



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



First Service

**The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction
Palm & Passion Sunday**

March 29, 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 *Rose d'hiver, Op.36* (excerpt) Wilhelm Kuhe

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 Riley Elliott

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 *More Like You* Scott Wesley Brown

Call to Worship

Leader: Today we near the end of our Lenten journey. All week we will journey with Jesus during his last week of life. That solemn week begins today with a parade of palms and shouts of hosanna.

People: We love the palms, but know what's coming. We are caught betwixt and between joy and pain, celebration and tragedy, hope and fear. Our lives are caught in the balance and we hold both for much of our lives.

Leader: Today, we will take the journey. We will start with children singing, but we will end with a mother's wailing. Let us begin the journey of life.....

***Opening Hymn**

All Glory, Laud and Honor

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People are encouraged to wave their palms as they sing or walk around the Sanctuary.

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

Anthem

How Deep the Father's Love For Us

Townend / Shackley

A Journey through the Passion of Christ

The Betrayal Planned and the Passover Observed.....Mark 14:10-25

Read by Pastor Bob

A Moment of Silence

During this reading and time of silence, everyone is asked to reflect on the times when you refuse to follow the hard truths Jesus teaches.

Peter's Denial Foretold and Committed.....Mark 14:26-31, 66-72

Read by Parker Bero

A Moment of Silence

During this reading and time of silence, everyone is asked to reflect on the way our behaviors and thoughts betray Jesus.

Hymn of Passion

O God, How We Have Wandered

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The Two Faced Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.....Mark 14:32-42

Read by Donna Burnett

A Moment of Silence

During this reading and time of silence, everyone is asked to reflect on how the difficult times in our lives draw us away from our God.

Pastoral Prayer

Sharing Our Prayers with God and Each Other

A Time of Silence for Personal Prayer

Musical Prayer Response *Deep River Op. 59 No. 10* 🎶
(excerpt)

African-American spiritual
arr. Samuel Coleridge Taylor

Hymn of Passion

Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart

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The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus.....Mark 14:43-51

Read by Ethan Koch

A Moment of Silence

During this reading and time of silence, everyone is asked to reflect on the ways we betray our faith by not living up to God's principles for our lives.

Christ's Trial and Proclamation Before the Council.....Mark 14:53-65

Read by Pastor Bob Driver

A Moment of Silence

During this reading and time of silence, everyone is asked to reflect on the ways we find Christ's proclamation of divinity difficult to believe.

Hymn of Sorrow

When Israel Was in Egypt's Land 🎶

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Christ's Silence and Pilate's Appeasement.....Mark 15:1-15

Read by Judy Allen

A Moment of Silence

During this reading and time of silence, everyone is asked to reflect on the times our silence reflects our culpability or times when we shout for things or people over God.

The Mocking and Crucifixion of Jesus.....Mark 15:16-32

Read by Riley Elliott

A Moment of Silence

During this reading and time of silence, everyone is asked to reflect on the times when our beliefs and behaviors mock God's ways.

Hymn of Passion

Beneath the Cross of Jesus

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The Death and Burial of Jesus, the Christ.....Mark 15:33-47

Read by Rev. Mark Mendes

A Moment of Silence

During this reading and time of silence, let us reflect on the ways that our actions and or inactions kill Christ's divine Spirit of love and forgiveness.

Offering Our Gifts to God

Invitation, Offering, and Prayer of Dedication

Offertory

Minuet in G

Christian Petzold

***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**

We Would Be Building

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***Benediction**

Closing Remarks and 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.**

***Please stand if you are able**

- ◆ Sincere thanks to Bethany Blake and the FCCEJ Sanctuary Choir for sharing their amazing musical talents with us this morning!

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 will go to a local organization that supports African American musicians.



*The flowers on the altar today are given by Sharon Dettenrieder
In memory of Eric Dettenrieder.*

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, or call (802) 878-5745. Unless otherwise specified, prayer requests will be printed in the bulletin for a month.

Family & friends of Janet Martel	Joe Shields	Josh Winslow
Family & friends of Barbara Williams	Jeffrey Basiliere	Carol Daigle
Shashaunah	Elizabeth Stone	Patty Giroux
Rose Drost	Stephanie Repolle O'Flaherty	Everyone experiencing uncertainty and fear in their communities
Bill Bickford Sr.	Audrey MacGibbon	All those affected by the violence around the world
Michael Hahner	Patty Geiger	Everyone that may be privately suffering
Bill Bickford Jr.	Thomas Cencer	
Elizabeth O'Beirne & Family	Tatyana Szymanski	
	Jane Piper	

HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

- **Palm Sunday—March 29**
Worship services at 8:30 and 10:15. Faith Formation during second service
- **Good Friday—April 3**
Ecumenical worship service at 12 noon in the FCCEJ Sanctuary
- **Easter Sunday—April 5**
Sunrise service at 6:30am at Holy Family Gazebo—30 Lincoln Street, Essex Junction
Light breakfast (pastries, muffins, fruit, etc..) at FCCEJ starting at 7am
All-Family worship w/ Holy Communion at 8:30 and 10:15 in the FCCEJ Sanctuary

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- **New Members Class:** Sunday, March 29—11:30am in Marvin Lounge
- **Free Dinner for Young Families:** Friday, April 3—5:30pm in the Fellowship Hall
- **Deacon Ordination:** Sunday, April 12—ONE SERVICE AT 10AM
- **Youth Hike:** Sunday, April 12—after 2nd Service to Mt. Philo
- **FCCEJ Leadership Workshop:** Sunday, April 19 at 11:30am in the Fellowship Hall
- **CCAF presents Ray Vega:** Sunday, April 26—3pm in the Sanctuary

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 April 9.

Age Well Vermont Workshop

Age Well and FCCEJ are hosting a workshop for seniors and their families and caregivers. The event will include information on service and resources that Age Well offers as well as how programs are responding to the changes in federal funding, a Q & A period, and giveaways from Age Well and FCCEJ.

EVENT DETAILS:

- Thursday, April 30 in the FCCEJ Fellowship Hall
- Continental Breakfast at 8:30am
- Workshop Begins at 9am
- Event is free

For more information, please contact the church office at: 802-878-5745 or welcome@fcej.org

Three Summer Evenings

Instead of Vacation Bible Camp, the Christian Formation Committee invites the entire church to join us for Three Summer Evenings on June 17, July 22 and August 19, all on Wednesdays. We will follow the story of Moses through fun, fellowship and faith learning. More information will follow.

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 worked diligently over the past four weeks to gather feedback from our church community through a series of Cottage Meetings. Those meetings have wrapped up, and we have created a Google Survey for all church members soliciting your feedback. This survey is a compilation of the same questions that we discussed in the Cottage Meetings so if you did not have a chance to attend one or if you would like to add to your thoughts that you had during your meeting, please fill one out.



Simply scan the QR code or follow the link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpOLSe3ER2hU_W5BDESFT8KfWKlhXwj9q6ZGG71RAFrlvKEL8IG0A/viewform?usp=header

The next step for the committee will be to compile the results of the meetings, surveys and feedback to enter it into the Church Profile. The Church Profile is quite complex and asks for a variety of historical, community, financial, and demographic information. We hope to have the Profile completed and ready to post later this spring. Thank you to everyone who is supporting this process through your feedback and prayers. If you have any questions, please reach out to a member of the Search Committee.

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

Weekly Calendar: March 29—April 5

Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections

Sunday, March 29

Palm Sunday

8:30* & 10:15am: Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming*

10am: Heavenly Harmony Rehearsal—Marvin Lounge

11:30am: New Members Class—Marvin Lounge
Youth Group to Burlington

1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

Tuesday, March 31

8:30: Sermon Talkback—Marvin Lounge/Zoom:
[<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89903982036>]

10:15am: Intermediate Tai Chi—Fellowship Hall

10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

7pm: HRC—Marvin Lounge

Thursday, April 2

8:30am: Essex Art League—Fellowship Hall

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

1:30pm: Essex Art League—Fellowship Hall

3-6pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop

6:30pm: Music Lesson—Sanctuary

Cub Scouts Pack 630 Den Meetings - Fellowship Hall, Program Room, Classrooms

7pm: Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal—Sanctuary

Saturday, April 4

*8am: Give It A Go Support Group—Marvin Lounge
The Vine Nepali Congregation—Sanctuary,
West Wing*

8:30am: Weight Loss Support —Fellowship Hall

10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop

1pm: Martel Celebration of Life—Sanctuary,
Fellowship Hall, Kitchen

Brown Bag Fellowship—Marvin Lounge

GMKCS—Gym, 3rd Floor

Monday, March 30

9am: Food Pantry Organizing—Fellowship Hall,
Kitchen, 2nd Floor Storage Room

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

7:30pm: Group Victory—Marvin Lounge

Wednesday, April 1

10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

*5pm: Essex Pediatrics Workshop—2nd Floor
Program Room, Gym*

7pm: Searchers—Marvin Lounge

Lenten Prayer Time—Sanctuary

BSA Troop 624—Fellowship Hall

Friday, April 3

Good Friday

8am: Coffee Clatter—Martone's Deli

10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

12pm: Ecumenical Service—Sanctuary

Nepali Service—Marvin Lounge

1pm: Lunch—Fellowship Hall, Kitchen

5:30pm: First @ First Family Dinner—Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, Gym

Sunday, April 5

Easter Sunday

6:30am: Sunrise Service at Holy Family

7am-11:30am: Easter Fellowship—FCCEJ
Fellowship Hall

8:30* & 10:15am: Worship—Sanctuary &
Streaming*

1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

Events in italics = Local Community Groups