



# 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)



*First Service*

# The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction

## The Fourth Sunday of Easter

April 26, 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).*

*A Welcoming Community*

*Accepting and Serving All*

*In the Spirit of Christ*

### Order of Worship

Prelude

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.....Emily Guziak

*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

*Come Away with Me*

Mary Nelson Keithahn,  
John D. Horman

Call to Worship

Inspired by Psalm 23

Leader: The Good Shepherd is the gate. Let us enter with thanksgiving and praise!

**All: The Shepherd restores our souls, satisfies our needs, and leads us on the right path.**

Leader: The Good Shepherd is the gate. Let us live with the courage and conviction not fear and timidity.

**All: Through valleys and storms, chaos and confusion, threats and concerns, the Shepherd comforts us with power and strength, love and compassion, hope and peace.**

Leader: The Good Shepherd is the gate. Let us worship in the presence of the Holy One!

**All: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all days of our lives. Let us dwell in God's presence forever!**

**\*Opening Hymn**

*Such Perfect Love My Shepherd Shows*

#248

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

Pastor Bob

Scripture Readings

New Testament Gospel

John 10:1-10

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Old Testament

Psalm 23:1

[Page 68]

Pastoral Prayer

Rev. Mendes

Sharing Our Prayers with God and Each Other

A Time of Silence for Personal Prayer

Musical Response

**\*Hymn**

*Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us*

#252

Sanctuary Choir Anthem

*The Stone is Rolled Away*

David Davenport,  
Don Besig

Sermon

*Listen to the Voice*

Pastor Bob Driver

Offering Our Gifts to God

Invitation, Offering, and Prayer of Dedication

Offertory

*Make Us One*

Carol Cymbala

**\*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.**

\*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.**

\*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!



***The flowers on the altar today are given by Andrea and Steve Sharp  
In celebration of their 33rd Wedding Anniversary.***

## 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.*

Family & Friends of Bill Bickford Sr.	Bill Bickford Jr.	Josh Winslow
Mike and Carole Allen	Elizabeth O'Beirne & Family	Carol Daigle
Sandi Miller	Joe Shields	Patty Giroux
Family & friends of Jim Faux	Jeffrey Basiliere	Everyone experiencing uncertainty and fear in their communities
Family & friends of Barbara Williams	Elizabeth Stone	All those affected by the violence around the world
Shashaunah	Patty Geiger	Everyone that may be privately suffering
Michael Hahner	Thomas Cencer	
	Tatyana Szymanski	
	Jane Piper	

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- **CCAF presents Ray Vega's Jazz Ensemble:** TODAY, April 26—3pm in the Sanctuary
- **Age Well Workshop:** Thursday, April 30 at 8:30am in the Fellowship Hall
- **FCCEJ Grounds Clean Up:** Saturday, May 2 from 9am to noon
- **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@fccej.org](mailto: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's jazz ensemble led by Brian McCarthy, saxophonist, as the next performance in our music series! They present 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.

### **Bible Study: Psalms**

Our Bible study group will begin diving into the book of Psalms on Friday, April 24. We meet in the Marvin Lounge from 1:30 - 3 PM. Mary McHugh will be leading and using Walter Brueggemann's book "The Spirituality of the Psalms" as a guide. (No need to buy the book.) Our next meetings will be May 8, June 12 and June 26.

## Weekly Calendar: April 26—May 3

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

### Sunday, April 26

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

*1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall*

3pm: Community Concerts At First—Sanctuary

### Tuesday, April 28

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

7pm: Stewardship—Marvin Lounge

### Thursday, April 30

8:30am: Age Well Workshop—Fellowship Hall

*11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Marvin Lounge*

3-6pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop

*6:30pm: Reiki Workshop—Marvin Lounge*

*Music Lesson—Sanctuary*

7pm: Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal—Sanctuary

### Saturday, May 2

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

*8:30am: Weight Loss Support —Fellowship Hall*

9am: FCCEJ Grounds Clean Up

10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop

*1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall*

*GMKCS—Gym, Classrooms*

### Monday, April 27

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 29

*10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall*

*11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall*

*5:30pm: Finally @ First Rehearsal—Sanctuary*

7pm: Searchers—Marvin Lounge

*BSA Troop 624—Fellowship Hall*

### Friday, May 1

8am: Coffee Clatter—Martone's Deli

10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall

*11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall*

1:30pm: Bridge Group—Marvin Lounge

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

### Sunday, May 3

*8:50am: Piano Lesson—Marvin Lounge*

10am: Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming

11am-12pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop

11am: Youth Gathering—Gym

11:30am: Service Trip Team—Marvin Lounge

*1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall*

*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

Hospitality: Sue Conti

Communications:

Human Resources: Terry Stein

Francis Gravel, Beth Warren—Co-Chairs

Missions: Ann Marie Sullivan

Deacons:

Judy McCullen, Bob Driver—Co-Chairs

Nominating: Lauren Starkey

Finance & Pastoral Relations:

Stewardship: Beth Volker

Kathryn Brennan

Trustees: Rob Gibson

## Recognized Groups

Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop: Sandy Tallman

Heavenly Food Pantry: Betsy Weischedel, Lisa Clark