

As we gather together there is some technical information that most of you already know, but just in case someone doesn't:

The service will be in voice and text.

There is a copy of the service in the red book by the door to the sanctuary. You'll want to grab one of those if you need the YouTube links or want the lyrics for today's worship music.

Speaking of which, worship music will be in the media player.

During the opening piece, please feel free to make any Announcements for the good of the community.

And frequently in my worship service, folk end up dancing right here in the aisles or in the back of the sanctuary, so if the mood strikes you—I say go for it!

GATHERING:

Happy Pride Month, everyone! Today I'm thinking about the Stonewall Inn. It wasn't that long ago, in the grand scheme of things.

My father was in college when the queer community centered around Greenwich Village in New York City decided that enough was enough.

The first time they made their Voice heard, it was a riot.

(Note: This song contains adult words. But they are the right words.)

<https://youtu.be/ixZDTiXiHsc>, "Riot" ~Three Days Grace

If you feel so empty

So used up, so let down

If you feel so angry

So ripped off, so stepped on

You're not the only one refusing to back down

You're not the only one, so get up

Let's start a riot

A riot

Let's start a riot

Let's start a riot

A riot

Let's start a riot

If you feel so filthy

So dirty, so fucked up

If you feel so walked on

So painful, so pissed off

You're not the only one refusing to go down

You're not the only one, so get up

Let's start a riot

A riot

Let's start a riot

Let's start a riot

A riot

Let's start a riot

If you feel so empty

So used up, so let down

If you feel so angry

Just get up

Let's start a riot

A riot

Let's start a riot

Let's start a riot

A riot

Let's start a riot

Let's start a riot

A riot

Let's start a riot

A riot

Let's start a riot

A riot

Let's start a riot

Let's start a riot

A riot

Let's start a riot

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Most churches have a time of offering.

Making an offering, sharing what you can in God's name, is a spiritual practice.

That offering can be one of prayer or of presence,

of work on behalf of the church doing things like reading scripture or serving on the board of directors,

of helping with any of the many things that are needed for the church to function, and/or, that offering can be one of money.

As a UCC church, we support the work of the wider church both with prayer and with donations.

And it's true that we don't have a physical building, but there are monetary costs for this ministry to function.

So if you would like to make an offering by participating in leading worship or social events,

or if you would like to become a member of this church,

let any clergy or staff member know.

If you would like to make a financial offering to support this ministry there is a donation bowl by the door to the sanctuary,

or if you prefer you can make a donation in RL currency on our website:

www.firstuccsl.org

And since we are a 501(c)(3) public charity, monetary donations are tax deductible in the U.S.

We thank you for the blessing of your presence and your offering of support.

WELCOME

Welcome to First United Church of Christ and Conference Center, Second Life.

We have official standing with the Eastern Association of the Southern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ as a Real Life church located in Second Life.

And I still think that's pretty cool, because I have sat in South Central Pennsylvania—I have sat in Northern Maine—

and I am currently sitting in Central Connecticut—

and I still think it's pretty cool that we can partner with my brothers and sisters and non-binary siblings all across the country

and all of you wherever you are!

Speaking of wherever you are:

"No matter who you are,

or where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here."

SCRIPTURE

Luke 19:28-40

After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying,

'Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden.

Untie it and bring it here.

If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" just say this: "The Lord needs it." '

So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them.

As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, 'Why are you untying the colt?'

They said, 'The Lord needs it.'

Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it.

As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road.

As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying,

'Blessed is the king

who comes in the name of the Lord!

Peace in heaven,

and glory in the highest heaven!'

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, order your disciples to stop.'

He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.'

Acts 4:5-22

The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family.

When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, 'By what power or by what name did you do this?'

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them,

'Rulers of the people and elders, if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead.

This Jesus is

"the stone that was rejected by you, the builders;

it has become the cornerstone."

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.'

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed and recognized them as companions of Jesus.

When they saw the man who had been cured standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition.

So they ordered them to leave the council while they discussed the matter with one another.

They said, 'What will we do with them? For it is obvious to all who live in Jerusalem that a notable sign has been done through them; we cannot deny it.

But to keep it from spreading further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.'

So they called them and ordered them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

But Peter and John answered them, 'Whether it is right in God's sight to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard.'

After threatening them again, they let them go, finding no way to punish them because of the people, for all of them praised God for what had happened.

SERMON "Quiet & Respectful—A Pride Sermon"

Happy Pride, everyone! It's still Pride month, and I'm still thinking about what that means for the LGBTQ+ community. I'm still pondering what it means to be a proudly queer Christian.

Last week I talked about the sin of pride, and how that is very different than what the queer community means when we talk about Pride.

To be honest, I feel like I'm preaching to the choir a little bit!

But there's another barrier to Pride that's more subtle. It feels more reasonable.

And it is maybe something that you feel—and it's certainly something we've seen in American culture in recent years that needs to be talked about.

Maybe you haven't noticed, because we tend to pick a new source and stick with it—but whether you call a gathering of people a protest or a riot seems to depend entirely on who's looking at it from the outside.

Black Lives Matters: Protest or Riot?

January 20th: Insurrection or Protest?

Depends on who's speaking, right? Depends on one's politics.

I'm constantly reminded of Pontius Pilate asking Jesus "What is truth?"

And it seems to me that if you don't want your movement, your march, your protest to be blasted as a riot, you have to find some way to play it completely safe.

We not only have to be safe in truth, but perceived as safe, right?

We have to be quiet and respectful.

I have to push back on that.

Yes, we need to be respectful.

Especially as Christians! Love and respect is central to what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

But quiet does not equal respectful.

Quiet is not the Christian way.

You can see this most clearly in Luke / Acts, which were written by the same author.

It is in Luke that we find the Pharisees telling Jesus to make his disciples be quiet as their protest march wound its way into Jerusalem.

No.

Can't be done.

It is in Acts that we find the Priesthood telling Peter and John to keep the name of Jesus out of their mouths—be quiet!

No!

Can't be done.

Followers of Jesus are not quiet. We're not quiet. No. Can't be done!

It was not that long ago that the queer community was "living in the shadows," as Father Shannon Kearns puts it:

"...forced to live and love in secret.

And yet they persisted in creating a community, caring for one another, looking out for each other, and organizing in the shadows.

Until that fateful night at the Stonewall Inn; the night that changed everything and pushed the underground community into the limelight.

The first Pride Parade was a riot.

The Stonewall Inn was located in the heart of the village in New York City.

It was a seedy, grimy bar.

It was frequented by street kids, lower class workers, and transgender people.

The bar was routinely raided and the customers harassed by police.

On June 28th 1969, in the early hours of the morning, another raid occurred.

But this time the patrons of the bar decided they had had enough.

This time they refused to scatter.

And when the police finally chased them away, they came back with even more people the next night, and the next, and the next.

For six days they rallied and marched and shouted.

They said, enough is enough.

We will not be silent anymore."

But that was then, right? Surely in today's day and age—

I can't even finish that sentence. No. Not hardly.

Surely where you live in Central Connecticut, though, Jamie—

No. Not hardly.

According to NBC news, "Police in Middletown are looking for a person accused of smearing feces on several homes and cars in town this week."

You heard that right: feces.

Furthermore, "Police said a racial slur was smeared with feces on the back window of a private car," and "Police said each victim had a Pride flag prominently displayed on their property."

Now, maybe I'm jumping to conclusions, but—

Actually, wait a minute. Wait a minute.

Is it just me, or is 'feces' an anemic word for the vandalism we're talking about?

Does anybody mind my using real language to talk about this for a minute?

Let me know now and I can censor myself...

Alrighty, then. Preaching in the vernacular:

"Police said a racial slur was smeared with feces on the back window of a private car," and "Police said each victim had a Pride flag prominently displayed on their property."

Now maybe I'm jumping to conclusions, but to me that sounds like somebody literally

shitting on our Right to Free Speech—on our Pride.

What a cowardly way to tell us to be quiet!

But guess what?

No. Can't be done.

Followers of Jesus could not be silenced by the Pharisees as they marched into Jerusalem.

Followers of Jesus could not be silenced by the Priests as they preached the Good News.

And followers of Jesus can not be silenced as we march for Pride—as we chant, as we yell, as we scream, as we sing the Truth:

“...that our uniqueness as LGBTQ people is not something to be hidden or assimilated, but is instead something to be cherished and celebrated.

May we remember who we come from: Both as followers of Jesus and as LGBTQ people: From revolutionaries and rabble rousers, from the poor and those living in occupied lands, from the fierce and the feisty, from the bold and courageous.

And may we speak and fight and work for liberation.” (Father Shannon Kearns)

What do you say? Amen?

PRAYER PREPARATION:

I'm going to include the full lyrics of this song in local chat because I know I've never really absorbed them.

Please take the time to read along and see how it hits you as we move into Prayer time.

https://youtu.be/a01QQZyl-_I, “Under Pressure” ~Queen and David Bowie

Pressure pushing down on me

Pressing down on you no man ask for

Under pressure - that burns a building down

Splits a family in two

Puts people on streets

It's the terror of knowing

What this world is about

Watching some good friends

Screaming let me out

Pray tomorrow - gets me higher

Pressure on people - people on streets

Chippin' around - kick my brains around the floor

There are the days it never rains but it pours

People on streets - people on streets

It's the terror of knowing

What this world is about

Watching some good friends

Screaming let me out

Pray tomorrow - gets me higher

Pressure on people - people on streets

Turned away from it all like a blind man

Sat on a fence but it don't work

Keep coming up with love but it's so slashed and torn

Why - why - why

Love

Insanity laughs under pressure we're cracking

Can't we give ourselves one more chance
Why can't we give love one more chance
Why can't we give love
Cause love's such an old fashioned word
And love dares you to care for
The people on the edge of the night
And love dares you to change our way of
Caring about ourselves
This is our last dance
This is our last dance
This is ourselves
Under pressure
Under pressure
Pressure

We have come to our time in worship that I really do believe is the core of what we do here together, and that is where we uplift our joys and concerns with one another in prayer.

And so I would like to invite you to enter this time of prayer with a sense of reverence.

We're about to enter into a conversation with God, and that shouldn't be done lightly,

but rather "... with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"
(Ephesians 4:2-3)

Please type your prayers into chat, or if you need to use voice simply emote raising your hand so everybody can have a voice.

And as we pray together, you may wish to respond to others with words like, "God hear our prayer," or with any other words the Spirit leads to you use.

COMMUNITY PRAYER

If there was a prayer inside of you that you couldn't quite get out, it's ok.

Because the Psalmist tells us that God knows what we are going to say before the words can even form on our tongues.

And so we know.

We _ know _ that God has heard our prayers. Those spoken out loud, those typed into SL chat, and those spoken only in the silence of our hearts.

And that we pray them in the name of the Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

LISTEN!

We have done a lot of talking. Let us take a moment of silence to listen to what God might be saying.

Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening...

PASTORAL PRAYER: Prayer for Father's Day

Abba God, we come to You on this day knowing that it may be a difficult day, for those who are missing their fathers and for those who have difficult relationships,

for those who are estranged and for those who never knew their fathers.
We thank You for those fathers who demonstrate Your love, and for stepdads, uncles,
coaches, grandpas, teachers and neighbors.
We thank You that we know Your love like a father to Jesus Christ, who called You
"Abba."
Abba God, may we know Your love surpasses our human understanding and that You are
beyond gender, but You love us, Your children, far beyond what we can comprehend or
imagine.
Abba God, may we draw closer to You, to abide in You as Jesus abides in us, and it
is in Your Son's name that we pray.
Amen. (Rev-o-lution Resources by Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell
<http://rev-o-lution.org>, (c) 2021. Used by permission.)

BENEDICTION:

And now it really is just this simple:
God loves you.
So, don't forget to love each other.
Go with God.
Go in Peace.
And amen!

CLOSING:

It's not only the queer community who needs to raise their voices. We can't do this
alone.
And there is still so much work to be done.
The SL Pride imagery this year bears the words, "Not Going Back / Not Backing Down."
Or, as this piece puts it, "We're undefeated, bent but not broken."
<https://youtu.be/xXcCvoqEaUE>, "Undefeated" ~Incubus
Could there be another universe?
One that wasn't always out to getcha?
And it breaks my heart a little bit
That here I'm like a sleepwalker
Half alive and hanging by a thread
I'm not dead yet
I'm not dead yet, no
I'm bent but not broken
And I'm not dead yet, no
Yeah
Maybe there's a poem in reverse
Spoken and it holds me out forever
Man it breaks my heart a little bit
But love is like a blind archer
Tryin' to shoot an apple off my head
I'm not dead yet
I'm not dead yet, no
I'm bent but not broken
And I'm not dead yet
Not yet
We're undefeated, bent but not broken
No they ain't seen nothing yet

We're undefeated, bent but not broken
Not dead yet
We're undefeated, bent but not broken
No they ain't seen nothing yet
We're undefeated, bent but not broken
I'm not dead yet
I'm not dead yet, no
I'm bent but not broken
And I'm not dead yet (ooh)
I'm not dead yet (ooh)
I'm not dead yet (ooh)
I'm bent but not broken (ooh)
And I'm not dead yet (ooh)
No

end