



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**

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The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction
Annual Meeting Sunday
February 1, 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

Prelude	<i>Nocturne in E minor, Opus 72, No. 1.</i>	Chopin
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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 Deacon Paula Sargent
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	<i>Awesome God</i>	Rich Mullins
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Call to Worship..... Deacon Paula Sargent

Leader: This is the day that the Lord has made.

People: Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Leader: Come, let us lift our voices in song. Come, let us hear the word of God. Come, let us explore the faith. Come, let us celebrate the warmth of community. Come, let us open ourselves to a relationship with the Divine. Come, let us worship our God.

Opening Epiphany Reading About Jesus

***Opening Hymn**

We Gather Together

We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing,
God chastens and hastens thy will to make known.
The wicked oppressing now cease from distressing
Sing Praises to God's name, God forgets not their own.

Beside us to guide us, our God with us joining,
Ordaining, maintaining the kingdom divine.
So from the beginning, the fight we were winning
Thou Lord was at our side, all glory be thine.

We all do extol thee, our leader triumphant,
And pray that thou still our defender wilt be.

Let thy congregation escape tribulation,
Thy name be ever praised! O Lord, make us free.

Deacon's Prayer of Invocation and 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.

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

Andante Religioso (excerpt)

Francis Thomé

New Testament Scripture Readings

Gospel Matthew 5:1-12

Leader: When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he began to speak and taught them, saying:

**Lectern Side: Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

Pulpit Side: Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Lectern Side: Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

**Pulpit Side: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst
for righteousness, for they will be filled.**

Lectern Side: Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Pulpit Side: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

**Lectern Side: Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.**

**Pulpit Side: Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake
of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

Leader: Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Epistle I Corinthians 1:18-31 [page 127]

Anthem *Everywhere I Go* Natalie Sleeth

Communion Meditation *Then and Now* Rev. Mendes

Affirming Our Partnership in Ministry

Deacon: On January 28, 2008, the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction called the Rev. Mr. Mark Mendes to serve as our Senior Pastor. On March 2, 2017, Kul Dahal became our church's Sexton. On May 4, 2021, Rev. Ron Faux became our Assistant Minister. On October 4, 2021, Jennifer Kelly came to be our Church Administrator. On May 5, 2022, Bethany Blake became our Organist and Choir Director. On March 2, 2023, Mary McHugh became our Assistant Minister. On November 27, 2023, Elizabeth O'Beirne became our Children's Ministry Coordinator. And in November of 2026, Andrea Sharp became our Digital Marketing and Communications Specialist. Come, let us affirm these decisions and ask our God to continue to bless our mutual ministry in Christ.

People: We are blessed to have Mark, Kul, Ron, Jen, and Bethany, Mary, Elizabeth, and Andrea as our professional staff and we pledge our support to them as we partner in ministry on behalf of the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction.

Staff: We thank the First Congregational Church, its members and friends, for the love, kindness, and support shown to us over this last year. We ask forgiveness for the mistakes we have made. We are grateful for the ways our leadership has been accepted. And we look to the future with promise and optimism.

People: We receive your thankfulness, offer forgiveness, and re-affirm our commitment to your ministry. We express our gratitude for your dedication and work this last year. We ask your forgiveness for our mistakes. Your influence on our faith is appreciated as we move into the unknown future.

Staff: We forgive you and accept your gratitude, trusting that our time together, both in the past and time to come will be pleasing to God.

Vows of Partnership

Deacon: Do you, the members and friends of the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction promise your continued support of Mark, Kul, Ron, Jen, Bethany, Mary, Elizabeth, and Andrea?

People: We do, with the help of God.

Deacon: Do you offer your encouragement for their future ministry as it unfolds in new ways among us?

People: We do, with the help of God.

Deacon: Do you, Mark, Kul, Ron, Jen, Bethany, Mary, Elizabeth, and Andrea promise your continued support for the ministry of the church's leadership?

Staff: We do, with the help of God.

Deacon: Do you offer your encouragement and prayers to all members and friends of this church, promising to treat all with the love of Christ? And do you promise to pray for them, journey with them in the exploration of faith, teach them of your knowledge and care for them to the best of your ability?

Ministers: We do, with the help of God.

Witness of Shared Ministry

Church President: On behalf of the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction, I, Judy Larrabee, President of the Church, witness to the words spoken: words of thankfulness, forgiveness, and a commitment to future ministry. I, along with the members and friends of this church, hold both our ministers and our members accountable to the promises made this day. May we hold each other in prayer and pledge our commitment to our shared ministry in the future.

Everyone: Thanks be to God.

Prayer

Deacon: Let us pray.

People: God, whose everlasting love for all is trustworthy, help each of us to trust the future which rests in your care. During this past year, we were united in your name and saw laughter and tears as well as hopes and disappointments. Guide us as we hold these cherished memories, but move in new directions, as we work together to build a good and healthy church that gives glory to you here in Essex Junction. Amen.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

The Open Invitation from Christ

The Words of Institution

Passing Out the Elements

Today, we will celebrate communion by passing the elements out to the congregation. First, we will pass out the gluten free bread and once everyone receives it, then Rev. Mark will direct you to partake. Then we will pass out the grape juice and once you receive it, you are free to partake of it immediately. This symbolizes both the corporate and individual nature of the 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

Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

Helen H. Lemmel

***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**

I Sing a Song of the Saints of God

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***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

Corant from Suite No. 6 in D Minor

William Croft

*Please stand if you are able

- ♦ A big thank you to Bethany Blake, the FCCEJ Sanctuary Choir, Sam Onion on piano, and our “Drop In Choir” members, for providing the awesome 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.

Shatique Brown
Mary Ellen Grove
Stephanie Repolle O’Flaherty
Friends and Family of
Linus Kinner
Audrey MacGibbon
Elaine Tornello
Patty Geiger
Thomas Cencer

Tatyana Szymanski
Shashannah
Jane Piper
Gracie O’Malley & Family
Rob Robinson
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

***The flowers on the altar today are given by Melissa Ward
In loving memory of Gary Godin.***

Weekly Calendar: February 1—February 8

Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections

<p><u>Sunday, February 1</u> 10am: Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming 11:15am: FCCEJ Annual Meeting—Sanctuary & Zoom 12:30pm: Soup Luncheon—Fellowship Hall <i>1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Marvin Lounge</i></p>	<p><u>Monday, February 2</u> 9am: Food Pantry Organizing—Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, 2nd Floor Storage Room 11:30am: <i>Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i> 4pm: Thrift Shop Advisory Board—Marvin Lounge 6pm: Pastoral Search Committee—2nd Floor Program Room <i>7:30pm: Group Victory—Marvin Lounge</i></p>
<p><u>Tuesday, February 3</u> 8:30: Sermon Talkback—Marvin Lounge/Zoom: [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89903982036] 10:15am: Intermediate Tai Chi—Fellowship Hall 10:30am: Piano Tuning 10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop <i>11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i> <i>5pm: BSA Troop 624 Leadership—Fellowship Hall</i> <i>6pm: BSA Troop 624 District Mtg—Fellowship Hall</i></p>	<p><u>Wednesday, February 4</u> <i>10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall</i> <i>11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i> 5:30pm: Finally @ First Rehearsal—Sanctuary 6pm: BSA Troop 624 PLC—West Wing 7pm: Searchers—Marvin Lounge BSA Troop 624—Fellowship Hall</p>
<p><u>Thursday, February 5</u> 8:30am: <i>Essex Art League—Fellowship Hall</i> 9am: FCCEJ Staff Meeting—Marvin Lounge <i>11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i> 3-6pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop <i>6pm: Music Lesson—Sanctuary</i> <i>6:30pm: Cub Scouts Pack 630 Den Meetings—Fellowship Hall, West Wing, 3rd Floor</i> 7pm: Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal—Sanctuary</p>	<p><u>Friday, February 6</u> 8am: Coffee Clatter—Martone’s Deli <i>10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall</i> <i>11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i> 1:30pm: Bridge Group—Marvin Lounge 5:30pm: Young Family Dinner—Fellowship Hall, Kitchen</p>
<p><u>Saturday, February 7</u> 8am: <i>Give It A Go Support Group—Marvin Lounge</i> <i>The Vine Nepali Congregation—Sanctuary, West Wing</i> 8:30am: <i>Weight Loss Support —Marvin Lounge</i> 10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop <i>1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i></p>	<p><u>Sunday, February 8</u> 8:30* & 10:15am: Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming* 11:30am: Youth Group—Kitchen, Youth Room Music Committee—2nd Floor Program Room <i>1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i> <i>2pm: Mid-Point Meeting—Marvin Lounge</i></p>

Events in italics = Local Community Groups