



# 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](mailto:welcome@fccej.org) **Website:** [www.fccej.org](http://www.fccej.org)



**The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction  
The Third Sunday in Lent**

**March 8, 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).*

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

**Order of Worship**

Prelude

*Invention 2*

J.S. Bach

Lenten Candle Lighting



*During the season of Lent, candles will be up front for anyone to light in remembrance of a loved one, a situation needing extra prayer, circumstances in the world that are problematic, or a relationship that is causing angst. People are invited to come up and light the candles before the service, during any of the music, or even during the pastoral prayer.*

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 Donna Burnett

*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

*Cry of My Heart*

Terry Butler

Call to Worship.....Psalm 95:1-7

Leader: O come, let us sing to the Lord and make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into God's presence with thanksgiving and make a joyful noise to the Lord with songs of praise!

**People: For our God is above all gods. God's hands created the depths of the earth and the heights of the mountains; the sea and the dry land are God's handiwork.**

Leader: O come, let us worship and bow down and kneel before the Lord, our Maker! For we are God's people and the sheep of God's pasture.

People: O that today we would listen to God's voice!

\*Opening Hymn

*In Christ There Is No East or West*

# 395

Deacon's Prayer of Invocation and Unison Lord's Prayer

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 Peer Groups

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 and Unison Lord's Prayer

Bob Driver,

Commissioned Assistant Minister

Sharing Our Prayers with God and Each Other

A Time of Silence for Personal Prayer

Musical Response

*Rondino*

Jean Philippe Rameau

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.

\*Hymn

*Lift Every Voice and Sing*

# 593

New Testament Gospel Reading

John 4:1-42

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Anthem

*You Are Mine*

David Haas

## Offering Our Gifts to God

Invitation, Offering, and Prayer of Dedication

Offertory

*Sanctuary*

John Thompson, Randy Scruggs,

Nylea Butler-Moore

\*Doxology

**All Glory, Laud and Honor**

# 216

**All glory, laud and honor to you, O Christ, we sing,  
To whom the lips of children made sweet hosanna's ring!  
The people of the Hebrews with palms adorned your way;  
Our praise and prayer and anthems we offer you this day.**

**Congregational Reflection**

*Scripture teaches us that during early church's worship services, a time was provided for folks to bear witness to how the Holy Spirit had spoken to them during the worship service or in their lives: theological or scriptural insights, spiritual reflections, personal witness, prophetic guidance, or personal confession or sharing. It was thought that God speaking to one person could positively affect another and draw the community into a closer relationship with God. So here is a little time to do just that.....*

\*Hymn

***In the Midst of New Dimensions***

# 391

\*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

*Invention 14*

J.S.Bach

\*Please stand if you are able

- ◆ A big thank you to Bethany Blake, and the FCCEJ Sanctuary Choir for sharing their amazing musical talents with us 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, you may use the Friendship Pads, email [welcome@fccej.org](mailto:welcome@fccej.org), or call (802) 878-5745. Unless otherwise specified, prayer requests will be printed in the bulletin for a month.*

Bill Bickford Jr.  
Elizabeth O'Beirne & Family  
Joe Shields  
Jeffrey Basiliere  
Elizabeth Stone  
Stephanie Repolle O'Flaherty  
Audrey MacGibbon  
Patty Geiger

Thomas Cencer  
Tatyana Szymanski  
Jane Piper  
Josh Winslow  
Carol Daigle  
Patty Giroux  
Victims of gun violence  
and their families

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 Sylvia Nyhagen  
In loving memory of her husband, Ed.*

### **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 March 12.

### **Easter Cards for Service Members**

We are collecting Easter cards to send to our troops that are currently deployed. If you'd like to contribute a card, please drop it off to the church office by **Friday, March 20**. We'll send them all together in a packet for distribution. Mail is always appreciated and Easter is a great time to send thoughts of hope and gratitude.

### **The Seder Meal—Saturday, March 28 at 6pm**

We are pleased to once again offer a Seder Meal during Lent. This is the Passover meal and mirrors the repast that Jesus and his disciples experienced at the last supper. During the Seder meal, we will remember the Passover story and eat dinner together.

We are limited to 75 people due to space constraints; tickets are available in the church office. The meal is free; tickets are to save you a seat and ensure that we have enough food. This replaces the traditional Maundy Thursday service.

### **Free Dinner for Young Families**

On the first Friday of each month, we host a free dinner for families of elementary-age children. No agenda, no program—come and eat and visit with other families. Next dinner is Friday, April 3 from 5:30 to 7 in the Fellowship Hall. Soup, salad, sandwiches, fruit, and dessert.

## **Pastoral Search Committee**

The Pastoral Search Committee has been meeting and preparing to complete the profile of FCCEJ that will be used to recruit candidates for our next settled pastor. We are facilitating a series of 1-hour long cottage meetings to help collect feedback from the congregation. We want to hear from you! A link to the sign up for the meetings is now located on the opening page of the FCCEJ website in one of the flip buttons, or you can scan the QR code. The meetings are being held at FCCEJ and members homes. We hope you can find a time and day which works with your schedule. Please feel free to reach out to committee members if you have any questions.

Kaki McGeary, Matt Clark, Micah Heaney-Forbes, Judy Allen, Jen Dooley, Cathy Shearer, Amy McIntyre, Marion Lawlor, Laura Marthaler, Betty Marthaler, Bob Driver



**NEW DATES  
ADDED!!**

## **Calcutta Tickets**

Check out the Intergenerational Service Team table in Fellowship Hall and chat with a Team Member to learn more about their June trip to the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana. Tickets for the 9th Cabin Fever Calcutta, to be held on Saturday, March 14th at the Catamount Country Club, support this service trip. Each \$150 ticket includes a buffet dinner for two plus one Calcutta ball number. For more information, contact Sharon Dettenrieder at [Sharon.dettenrieder@gmail.com](mailto:Sharon.dettenrieder@gmail.com).

## **Request for Cupcakes**

The Missions Committee would love to have some of the fabulous and talented bakers in our church assist with making cupcakes for the Calcutta dessert table. We are looking for a dozen of any flavor of cupcakes. Scan the QR code for the Sign-Up Genius, or call the church office and Jen will assist you.



## **New Member's Class Offered**

Do you like the values of love, justice, inclusion and diversity that we lift up as Christ's teachings here at FCCEJ? Do you enjoy the warmth of community that we cherish here? Do you like the ways we feed and clothe people in need? Do you like the many groups and organizations that we partner with in order to create a more perfect union in Vermont, our nation and world? Do you love the music that comes from so many different and talented groups in our church? Or do you just love to come and sit in the sanctuary and soak up God's presence? If so, then maybe it's time you join this great church. Both God and all of us need you to help us spread Jesus' love around liberally to people who need it and to a world in desperate need of some tenderness and light.

You are invited to attend our New Member's Class on Sunday, March 29 after the second service around 11:30am in the Marvin Lounge. Come and learn more about the UCC and FCCEJ in a relaxed setting with Rev. Mark and one of our Deacons. If you need childcare, please contact the church office. Lunch will be provided for all. The class will last about an hour and a half.

## Weekly Calendar: March 8—March 15

**\*Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections\***

<p><b><u>Sunday, March 8</u></b>              8:30&amp; 10:15am: Worship—Sanctuary &amp; Streaming*              10:15am: Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal—Marvin Lounge              11:30am: Music Committee—Program Room              Pastoral Search Cottage Meeting—Marvin Lounge              Youth Group—Kitchen, Youth Room  <i>1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i></p>	<p><b><u>Monday, March 9</u></b>              9am: Food Pantry Organizing—Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, 2nd Floor Storage Room  <i>11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i>              1pm: Food Pantry Set Up—Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, Storage Rooms              5:30pm: Food Pantry Distribution—Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, Sanctuary  <i>7:30pm: Group Victory—Marvin Lounge</i></p>
<p><b><u>Tuesday, March 10</u></b>              8:30: Sermon Talkback—Marvin Lounge/Zoom: [<a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89903982036">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89903982036</a>]              10:15am: Intermediate Tai Chi—Fellowship Hall              10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop  <i>11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i>              3:30pm: Food Pantry Committee—Marvin Lounge  <i>6:30pm: BSA Three Rivers District Roundtable—Fellowship Hall, 2nd Floor Program Room</i>              7pm: Deacons—Marvin Lounge</p>	<p><b><u>Wednesday, March 11</u></b>  <i>10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall</i>  <i>11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i>              5:30pm: Finally @ First Rehearsal—Sanctuary              7pm: Searchers—Marvin Lounge              Lenten Prayer Time—Sanctuary  <i>BSA Troop 624—Fellowship Hall</i></p>
<p><b><u>Thursday, March 12</u></b>              10am: Grief Support—Marvin Lounge  <i>11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i>              3-6pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop</p>	<p><b><u>Friday, March 13</u></b>              8am: Coffee Clatter—Martone’s Deli              10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall  <i>11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i>              1:30pm: Bible Study—Marvin Lounge</p>
<p><b><u>Saturday, March 14</u></b>  <i>8am: Give It A Go Support Group—Marvin Lounge</i>  <i>The Vine Nepali Congregation—Sanctuary, West Wing</i>  <i>8:30am: Weight Loss Support —Fellowship Hall</i>  <i>10am: Quick Birthday Party—Gym</i>  <i>Highland Dance Rehearsal—Fellowship Hall</i>              10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop  <i>1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i>  <i>GMKCS—Gym, 3rd Floor</i>  <i>Essex Watercolor Society—Marvin Lounge</i>              5pm: Calcutta—Catamount Country Club</p>	<p><b><u>Sunday, March 15</u></b>              8:30&amp; 10:15am: Worship—Sanctuary &amp; Streaming              9:45am: Pastoral Search Cottage Meeting—Marvin Lounge              11:30am: Confirmation—Marvin Lounge  <i>12:30pm: Music Rehearsal—Sanctuary</i>  <i>1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i></p>

*Events in italics = Local Community Groups*

# MINISTRY DIRECTORY

## Staff

Senior Pastor: Rev. Mark Mendes [mmendes@fccej.org]  
Children's Ministry Coordinator: Elizabeth O'Beirne [childrensministry@fccej.org]  
Music Director: Bethany Blake [bblake@fccej.org]  
Church Administrator: Jen Kelly [welcome@fccej.org]  
Commissioned Assistant Minister: Bob Driver

## Music

Chair of Music: Steph Field  
Finally @ First Director: Rick Dooley  
Men At First Director: Bill Bickford

## Officers

President: Terry Stein  
Vice President: Kathryn Brennan  
Financial Secretary: Ann Gray [finances@fccej.org]  
Assistant Financial Secretary: Linda Bogardus  
Treasurer: Darryl Koch [treasurer@fccej.org]  
Assistant Treasurer: Matt Clark [mattclark48discovery@gmail.com]  
Clerk: Alison Wermer  
Assistant Clerk: Brenda Dawson  
Historian: Ann Gray  
Internal Auditors: Dan Petherbridge, Alan Kinney

## Committee Chairs

### Christian Formation:

Derek Lyman, Terri Livak—Co-Chairs

### Communications:

Francis Gravel, Beth Warren—Co-Chairs

### Deacons:

Judy McCullen, Bob Driver—Co-Chairs

### Finance & Pastoral Relations:

Kathryn Brennan

### Hospitality: Sue Conti

Human Resources: Terry Stein

Missions: Ann Marie Sullivan

Nominating: Lauren Starkey

Stewardship: Beth Volker

Trustees: Rob Gibson

## Recognized Groups

Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop: Sandy Tallman  
Heavenly Food Pantry: Betsy Weischedel, Lisa Clark