



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

Welcome Back Sunday *September 20, 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 *Toccata IV in G minor* Girolamo Frescobaldi

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

A Kairos Invitation Michael and Suzanne Lawrence

Deacon's Greeting Deacon Maureen McKenzie
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 *Now I Walk in Beauty* arr. Gregg Smith

Call to Worship Deacon Maureen McKenzie

Leader: Welcome to First Church. Here we listen to and learn from Christ's gospel of love, then we try to apply it to everything we do.

People: **We try to love God. We try to love our neighbor. We try to love ourselves. And we even try to love our enemies and people we do not like very much. And Jesus says to love with our heart, mind, soul and strength.**

Leader: God simply commands us to love everything with our whole being. Come, let us try as we worship and praise our God.

***Opening Hymn**

All Things Bright and Beautiful

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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

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 *Threefold Amen*

***Hymn** *There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy* **# 23**

Scripture Readings:
Old Testament Prophetic Jonah [pages 667-668]
New Testament Gospel Matthew 20:1-16 [page 17]

Anthem *All Good Gifts* Lon Beery

Sermon *Gifts from God that Make Us Mad* Rev. Mendes

Offering Our Gifts to God
Invitation, Offering and Prayer of Dedication
Offertory *May You Run and Not Be Weary* Handt Hanson;
Paul Murakiami

***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.**

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

Gloria: Basse de trompette: 4e couplet du Gloria
(from *Messe pour les Convents*)

François Couperin

*Please stand if you are able.

- ❖ *Sincere appreciation to the fantastic musicians who shared their talents with us this morning:*
 - *Bethany Blake,*
 - *The FCCEJ Sanctuary Choir, and today's members of the Drop In Choir*
 - *Men At First, under the direction of Bill Bickford Jr.*
- ❖ *Special requests from your Deacons and staff: As we head into "sniffle season" please remember to take your used tissues with you after worship. There are garbage cans in the Narthex, by the elevator, and in the Fellowship Hall. Thank you!*

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>Carol Daigle</i>	<i>Fletch Coolidge</i>
<i>Myrna Lindholm</i>	<i>Laura Cunningham-Firkey and Family</i>
<i>Shashaunah</i>	<i>Myrna Dooney</i>
<i>Bill Bickford Jr.</i>	<i>Joe Shields</i>
<i>Elizabeth Stone</i>	<i>Josh Winslow</i>
<i>Rev. Kevin Goldenbogen, Senior Pastor at Charlotte Congregational Church</i>	<i>Patty Geiger</i>
<i>Flood victims in Nepal and surrounding areas</i>	<i>Everyone experiencing uncertainty and fear in their communities</i>
<i>Everyone that may be privately suffering</i>	



***The flowers on the altar today are given by Linda Lou Parker
In honor and remembrance of Bruce Parker's birthday.***



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#/



Community
Concerts @ First
Presents
HairPeace

Acoustic folk-rock, Americana, and
bluegrass vocal duo

Suggested Donation: \$20, 12 and under are free
Donations support Age Well & FCCEJ

27 September, 2026 at 3pm
39 Main St., Essex Junction

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.

LIFT (Living in Faith Together) Sunday

On Sunday, October 4th, everyone is welcome to assemble packets for Persons Living Without Permanent Accommodations in Fellowship Hall after the single service at 10am. The packets will be housed in cubbies by the front door. Everyone is encouraged to take one to distribute when the opportunity arises.

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.

Josh Sharp Ordination & Celebration

We are thrilled to celebrate the ordination of (soon-to-be Reverend) Josh Sharp on Sunday, October 25 at 3pm! There will be an ordination service in the FCCEJ Sanctuary, followed by a pot-luck reception in the Fellowship Hall. More information and a Sign Up Genius will be available in the October newsletter and worship bulletins.

Heavenly Food Pantry

The Food Pantry is seeing a significant uptick in families requesting food assistance. We continue to need reusable shopping bags as well as **empty one-dozen egg cartons**, baked beans, canned fruit and veggies, chunky soups, ready-made pasta, and feminine hygiene items - specifically pads (moderate, heavy, and extra absorbent).

We're also looking to expand our volunteer base. We need people for organizing during the week, set-up, assisting during the distribution times, and to make deliveries in the Essex area. Please contact the church office for more information.

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 20 – September 27

Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections

Events in italics = Local Community Groups

<u>Sunday, September 20</u> Welcome Back Sunday 9:30am: Drop-In Choir Rehearsal – Sanctuary 10am: Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming 10:15am: Peer Groups (PreK-8th) 11:30am: Welcome Back Lunch <i>1pm: Brown Bag—Fellowship Hall</i>	<u>Monday, September 21</u> 9am: Food Pantry Organizing— Fellowship Hall, Kitchen 11:30am: Lunchtime Book Group – Marvin Lounge <i>Brown Bag—Fellowship Hall</i> <i>3:45 & 4:40pm: Music Lesson – Sanctuary</i>
<u>Tuesday, September 22</u> <i>8:15am-3:30pm: Bluebird Montessori</i> 8:30: Sermon Talkback—Marvin Lounge/Zoom 10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop <i>10:15am: Intermediate Tai Chi – Fellowship Hall</i> <i>11:30am: Brown Bag - Fellowship Hall</i> 5:30pm: Finance Committee – Marvin Lounge 7pm: Stewardship—Sanctuary, Marvin Lounge Pastoral Search Committee – Program Room Trustees – Fellowship Hall	<u>Wednesday, September 23</u> <i>8:15am-3:30pm: Bluebird Montessori</i> <i>10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall</i> <i>11:30am: Brown Bag—Fellowship Hall</i> <i>3pm: Highland Dance Rehearsal – Gym</i> 7pm: Searchers – Marvin Lounge BSA Troop 624 – Fellowship Hall
<u>Thursday, September 24</u> <i>8:15am-3:30pm: Bluebird Montessori</i> 8:30am: Food Pantry Organizing & Set Up – Fellowship Hall, Kitchen 9am: FCCEJ Staff Meeting – Marvin Lounge <i>10am: Music Lesson - Sanctuary</i> <i>11:30am: Brown Bag—Marvin Lounge</i> 3-6pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop Food Pantry Distribution – Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, Sanctuary <i>6pm: Music Lesson—Sanctuary</i> <i>6:30pm: Bluebird Montessori</i> 7pm: Choir Rehearsal – Sanctuary	<u>Friday, September 25</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> 12pm: Service Trip Leadership – Marvin Lounge <i>5pm: Blue Spruce Grange—Fellowship Hall</i>
<u>Saturday, September 26</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> 10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop <i>1pm: Brown Bag—Fellowship Hall</i>	<u>Sunday, September 27</u> 8:30* & 10:15am: Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming* 10:30am: Peer Groups (PreK-8th) <i>1pm: Brown Bag—Fellowship Hall</i> 3pm: Community Concert, Sanctuary