



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

Easter Sunday

April 5, 2026

The first Sunday of each month we celebrate the Lord's Supper. Typically we have a single 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). Next week we have ONE service at 10am.

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

Order of Worship

Prelude

Christ Arose

Robert Lowry,
arr. Larry Shackley

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.....Pastor Bob - 8:30, Deacon Maureen McKenzie - 10:15

Our Deacon will welcome everyone to our community of faith; ask if anyone has special joys to share, 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

Sing Hallelujah, Praise the Lord

Moravian melody
arr. Carl F. Mueller, Text John Swertner

Call to Worship

Leader: Christ Is Risen!

People: Christ Is Risen indeed!

Leader: Two Thousand and twenty-six years ago, God raised Jesus of Nazareth from a cold stone tomb into a new resurrected life and it changed the world.

People: Jesus lives.

Leader: From then until now, people from all cultures, races, educational background, economic situation and gender status have personally experienced the Risen Christ.

People: Jesus lives in us.

Leader: Jesus' teaching on love still inspires us to live better lives. Jesus' healing touch still works through time and space. Jesus' sense of justice and inclusion still challenges us to live in peace with everyone.

People: Jesus lives in the world.

Leader: We come to celebrate Christ's resurrection long ago. But let us also come to celebrate Christ's continuing presence and revelation in our midst. Come let us sing praises to our God.

***Opening Hymn**

Christ the Lord Is Risen Today

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A Time of Confession

A Call to Confession

Leader: God created humanity and declared us "very good." And yet, we all fail to live into our potential. We all fall short of God's goodness and Christ's love. We all need a little grace to cover our shortcomings.

People: Jesus teaches us how to move forward through this conundrum of being both saint and sinner at the same time: have mercy, forgive freely, live in peace with everyone, and love your neighbors and enemies.

Leader: Resurrected Jesus, HELP us to live within this dichotomy. May your life show us the way.....

Unison Prayer of Confession

From the crib, Baby Jesus, you teach us to be vulnerable and rely on others. From Galilee, Wise Teacher, you teach us to love. From the cross, Crucified Savior, you teach us that love can hurt. From the empty tomb, Resurrected Jesus, you teach us that God's ways win. Forgive us for being too independent and too self-absorbed. Forgive us for turning away from meaningful living. Forgive us for being too scared to love freely. And forgive us for giving up. Help us to focus on your resurrection as we draw power, joy and hope from your victory. Help us to sense your goodness within and share it with others. We pray this in Christ name, Amen.

The Assurance of Pardon

Leader: The Good News is that God is in charge; Jesus loves, forgives and always welcomes you home.....if you but accept it.

People: On this Easter Day, we accept God's presence in our lives. We accept Christ's forgiveness for our sins. And we accept the challenge to live more faithfully.

Leader: I declare to you that your sins are forgiven. Leave this place and claim the power of Christ's victory of life and love. 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 Return to Their Families

**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 Rev. Mendes—8:30, Josh Sharp—10:15

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.

Sharing Our Prayers with God and Each Other

A Time of Silence for Personal Prayer

Musical Response

Ubi Caritas

Christ the Lord, is risen! Christ the Lord, is risen! Yesu.

Christ the Lord, is risen! Christ the Lord, is risen! Yesu.

He has conquered death! He has conquered death! Yesu.

He has conquered death! He has conquered death! Yesu.

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Yesu.

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Yesu.

New Testament Gospel Reading Matthew 28:1-10 [page 26]

Read by Pastor Bob—8:30, Read by Rev. Ron Faux—10:15

Anthem

Galilean Easter Carol

R. Deane Shure

Easter Sermon

The Great Balancing Act

Rev. Mendes

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

We will observe communion by passing the bread and cup out to the congregation. Everyone should hold the bread until directed to partake as one body by the pastor and then drink the juice when you would like, thus symbolizing the corporate and individual nature of faith. The bread is gluten free and the cup is non-alcoholic so hopefully everyone can partake.

EVERYONE is welcome at Christ's table.

Invitation and Sharing the Elements

Unison Prayer of Thanksgiving

God of Enlightenment and Truth, you meet us on the highways and byways of life and open our eyes to your presence. Thank you for meeting us as we discuss your word, commune with each other, and share the bread of life. Allow this meal to give us the eyes to see you, the strength to race toward the community and the courage to tell others about your glory. In Christ's name, amen.

Offering Our Gifts to God

Invitation, Offering, and Prayer of Dedication

Offertory

***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**

God of Grace and God of Glory

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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

A Voluntary for Easter (on the tune "St. Fulbert")

Douglas Guest

***Please stand if you are able**

- ◆ Sincere thanks to Bethany Blake, Denise Keating, 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, 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	

*The flowers on the altar today are given by Jon Eric Lindholm
In memory of Albert W. Lindholm Jr celebrating a first heavenly birthdate.*

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



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- **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 services 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. For more information, contact the church office at: 802-878-5745 or welcome@fccej.org

EVENT DETAILS:

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

Community Concerts At First

We are excited to welcome back Ray Vega and his jazz ensemble as the next performance in our music series! Ray has established himself as one of the innovators of the international Jazz and Latin music scenes. A multi-talented trumpeter, percussionist, composer, arranger and educator, he presents Jazz from a refreshingly original and contemporary perspective.

Sunday, April 26 at 3pm in the FCCEJ Sanctuary. Tickets are \$20pp/12 and under are free.

<https://sevendaystickets.ticketsauce.com/e/rayvegajazzensemble>

A portion of the proceeds will benefit Age Well Vermont.

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, May 1 from 5:30 to 6:30 in the Fellowship Hall. Menu TBD—any requests? Contact Jen in the office.

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.

Heavenly Food Pantry

The Food Pantry continues to need reusable shopping bags as well as cereal, baked beans, canned fruit, chunky soups, ready-made pasta (Spaghetti-O's, etc.) drip coffee (regular and decaf), 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.

Weekly Calendar: April 5—April 12

Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections

Sunday, April 5

Easter Sunday

6:30am: Sunrise Service at Holy Family
7-11:30am: Easter Fellowship—FCCEJ Fellowship Hall
8:30* & 10:15am: All Family Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming*
1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

Tuesday, April 7

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
6pm: Heavenly Harmony Rehearsal—Sanctuary
6:30pm: BSA Troop 624 District—Fellowship Hall
7pm: Church Council—Marvin Lounge

Thursday, April 9

9am: FCCEJ Staff Meeting—Conference Room
10am: Grief Support—Marvin Lounge
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall
3-6pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop
6:30pm: Music Lesson—Sanctuary
7pm: Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal—Sanctuary

Saturday, April 11

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
11am: Lang Celebration of Life—Sanctuary
1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Marvin Lounge
GMKCS—Gym, 3rd Floor

Monday, April 6

9am: Food Pantry Organizing—Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, 2nd Floor Storage Room
11:30am: *Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall*
5pm: Thrift Shop Advisory Board—Marvin Lounge
7pm: Pastoral Search Committee—2nd Floor Program Room
7:30pm: Group Victory—Marvin Lounge

Wednesday, April 8

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
BSA Troop 624—Fellowship Hall

Friday, April 10

8am: Coffee Clatter—Martone's Deli
10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall
1:30pm: Bible Study—Marvin Lounge
7pm: Blue Spruce Grange—Fellowship Hall

Sunday, April 12

10am: Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming*
11:30am: Confirmation—Marvin Lounge
Youth Hike at Mt. Philo
Music Committee—2nd Floor Program Room
1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

Events in italics = Local Community Groups