



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
Pentecost / Confirmation Sunday
May 24, 2026

Our worship opportunities during the year offer two services: one traditional with our outstanding organist and Sanctuary Choir at 8:30 a.m. and one less traditional with our talented Finally @ First Band and our Faith Formation Program for our children at 10:15 a.m. We meet together with communion on the first Sunday of each month. Everyone is welcome to join us as a precious child of God. Each week our service is streamed for all to see live or whenever they would like; check it out on our web page at fccej.org. From June 7th through September 6th, we have one service at 9:00 a.m. with our organist and a group of talented volunteers offering their musical abilities to God and our congregation.

NEXT WEEK, May 31st, we have ONE SERVICE at 10 a.m. to celebrate the many musical groups we have at FCCEJ. Plus, we will sing some great hymns.

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

.Order of Worship

An Extravagant Welcome and Announcements..... Parker Bero
*No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey
you are welcome in this place.*

Opening Greeting Rev. Mark Mendes
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 *Open Wide the Doors* John Angotti and Larry Dorsch

Call to Worship..... Betty Marthaler

Leader: We invite all of those sure of themselves in their faith, purpose, and feelings into the church and also those who come for their belief.

People: We welcome everyone in their sureness.

Leader: We invite all those unsure of themselves in their faith, purpose and feelings into the church and also those that come for food.

People: We welcome those unsure of themselves with open arms and no judgement.

Leader: Everyone, anywhere in their journey of life is welcome here on this Confirmation Sunday.

***Opening Hymn**

Lean On Me
[handout]

Bill Withers

Prayer of Invocation & **Unison Lord's Prayer**Robin Miller
Confirmand: Dear God, we welcome you to this service to celebrate the confirmands that have discovered their paths of spiritual beliefs. Let us pray and learn your teachings that have been passed down through the centuries. Let everyone sitting in this room feel your love through times of support and hardship. Your love is what binds people together. In Christ's name we pray the pray Jesus taught us by saying.....

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.....Shay Mendes

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 PrayerEthan Koch

Sharing Our Prayers with God and Each Other

A Time of Silence for Personal Prayer

Musical Response

Lord, I Need You

Lord I need You, oh I need You.

Every hour I need You.

My one defense, my righteousness,

O God, how I need You.

You're my one defense, my righteousness.

O God, how I need You.

Sharing Their Faith Statements.....Parker Bero and Shay Mendes

Confirmands were given the option of either presenting their Faith Statements verbally or in writing for the congregation to read.

Pentecost Scripture Reading: Acts 2:1-21 Teddy Owens

Sharing Their Faith Statements..... Teddy Owens and Ethan Koch

The Rite of Confirmation

The Rite of Confirmation is an old ceremony where the responsibility for one's spiritual life is shifted from the parent to the confirmand. During this rite, each confirmand decides whether they want to confirm their faith, get baptized if they haven't been already, and whether or not they want to join our specific church. We will say a quick prayer over each confirmand and the decisions they made asking the Holy Spirit to be a part of their continuing journey. Everyone in the congregation should focus their positive thoughts and energy on the confirmand being prayed over. This year's confirmands are

Parker Bero: Confirmed and FCCEJ Membership

Ethan Koch: Confirmed and FCCEJ Membership

Betty Marthaler: Confirmed and FCCEJ Membership

Shay Mendes: Confirmed in Faith

Robin Miller: Confirmed and FCCEJ Membership

Teddy Owens: Confirmed in Faith

Liam Palmer: Confirmed and FCCEJ Membership

Am Stein: Blessed by the FCCEJ Community

The Invitation & Questions for the CandidatesPrayer of the Candidates

Confirmands: Loving God, we have studied about you and your ways in the bible. We have experienced you in our church and others. We have learned about your love through Jesus. We have debated, challenged and spoken about God and life. Now, we are ready to continue our relationship with you with some of us being confirmed and others asking for a blessing. Be with all of us.

Parents of Confirmands: We have watched you grow in body, mind and spirit all your days. We have taught you what we know about life and God. We encouraged you to attend confirmation and are ready to give you the freedom and responsibility to nurture your own spirituality. May God be with you.

Congregation: We celebrated when some of you were baptized ,and loved teaching you in Sunday School. We have watched you grow up one week at a time and have seen the Spirit of God in you. We are so proud for all the work you have done and for everything you have learned. We will continue to be here for you as you continue to grow in faith.

Deacon: We pray for God to increase your gifts, grant you love, joy in the service to others, peace in disagreement, patience in suffering, kindness toward all people, goodness in evil times, gentleness in the face of opposition, and self-control in all things. May God strengthen these young adults for life and ministry in the world; through Jesus Christ our Friend and Teacher. Amen.

Act of Confirmation [prayer over each confirmand]..... Rev. Mark
Everyone who feels called to come forward and lay your hands of blessing and power on each confirmand is welcome to do so. We especially welcome family members and friends, Deacons past and present, Faith Formation Helpers, and anyone else who feels the nudge of the Spirit.

Welcome

Deacon: Let us, the members of First Congregational Church, express our welcome and affirm our mutual ministry in Christ.

People: We promise you our continuing friendship and prayers as we share the hopes and labors of this church. By the power of the Holy Spirit may we continue to grow together in God's knowledge and love and be witnesses of peace in this world. We are proud of those of you being confirmed and equally proud for those who are still struggling to understand God.

Greeting of Christian Love and the Giving of Gifts

Offering Our Gifts to God Am Stein
Invitation, Offering, and Prayer of Dedication

Offertory *Stand Up* Jennifer Nettles and Kristian Bush

***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** *Shine, Jesus, Shine* **Graham Kendrick**
[handout]

***Benediction**

Pastoral Benediction

***Sung Community Benediction**

Let There Be Peace On Earth

**Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be!
With God our Creator, family all are we,
Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.
Let peace begin with me. Let this be the moment now.
With ev'ry breath I take, let this be my solemn vow;
To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally!
Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.**

***Please stand if you are able**

- ◆ Sincere thanks to Finally @ First Praise Band, under the direction of Rick Dooley, 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.

Meg Audette and Family	Myrna Lindholm	Jane Piper
Fletch Coolidge	Faye Fittipoldi	Josh Winslow
Annette Whitemar	Mike and Carole Allen	Tatyana Szymanski,
Laura Cunningham-Firkey and Family	Family & friends of Barbara Williams	Bobby Evans, and all troops currently deployed
Family & Friends of Polly McEwing	Shashaunah	Carol Daigle
Sharon Dettenrieder and the Owens Family	Michael Hahner	Patty Giroux
Family & Friends of Jean Tucker	Bill Bickford Jr.	Everyone experiencing uncertainty and fear in their communities
Dennis McMahan	Elizabeth O'Beirne & Family	All those affected by the violence around the world
Myrna Dooney	Joe Shields	Everyone that may be privately suffering
Family & Friends of Bill Bickford Sr.	Jeffrey Basiliere	
	Elizabeth Stone	
	Patty Geiger	
	Thomas Cencer	

*The flowers on the altar today are given by Sue & Steve Wood
In celebration of their 40th wedding anniversary today!*

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- **Music Sunday:** Sunday, May 31—One Service at 10am
- **Ice Cream Social:** Sunday, June 7—after worship (at 9am) in Fellowship Hall
- **Celebrating Graduates:** Sunday, June 14

FCCEJ SUMMER SCHEDULE—STARTS JUNE 7

June through August—One Service at 9am
In the Sanctuary and Streamed ~ All Family Worship
Holy Communion on the first Sunday of each month

CELEBRATION OF LIFE SERVICES

Jean Tucker's Celebration of Life service will be on May 30th at 1pm
In the FCCEJ Sanctuary with a reception to follow in the Fellowship Hall

Bill Bickford Sr's Celebration of Life service will be on June 13th at 1pm
In the FCCEJ Sanctuary with a reception to follow in the Fellowship Hall

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, June 5 from 5:30 to 7. If the weather cooperates, we're thinking of a summer cookout—burgers, etc... with tables and games set up outside.

Celebrating Graduates

The end of another school year is just around the corner and we want to celebrate all high school, trade school, college, and post graduate degree recipients related to the FCCEJ family.

Please email Jen at the church office (welcome@fccej.org) the following info:

- ◆ Name of graduate
- ◆ Graduation/recent picture & baby/young picture
- ◆ School (high school, undergrad, graduate) & degree if applicable
- ◆ Their plans for the future

We will acknowledge this milestone in worship on **Sunday, June 14** and share the information in the July/August newsletter. **Deadline is June 1.** Congratulations, Class of 2026!

Searchers

The Wednesday Night Searchers will be viewing and discussing movies through June.

May 27: Babbette's Feast

June 3: Left Behind

June 10: The Davinci Code

Wednesday nights at 7pm in Marvin Lounge.

May's Special Offering ~ Per Capita Dues

Every year, FCCEJ contributes to the Vermont Conference, of which we are a part. This is called our per capita dues. These dues cover such things as clergy gatherings and educational support, pastoral search and call assistance, faith formation resources, outdoor ministries, training and resources for staff, and much more. They are assessed on a per member basis according to the data reported by cto the Conference as of December 31st of the previous year. This year, 2026, our per capita dues amount is \$16.38 per member. If possible, please pay during the month of May and, if you are able, please double your offering to cover the dues for members who may be unable to give at this time. Of course, any donation later in the year is also welcome.

Three Summer Evenings

During the summer months, the Christian Formation Committee invites the entire church to attend ***Three Summer Evenings!***

1. June 17 will be a campfire, along with s'mores, singing and stories
2. July 22 will be camp games
3. August 19 will be a street dance.

Food enough to call dinner will be provided each evening. Plan to join us as we follow the story of Moses through fun, fellowship and faith learning.

Weekly Calendar: May 24—May 31

Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections

<p><u>Sunday, May 24</u> Pentecost / Confirmation Sunday 10am: Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming 9:30am: Joyful Noise Rehearsal—Marvin Lounge <i>1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i> <i>Bluebird Montessori School Open House—</i> <i>West Wing</i> 2pm: Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal—Sanctuary</p>	<p><u>Monday, May 25</u> Memorial Day—Church Office Closed 9am: Food Pantry Organizing—Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, 2nd Floor Storage Room <i>11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i> <i>7:30pm: Group Victory—Marvin Lounge</i></p>
<p><u>Tuesday, May 26</u> 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 <i>11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i> 5:30pm: Finance Committee—Marvin Lounge 7pm: Stewardship—Fellowship Hall Trustees—Program Room</p>	<p><u>Wednesday, May 27</u> <i>10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall</i> <i>11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i> 5:30pm: Finally @ First Rehearsal—Sanctuary 6:30pm: Men At First Rehearsal—West Wing <i>Webelos—2nd Floor Program Room</i> 7pm: Searchers—Marvin Lounge <i>BSA Troop 624—Fellowship Hall</i></p>
<p><u>Thursday, May 28</u> 9am: Food Pantry Set Up—Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, Storage Rooms <i>11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Marvin Lounge</i> 3-6pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop Food Pantry Distribution—Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, Sanctuary 7pm: Property Planning Team—Marvin Lounge Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal—Sanctuary</p>	<p><u>Friday, May 29</u> 8am: Coffee Clatter—Martone’s Deli 10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall <i>11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i></p>
<p><u>Saturday, May 30</u> <i>8am: Give It A Go Support Group—Marvin Lounge</i> <i>The Vine Nepali Congregation—Sanctuary,</i> <i>West Wing</i> <i>8:30am: Weight Loss Support —Fellowship Hall</i> 10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop <i>1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Marvin Lounge</i> Jean Tucker Celebration of Life— Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall, Kitchen</p>	<p><u>Sunday, May 31</u> Music Sunday 10am: Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming 9:30am: Joyful Noise Rehearsal—Marvin Lounge <i>1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall</i></p>

Events in italics = Local Community Groups