



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
Second Sunday of Easter
April 12, 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).

<i>A Welcoming Community</i>	<i>Accepting and Serving All</i>
<i>In the Spirit of Christ</i>	

Order of Worship

Prelude *Concerto No. 2 Andante* Dmitri Shostakovich

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.....
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 *What Does the Lord Require of You* Jim Strathdee

Call to Worship

Leader: This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.

People: Sundays are anniversaries of Christ's resurrection. We come to relish his victory over the grave and celebrate our hopeful faith.

Leader: Life is good all the time for God's extravagant Spirit brightens the darkest day with light and encourages everyone to love more. Come, let us enter into God's presence with awe and wonder.

***Opening Hymn** *Come You Faithful, Raise the Strain* # 230

Deacon's Prayer of Invocation and Unison 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 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.**

Scripture of Belonging

Acts 2:37-47

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Welcoming New Members

Meg Audette
Carol and Warren Coolidge
Mary Lue and Gil Rodes

Eric and Melissa Stewart
[*Violet / Rosie*]
Jack and Maarit Yando

People: Meg, Carol, Warren, Mary Lue, Gil, Eric, Melissa, Jack, and Maarit, we welcome you with joy in the communion life of this church. We promise you our friendship and prayers as we share the hopes and labors of our church. By the power of the Holy Spirit, may we continue to grow together in God's knowledge and be witnesses of Christ's love in this world. And Eric and Melissa, we welcome your kids, Violet and Rosie, into our midst to learn about God and soak in divine love.

*Hymn of Discipleship

Called as Partners in Christ's Service

495

Offering Our Gifts to God

Invitation, Offering, and Prayer of Dedication

Offertory

Joy in the Morning

Natalie Sleeth

*Doxology

The Day of Resurrection

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**Now let the heavens be joyful, let earth its songs begin,
The whole world keep high triumph and all that is there in;
Let all things seen and unseen their notes of gladness blend,
For Christ again has risen, our joy that has no end.**

Sanctuary Choir Anthem

Christ Has Risen

John Bell; William Moore
descant by Shirley W. McRae

A Scripture for Deacons from *The Message* I Timothy 3:8-13

The Message version of the bible is written by Eugene Peterson
Who used modern language to express old guidance.

The Ordination of Our New Deacons

Welcome and Introduction

Leader 1: The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction greets you in the name of Jesus Christ who calls all of us to ministries of love. Hear these words from the apostle Paul, “My friends, there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them all.

People: There are different ways of serving, but the same God is served.

Leader 2: There are different abilities to perform service, but the same God gives ability to each of us for our particular service.

People: The Spirit’s presence is shown in some way in each and every person to build up the community.

Leader 1: Christ is like a single body, which has many parts.

People: It is still one body even though it has different parts.

Leader 2: If one part of the body suffers, all the other parts suffer with it; if one part is praised, all the other parts share in its happiness.

People: All of us are a part of Christ’s body.

The Presentation

Leader 1: Emily Guziak and Tobe Zalinger have been called by God in accordance with the faith and order of our church to serve as Deacons. They have accepted their calls and are before us in witness to their willingness to serve.

Leader 2: Emily and Tobe, it is an honor to be entrusted with the duties and responsibilities of ministry as a Deacon. Having prayerfully considered your duties and responsibilities, are you prepared to serve with the help of God?

Candidates: I am.

Leader 1: Do you promise to exercise your ministry as a Deacon diligently and faithfully, showing forth the love of Christ?

Candidates: I do, relying on God’s grace.

Leader 2: Members of First Church, you have heard the promises of Emily and Tobe. They have answered the call to be your Deacons and leaders within the church. Let us affirm our intention to live in covenant with them and support their ministry among us. Let us rise and witness to our commitment to their role as Deacons within our church.

People: Tobe and Emily, we gather in celebration of the joy that is ours to be partners with you in the service of Jesus Christ. We promise to love you, honor your leadership, and partner with you to help build a community of respect, kindness and peace.

The Laying on of Hands

Leader 1: The laying on of hands is the symbolic act whereby the church recognizes God's call in the lives of faithful men and women. We lay hands upon Tobe and Emily so that the power of the Holy Spirit may empower them to uphold the office of Deacon at First Church.

Rev. Mark, all current and past Deacons, and anyone connected to one of the candidates are welcome to come forward to lay hands on the new Deacon and as a prayer of empowerment is prayed.

People: Emily and Tobe, may the Holy Spirit strengthen and equip you with everything good to do God's will and to be a great Deacon at First Church. Receive the authority to execute the office of Deacon in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Declaration

Leader 2: In the name of Jesus Christ and on behalf of the people of the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction, I rejoice to announce: Tobe and Emily, you are ordained as Deacons of First Church! In accordance with the faith and order of this church and the United Church of Christ, I extend to you the right hand of Christian fellowship.

*Hymn of Service

Forward Through the Ages

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Pastoral Prayer

Sharing Our Prayers with God and Each Other

A Time of Silence for Personal Prayer

Musical Response *In the Garden* [adapted]

I pray in the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses;

And the voice I hear, falling on my ear, the Son of God discloses.

And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own.

And the joy we share as we tarry there, all others can surely know.

I pray for my loved ones so dear, like the lilies, God's care is so tender;

And the voice I hear, caring for my dears, the Son of God discloses.

And he walks with them & he talks with them & he tells them he is their own

And the joy they share as they tarry there, all others can surely know.

I shift to the world and her folk, who need God's guidance so dearly,

And the love God shares, for all in despair, the Son of God discloses,

And he walks with us and he talks with us and he tells us we are his own.

And the joy we share as we tarry there, all others can surely know.

The Commissioning of Pastor Bob Driver

Greeting

Rev. Mark: The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction of the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ greets you in the name of Jesus Christ, the head of the church. As we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us remember our past, celebrate our present, and lean into our future as people of faith, running with perseverance the race that is set before us.

People: May we look to Jesus, our teacher and exemplar of our faith in action, recognizing and realizing the cost and the joy of discipleship. We come together asking the Holy Spirit to bless our faith community.

Presentation

Rev. Mark: The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and in accordance with the foundational belief of local church autonomy embedded in the Constitution and By-laws of the United Church of Christ and the Vermont Conference seeks Commissioning for Bob Driver as our Assistant Pastor.

President Terry Stein: The Church Council has reviewed the request of Reverend Mendes to Commission Bob Driver as our Assistant Pastor, asked for and received both Bob's Boundary Training Certificate and background check. We have prayerfully observed his ministry and are pleased to commission him as our assistant pastor and graciously accept his generous offer to serve us without pay! Bob, servant of God, we invite you to come forward as a sign of your acceptance of your call to this office.

Local Church Commissioning is the action of a local congregation in covenant with state and national United Church of Christ bodies to call one of her members to ministry within a particular local church. Our Church Council confirms and celebrates this covenantal relationship and welcomes Bob into our midst as an assistant pastor.

Exhortation

Head Deacon Judy McCullen to the Congregation: Hear these words from the apostle Paul: "We beg you our brothers and sisters, to pay proper respect to those who work among you, who guide and instruct you in the Christian life. Treat them with the greatest respect and love because of the work they do. Be at peace among yourselves."

People: We urge you, Pastor Bob, participate with integrity in our worship services, help the weak and those in need, pray for all of us and our church community, and be patient with and love all of us.

Rev. Mark: See that no one pays back wrong for wrong, but at all times make it your aim to do good to one another and to all people. Be joyful always, pray at all times, be thankful in all circumstances. This is what God wants of you in your life in Christ Jesus.

Covenant

Head Deacon Judy McCullen: Dear friends, The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction has declared that with the Spirit's guidance, it has called Pastor Bob Driver to minister in this place as an assistant pastor and that it now receives him as appointed by God for this ministry.

President Terry Stein: On behalf of the Church Council of The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction, I declare that Pastor Bob has met all the necessary conditions for commissioning to the office of assistant pastor.

Everyone: Pastor Bob Driver, seeing that you are led by God and commissioned to be one of our pastors at FCCEJ by the grace of God, are you willing to enter into this covenant with her members?

Pastor Bob: I am willing, and I promise to serve this church faithfully, preaching and teaching the word of God, administering the sacraments, and fulfilling the pastoral office in partnership with Rev. Mendes and the elected leaders of this church.

The Laying on of Hands

Rev. Mark: The laying on of hands is the way in which a governing body empowers the one being set apart for a particular ministry. Will our Deacons and all those who feel called to participate in this ancient ritual come forward and lay your hands on Bob.

*Rev. Mark, all current Deacons, and anyone connected to Pastor Bob
are welcome to come forward to lay hands on the new Deacon
and as a prayer of empowerment is prayed.*

We call upon God's Spirit to bless and empower Bob with all the good gifts of ministry so that we may all be enriched and encouraged to follow Jesus. Give Bob strength, courage and patience to be your representative in this place. Let the church say amen.

People: Amen!

We, the friends and members of FCCEJ receive Pastor Bob as our pastor, promising to labor with him in the ministry of Christ's gospel and to give him due honor and support. We gather with him as a sign of our covenant and in celebration of our mutual ministry in Christ's name.

Head Deacon Judy McCullen and the Prayer of Installation: Let us pray. Gracious God, always reaching out to draw us into discipleship and ministry. Bless Pastor Bob and his work at FCCEJ. May his efforts build up our church and strengthen his spirit so that together your church and message of love might spread. In Christ's name, amen.

Declaration

President Terry Stein: In the name of Jesus Christ, and on behalf of the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction, I declare Bob Driver, duly commissioned as an assistant pastor of our church.

All: Thanks be to God!

*Hymn of Commissioning

In the Midst of New Dimensions

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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

Sonata No. 11 K. 331 - Third Movement "Rondo Alla Turka"
(Excerpt)

Mozart

*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!

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.

Sandi Miller
Family & friends of Jim Faux
Family & friends of
Barbara Williams
Shashaunah
Bill Bickford Sr.
Michael Hahner
Bill Bickford Jr.
Elizabeth O'Beirne & Family

Joe Shields
Jeffrey Basiliere
Elizabeth Stone
Patty Geiger
Thomas Cencer
Tatyana Szymanski
Jane Piper
Josh Winslow

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

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- **FCCEJ Leadership Workshop:** Sunday, April 19 at 11:30am in the Fellowship Hall
- **CCAF presents Ray Vega:** Sunday, April 26—3pm in the Sanctuary
- **Age Well Workshop:** Thursday, April 30 at 8:30am in the Fellowship Hall
- **LIFT (Living In Faith Together):** Sunday, May 3—assembling care kits in the Fellowship Hall
- **Blessing the Animals:** Sunday, May 17—after each service on the church grounds
- **Confirmation Sunday:** Sunday, May 24—One Service at 10am
- **Music Sunday:** Sunday, May 31—One Service at 10am

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 May 14.

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.

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@fceej.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 is breakfast for dinner—eggs, pancakes, bacon, etc...

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 12—April 19

Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections

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

Tuesday, April 14

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
5:30pm: Cub Scouts—Gym
6pm: Heavenly Harmony Rehearsal—Sanctuary
6:30pm: BSA Troop 624 District—Fellowship Hall
Bluebird School Open House—West Wing
7pm: Deacons—Marvin Lounge

Thursday, April 16

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall
3-6pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop
5:30pm: Reiki Share—Marvin Lounge
6:30pm: Music Lesson—Sanctuary
Cub Scouts Pack 630—Fellowship Hall
7pm: Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal—Sanctuary

Saturday, April 18

8am: Give It A Go Support Group—Marvin Lounge
The Vine Nepali Congregation—Sanctuary,
West Wing
8:30am: Weight Loss Support —Fellowship Hall
10am: Reiki 1 Class—Marvin Lounge
10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop
10:30am: Bluebird School Open House—West Wing
1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Marvin Lounge
GMKCS—Gym, 3rd Floor

Monday, April 13

9am: Food Pantry Organizing—Fellowship Hall,
Kitchen, 2nd Floor Storage Room
11:30am: *Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall*
1pm: Food Pantry Set Up—Fellowship Hall,
Kitchen
5:30pm: Food Pantry Distribution—Fellowship
Hall, Kitchen, Sanctuary
6:30pm: EJCA—West Wing
7:30pm: Group Victory—Marvin Lounge

Wednesday, April 15

10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall
Missions Committee—Marvin Lounge
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 17

8am: Coffee Clatter—Martone's Deli
10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall
11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall
1:30pm: Bridge Group—Marvin Lounge
7pm: Burlington Amateur Radio Club—Marvin
Lounge

Sunday, April 19

8:30 & 10:15am: Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming
11:30am: Leadership Workshop—Fellowship Hall
1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Marvin Lounge

Events in italics = Local Community Groups

MINISTRY DIRECTORY

Staff

Senior Pastor: Rev. Mark Mendes [mmendes@fcej.org]

Children's Ministry Coordinator: Elizabeth O'Beirne [childrensministry@fcej.org]

Music Director: Bethany Blake [bblake@fcej.org]

Church Administrator: Jen Kelly [welcome@fcej.org]

Social Media Marketing Coordinator: Andrea Sharp [socialmedia@fcej.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@fcej.org]

Assistant Financial Secretary: Linda Bogardus

Treasurer: Darryl Koch [treasurer@fcej.org]

Clerk: Alison Wermer

Assistant Clerk: Brenda Dawson

Historian: Ann Gray

Internal Auditors: Dan Petherbridge, Alan Kinney

Committee Chairs

Christian Formation: Terri Livak

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