



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**

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The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 13, 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 10:15am. 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 fcej.org. From June 7th through September 6th, we have one service at 9am 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 *No. 1 from Six Pieces for Children Op. 72* F. Mendelssohn

An Extravagant Welcome and Announcements

*No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome in this place.*

Deacon's Greeting Deacon Emily Guziak
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.

Introit *For Everyone Born* Shirley Murray, Brian Mann

Call to Worship Deacon Emily Guziak

Leader: My journey is different than yours. As your Deacon, I proclaim that I have expanded Christ's goodness in this world.....and I have fallen short and done things in which I am not proud.

People: My journey is different than everyone else's here. But like our Deacon, I have done things that honor God and spread Christ's love and done some things that have done the opposite.

Leader: For sanity and the ability to move into the future with hope, I proclaim that your sins are forgiven. Go and sin no more.

People: For sanity and the ability to move into the future with hope, I proclaim that your sins are forgiven. Go and sin no more.

Leader: Come, let us learn how to live healthier lives through the love of God and our neighbor. Come, let us leave the weight behind and sing for joy. Come, let us celebrate Christ's family of faith.

***Opening Hymn**

Blessed Be the Tie that Binds

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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.

Children's Message Elizabeth O'Beirne

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

Hallelujah

Abraham Maraire

***Hymn**

Just As I Am

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New Testament Scripture Readings:

Epistle Romans 14:1-12 [page # 124]

Gospel Matthew 18:21-35 [page 15]

Anthem

Day by Day

K. Lee Scott

Meditation

The Necessity & Implications of Forgiveness

Rev. Mendes

Offering Our Gifts to God

Invitation, Offering and Prayer of Dedication

Offertory Mvt. 2 from *Symphony No. 9* (excerpt)

Antonín Dvořák;

***The 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.**

*** Hymn**

O For a World

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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**

Waltz No. 8 Op. 39

Brahms

***Please stand if you are able.**

- ❖ Sincere appreciation to Bethany Blake and the FCCEJ Sanctuary Choir for sharing their 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.

<i>Bethany Blake and friends and family of Thomas Cencer</i>	<i>Fran Thomas</i>
<i>Mike LaMoy</i>	<i>Nick Hella</i>
<i>Josephine Lawrence</i>	<i>Bob Hahner</i>
<i>All those affected by violence around the world</i>	<i>Emily Guziak & friends & family of Nancy Thayer</i>
<i>David and Family</i>	<i>Remi and Family</i>
<i>Patty Giroux</i>	<i>Phil Bourn and all troops currently deployed</i>
<i>Michael Lafoy</i>	<i>Audrey Sawyer</i>
<i>Allan and Barbara Reith</i>	<i>Jane Piper</i>
<i>Meg Audette and Family</i>	<i>Fletch Coolidge</i>
<i>Carol Daigle</i>	<i>Laura Cunningham-Firkey and Family</i>
<i>Myrna Lindholm</i>	<i>Myrna Dooney</i>
<i>Shashaunah</i>	<i>Joe Shields</i>
<i>Bill Bickford Jr.</i>	<i>Josh Winslow</i>
<i>Elizabeth Stone</i>	<i>Patty Geiger</i>
<i>Rev. Kevin Goldenbogen, Senior Pastor at Charlotte Congregational Church</i>	<i>Everyone experiencing uncertainty and fear in their communities</i>
<i>Flood victims in Nepal and surrounding areas</i>	<i>Everyone that may be privately suffering</i>



***The flowers on the altar today are given by Sue & Dennis Conti
In honor of their grandchildren on Grandparent's Day.***



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#/



Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop News

The Thrift Shop is hosting an “*Open House and Bag Sale Shopping Experience*” for **Church Attendees Only** this Sunday morning, September 13th. Church attendees will have first dibs to buy summer inventory for \$5 before the Bag Sale opens to the public on Tuesday the 15th. Plan to stop by to see what treasures you can find!

Burlington Pride Parade

TODAY, 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 at City Hall Park and ends at Battery Park where the Pride Festival begins at 1pm.



2nd Annual Welcome Back Sunday Dessert Challenge

The Christian Formation Committee invites dessert makers of all sorts to enter their best creation in the 2nd Annual Welcome Back Sunday Dessert Challenge on September 20. Bring your best offering, to be judged by the youth, and perhaps you will win a \$25 gift card to Boxcar Bakery, provided by Rev. Mark.

Craft Fest

We are currently looking for one more additional crafter. The cost is \$30 and they need to bring their own table. Please contact Ann Gray or the church office. First come, first dibbys.

Community Concerts at First

CCAF presents HairPeace on Sunday, September 27th at 3pm here in our sanctuary. Please mark your calendars now so you don't miss this fabulous concert! HairPeace has been filling the air with music since 1993. Chrystine and Ray's close vocal harmonies blend the songs of the 60s and 70s with original material and an occasional modern tune, bringing a sense of peace, love and community to every show. Joined by the incredible Kenny Z on upright bass, this concert is a must-see! HairPeace has shared stages with national acts such as The Little River Band, Roseanne Cash and Asleep at the Wheel. Visit their website (www.hairpeace.net) to listen to some of their music.

Tickets \$20 at <https://sevendaystickets.com/e/hairpeace> or by calling the church office.

Children 12 & under admitted free.

Soda Drive for Josh's House

The Missions Committee extends heartfelt thanks for the incredible support of the Soda Drive for Josh's House. We were able to deliver soda several times over the summer and show our support to our veterans and current military personnel.

Grief Support

Grief Support Group meets monthly on the 2nd Thursday in the Marvin Lounge from 10-11:30am. Led by Mary McHugh and Sharon Dettenrieder. This is a safe place to share, question, and learn about the grief experience. Next meeting is October 8.

Adult Bible Study

Bible Study dates and topics:

Friday September 25: Genesis - Abraham thru Joseph (chapter 11 - end of book)

October 23 & Nov 13: Paul's 2nd letter to the Corinthians.

We meet from 1:30-3pm in Marvin Lounge. Led by Mary McHugh.

Wednesday Night Searchers

Every Wednesday Night from 7-9pm a group of inquiring folk come together to read books, watch video series and reflect on life and faith in our church and individual lives. We are starting the program year with the book *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* by Richard Rohr. Books will be available in the church office on Tuesday morning - \$15 each.

Lunchtime Book Group

The book we're reading for September is "Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail" by Bill Bryson.

Join us on Monday, September 21 at 11:30am in Marvin Lounge. Bring a lunch and be part of a lively discussion!

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.

Weekly Calendar: September 13 – September 20

Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections

Events in italics = Local Community Groups

<u>Sunday, September 13</u> 10am: Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming 11:30am: Music Committee – Program Room Craft Fest Committee – Marvin Lounge 12pm: Burlington Pride Parade <i>1pm: Brown Bag—Fellowship Hall</i>	<u>Monday, September 14</u> <i>8:15am-3:30pm: Bluebird Montessori</i> 9am: Food Pantry Organizing— Fellowship Hall, Kitchen <i>11:30am: Brown Bag—Fellowship Hall</i> 1pm: Food Pantry Setup – Fellowship Hall, Kitchen <i>3:45 & 4:40pm: Music Lesson – Sanctuary</i> 5:30pm: Food Pantry Distribution – Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, Sanctuary
<u>Tuesday, September 15</u> <i>8:15am-3:30pm: Bluebird Montessori</i> 8:30: Sermon Talkback—Marvin Lounge/Zoom 10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop <i>11:30am: Brown Bag - Fellowship Hall</i> 3:30pm: Food Pantry Committee – Marvin Lounge <i>6:30pm: BSA Three Rivers District Roundtable – Fellowship Hall, West Wing</i> 7pm: Christian Formation—Marvin Lounge	<u>Wednesday, September 16</u> 8am: Food Bank Delivery – Fellowship Hall <i>8:15am-3:30pm: Bluebird Montessori</i> <i>10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall</i> Missions Committee – Marvin Lounge/Zoom <i>11:30am: Brown Bag—Fellowship Hall</i> <i>3pm: Highland Dance Rehearsal – Gym</i> <i>5:30pm: Cub Scouts Pack 630 – Fellowship Hall</i> <i>7pm: BSA Troop 624 – Fellowship Hall</i>
<u>Thursday, September 17</u> <i>8:15am-3:30pm: Bluebird Montessori</i> <i>10am: Music Lesson - Sanctuary</i> <i>11:30am: Brown Bag—Fellowship Hall</i> 3-6pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop <i>6pm: Music Lesson—Sanctuary</i> 7pm: Choir Rehearsal – Sanctuary	<u>Friday, September 18</u> 8am: Coffee Clatter—Martone’s Deli <i>8:15am-3:30pm: Bluebird Montessori</i> <i>10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall</i> <i>Music Lesson - Sanctuary</i> <i>11:30am: Brown Bag—Fellowship Hall</i> <i>6pm: Blue Spruce Grange—Fellowship Hall</i>
<u>Saturday, September 19</u> <i>8am: Give It A Go Support—Marvin Lounge</i> <i>The Vine Nepali Congregation—Sanctuary,</i> <i>West Wing</i> <i>8:30am: Weight Loss Support —Fellowship Hall</i> 9:30am: Reiki 2 Class – Marvin Lounge 10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop <i>1pm: Brown Bag—Fellowship Hall</i> 2:30pm: Rotary Food Drive Delivery – Fellowship Hall	<u>Sunday, September 20</u> Welcome Back Sunday 9:30am: Drop-In Choir Rehearsal – Sanctuary 10am: Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming 11:30am: Welcome Back Lunch <i>1pm: Brown Bag—Fellowship Hall</i>