

WELCOME

Thank you for coming!
I'm so glad to be here with you tonight midway
through the week.

My name is Rev. Yadi Martinez-Reyna, I'm one of the Pastors here. Today I'm covering
for my sibling Rev. Jamie.

It gives me great joy to tell you that
First United Church of Christ and Conference Center is a church with full real life
standing in the Eastern Association;
Southern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC).

And anyone you see with a "Minister" tag is an ordained UCC minister in real life.
As we like to say, it's good to be real in Second Life!
And as a real UCC church, we'd like you to know that
"No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here."

Our service will be in voice and text.
Music and videos clips will be on the media viewer, so be sure that you have voice
and media turned on.
If you don't know how to do that, let someone know and we'll try to help.

There will be a link in Nearby so you can watch it in your browser if the viewer
isn't working for you.
If you would like a bulletin for today's service, you can find it in the red binder
in the back.

And there is a donation bowl near the door of the Sanctuary
or if you prefer you can donate 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.
One of the blessings and responsibilities that come with
our being a real church with real standing in our
denomination is that we, like all UCC churches, support
the work of the wider denomination not only with prayer
but financially.

So, we greatly appreciate any offering you can make to support this ministry. If
there are any announcements
about the life of the church, please type them in Nearby Chat during our Gathering
Music.

So now, let us remember that where two or three are gathered our God is there.
Amen.

GATHERING MUSIC

Something Just like this (Cover by Color Music choir)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2LBBaD1aQuw>

May the Younglings lead us into a world of something we can believe in.
Today's service will be a bit different because I want to invite you to join in our collective reflection of today's message.

Today, we are going to enter the vault of a book study a series I created during my internship here at First UCC in Second Life that meshed pop-culture with the scriptures.

A place where I invite you to dive in beyond the binary world of good vs evil, strong vs. weak. Today I invite you to dive into the text we are about to read, the clips of movie we are about to see.

I will invite you to connect, dissect, and explore together as a community of faith. I am going to invite you in different areas of this reflection to share your thoughts in text.

We want you to feel comfortable as we jump into the world of Wonder Women, a 2017 American Superhero film based on the DC Comics character of the same name, produced by DC Entertainment.

As I play this clip feel to type in the chat box what this back story of Wonder Women reminds you about.

The Story of Ares | Wonder Woman
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7XrrZlRciM>

This story reminds me of creation from other cultures view.
When the queen says "from clay I sculpted you" it reminded me of Some creation stories I have heard about gods making humankind.

SCRIPTURE

Ezekiel 28:16-17

"In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned; so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and the guardian cherub drove you out from among the stones of fire. Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground;"

This reading is about the fallen city of Tyre.
But I could see a comparison to Ares falling to that to the city of Tyre in

Both the book of Ezekiel and Isaiah.

See Tyre was among the ten nations that conspire against the people of God.

So Tyre fell and in this clip evil fell and humanity is falling.

The movie goes on to show how Wonder Woman who is known as Diane goes on a mission to capture this evil god.

She believes that if evil can be contained then peace can be restored.
Can evil be contained?

When I think about humanity and how divided the nation has become, I don't believe it can be.

A nation that is sitting on a political balance of power in the United States.

A time when the complicated way of seeing beyond the binaries makes some people mad.

I believe it is easier to find someone to blame.

In this next clip Aires says to Diane

"I am not your enemy. I'm the one who truly knows them..."

Diane comes to the realization that Aires was not pulling any strings. Perhaps he was fueling the anger, and hate.

Humanity was doing what humanity does, in Aires words

"Humanity has always been weak, cruel, selfish, and capable of the greatest horrors."

As this clip plays what comes to your mind?

Can humanity be persuaded to act differently?

Only a god can kill another god | Wonder Woman [+Subtitles]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8A9UAqA4Ks>

If the Holy-One- was truly to give humanity what we deserved, we would never have life on earth.

In this movie we see sacrifice, resilience and humanity rise to the occasion. No matter how much this god like says "humans are unworthy, they are destructive..."

It is easy to see darkness when light is far away.

For those of us who have faced violence in the past we know that evil exists.

We are not naïve to the concept of being safe and taking care of our families. Jesus said in Matthew 10:16

"See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."

We are not naïve to believe that humanity is harmless but then how do we hold on to the belief that they are redeemable?

As I play the next clip I would like to invite you to reflect and respond in chat if you would like to share with others:

How do we hold on to hope as a community?

How do you hold on to hope?

Diane says, "You wrong about them. They are everything you say but so much more"

Diana vs. Ares

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCD0iyXhS1w&list=RDQM5fEBn1C3bqc&index=8>

1 John 4:8 says, "But anyone who does not love does NOT know God, for God is love."

Grace is not about what we deserve or not it is about the essence of the One who loved and love us.

Diane says "It is not about what they deserve"
"its about what they believe" and she ends this by saying
"and I believe in love."

In the messiness of our world, and our lives let us hold
on to love. Society can be cruel and fuel our anger,
and fear into a destructive life.

But let us remind each other to hold on to Love.
I mean maybe the world did not deserve Jesus or even
our kindness at times.

This movie invited me to reflect on how we all have the ability to respond and
react with what energy we fuel.

May our passion be fuel with knowing that regardless of anything we do, have done or
will do.....God's got our back and we are loved.

Amen.

PRAYER PREPARATION:

We have come to the time where we come together in prayer.
As this song plays, please type your joys and prayer request.

Song:

Colton Dixon- Build a Boat

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjaKKAsQc34>

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.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Holy God,

We struggle with a world that can be frightening.

But we come to You in prayer, knowing You are with us, as we

Pray for our city.

Pray for the grieving and the broken-hearted.

Pray for justice.

Pray for Black Lives to really matter.

Pray for no more death.

Pray that we listen.

Pray that we learn.

Come, Holy Spirit, Come.

Set our hearts on fire.

Now lets us Dance!

Never give up and believe...

Imagine Dragons - Believer (Thunder) | Cover by One Voice Children's Choir

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUQheX3PSnY>

May you continue to believe in the grace,
in the wisdom of being innocent but also wise.

Above all may love light the way and fuel your heart with a passion to be an advocate for those in the margins.

Peace be with you!