, January 10

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

Sunday, January 11

8:30* & 10:15am: Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming*
11:30am: Youth Group—Youth Room, Kitchen
1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall
3pm: Community Concerts @ First presents Tracy Grammer—Sanctuary

Events in italics = Local Community Groups