



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

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

August 23, 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 Praise Band and our Faith Formation Program for our children at 10:15 a.m. We worship 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.

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

Order of Worship

Prelude

Sunrise Sunset

Harnick/Boc

An Extravagant Welcome and Announcements

Opening Greeting Deacon Andrea Sharp
Our Deacon will welcome everyone to our community of faith; ask if anyone has special joys to share; invite any guest to introduce themselves if they want to 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

Be Thou My Vision

Traditional Irish Melody
arr. Ian Good

Call to Worship Deacon Andrea Sharp

Leader: God invites all of us to pass through the waters of faith to renew our Spirits, center our lives and lead us into the future.

Pulpit Side: Life on earth was born in water and so were we.

Lectern Side: With signs of a dove and a rainbow, the waters cleansed the earth and led us into a new future.

Pulpit Side: With danger demanding death from behind, the Hebrew people ventured through the waters on dry land to create a people.

Lectern Side: With the wilderness behind, the Israelites crossed the river Jordan on dry land to build a new community of faith.

Pulpit Side: With mistaken assumptions about God, John the Baptist offered new life to those who repented and turned back to God's ways.

Lectern Side: Jesus offered unadulterated grace through the waters of baptism to all who want to follow in the ways of love.

Leader: Come, let us renew our baptismal vows to follow Jesus. Come, let us offer Christ's grace to Cecilia and promise to simply love everyone.

***Opening Hymn**

I Was There to Hear Your Borne Cry

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Prayer of Invocation and Unison Lord's Prayer Deacon Andrea Sharp

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 Sacrament of Baptism.....Cecilia Jane Sargent

Let's give a warm First Church welcome to Cecilia today. Her proud parents are Allie and Asa Sargent and her older sister is Noelle.

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

Sharing Our Prayers with God and Each Other

A Time of Silence for Personal Prayer

Musical Response

Sweet Hour of Prayer

William Bradbury

***Hymn**

Child of Blessing, Child of Promise

325

Scripture Readings

Old Testament

Torah

Exodus 1:8-2:10

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New Testament

Gospel

Matthew 28:16-20

[page #26]

Special Music Anthem

I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry

J. Vlvisaker
arr. Reflet des Nuages

Sermon

The Art of Saving

Rev. Mendes

Offering Our Gifts to God

Invitation, Offering and Prayer of Dedication

Offertory

Change My Heart, O God

Eddie Espinosa

***The Doxology**

778

**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.**

*** Closing Hymn**

God Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens

556

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

The Zeal of the Lord

Anthony Giananco

*Please stand if you are able.

- ❖ Sincere appreciation to Denise Keating and Allie Sargent for providing the beautiful music 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.

*Bethany Blake
and friends and family of Thomas Cencer
Thanksgiving for the homecoming of
Tatyana Szymanski and Bobby Evans!
Rev. Kevin Goldenbogen, Senior Pastor at
Charlotte Congregational Church
David and Family
Emily Guziak
and friends and family of Nancy Thayer
Remi and Family
Family & Friends of Sally Lembake
Family & Friends of Lani Goram
Michael Lafoy
Audrey Sawyer
Allan and Barbara Reith
Family & Friends of Chris Canosa
Family & Friends of Russ Kinaman
Meg Audette and Family
Fletch Coolidge
Family & Friends of Annette Whitemar*

Laura Cunningham-Firkey and Family

*Myrna Lindholm
Myrna Dooney
Shashaunah
Michael Hahner
Bill Bickford Jr.
Joe Shields
Elizabeth Stone
Patty Geiger
Jane Piper
Josh Winslow
Phil Bourn and all troops currently
deployed
Carol Daigle
Patty Giroux
Everyone experiencing uncertainty and fear
in their communities
All those affected by violence
around the world
Everyone that may be privately suffering*



****The flowers on the altar today are given by Sylvia Nyhagen
In loving memory of her husband, Ed.****



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#/



Soda Drive for Josh's House

The Missions Committee continues to support Josh Pallotta House in Winooski. Josh's House Vermont is for veterans and current military personnel. It's a designed recreation/wellness space offering meeting and study areas, a large communal kitchen, video games, and a state-of-the-art gym. Many of the veterans being served at the Pallotta house are recovering substance abusers. These veterans rely on sugar items to get them through their addiction. Missions is sponsoring a soda drive during July, August & September. You can drop the soda anytime while the church is open. The drop-off place will be in Fellowship Hall. Signs will be posted to provide the exact location.

Remember—sugar soda only, no diet. Thank you for your support!

Coffee House Cabaret

Calling all musicians, poets, dancers, magicians, comedians, etc! Our Coffeehouse Cabaret is scheduled for Sunday, September 20 at 2pm). Please be thinking about performing something in this comfortable environment (with free coffee, tea, and pastries). You may even win a gift card! Must be family friendly content, performers ages 12+, and approximately 5 minutes in length.

Scan the QR Code or use this link for the Sign-Up Genius:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0545A8AB2FAAF58-64781886-coffee>

Contact stephfield87@gmail.com with any questions. Thank you!



Stay Connected!

Our weekly E-Connection contains timely information about the FCCEJ faith community including children/youth happenings, special events, links to online bulletins and worship services, and our current calendar. Our monthly newsletter "SPIRIT@FIRST" is available by "snail mail" and email, as well as on our website. Please share your contact information via the Friendship Pad and indicate which communications you are interested in receiving.

Burlington Pride Parade

Sunday, September 13th at 12pm.

For years, Pride Vermont has been a powerful celebration of visibility, joy, and community in downtown Burlington. This year, FCCEJ will be participating with other churches in the Vermont UCC Conference. The parade starts at 12pm on South Winooski Ave. and ends at Battery Park where the Pride Festival begins at 1pm.

If you are interested in attending and/or carpooling to the event, please reach out to Rev. Mark or Pastor Bob for details.

Weekly Calendar: August 23 – August 30

Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections

Events in italics = Local Community Groups

Sunday, August 23

9am: Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming

1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

Monday, August 24

9am: Food Pantry Organizing—Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, Storage Rooms

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

Tuesday, August 25

8:30: Sermon Talkback—Marvin Lounge/Zoom

10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship - Fellowship Hall

7pm: Stewardship— Marvin Lounge

Wednesday, August 26

8:15am-3:30pm: Bluebird Montessori

10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

6:30pm: BSA Troop 624 – Fellowship Hall

Thursday, August 27

8:15am-3:30pm: Bluebird Montessori

8:30am: Food Pantry Set Up – Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, Storage Rooms

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Marvin Lounge

3-6pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop;

Food Pantry Distribution – Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, Sanctuary

Friday, August 28

8:15am-3:30pm: Bluebird Montessori

8am: Coffee Clatter—Martone's Deli

10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall; Music Lesson - Sanctuary

11:30am: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

6:30pm: Blue Spruce Grange –Fellowship Hall

Saturday, August 29

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

1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

4pm: Nancy Thayer Celebration of Life – Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall

Sunday, August 30

9am: Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming

1pm: Brown Bag Fellowship—Fellowship Hall

FCCEJ MINISTRY DIRECTORY

Staff

Senior Pastor: Rev. Mark Mendes [mmendes@fccej.org]
Commissioned Assistant Minister: Bob Driver [pastorbob@fccej.org]
Children's Ministry Coordinator: Elizabeth O'Beirne [childrensministry@fccej.org]
Music Director: Bethany Blake [bblake@fccej.org]
Church Administrator: Jen Kelly [welcome@fccej.org]
Social Media Marketing Coordinator: Andrea Sharp [andrea.sharp@gmail.com]

Music

Chair of Music: Steph Field
Finally @ First Director: Rick Dooley
Men At First Director: Bill Bickford Jr.

Officers

President: Terry Stein
Vice President: Kathryn Brennan
Financial Secretary: Ann Gray [finances@fccej.org]
Assistant Financial Secretary: Linda Bogardus
Treasurer: Darryl Koch [treasurer@fccej.org]
Assistant Treasurer: Matt McGearry
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