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

The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction

Christ the King Sunday
November 22, 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

Prelude *Canon in D* Johann Pachelbel

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 *Every Time I Feel the Spirit* African-American Spiritual

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

Leader: Jesus loves us this I know for the Bible tells me so. As your Deacon I affirm this truth and proclaim Christ's love for all of you.

People: Thank you, Jesus, for loving me.

Leader: Jesus sums us both divine command and enlightened human truth by saying that we should Love. As your Deacon, I proclaim that Love is the strongest force in all creation and we preach it in this place.

People: Thank you, Jesus, for teaching us how to live.

Leader: From his birth to his teachings, from his death to his rising, Jesus embodies God's presence of love. Come, let us commit to following our Friend, King, Savior, and Liberator!

Deacon's Prayer of Invocation

Opening Hymn** ***Love Divine, All Loves Excelling **# 43**

Children's Message

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 *Amazing Grace/Pachelbel's Canon* arr. Jean Anne Shafferman

Offering Our Gifts to God

Invitation, Offering and Prayer of Dedication

Musical Offering *Down a Country Lane* (excerpt) Aaron Copland

***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.

Sermon *Responding to the Gift* Rev. Mendes

During the Sermon, Rev. Mark will remind us of the many ways that Jesus comes to us and makes our world come alive. Rev. Mark will then invite anyone who feels called to affirm some facet of Christ in their lives to come forward and renew their devotion to Jesus; it may be his teaching, his acceptance of you as you are, his passion for social justice or simply his mystical presence in your life. Come forward and be anointed, blessed, baptized, or take a copy of his great commandment on a cross. As people come up, those seated will sing……..

 # 506 What a Friend We Have in Jesus
 # 132 Joy to the World
 # 217 All Glory, Laud and Honor
 # 193 In The Cross of Christ I Glory
 # 233 Christ the Lord Is Risen Today

Pastoral Prayer

Sharing Our Prayers with God and Each Other

A Time of Silence for Personal Prayer

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.**

Musical Response ***Threefold Amen*** **# 590**

Hymn** ***Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine **# 473**

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 *Promenade* from *Pictures at an Exhibition* Modest Moussorgsky

*Please stand if you are able.

❖ Sincere appreciation to Bethany Blake and the FCCEJ Sanctuary Choir, 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 Sharon Dettenrieder
In memory of Doug Dettenrieder.*

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*
Mike Allen	*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*
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

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 this 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 next 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

Scan the QR code or use this link for Sign-Up Genius:
https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0545A8AB2FAAF58-59862482-giving

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 22 – November 29

Please contact the church office with any changes or corrections

Events in italics = Local Community Groups

Sunday, November 22 8:30* & 10:15am: Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming* 10:30am: Peer Groups (PreK-8th) *1pm: Brown Bag—Marvin Lounge* 2:30pm: Lyn Beliveau Celebration of Life – Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall, Kitchen	**Monday, November 23** 9am: Food Pantry Organizing—Fellowship Hall *11:30am: Brown Bag—Fellowship Hall* *3:45pm: Music Lesson – Sanctuary*
Tuesday, November 24 8:30: Sermon Talkback—Marvin Lounge/Zoom *11:30am: Brown Bag – Marvin Lounge*	**Wednesday, November 25** *10am: Bone Builders—Fellowship Hall* *11:30am: Brown Bag—Fellowship Hall* *3pm: Highland Dance Class – Gym*
Thursday, November 26 **Thanksgiving Day – Church Office Closed** *10am: The Vine Nepali Congregation – Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall, Kitchen* *11:30am: Brown Bag—Marvin Lounge*	**Friday, November 27** **Holiday – Church Office Closed** *11:30am: Brown Bag—Fellowship Hall*
Saturday, November 28 *8am: The Vine Nepali Congregation—Sanctuary* *Give It a Go Support Group – Marvin Lounge* *8:30am: Weight Loss Support Group – Fellowship Hall* *1pm: Brown Bag – Fellowship Hall*	**Sunday, November 29** 8:30* & 10:15am: All Family Worship—Sanctuary & Streaming* *1pm: Brown Bag—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 – 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]
Assistant Financial Secretary: Linda Bogardus – bogarduslinda@gmail.com
Treasurer: Darryl Koch [treasurer@fccej.org]
Assistant Treasurer: Matt McGeary – mattmcgeary@comcast.net
Clerk: Alison Wermer – clwerme@msn.com
Assistant Clerk: Brenda Dawson – bkdvermont@gmail.com
Historian: Ann Gray – grayann8@aol.com
Internal Auditors: Dan Petherbridge, Alan Kinney

Committee Chairs

Christian Formation:
Terri Livak – territls@comcast.net
Communications:
Francis Gravel – francis.gravel@gmail.com
Deacons:
Judy McCullen – jhmccullen@yahoo.com
Bob Driver – pastorbob@fccej.org
Finance & Pastoral Relations:
Kathryn Brennan - khbrennan@comcast.net
Hospitality:
Sue Conti – sueconti@comcast.net
Human Resources:
Terry Stein – terrirobertstein@gmail.com
Missions:
Ann Marie Sullivan – ambs6155@comcast.net
Nominating:
Lauren Starkey – lauren@laurenstarkey.com
Stewardship:
Beth Volker – denverhead@gmail.com
Trustees:
Rob Gibson – rgibsonvt@gmail.com