

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.

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:

In today's sermon I reference the work of Willing Bridges.

This video is a quick summary of that work. I hope you find it helpful.

<https://youtu.be/Dd7jmrAYZWo>, "Change Model: Bridges Transition Model" ~Confident Change

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."

Most churches have a time of offering.

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

You can find out more about how you can engage in that practice below:

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](http://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.

#### SCRIPTURE

Exodus 16:1-16:31 & 17:1-7

The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.

The Israelites said to them, 'If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.'

Then the Lord said to Moses, 'I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day.

In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not.

On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days.'

So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, 'In the evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your complaining against the Lord.

For what are we, that you complain against us?'

And Moses said, 'When the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the Lord has heard the complaining that you utter against him—what are we?

Your complaining is not against us but against the Lord.'

Then Moses said to Aaron, 'Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, "Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining." '

And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked towards the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.

The Lord spoke to Moses and said, 'I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, "At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God." '

In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp.

When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground.

When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, 'What is it?' For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, 'It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat.

This is what the Lord has commanded:

"Gather as much of it as each of you needs, an omer to a person according to the number of persons, all providing for those in their own tents." '

The Israelites did so, some gathering more, some less.

But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them needed.

And Moses said to them, 'Let no one leave any of it over until morning.'

But they did not listen to Moses; some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul.

And Moses was angry with them.

Morning by morning they gathered it, as much as each needed; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

On the sixth day they gathered twice as much food, two omers apiece.

When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, he said to them, 'This is what the Lord has commanded:

"Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy sabbath to the Lord; bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning." '

So they put it aside until morning, as Moses commanded them; and it did not become foul, and there were no worms in it.

Moses said, 'Eat it today, for today is a sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field.

For six days you shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is a sabbath, there will be none.'

On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, and they found none.

The Lord said to Moses, 'How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and instructions?

See! The Lord has given you the sabbath, therefore on the sixth day he gives you food for two days; each of you stay where you are; do not leave your place on the seventh day.'

So the people rested on the seventh day.

The house of Israel called it manna; it was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.

From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded.

They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink.

The people quarreled with Moses, and said, 'Give us water to drink.'

Moses said to them, 'Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?'

But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said,

'Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?'

So Moses cried out to the Lord,

'What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.'

The Lord said to Moses, 'Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.

I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb.

Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.'

Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.

He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying,

'Is the Lord among us or not?'

SERMON "Changes"

Last week I tried something a little bit different—we had a conversational service:

I started with a brief line of scripture, we sat down and talked with each other about this particular service, and then ended in prayer.

That one verse from scripture came from the prophet Isaiah 43:19, "I am about to do

a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”  
We had a great conversation! But at the end of the service, one of you asked me,  
“Are you gathering this feedback because a change is coming? Or is your work  
schedule still all over the place? Enquiring minds want to know!”

Now here’s an interesting thing, I think—in my memory, the question as “Are you  
gathering this feedback because a big change is coming?”  
Looking back at the chat log, I do not see the word “big,” which makes my response a  
little off the mark, “There aren't any huge changes coming...”  
Why did I do that? Why did I ‘hear’ “big” changes? And why did I start off by  
trying to soften the idea of changes—nothing huge, I promise!  
A quick side note—this kind of self-reflection is something that I think we should  
all do every so often. When was the last time you asked yourself, “Why did I do  
that?”

Anyway, I think that I responded the way I did because my experience of communities  
experiencing change is that they hate it.

We hate change. We hate it.

Notice I say “we.” I don’t like changes much, either.

I think if we’re honest with ourselves, we can all identify with the Hebrew people  
in the wilderness saying, “Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our  
children and livestock with thirst?”

Deliver us from slavery and that’s the thanks we give!

Because we hate change.

So when someone asked, “Are changes coming?” my knee-jerk reaction was to say,  
“DON’T PANIC!” but in prettier words.

Because the truth is that we can hate it all we want, but we can’t avoid change.  
Change is going to happen.

The question for anybody, no matter what their spirituality or religion, is not “Is  
a change coming?”

Spoiler Alert: Change is always coming.

No, the question is, “How are we going to respond to change?”

According to author and organizational consultant William Bridges, the psychological  
work that must be done in response to change is transition:

“...change is situational.

Transition, on the other hand, is psychological.

It is not those events, but rather the inner reorientation and self-redefinition  
that you have to go through in order to incorporate any of those changes into your  
life.”

In other words, change happens to you—and then if you do the work of transition, you  
can creatively incorporate those changes into your life in positive ways.

That’s what I want for us as a community!

I want us to be able to intentionally respond to change creatively and positively!

I want us to do the work of transition.

So what changes am I talking about?

Well, several things have changed over the past few years:

Pastor Jer stepped down as Senior Pastor.

I stopped serving brick and mortar churches, dedicated myself to becoming a hospital  
Chaplain, and came out of the closet as a Non-Binary (Gender Fluid) person.

Pastor Kris has gone back to school.

And the church has extended a call to Pastor Yadi to be an official pastor of this church.

These are all pretty big changes—but let's be honest with ourselves—they aren't slavery to freedom changes.

They aren't "What will we drink? What will we eat?" changes.

But they do call for some intentional transition—and I refuse to do that without you.

And now that I've solicited feedback from all of you, and from the other clergy who serve alongside you, I have an announcement:

I'm going to try something just a little bit different. As I said before, it's not a huge change. And it has taken into account all that I've learned from you.

I'm going to try moving this service from Thursday nights to Friday nights, starting next week.

The truth is that all of your clergy's schedules have changed in ways that have been making Thursday nights increasingly difficult to work with—and Friday quite a bit easier.

At least one of you stated that it is important for this service to be on a weekday, and Friday is the only other weekday that works.

And we hope to revitalize our old tradition of having social / fellowship time after the weekday service, and we believe that Fridays might be a good time for that.

On that note: If you know—or are—someone who is willing and able to share the gift of music with us on a random Friday night, please let myself or another staff member know!

One last thing—I already pointed out that we're not talking about life-or-death ideas here.

If it turns out that Friday nights are some kind of disaster that I'm not foreseeing—no big deal.

We can always change back to Thursdays again, if need be.

I just ask us to give it a solid chance, first.

What do you say?

Amen?

#### PRAYER PREPARATION:

I discovered this band through a high school buddy who found them at a low point in his life.

He found them to be a bright counterpoint to that dark moment, and I'm forever grateful that he chose to share them with me.

Pay special attention to this line:

"For the first time in my life I'm not afraid, cause there's nothing in this world that doesn't change."

<https://youtu.be/LejEjFxiRUQ>, "Goodnight" ~Zox

Goodnight

To the city and the sea

To the strangers in the street

Goodnight

To the ghosts out in the hall

The paint peelin' off the walls

Goodnight

Sometimes I

Stand between the sidewalk and the sky  
And just stare into the clouds as they pass by  
You have to leave the ground to learn to fly  
Goodnight  
To the TV and the clocks  
To the rain that never stops  
Goodnight  
To everyone I know  
Shut my eyes and let 'em go  
Goodnight  
Sometimes I  
Stand between the sidewalk and the sky  
And just stare into the clouds as they pass by  
You have to leave the ground to learn to fly  
There is something beautiful  
Dying everyday  
For the first time in my life I'm not afraid  
'Cause there's nothing in this world that doesn't change  
And goodnight  
To the person I have been  
To the place that I am in  
Goodnight  
Tomorrow hello to the sun  
Are you ready? Here I come  
Goodnight  
Sometimes I  
Stand between the sidewalk and the sky  
And just stare into the clouds as they pass by  
You have to leave the ground to learn to fly  
You have to leave the ground to learn to fly

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

Spirit of Life, guide us into practices that draw us closer to You, rather than the ways of this world.

Teach us how to pray.

Teach us how to seek You.

Lead us into the ways of justice and mercy.

Call us into times of reflection and speak to us in the ways that help us follow You.

May we not spend only one hour a week, but every moment, every breath, in gratitude for You, our Maker, Redeemer, and Sustainer.

Guide us on this journey of faith and life.

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:

In closing, I invite you to "Turn and face the strange"

<https://youtu.be/pl3vxEudif8>, "Changes" ~David Bowie

Still don't know what I was waiting for

And my time was running wild, a million dead-end streets and

Every time I thought I'd got it made

It seemed the taste was not so sweet

So I turned myself to face me

But I've never caught a glimpse

Of how the others must see the faker

I'm much too fast to take that test

Ch-ch-ch-ch-changes (Turn and face the strange)

Ch-ch-changes, don't want to be a richer man

Ch-ch-ch-ch-changes (Turn and face the strange)

Ch-ch-changes, just gonna have to be a different man

Time may change me  
But I can't trace time  
Oh yeah  
I watch the ripples change their size  
But never leave the stream of warm impermanence and  
So the days float through my eyes  
But still the days seem the same  
And these children that you spit on  
As they try to change their worlds  
Are immune to your consultations  
They're quite aware of what they're going through  
Ch-ch-ch-ch-changes (Turn and face the strange)  
Ch-ch-changes, don't tell them to grow up and out of it  
Ch-ch-ch-ch-changes (Turn and face the strange)  
Ch-ch-changes, where's your shame?  
You've left us up to our necks in it  
Time may change me  
But you can't trace time  
Strange fascination, fascinating me  
Ah, changes are taking the pace I'm going through  
Ch-ch-ch-ch-changes (turn and face the strange)  
Ch-ch-changes, oh, look out you rock 'n rollers  
Ch-ch-ch-ch-changes (turn and face the strange)  
Ch-ch-changes, pretty soon now you're gonna get older  
Time may change me  
But I can't trace time  
I said that time may change me  
But I can't trace time

\*end\*