



SPIRIT @ FIRST

Monthly Newsletter

FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH *of Essex Junction*

Love. Serve. Grow.

JUNE 2026: IN THIS ISSUE...

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YOUR PASTOR’S PONDERINGS...

One of the things that I love about Ice Cream Sunday, besides the ice cream of course, is the recognition of our Faith Formation leaders. They care for and teach our children about the faith so that they might learn what it means to follow Jesus in today’s world. They volunteer their time and energy to help build up our community, and for years, we have been honoring their service with a little gift and the sweet nectar of the cow god’s, flavored with all sorts of various colored sugary goodies sprinkled on top.

But as I sit here in my office, Beth Poratti is in the Sanctuary tidying up last weeks mess and getting the place looking good for this week’s service: she has been volunteering this way for probably twenty years, and few know of her dedication. While she is in the Sanctuary, Michael Bottamini is out watering the impatiens flowers in front of the church: something he has also done for decades. Peter Frankenburg is weed whacking any weed that dares to stick its ugly head up around our fences and buildings; a job he too has done for decades. Gail Cromie is down the hall making posters [a master creator of Mission Posters for years] for the Josh Palotta House so that we can collect soda for our veterans. Val and Belinda Gabert are in Fellowship Hall hauling and sorting food this way and that so that our Food Pantry will be ready on Thursday for the folks in need of food. Ed Guild is someplace down in the hidden depths of the building replacing some valve in our ancient heating system again, something he has quietly done for decades. And on Wednesday and Thursday nights, we have our choir members coming from work or homes to prepare for the upcoming Sunday’s musical selections, a ritual they do every week throughout the program year. Earlier today, I saw Ann Gray here counting money and preparing it to be deposited, a task required every week and which she has done for years; and here is our new treasurer, Darryl Koch, coming in to check on our bills and ensure that we are in good financial shape. And Sue Conti just came in to ensure that Jean Tucker’s funeral reception will be staffed and ready to honor one of our great old members; something she does with grace and skill whenever the need arises.

One of the delights of my job is to see all of you doing ministry. All of you keep this church running like a well oiled machine. We have programs and activities because all of you make them happen. We are financially sound because many of you contribute your funds and some of you track our expenses and income. We have magnificent music because so many of you sing your hearts out. We have kids here because folks step up to share the faith. Our place is well maintained because so many of you come in and help with a project here and there. I get paid but all of you simply pour your hearts out to make First Church a great place.

One of the blessings of your volunteering is that I can go on vacation and not worry that the church and her ministries will stop happening or even slow down.

So we are going to not only honor the Faith Formation Volunteers on ICE CREAM Sunday, but we will also honor and celebrate all of you and the way you share your gifts for the glory of God and the maintenance of our church. We might even have a little gift for you all so come and eat, laugh, share, and participate in this vibrant community of faith.

Blessed to be a part of it, I am

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Mark

SPECIAL SERVICES IN JUNE

ALL SERVICES FROM JUNE 7 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 6 START AT 9AM

Communion in June will be observed through Congregational Intinction
(We will pass the chip and dip ceramics out)

Ice Cream Sunday & Montana Team Blessing & Volunteer Recognition

June 7

Who doesn't like ICE CREAM? After a great year with all sorts of programs and activities, we will celebrate a job well done and the start of the summer season. So we will eat some ICE CREAM with that incredible hot fudge sauce of Judy McCullen's and all the other fixings! We will recognize the faith Formation volunteers [and others] in the service as well as offer a blessing to our Service Trip Team going to Montana to help the Blackfeet Tribe who will be leaving on June 20th. With a little luck, it will be a beautiful day with warm sunny weather so we can enjoy the green lawn and each other's company. So bring your neighbor that likes ICE CREAM and have some fun and sweet treats.

Graduation & Scout Sunday

June 14

We are recognizing our graduates from High School, College, Trade and Graduate Schools on Sunday June 14th. We invite everyone to send the following to the church office: 1. two pictures: one as baby and then one as a graduate, 2. information of where they graduated from and what degree earned, and 3. Plans for the future. Then our wonderful administrator will create a slide show with all that information for us to enjoy.

We will also celebrate the longest established scout troop in town with a special Scout Sunday. The night before, our scouts will sleep out on our grounds, then come to church to participate in the service and share their cobbles at Fellowship Hour. During the service, we will ask all past and present scouts to stand as we honor all the work and accomplishments they have achieved.

BILL BICKFORD'S CELEBRATION OF LIFE

June 13th @ 1:00 p.m.

Bill Bickford served our church and the wider Essex community with devotion and heartfelt faith. He strengthened the ties that bind us together as a community of faith and helped to create an outstanding place to live as a local banker at the Howard Bank. His word and his handshake was his bond and all that was needed for many a deal and friendship. He served on many committees but his center was always with the Sanctuary Choir and the Men At First as he shared his faith and love through song. He will be sorely missed.

On June 13th at 1:00 p.m., we will have a worship service in the FCCEJ Sanctuary to honor Bill's life and ministry. Everyone is welcome.

SUMMER PREACHING SCHEDULE

June 21st	Pastor Bob Preaching while Rev. Mendes on Service Trip
June 28th	Rev. Mark Returns from Service Trip
July 5th	Pastor Bob
July 12th	Mary McHugh
July 19th	Member in Discernment Josh Sharp
July 26th	Rev. Dr. James Ross from UVM
August 2nd	Margaret "Peggy" Dippin of Hinesburg
August 9th	Rev. Mendes Back in the Pulpit

GREETINGS FROM PASTOR BOB

Rev. Mark and I have received several questions regarding my position as Commissioned Assistant Minister. I am going to attempt to clarify my position and duties as best I can.

Rev. Mark approached me and asked if I would consider the position of Associate Minister at FCCEJ. I want to be very clear, and have it understood that I did not at anytime approach or suggest this position to Rev. Mark. I realize that Rev. Mark is fully aware of my faith journey and the health reasons why seminary studies was not a possibility for me.

I have known Rev. Mark for many years through UCC interactions. He is quite familiar of my leadership roles within the UCC. They include:

- ◆ Assistant Moderator for the Champlain Association & Worship Leader for several VT Conference Annual Meetings. (Side note—this is where I met Rev. Mark.)
- ◆ Chair of The Official Board at Williston Federated Church for 5 years. This is where I began my journey behind the pulpit in 2014.
- ◆ Member of the Pulpit Supply Team, serving Vermont UCC churches for over 4 years.
- ◆ Deacon at FCCEJ since 2022.

There was a 9 month process involving the Deacons and Church Council to work out the details of the position and wording of the title. The final position title is Commissioned Assistant Minister. This went to Church Council for a final vote at the March 2026 meeting and was unanimously passed.

So what does that mean? Here is a brief list of the position details:

- ◆ This is a volunteer position of 10-12 hours a week. This is not a paid position.
- ◆ Responsibilities include:
 - ❖ Assisting & leading worship services at FCCEJ
 - ❖ Assisting with worship services at Mansfield Place
 - ❖ Pastoral Care
- ◆ Rev. Mark and I meet each week to determine where my time is most helpful to himself and FCCEJ.

Following the Commissioning Service on April 12, 2026, I was granted full Sacramental Rights for FCCEJ “EXCLUSIVELY”. This stipulation is because of the UCC ByLaws on Church Autonomy both at the State and National levels. We, as an independent congregation, were able to establish this process and position. I want to be clear that my current position at FCCEJ cannot now or ever allow me to apply for, or accept, a Senior Pastor role at FCCEJ or any other church.

If at any time you have questions regarding my role, please feel free to reach out to Rev. Mark or me. I hold my position at FCCEJ as a most profound and meaningful blessing from God, this Church, and this Congregation. I joyfully accept my responsibilities and look forward to continuing this faith journey with you all. I am committed to doing my absolute best to serve God, this Church, this Congregation, and the wider community.

Peace and Blessings to All,

Pastor Bob

pastorbob@fccej.org

FCCEJ MUSIC ENSEMBLE PARTICIPANTS FALL 25-SPRING 26

Currier Bell Choir

Linda Hasan, Laura Marthaler, Paula Sargent, Alison Wermer

Sanctuary Choir

Bill Bickford Sr. (60yrs), Bill Bickford Jr. (33yrs), Mindy Bickford (26yrs), Di Bottamini (40yrs), Michael Bottamini (40yrs), Brenda Dawson (23yrs), Bob Driver (2yrs), Francis Gravel (5yrs), Jane Halsted (1.5yrs), Joanne Irwin (2mo), Dave Johnson (42yrs), Marie Johnson (32yrs), Denise Keating (9yrs), Terri Livak (40yrs), Doug Olufsen (9yrs), Amanda Palmer (15yrs), Judy Pomainville (18yrs), Pete Schmalz (4-5yrs), Andrea Sharp (8yrs), Heather Stein (2yrs), Beth Volker (42yrs)
Special appreciation to Bill Bickford Sr for 60 YEARS OF SERVICE singing in the Sanctuary Choir and Men At First!

Finally @ First Praise Band

Rick Dooley, Director (13yrs), Steph Field (15yrs), Laura Cunningham Firkey (13yrs), Linus Goedkin (12yrs), Matt Kalix-Crisafi (1yr), Judy McCullum (15yrs), Kevin McCullum (15yrs), Kim Shields (1yr), Kim Sonntag (3yrs)
Special appreciation to Laura Cunningham Firkey, who created amazing harmonies with us from 2013-2026!

Men At First

Bruce Bass, Bill Bickford Jr. (Director), Bill Bickford Sr., Michael Bottamini, Francis Gravel, Curtis Guild, Glenn Harple, David Johnson, Albert Koch, Doug Olufsen, Peter Schmalz, Terry Stein, Clem Turmel

Heavenly Harmony

Mindy Bickford, Di Bottamini, Brenda Dawson, Jane Halsted, Joanne Irwin, Marie Johnson, Denise Keating, Terri Livak, Whitney Noel, Amanda Palmer, Judy Pomainville, Andrea Sharp, Heather Stein, Beth Volker

Joyful Noise

Nora Blake, Abigail Blake, Kira Blake, Molly Bourn, Izzy Bourn, Twyla De Vries, Wade De Vries, Easton Isham, Nora Johnson, Ernest Kalix-Crisafi, Maia Kalix-Crisafi, Eli Palmer, Liam Palmer, Am Stein, Tristan Stein

2025-2026 FAITH FORMATION VOLUNTEERS



Jenny Bourn	Derek Lyman
Mindy Bickford	Kevin McCullen
Lara Kalix-Crisafi	Mary McHugh
Lorinda Elliott	Jessica Moos
Janne & Howard Giles	Matt Noel
Patty Giroux	Gretchen Owens
Micah Heaney-Forbes	Amanda Palmer
Barb Isham	Beth Poratti
Justin King	Mary Ann Phelps
Mel Gibson King	Judy Roy
Eric Lindholm	Ann Marie Sullivan
Terri Livak	Carl Wermer

PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE

The Dear FCCEJ Family,

The Pastoral Search Committee continues to meet faithfully as we seek the person that will lead our congregation into the next phase of our church life. We are deeply grateful for your continued patience, trust, and the many words of encouragement and assistance that we have received.

Current Progress

We are currently in the Construction of the Church Profile Phase. Since our last update, we have:

- Facilitated twelve cottage meetings soliciting feedback about our church and about what we are looking for in our next Pastor. These meetings generated many insightful themes into our present reality and future outlook.
- Conducted a survey to solicit feedback from those unable to attend a cottage meeting.
- Solicited feedback from community members regarding FCCEJ's place and participation in the greater community of Chittenden County and Vermont.
- As a committee, spread out pieces of the church profile to fill out based on the feedback received from the meetings and surveys.

Looking Ahead

Over the next month, we expect to finalize our Church Profile and publish it with the UCC so we can accept candidates. We are extremely encouraged by our progress and remain committed to a thorough discernment process rather than a rushed one.

Call to Prayer

Prayer remains the most vital action our congregation can take. Please join us in praying for:

- **Wisdom & Unity:** For the committee to have clarity and discernment through each step of the process.
- **The Future Pastor:** For God to prepare the heart of our next leader and their family for this transition.
- **Our Church:** That we remain unified and focused on our mission and each other during this period of transition.

If you have any questions about the process, please do not hesitate to reach out to any of the committee members.

Jen Dooley, Secretary

FCCEJ Pastoral Search Committee, Cathy Shearer, Chair; Bob Driver, Chaplain; Jen Dooley, Secretary; Judy Allen, Micah Heaney-Forbes, Marion Lawlor, Betty Marthaler, Laura Marthaler, Kaki McGeary, Amy McIntyre

DEACONS

Greetings from your Deacons! The warm summer weather is coming and with that it brings some change to our worship schedules for the summer. Starting June 7th, we will begin our summer worship schedule of one service at 9am (even on Communion Sundays). Please plan to join us for the earlier services and then go enjoy this lovely weather. While we will miss Rev. Mark while he vacations, we are really looking forward to our guest preachers this summer! There is a lot planned at FCCEJ – come and join us!

We would also request that folks who use the headsets during worship to please check at home and bring any back that may have gone home with you. Thanks in advance for checking!!

-Judy McCullen, Deacon

‡ ELIZABETH’S EPISTLE ‡

The Season after Pentecost is the period between the Day of Pentecost and the First Sunday of Advent. This season makes up half of the calendar year, and its liturgical color is green. It is a time to focus on the life and growth of the Church in the world, empowered by the gift of the presence of the Holy Spirit. 12th-century mystic Hildegard von Bingen captured the essence of this season when she wrote, “The Holy Spirit is the greening power of God. Our task is to blossom.

Volunteers Welcomed

- ★ Many thanks to our dedicated Faith Formation volunteers who make Sunday morning Peer Groups possible for the children to share precious time together during service.
- ★ Volunteers are essential in having a meaningful faith formation ministry. Understanding life’s busy schedules, the time commitment is flexible. It’s helpful to have a network of peer group leaders to fill in when needed.
- ★ Please consider volunteering next year, and sharing your heart with the children of FCCEJ.
If you are interested in more information about the children’s ministry peer groups, please reach out to Elizabeth at ChildrensMinistry@fccej.org.

June Dates to Remember:

****Begin Summer Worship ~ ONE Service at 9am****

- ★ June 7th ~ Celebration Sunday ~ Ice Cream Social after worship
- ★ June 14th - Celebrating Graduates in worship
- ★ June 17th ~ First of Three Summer Evenings

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

Living God, through Jesus, you taught us how to live with love—for you, our neighbors, and ourselves. Wherever we go, no matter how near or far, may we remember you are always with us. With you, we always belong. Amen.

Love and Light,

Elizabeth - Children’s Ministry Coordinator

CHRISTIAN FORMATION COMMITTEE

Three Summer Evenings!

On June 17 plan to join us between 5:30 and 6 for a quick bite to eat, then our programming will start at 6:15. Each evening we will be using some (if not all) of our parking lot for the event, so if you are able, please park offsite. Moses and the Burning Bush will be the theme, which we’ll reinforce with a campfire, songs, stories and s’mores! Our plan is to conclude by 7:30, with clean-up being done by 8.

On July 22 we will look at Moses’ journey in the wilderness, and on August 19 we will have a street dance, with music provided by Supersounds! Look for save the date cards in the bulletin.

MISSIONS

Thank You From our Troops

Thank you so much for all of
the very yummy snacks we feel
the love over here your support
means so much to us!!!
-Love Tatyana
Szymanski

THANK YOU SO MUCH
FROM ALL OF L.O. and N.O.I
- UTANG 2025 / Deployment
2026

Thank you
for the gifts!
- Michael
Mansfield

Muchas Gracias
For the Gifts
- Marlene

Thank you for the food
- Alec Ormerod

Thank you so much!
Carlos

Your kindness is
appreciated.

Thank you so much
for the care
packages.
- Mike Kelly

Thanks for
the morale
boost!
- SSGT Clark

Thank you so much,
- Connor

Thank you
so much
for the gifts
!! - Michael

Thank you
for sharing
of us
- Joyce

Thank you for
keeping us full!
- Cam

Save the Date



PIZZA PARTY!

JOSH'S HOUSE

162 HEGEMAN AVENUE, COLCHESTER
FORT ETHAN ALLEN

Friday, June 5th at Noon
Meet at FCCEJ at 11:30 to carpool

First Congregational Church of Essex Junction - 39 Main Street, Essex Junction - 802-878-5745 - www.fccej.org

On Friday, June 5th the Missions Committee is hosting a pizza party at the Josh Pallotta House for lunch. We are inviting all veterans and current service members from the church to join us for lunch at Josh's house. It will be a great opportunity to see all the services provided by the house and meet other military members in the area. We will be carpooling from the church at 11:30 to the house. Please feel free to join us.

The Missions committee will also be hosting another luncheon in the fall to celebrate the return of all our service men and women who are serving overseas. Any further questions, please feel free to contact the church office.



“CRITTER CORNER”



By Beth Volker

A Shameless Plea for Help

Wildlife rescues have begun in earnest. Every year for the past 25+ years, I have served as a wildlife transporter ~ picking up injured and/or orphaned birds, turtles and mammals from the point of discovery and transporting them to the appropriate licensed wildlife rehabilitator (rehabber). This begins in early spring and continues until late fall, tapering off come winter.

It's a tough job on several fronts. First, I never know when a call for help will come. I can be at the gym, at a medical appointment, in a meeting or just trying to get some work done around the house when I get the call. A typical call might be, “Can you go to St. Albans, pick up a nest of three baby starlings and take them to the rehabber in Addison?” My usual response is, “Yes.” It rarely comes at a convenient time, but I have difficulty saying no because then I'll spend the rest of the day worrying about whether or not another transporter was able to go in my stead, and if the birds are now safely with the rehabber.

Many times, I will see a post on Facebook looking for a transporter. An organization called Green Mountain Animal Defenders is usually the one doing the posting. It will include the situation, the location of the finder and the rehabber who has agreed to take the critter or critters. I then call the finder to see if someone has already volunteered. If not, I get their location and then call the rehabber to tell them I'm on my way to get the critter and give them my ETA at their location.

The second tough part is that some of these situations are with critters in terrible shape, meaning their likelihood of survival is slim. In these situations, I tell myself that it's better that I get them to a rehabber for euthanasia than to leave them to die out in the elements. It can be very emotionally draining, but conversely, it can also be very rewarding when help is able to guarantee survival. It's definitely a mixed bag. The good thing is that the plus column outweighs the minus column, meaning there are more wins than losses.



A recent transport involved a nest of seven bunnies that were in someone's backyard in Essex Town. It was evident from their condition that the mom was taking care of them. The problem was that the nest was on the ground in a backyard occupied by two large dogs who would have killed them in a heartbeat. So, the decision was made to remove them from there, and bring them to a rehabber who could continue to care for them, as mom would have, until they were ready to be released.

Fortunately, in the past few years more volunteer transporters have cropped up around the state, and the good news is that a number of them are younger folks. The majority of us who have been doing this for many years are in our 60s, 70s and 80s. We're aging out fast. Personally, I can no longer do any transports after dark as my night vision is pretty much non-existent. These new volunteers are greatly appreciated.

So, here's my shameless plea for help....if you think that you may want to be a transporter, perhaps on the weekends, please see me. I'll be happy to explain to you how it all works and then you can decide yea or nay. It can be a great teaching tool for your kids or grandkids...a lesson in compassion and a way to show them that one person can make a positive difference in the world. I'm available to answer any and all questions. Thank you!

STEWARDSHIP

So Many Ways to Give of Your Time and Treasure!

The vibrant community at FCCEJ thrives because of the generosity of its members, who give of their time and treasure throughout the year. They give of themselves by serving on committees, joining one of our many musical groups, welcoming new attendees, baking and/or cooking for special occasions, volunteering whenever and wherever needed and caring for one another and the physical church.

There are many ways to see that your financial support reaches the church. For many years, almost all contributions were given during the weekly offering using a designated envelope, in which you put cash or a check. However, now members fund the church in new ways. Some continue to donate with cash or a check in the offering plate, Some give monthly by automatic bill pay directly from their bank account. Others donate their entire annual amount in one lump sum and are done for the year. A few will sell stock for their contribution (which means no tax has to be paid on the gains - such a deal!). In addition, anyone can join the Legacy Circle, designating either a set amount or a percentage of their estate to FCCEJ upon their passing. You don't have to be wealthy to do this....please ask any member of the Planned Giving Committee for information.

THANK YOU for all of your contributions that keep our church vibrant and whole, so we can continue to care for each other now and into the future.

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

We are an active church with events, groups using our facilities, and myriad ways that we help people in our community and beyond. With such a dynamic community, there are many opportunities to help nurture and grow our ministry and live into Christ's way. OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS lifts up specific needs of our church and ways our members and friends can help. If you feel called to help in one of these asks, please call Jen or Mark at the church office at 802-878-5745. And thanks in advance!

We are looking for someone to.....

1. Provide Audio/Visual Support. We're looking for a few more people to assist with streaming our worship services. It is not difficult or time intensive. Streaming our services is crucial to reaching out and providing a connection to folks who no longer drive AND to people checking us out before they come in person. We also receive requests to stream memorial services, so that family and friends who are not able to attend in person may still celebrate the life of their loved one.
2. Take Pictures! We'd like to keep our website and Facebook presence fresh and up to date and we're looking for pictures from FCCEJ events, meetings, and worship services. Send them along to welcome@fccej.org or socialmedia@fccej.org. Thank you!
3. Assist with Friday Night Dinners. Our Friday night dinner program for families with elementary-age children is really starting to take off and we could use some help! There are opportunities with set up, kitchen prep, cooking, tidying up, and supervising the kids as they whack each other with pool noodles (or create other chaos). Good times! Over the summer, we will have a barbeque style meal in June and August (taking a hiatus in July). So grill masters are also appreciated! Our families are really enjoying this time to come have a meal together and have the kids play.

SERMON TALKBACK

Did you ever want to hold Rev. Mark accountable for something crazy or confusing he said in the sermon? Did you ever just want to express to him how much the sermon touched your heart? Did you ever want to ask why Pastor Bob picked such a loser hymn to sing? Did you want to follow up with some biblical fact and dig deeper into the text? Do you ever want to continue Sunday's Sermon discussion or ask a question that you did not feel comfortable enough to bring up at church? Do you like talking about our church and what goes on here? Do you want to belong to a group of folks who love and support each other? Well, if you can get to church by 8:30am on Tuesday, we meet with free coffee, tea and usually some goodies. Everyone is welcome.

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

At Sermon Talkback we focus on the previous week's worship service and the sermon as well as any church or theological issues that may arise in the normal course of discussion. Rev. Mark tried his best to steer clear of the political rabbit holes that sometimes divide and stifle. HOWEVER, on Friday mornings from 8-9am at Martone's in downtown Essex Junction, we talk about anything we want! From camping to gardening, from politics to social security medical benefits, from what's going on in Burlington to travel spots, from church business to local politics, we poke and prod and have fun talking about anything we want.....remembering to keep it respectful and civil. Everyone is welcome and buys their own coffee and food.

BRIDGE FOR FUN

Twice a month a group of folks get together to have some fun playing bridge. We put on a pot of coffee, have some goodies, and enjoy the game of bridge. It is an informal game so there is plenty of table talk, a great diversity of skill levels and absolutely no judgement. We are there to enjoy life, bridge, and each other's company. Some of the folks that come are church members and some are not so it's a great group to bring a friend. And of course the winner gets a jar of homemade jam from Rev. Mark's stash.

The group will meet one more time before taking a summer hiatus—June 5 from 1:30 to 4 in Marvin Lounge. They'll start back up again in September on the 1st and 3rd Friday of each month.



*Thank you so much for the Beautiful Yellow Rose that I received on my birthday.
It brings love and happiness.
Don Foss*

JUNE BIRTHDAYS

Janet ASTORE
 Meghan AUDETTE
 Paige BERO
 Mindy BICKFORD
 Kira BLAKE
 Linda BOGARDUS
 Susan BOYD
 Kathryn BRENNAN
 Christine CATTERTON
 Cindy CHADURJIAN
 Dennis CONTI
 Bev DAVIS
 Brenda DAWSON

Erna DEUTSCH
 Joan FAUX
 Stephanie FIELD
 Henry GABERT
 Lori GIANNUZZI
 Curtis GUILD
 Finn HAMILTON
 Linda JACKSON
 Maia KALIX-CRISAFI
 Brandon KINNEY
 Thomas Emery MATT
 Kaki MCGEARY
 Whitney NOEL

Leslie O'NEIL
 Suzanne REARDON
 Paula SARGENT
 Peter SCHMALZ
 Max SMITH
 Meghan SMITH
 Jonathan STAPLETON
 Edward STEELE
 Ann Marie SULLIVAN
 Ann WELLS
 Steven WOOD

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 6:30 in the Fellowship Hall. If the weather cooperates, we’re thinking of a summer cookout—burgers, etc...

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)

COFFEE HOUSE CABARET

Calling all musicians, poets, dancers, magicians, comedians, etc! Our Coffeehouse Cabaret has been rescheduled to Sept. 2026 at Holy Family Parish Hall (specific date TBD, but likely 9/20 at 2 pm). Please be thinking about performing something in this comfortable environment (with free coffee, tea, and pastries). You may even win a gift card to a local bakery or coffee place. An online signup form is coming soon! Must be family friendly content, performers ages 12+, and approximately 5 minutes in length. Contact stephfield87@gmail.com with any questions. Thank you!

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, June 11 at 10am in Marvin Lounge.

LUNCHTIME BOOK GROUP

Here’s the line up for June, July, and August:

June: *PASTRIX*, by Nadia Bolt Weber, is a journey of cranky spirituality that intersects religion with real life, weaving incredible narrative, hilarious rants, and poignant honesty to portray a life deeply flawed and deeply faithful-giving hope to the rest of us.

July: *THE BORROWED LIFE OF FREDERICK FIFE*, by Anna Johnston, is a hilarious, feel-good, clever novel about grief, forgiveness, redemption, and finding family.

August: *Hello Beautiful*, by Ann Napolitano, follows the interconnected lives of the four Padavano sisters—Julia, Sylvie, Cecelia, and Emeline—and William Waters, a man who marries into their close-knit Chicago family, exploring themes of love, grief, and unconditional family bonds.

We meet in the Marvin Lounge on the 3rd Monday of each month at 11:30am. Newcomers are always welcome. Bring your lunch if you'd like, and join us!

First Congregational Church of Essex Junction



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

SUNDAY MORNING ALL-FAMILY WORSHIP

JUNE THROUGH LABOR DAY

9:00 - In-person and streamed via youtube.com/c/fccej

Music: Bethany Blake leads our musical offerings * Finally @ First Praise Band is on summer hiatus

Communion is served on the 1st Sunday of each month * All are welcome at Christ's table

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