

# SPirit @ FIRSt

Monthly Newsletter

FIRST  
CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH *of Essex Junction*

*Love. Serve. Grow.*

## APRIL 2026: IN THIS ISSUE...

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## YOUR PASTOR’S PONDERINGS...

The longest season of the church year is called ordinary time since it stretches from Pentecost to Advent, usually spanning from late May to late November. It’s the time we focus on some great Old Testament narratives or prophets, and New Testament texts that do not easily fit into one of the themed seasons between Advent and Pentecost.

Once we enter into the seasons that highlight the coming of Jesus, we shape the message to fit the patterns of his life from anticipation of his coming, to his resurrection, to the early building of the faith community that sprung up after his resurrection. Some would say that this liturgical journey through Christ’s life reflect our own lives and the journeys we all take as we travel though our time on earth.

Not including the generalized season of ordinary time, the longest season is Easter. It lasts seven weeks and focuses on stories of the resurrected Jesus with people he appears to, and his presence that shaped the accompanying movement that became the church. I’m an optimist and I appreciate the focus on Easter, on victory over death and darkness, on hope for the future, on new life, on the power of love to overcome the power of the state, on compassion for the people that trumps the tragic influence money had over some of the Jewish Religious leaders of his day.

Easter says to look to the future with hope, even if you are facing death. Jesus says to let his love guide every aspect of your life. God says to look for newness of life as Spring unfolds around us. The resurrection screams out that God’s power is stronger than humanity’s grasp for straws of power, pride, and prestige. The season of Easter challenges all of us not to be fooled by ways of the world that do not produce goodness.

That is why every Sunday is understood to be an anniversary of the Resurrection: a day of hope, power and love. So as we venture down Eastertide, let us soak in the goodness of our God and the victory of Christ’s message since it still stands tall after 2000 years! Know that all of you are a part of the strongest, most diverse, and successful movement in the history of the world. Love and Life Reigns!

As always, I am yours in Christ,

Rev. Mark



## **SPECIAL SERVICES IN MARCH**

Communion in March will be observed in the traditional way on March 1st  
Bread and Juice passed out to the congregation

## **HOLY WEEK**

### **Ecumenical Good Friday Service**

**April 3rd at 12 noon**

Ten churches and their pastors are heading to Essex Junction for FCCEJ's hosting of a Good Friday Service. People will be coming from UCC Churches in Jeffersonville, St. Albans, Hinesburg, South Hero, and Burlington as well as First Baptist in Burlington. The service is shaping up to be creative, inspiring, and full of divergent views of what is Good About Good Friday as reflected in the seven last words of Jesus. **The service will be at 12 noon and there will NOT be a service later at 7pm that evening.**

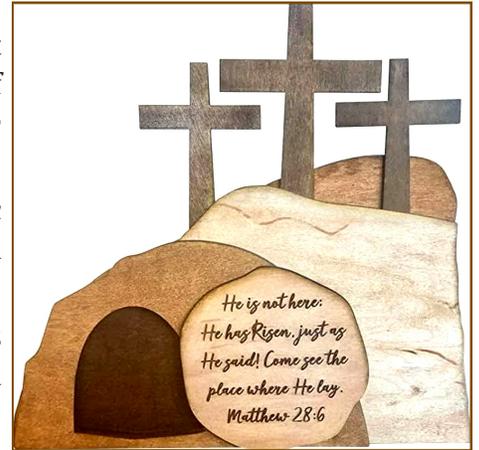
Since so many churches are coming together for the service, the Champlain Clergy Association participants thought it would be a great opportunity to share a meal together and get to know some of the members at our sister churches in the area. So, after the service there will be sandwich fixings for all. This would be a great service to bring a friend!

## **EASTER SUNDAY—APRIL 5TH**

Normally we just have one service on the first Sunday of the month, but because it is Easter, we will have two services this year at the regular times of 8:30 and 10:15am. The music will of course be supernal. We will share the sacrament of Holy Communion at both services.

We will also have a SUNRISE service at 6:30am at the Holy Family Catholic Church gazebo (30 Lincoln Street, Essex Junction) with Father Charlie and anyone else from the community that shows up.

Starting at 7am and going all the way through 2nd service, breakfast goodies will be served in FCCEJ Fellowship Hall along with piping hot coffee and good conversation.



### **Ordaining Our Deacons & Commissioning Rev. Bob Driver**

**One Service @ 10am—April 12**

Since we had two services on Easter, we will only have ONE SERVICE on April 12th. It is going to be amazingly powerful! First, we will ordain two of our new Deacons: Emily Guziak and Toby Zalinger. Both of these women are strong in their faith and they bring amazing gifts to add to our Deacons and our church community.

We will also be commissioning Bob Driver into the role of Assistant Pastor in our local church. Congregational polity maintains complete autonomy in a local congregation over all its affairs and for nine months we have been working out the details by which Bob can be authorized to provide ministry in our church as delineated from the wider United Church of Christ. As requested by Church Council, Bob has been through a Clergy Boundary Training and a background check. He will do some intentional learning from and report to Rev. Mendes. On April 12th, we will formally recognize FCCEJ's commissioning of Pastor Bob. It promises to be a great celebration!

## **PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE**

The Pastoral Search Committee has worked to gather feedback from our church community through a series of Cottage Meetings. Those in-person meetings have wrapped up. There is still an opportunity for you to share your thoughts and suggestions on the future of FCCEJ through a Google Survey. The survey is available on the FCCEJ Facebook page, by scanning the QR code, or through this link: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe3ER2hU\\_W5BDESFT8KfWKlhXwj9q6ZGG71RAFrIvKEL8lG0A/viewform?usp=header](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe3ER2hU_W5BDESFT8KfWKlhXwj9q6ZGG71RAFrIvKEL8lG0A/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



## **DEACONS**

As Lent draws to a close, we find ourselves on the edge of a beautiful season of hope. It's a time of renewal, a time when earth shakes off its winter slumber and bursts into life. These past forty days have invited us to slow down, to pray more deeply, to examine our hearts and to remember how much we depend on God's grace.

Lent never asks us to be perfect. It simply asks us to be honest—about our need for forgiveness, about our longing for hope, and about ways we are called to love one another better.

We begin to see signs of new life all around us. The days are getting longer, the air feels a little warmer, and the first hints of spring appear. In the same way that the earth begins to wake up again, Easter reminds us that God is always bringing new life out of what once seemed still or buried.

We celebrate the joy of Easter—the promise that love is stronger than death and that hope always has the final word. The empty tomb reminds us that no burden is too heavy, no mistake too great, and no night too dark for God to redeem.

May this Easter season bring renewal, peace, and joy to you and your family.

Donna Burnett--Deacon

## **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 2026:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0545A8AB2FAAF58-53196874-altar#/>



## **✠ ELIZABETH'S EPISTLE ✠**

Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen, indeed! Eastertide is a period of 50 days, beginning on Easter Sunday and ending at Pentecost, when we celebrate the birth of the Church. During Eastertide, we celebrate the Risen Christ and imagine how we might live as Easter people.

### **Volunteers Welcomed**

- ★ Volunteers are essential to the heart of children's ministry!
- ★ The recruiting for Faith Formation volunteers is an open invite.  
If you have been attending FCCEJ for more than 6 months, you are qualified.  
Reach out to Elizabeth at [ChildrensMinistry@fccej.org](mailto:ChildrensMinistry@fccej.org).

### **April Dates to Remember:**

- ★ 5th - All Family Worship ~ \*Easter Sunday\*
- ★ 12th - Peer groups ~ Acts 2:14a, 22-32
- ★ 19th - Peer groups ~ Acts 2:14a, 36-41
- ★ 26th - All Family Worship

### **Faith Formation Offering**

- ◆ The Heart to Heart Program through the Humane Society of Chittenden County is the 2025-2026 Faith Formation offering recipient.
  - *Please continue to use the white envelopes in the Narthex for the Faith Formation offering, or write "Faith Formation" on the memo of your check.*

### **Prayer**

*God of surprises, your life is never-ending, and your love is stronger than all things. When it's hard to find joy or hold on to hope, help us remember the stories we've heard, the wonder we've witnessed, and the laughter we've shared.  
Amen.*

Peace and Light,

*Elizabeth* - Children's Ministry Coordinator

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## **CHRISTIAN FORMATION COMMITTEE**

### **Three Summer Evenings—Save the Dates!**

The Christian Formation Committee has decided on the dates for our Three Summer Evenings: June 17, July 22 and August 19 - all are Wednesday evenings. We ask that you arrive between 5:30 and 6pm, and we will finish between 7:30 and 8pm. We will follow the story of Moses through fun, fellowship, and faith learning. These evenings are for our entire church family. We will get together, (re)learn about one of the great people of the Bible, and enjoy an evening of wonderful activities. Each evening will feature a specific part of the story, complete with themed activities. This will take the place of Vacation Bible Camp. Plan to attend one, two or all three!

## MISSIONS

### Age Well Vermont Workshop



This presentation will include information on services and resources Age Well offers for Vermont seniors, their families, and caregivers in our community. We'll feature discussions on how programs are responding to the current changes in federal funding, a Question & Answer period. The event will include giveaways from Age Well and First Congregational Church. For more information please contact church administrator.

### EVENT DETAILS

- Thursday, April 30
- Continental Breakfast at 8:30am
- Workshop Begins at 9am— Presentation by Erica Marks, Director of Volunteer Services: [emarks@agewellvt.org](mailto:emarks@agewellvt.org)
- Event is free

### COTS Walk 2026



Founded in 1988, the COTS Walk is one of their oldest and most important peer-to-peer fundraisers. Every year walkers of all ages from businesses, schools, religious organizations, and neighborhoods come together from all over the region to participate. The Walk begins and ends in Battery Park with music from Jenni & the Jazz Junketeers, as well as Ben & Jerry's ice cream, and fun activities.

This family-friendly event guides Walkers along a 3.6-mile route through downtown Burlington visiting some of the shelters and facilities that COTS operates. At this event, COTS seeks to illustrate the path a person experiencing homelessness might take when utilizing COTS services to educate our community about homelessness in our region. Bring your friends, family, coworkers, dogs, and strollers...All are welcome!

This year the COTS Walk theme is *Every Story Deserves a Home*. Every person who walks through the doors of COTS's shelters, housing, and service locations has a unique life story. COTS believes that every story matters, and every person has the power to change the ending. At this year's COTS Walk, we hope you will join us in honoring every story and recognizing that homelessness is a chapter in too many stories in our community.

**When:** First Sunday in May; Sunday May 3rd, 2026.

**Where:** Battery Park

**Registration:** begins at 1pm - <https://cotsonline.org/cots-walk>

**Walk time:** begins at 2pm

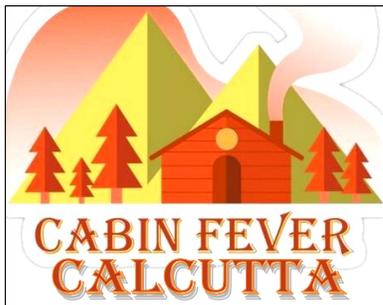
### Who Walks?

- Walkers of all ages, from businesses, schools, social and religious organizations, and neighborhoods come together from all over the region to participate in the annual COTS Walk.

### Why Walk?

- Raise public awareness about homelessness in our community and to raise money.
- Support COTS shelters and services for Vermonters who are homeless or are at risk of losing their homes.

## MONTANA SERVICE TRIP HAPPENINGS



What a wonderful celebration we had at the 9th Annual Cabin Fever Calcutta held at the Catamount Country Club! Our favorite emcee, Jamie Polli, kept the evening lively as we raised \$10,000 in support of the 2026 Intergenerational Montana Service Team. It was good to hear and see so many people enjoying an evening of fellowship. The Grand Prize winner was Doug Olufsen. In addition, many people went home with a donated prize to enjoy.

All proceeds from the Calcutta will help the FCCEJ team travel to the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana where they will engage in service projects that have been identified by members of the Blackfeet community.

We are most grateful to all of those who made this fundraiser such a success. From the people who sold tickets and those who bought them, to those who solicited prizes, to the cupcake bakers, and to those who created the decorations, we extend our heartfelt thanks.

There are also a number of people who supported this fundraiser in a myriad of ways behind the scenes to whom we extend our sincere appreciation. This event would not happen without all of these groups working together. It does take a village.

With Gratitude,

Sharon Dettenrieder for the Montana Service Team

## HEAVENLY CENTS THRIFT SHOP NEWS!

The Thrift Shop volunteers switched the inventory to Spring and Summer on 3/19 and 3/20. The Shop was ready to open on Saturday, 3/22, with another successful day! We took in \$987! Thrift Shop customers continue to be delighted with our inventory and we continue to see an increase in customer traffic, sales and donations.

We always welcome donations of gently used items in good resalable condition. Gently used clothing is always welcome, but at this time, we would appreciate only spring and summer.

We continue to explore ways to reuse and recycle items donated that we cannot sell, with a goal of keeping the clothing waste in our community and continue to reach out to folks who reuse and recycle. Currently we are saving clothing for Safe Harbor in Burlington, the Humane Society, and “in kind” donations as they arise.

Please spread the “good word” of the Shop’s mission with your friends and if you are interested in volunteering, contact Sandy Tallman, 802-879-0665. We are open for shopping and receiving donations on Tuesdays and Saturdays from 10am-1pm and Thursdays from 3-6 pm. We are also open 11am-12pm the first Sunday of each month so people attending the monthly joint service can shop and/or drop off donations.

## HEAVENLY FOOD PANTRY

The Food Pantry continues to need reusable shopping bags as well as baked beans, canned fruit, chunky soups, empty one-dozen egg cartons, and feminine hygiene products - specifically pads (moderate, heavy, and extra absorbent).

We also always appreciate volunteers—either for organizing, set-up, during the distribution times, or to make deliveries in the Essex area. Contact the church office for more information.

### Food Pantry Days/Hours:

Distribution Days:

2nd Monday 5 – 7:30 pm

4th Thursday 3 – 6 pm\*

\*November and December are 3rd Thursday due to the Holidays

Food Stocking and Sorting:

Mondays at 9am

Wednesdays at 8:30am



## “CRITTER CORNER”



By Beth Volker

### A Deep Dive into “No Mow May”

First, I have a very important addendum to last month’s Critter Corner, “Make Way for Babies!!” I neglected to mention two VERY IMPORTANT, yet easy tactics for humanely asking our critter friends to vacate our crawl spaces, attics, garages, etc. Skunk and racoon moms want a quiet and dark space in which to give birth and raise their offspring. SO, if you play loud music or make lots of loud noise, and/or, leave lights on in those spaces, mom will find another place to call home. Simple and humane....and it works!

Now.... on to this month’s topic, “No Mow May,” a conservation movement encouraging homeowners to pause or reduce lawn mowing during the month of May. In doing so we allow flowers ~ like dandelions ~ to bloom, providing food in the early part of the season for our all-important pollinators, such as bees. Bee populations are decreasing at an alarming rate, and *without bees there would be no us!* They pollinate the foods we eat, so they are a critically important part of our ecosystem and essential for our survival.

[Full disclosure, I stole the following from AI]

#### Tips for Participating in “No Mow May:”

- **Purpose:** Supports bees, butterflies, and other pollinators when few other food sources are available.
- **Action:** Reduce or eliminate mowing for the month of May.
- **Benefits:** Increases the abundance and diversity of wildlife, particularly pollinators, in urban and suburban yards.
- **Alternatives:** If not mowing entirely isn't possible, "Slow Mow Summer" suggests mowing less frequently (e.g., every 3-4 weeks) or setting mower blades to 4-5 inches.
- **Targeted Mowing:** Mowing just to prevent invasive weeds from going to seed is acceptable.
- **Plan Beyond May:** Transition sections of your lawn to native plantings to provide lasting support for insects.

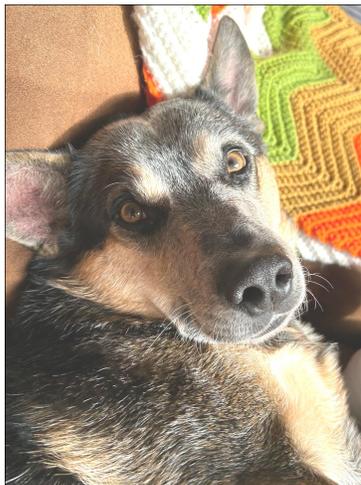


For more information, you can visit the Bee City USA website: <https://beecityusa.org/no-mow-may/> I personally have been participating for two springs now and I plan to do so again this year. I’m always a bit embarrassed by the appearance of my lawn in comparison to most of my neighbors, so I purchased this sign that I post on the front lawn until June 1st arrives.

I’ve decided that I’m doing the right thing for the planet, so it’s okay. My neighbors are pretty used to my strangeness by now, so they probably don’t even notice.

Thanks and Happy Spring!

#### MEET RADAR



*“Hi, my name is Radar, and I come to work with my mom, Jen Kelly, on Mondays and Fridays and sometimes more often during the summer. I like to hang out in her office and look out the windows. Sometimes I see squirrels or chipmunks! I love treats and am so happy when Gammy Val and Auntie Belinda are working in the Fellowship Hall because they give me cookies. I deliver the mail to Ann and Linda on Mondays and Ann has biscuits in her desk for me. I know where they are, but I sit and wait because I’m a good pup. I’m much more comfortable around women, and am protective of my mom and our office space, but I am an equal opportunity love-bug once I know you’re a safe human. I might bark if you startle me, but I settle quickly with assurances and pats (and treats—my mom has a supply she can share, just sayin’). Being at work with my mom makes me happy and makes her feel safe and we both appreciate my being able to come with her. Stop by and say hi!”*

## STEWARDSHIP

### **Introducing a New and Improved Multi-Purpose Pledge Envelope!**

Recently, the Stewardship Committee made the decision to discontinue providing weekly pledge envelopes. We did this because there was only a handful of people still using them consistently, yet the company we ordered them from required that we order a minimum of 100 sets, 90% of which ended up being recycled. This meant a waste of both paper and money.

So, Reverend Mark told the Finance Committee about the kind of envelope that his wife Karen's church uses and asked Jen to design in-house, this multi-purpose envelope to take the place of our old pledge envelopes. She has done a wonderful job and the new and improved multi-purpose envelopes are in production! Probably not in time for Easter, but soon! Below is an image of what they will look like. You are encouraged to take as many as you need. If you are not in church regularly, please stop into Jen's office and she can provide you with some.

We believe that these new envelopes will make it easier for our members and friends, as well as for our Financial Secretary. Please always remember to write your name on the envelope so you can get proper credit for your pledge and/or special offerings.

Beth Volker, Stewardship Chair

 <p><b>FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH</b> of Essex Junction <i>Love. Serve. Grow.</i></p>	Name: _____	
	Address: _____	
Phone: _____		
Email: _____		
Date: _____ Amount: \$ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Cash <input type="checkbox"/> Check		
.....		
<input type="checkbox"/> Pledge	<input type="checkbox"/> UCC Per Capita	<input type="checkbox"/> Endowment Gift
<input type="checkbox"/> Loose Offering	<input type="checkbox"/> UCC Strengthen the Church	<input type="checkbox"/> Jacobs Generosity Fund
<input type="checkbox"/> UCC One Great Hour of Sharing	<input type="checkbox"/> Seminary Sunday	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Service Trip	<input type="checkbox"/> UCC Neighbors in Need	
<input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Ministry	<input type="checkbox"/> Food Pantry	
<input type="checkbox"/> Pastor's Fund	<input type="checkbox"/> UCC Christmas Fund	
<input type="checkbox"/> I would like more information about Planned Giving		

## PLANNED GIVING

### **Estate Planning and Wills Clinic In May**

The Planned Giving Committee is offering an Estate Planning Seminar and Wills Clinic for all church members and friends on May 21. from 6:30 to 8:00pm in the Main Hall (top floor) at the Holy Family Parish House at 28 Lincoln Street, Essex Junction. The event is FREE.

The Seminar will cover all aspects of estate planning and information about the benefits of having a will. Also covered will be trusts, elder law, Medicaid planning, special needs planning and probate. Holly LeMieux, a local attorney specializing in these matters, will lead the workshop. She is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts and the New England College of Law.

To attend, please contact Jen in the FCCEJ church office at 802-878-5745 before May 15.

## **FCCEJ LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP**

**Sunday April 19th—11:30am – 1:30pm**

Here at FCCEJ, we have 7 staff members, 10 church officers, 12 committees with over 75 members to fill those committee positions, 100 volunteers who do all sorts of stuff, a ton of policies and procedures, and a newly revised set of by-laws that help to shape the way we do ministry at FCCEJ. We are busy doing a wide variety of activities and ministries. On top of all of that we have 20+ groups that use our facilities for events, meetings, celebrations, and more.

Joyously saying our members come from a variety of faith backgrounds with different ways of operating a church is an understatement. AND in true Congregational fashion, we shift all of these officers, committee members, and volunteers on a regular basis! We are not always good on passing on pertinent information to those who come after us either, but we try!

We understand that providing clear processes of operating this multifarious organization helps our faith community run smoothly and avoid problems that might arise when our procedures, traditions, and by-laws are not followed.

Each year as we experience membership and leadership changes, we offer a day when we can simply share basic information about how our church operates. How do we get reimbursed for money we spend for FCCEJ? Why do we need to get three quotes if our committee has a project that costs over \$5000? If we have a new idea and we need start up money to get it going, where does our group go to get some? If two committees disagree on an issue, how does the church work that out? What is the relationship between our staff, our church officers, and our committee members? Can anyone show up to committee meetings to see what they're up to?

All new committee members and officers are encouraged to come and learn about these things and ask questions. Any church member that is interested in learning about the inner workings of FCCEJ is welcome to attend. The meeting is after the second service on April 19th from 11:30am – 1:30pm. We will provide a free lunch. All are welcome. Childcare is available with advance notice—please contact Jen in the church office before Friday, April 10 to make arrangements.

**Committee Chairs:** Please bring your current binder to the church office by **Monday, April 6** so that it can be updated with the most current information.

## **DONATE TO FCCEJ**

Your donations support music, youth, missions, adult enrichment, Thrift Shop, Food Pantry, and more! We are also a United Church of Christ “5 for 5” participant in these fundraisers: Per Capita, One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen the Church, Neighbors in Need and The Christmas Fund. Here are a few ways that you may help our ministry:

- ⇒ **Send a Check or use BillPay.** This is a remote service that issues one-time or recurring check payments by mail. Please contact your banking institution for details. Please note the reason for your donation in the check's memo line (e.g., “missions”).
- ⇒ **Send money via PayPal.** We accept electronic donations! Visit [paypal.me/fccej](https://paypal.me/fccej).  
(A PayPal account is not required to donate money.)

**SERMON TALKBACK**

Join us every week on Tuesday mornings to discuss Sunday’s message and the various elements of the service from the previous week. The group discusses a wide variety of subjects, eats scones from a masterful pastry chef, enjoys fresh coffee, tea, or water, and simply enjoys being in community together. Everyone is welcome. Tuesdays at 8:30-10am in Marvin Lounge.

**COFFEE CLATTER @ MARTONE’S—EVERY FRIDAY MORNING FROM 8-9AM**

Each week, there is a group of five to ten people that come together to enjoy coffee, a breakfast goodie, enjoyable company, and conversations about whatever people want to talk about, including politics and religion! We meet at Martone’s from 8-9am and everyone pays their own way. Everyone is welcome to come and tell us what you really think! Everyone is welcome to not only come but to bring a friend.

**LUNCHTIME BOOK GROUP**

The book group is reading *The Great Northern Express*, by Howard Frank Mosher for the April discussion. *A Writer’s Journey Home is a 2012 memoir, chronicling a cross-country road trip the author took in his Chevy Celebrity after being diagnosed with prostate cancer. The book details his encounters with diverse people, from homeless individuals to country musicians, as he travels across America, blending autobiography, travelogue, and reflections on his life and work.*

We will meet in the Marvin Lounge on Monday, April 20 at 11:30am. Newcomers are always welcome. Bring your lunch if you’d like, and join us!

**BRIDGE FOR FUN**

If you are an old pro or just beginning to play, we have a Bridge Club that comes together to have some fun on the first and third Friday or every month from 1:30 to 4pm. We get a couple of tables, enjoy some good natured table talk, have snacks and coffee, and if you win the day, you get one of Rev. Mark’s homemade jams! The group is pretty evenly split between church members and non-church members so bring a friend.

**GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP**

This is open to anyone experiencing the loss of a loved one. This is an open group. You, along with any friends, family members, and neighbors are invited to join us. All are welcome! The sessions are facilitated by Sharon Dettenrieder, MSN, RN and Mary McHugh, MAPS. Both have personal experience with loss along with professional education and experience in leading grief support groups. Wherever you are along this road of grief, may you experience God’s healing presence and love. The group meets the 2nd Thursday of each month. Next meeting is Thursday, April 16 at 10am in Marvin Lounge.

**APRIL BIRTHDAYS**

Ashley CLARK  
 Ryan CLARK  
 Bob COBURN  
 Ginny COE  
 Peg COOLIDGE  
 Myrna DONEY  
 Kevin DORN  
 Suzanne FOSS  
 Patricia GEIGER  
 Rob GIBSON  
 Linus GOEDKEN  
 Kim HAMILTON

Dick HARRIS  
 Barbara HENNESSEY  
 Jan HOPPER  
 Lara KALIX-CRISAFI,  
 Lilo KINAMAN  
 Genevieve KING  
 Darryl KOCH  
 Derek LYMAN  
 Callie MARTIN  
 Bee MCCOLLUM  
 Caitlin MCGEARY  
 Steven MITCHELL

Barbara MUDGETT-RUSSELL  
 Blakely NOEL  
 Davin PETTINGILL  
 Rob PORATTI  
 Cheryl SAVAGE  
 Arnd SIEVERS  
 June SILVERMAN  
 Cathy STROEHER  
 Mike SULLIVAN  
 Steve VOCK  
 Carl WERMER

## 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. The kids are welcome to burn off some energy in the gym, too! All are welcome—bring a friend!

Next dinner is Friday, April 3 from 5:30 to 6:30 in the Fellowship Hall.

Soup, salad, sandwiches, fruit, and dessert.



**COMMUNITY CONCERTS**  
**@ FIRST PRESENTS**

Ray Vega Afro Caribbean Jazz Ensemble  
Sunday, April 26, 2026, 3pm  
39 Main St, Essex Jct., VT 05452

Tickets



Suggested Donation: \$20, 12 and under are free  
Proceeds support Age Well & FCCEJ

## COMMUNITY CONCERTS AT FIRST

### 2026 SEASON LINEUP:

**Sunday, September 27: Hair Peace**

Americana, Indie, Rock.

They were amazing last year, so we asked them back!

**Sunday, November 1: Skylark**

An innovative, contemporary string ensemble based in northern Vermont, influenced by Nordic, Celtic, and American musical traditions.

All concerts are at 3pm in FCCEJ Sanctuary

\$20/pp, under 12 free

### Tickets:

<https://sevendaystickets.com/?q=first+congregational+>

(Also available at the door, or through the church office - 802-878-5745)

## JUMP's Online Auction Starts Soon



**SPRING in for JUMP!**

*Building strong communities together*

**ONLINE AUCTION: April 8 - 17, 2026**



JUMP's Online Auction is fast approaching. The website is available for viewing now and bidding starts on Wednesday, April 8th at 8 am.

<https://www.biddingforgood.com/jointurbanministry/2026>

The auction includes several gift cards for local restaurants, local businesses and family activities, themed baskets, beautiful quilts and home décor.

All proceeds will help fund direct services to assist Vermont households in need.

For more information, visit <https://www.jumpvt.org/auction.html>

## First Congregational Church of Essex Junction



1 Church Street  
Essex Junction, VT 05452  
Phone: 802-878-5745  
Email: [welcome@fccej.org](mailto:welcome@fccej.org)

## ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

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### SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP:

~First Sunday of Each Month ~ One Service at 10am~

with Holy Communion and Sanctuary Choir ~ Spiritual Friends for PreK-5th

~Other Sundays Throughout the Month~

8:30am - In-person & streamed via YouTube

Music: Bethany Blake directs our Sanctuary Choir and provides accompaniment

10:15am - In-person—Faith Formation for PreK - 8th

### VISIT US ONLINE:



[FCCEJ.ORG](http://FCCEJ.ORG)



[FIRSTCONGREGATIONALEJ](https://www.facebook.com/FIRSTCONGREGATIONALEJ)



[FCCEJ\\_802](https://www.instagram.com/FCCEJ_802)



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