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

ONA
OPEN & AFFIRMING

Second Service

The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction

The Twenty-fifth Sunday After Pentecost
November 15, 2026

Our worship opportunities during the year offer two services: one traditional with our outstanding organist and Sanctuary Choir at 8:30am and one less traditional with our talented Finally @ First Band and our Faith Formation Program for our children at 10:15am. 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 through September, we have one service at 9am with our organist and a group of talented volunteers offering their musical abilities to God and our congregation.

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

Order of Worship

An Extravagant Welcome and Announcements ..... Rev. Mark

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

Deacon's Greeting ..... Deacon Allison Van Steensburg

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 *Revive Us Again* William MacKay and John Husband

Call to Worship ..... Deacon Allison Van Steensburg

Leader: This is the day that our God has made, let us rejoice and be glad.

People: This is the day when we welcome new members into our midst. Let us rejoice and welcome them warmly.

Leader: This is the day that we come together to worship, praise God's name, listen to scripture, pray for folks and grow a bit more into the faith.

People: Come, let us soak in the Holy Spirit and sit comfortably in the midst of this peaceful and loving community of faith.

Leader: Come, let us sing…..

Opening Hymn** ***Soon and Very Soon **African American Spiritual**
[handout]

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 ..... Pastor Bob

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 Transition to Peer Groups (PreK-8th)
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.

Scripture Readings:

Old Testament	Historical	Judges 4:1-10	[page 170]
New Testament	Epistle	I Thessalonians 5:1-11	[page 159]
	Gospel	Matthew 25:14-30	[page 22]

Special Music Anthem *Learning to Be the Light* Parisien, Toal and Moore

Sermon *Using Our Talents Wisely* Rev. Mark

Offering Our Gifts to God
Invitation, Offering and Prayer of Dedication
Musical Offering *Rise* Shawn McDonald
***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.

Pastoral Prayer

Sharing Our Prayers with God and Each Other

A Time of Silence for Personal Prayer

Musical Response ***Multiplied*** **Bo & Bear Rinehart**

God of mercy, sweet love of mine,
I have surrendered to Your design
May this offering stretch across the skies,
And these hallelujahs be multiplied,
these hallelujahs be multiplied.

Hymn** ***Taste and See **James Moore**

[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 appreciation to Finally @ First Praise Band, under the direction of Rick Dooley, for sharing their wonderful musical talents with us this morning!

Presented in accordance with our Royalties for Spirituals Project: a practice of valuing musical contributions of enslaved Africans to American worship and song. We honor unrecognized musicians who created these pieces by singing them with reverence, gratitude, and open hearts. Royalties set aside for the use of these songs will go to a local organization that supports African American musicians.

****The flowers on the altar today are given by Sue & Dennis Conti***
In memory of Rinaldo Conti.*

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#/

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.

Family and friend of Lyn Beliveau	*Tom Bennett and Family*
Mike LaMoy	*Nick Hella*
Josephine Lawrence	*Bob Hahner*
All those affected by violence around the world	*Fran Thomas*
David and Family	*Remi and Family*
Bill Bickford Jr.	*Myrna Dooney*
Michael Lafoy	*Audrey Sawyer*
Allan and Barbara Reith	*Jane Piper*
Laura Cunningham-Firkey and Family	*Fletch Coolidge*
Lou Ann Pioli	*Paula Sargent*
Phil Bourn, all troops currently deployed, and all those adjusting to being back home	
Everyone that may be privately suffering	*Flood victims in Nepal and surrounding areas*
Everyone experiencing uncertainty and fear in their communities	

Bickford Meal Train

As you may know, Bill is going through a difficult battle with cancer. After talking with Bill and Mindy, and with their blessing, Bob (Bill's brother) has set up a Meal Train to help make things a little easier for them during this challenging time.

The Meal Train allows friends and family to sign up to provide a meal on a particular day, helping Bill and Mindy without them having to coordinate meals themselves.

Here's the link to their Meal Train: https://mealtrain.com/vmdwe6

The link provides information about the Meal Train, including available dates, meal preferences, and delivery instructions.

This provides an opportunity for those who would like to help to do so in a practical way.

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.

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 December 10.

Bible Study

Our November date has moved to Friday, November 20th in the 2nd Floor Program Room at 1:30pm. We will recap the first 5 chapters of Paul's 2nd letter to the Corinthians and then finish off the letter.

Advent Lectionary Readings will be explored on December 11 at 1:30 - 3PM in the Marvin Lounge. Some key words: watch, wait, prepare, comfort. A key idea: trust in the Spirit of the Lord who brings light, healing, peace and justice!

Giving Tree

Once again FCCEJ is providing Christmas gifts to children in our community through our Giving Tree Program. Starting on Sunday, November 22, there will be a tree with gift tags in the Narthex as well as virtual tags on Sign Up Genius; tags will be available through Sunday, November 29.
Here are the steps for the tags:

1. Select a tag (or two or three) from the tree
2. Fill out the sign up sheet—please include your phone number and email
3. Purchase your gift(s), wrap them, and include the tag on the outside of the wrapping. Please use a gift bag or box for gift cards, too.
4. Drop off your gifts at the tree on Sunday morning or the office during the week

Gifts are due Sunday, December 6
The link for Sign Up Genius will be available and posted soon.
There is always great anticipation around the Giving Tree. We hope you will join us in making this Christmas a season of hope and love for many families in our community.

Weekly Calendar: November 15 – November 22

Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections

Events in italics = Local Community Groups

Sunday, November 15 8:30 & 10:15am: Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming 10:30am: Peer Groups (PreK-8th) *1pm: Brown Bag—Fellowship Hall*	**Monday, November 16** *8:15am-3:30pm: Bluebird Montessori* 9am: Food Pantry Organizing—Fellowship Hall *11:30am: Brown Bag—Fellowship Hall* Lunchtime Book Group – Marvin Lounge *3:45pm: Music Lesson – Sanctuary* *5:30pm: Nepali Wedding Prep – Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall* 6pm: Hospitality Committee – Marvin Lounge
Tuesday, November 17 *8am-7pm: Nepali Wedding – Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall, Kitchen* *8:15am-3:30pm: Bluebird Montessori* 8:30: Sermon Talkback—Marvin Lounge/Zoom 10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop *11:30am: Brown Bag – Marvin Lounge* 3:30pm: Food Pantry Committee – Marvin Lounge 5:30pm: Finance Committee – Marvin Lounge 7pm: Christian Formation – Marvin Lounge Communications – 2nd Floor Program Room Trustees – West Wing	**Wednesday, November 18** 8am: Food Bank Delivery – Fellowship Hall *8:15am-3:30pm: Bluebird Montessori* *10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall* Missions Committee – Marvin Lounge *11:30am: Brown Bag—Fellowship Hall* *3pm: Highland Dance Class – Gym* 5:30pm: Finally @ First Rehearsal – Sanctuary *Cub Scouts Pack 630 – Fellowship Hall* 7pm: Searchers – Marvin Lounge *BSA Troop 624 – Fellowship Hall*
Thursday, November 19 *8:15am-3:30pm: Bluebird Montessori* 8:30am: Food Pantry Set Up – Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, Storage Rooms *10:30am: Music Lesson – Sanctuary* *11:30am: Brown Bag—Marvin Lounge* 3-6pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop Food Pantry Distribution – Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, Sanctuary *5:30pm: Reiki Share – Marvin Lounge* *6pm: Music Lesson—Sanctuary* 7pm: Choir Rehearsal – Sanctuary	**Friday, November 20** 8am: Coffee Clatter—Martone's Deli *8:15am-3:30pm: Bluebird Montessori* *10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall* *Music Lesson - Sanctuary* *11:30am: Brown Bag—Fellowship Hall* 1:30pm: Bridge Group – Marvin Lounge *7pm: Burlington Amateur Radio Club – Marvin Lounge*
Saturday, November 21 *8am: The Vine Nepali Congregation—Sanctuary* *Give It a Go Support Group – Marvin Lounge* *8:30am: Weight Loss Support Group – Fellowship Hall* 10am-1pm: Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop *1pm: Brown Bag – Fellowship Hall* *GMKCS – Gym, 3rd Floor, Program Room*	**Sunday, November 22** 8:30* & 10:15am: Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming* 10:30am: Peer Groups (PreK-8th) *1pm: Brown Bag—Fellowship Hall* 2:30pm: Lyn Beliveau Celebration of Life – Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall, Kitchen

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 – stephfield87@gmail.com
Finally @ First Director: Rick Dooley – rickdooley5@gmail.com
Men At First Director: Bill Bickford Jr. – bill.bickford@aol.com

Officers

President: Terry Stein – terryrobertstein@gmail.com
Vice President: Kathryn Brennan – khbrennan@comcast.net
Financial Secretary: Ann Gray [finances@fccej.org]
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Assistant Clerk: Brenda Dawson – bkdvermont@gmail.com
Historian: Ann Gray – grayann8@aol.com
Internal Auditors: Dan Petherbridge, Alan Kinney

Committee Chairs

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