

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:

I do have one announcement that I feel is exciting enough to say in voice—and that is that one of my colleagues has been doing some very cool work with her patients, collecting their stories.

Today, she announced that they have organized those stories into a podcast called “In the Midst of It All” and I humbly request that you support them in this endeavor.

(<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/in-the-midst-of-it-all/id1684561596>)

The best way to support the podcast right now is to subscribe to it, write a review, and share it with your friends on social media.

The point of the podcast is to remind you that no matter what you're going through, you are not alone.

Today's service is in many ways about shame, so I thought that I'd start us off with my favorite shame song.

Fair warning! This song features one use of an “adult word.” But I think—or at least hope!—you'll agree that in this context, it's the right word.

https://youtu.be/HKqUglOC3_8, “Shame On You” ~Indigo Girls

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.

My friends they wash the windows
And they shine in the sun
They tell me, "Wake up early in the morning sometime
See what a beautiful job we done"
I say, "Let's put on some tunes
Sing along and Doolittle all day"
Go down to the riverside, take off our shoes
And wash these sins away
The river said
"La la la"
It said, "Shame on you"
The river said
"La la la"
It said, "Shame on you"
I go down to Chicano city park
Because it makes me feel so fine
And when the weeds go down you can see up close
In the dead of the winter time
But when the summer comes everything's in bloom
And you wouldn't know it's there
And white folks like to pretend it's not
But their music's in the air
You can hear them singing
"La la la"
They said, "Shame on you"
You can feel them dancing
"La la la"
They said, "Shame on you"
My friend Tanner she says, "You know
Me and Jesus we're of the same heart
The only thing that keeps us distant
Is that I keep fuckin' up"
I said, "Come on down to Chicano city park
And wash your blues away"
The beautiful ladies walk right by
You know I never know what to say
And they'll be singing
"Ooh la la la la la la la la, shame on you"
And they'll be dancing
Ooh la la la, they said, "Shame on you
Shame on you"
Let's go road block trippin' in the middle of the night
Up in Gainesville town
There'll be blue lights flashing down the long dirt road
When they ask me to step out
They say, "We be looking for illegal immigrants
Can we check your car"
I say, "You know it's funny

I think we were on the same boat back in 1694"
And I said
"Ooh la la la la la la la la la, shame on you"
They'll be dancing
La la la I said, "Shame on you"
I said
"Ooh la la la la la la la la la, shame on you
Shame on you, la la
La la la la shame on you"
I said
I said
"La la la shame on you"
I'll be dancing (and they'll be singing)
La la la I said, "Shame on you
Shame on you"
(Gainesville town
(Blue lights flashing down the long dirt road)

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."

I have a colleague whose mother taught her that God works through people.
Absolutely!

In recent years I have noticed God working on me through the work of one particular person—you may have noticed me referencing her in my sermons--Dr. Brené Brown, a Clinical Social worker and research professor at the University of Austin.

This week, it finally occurred to me that maybe I should set my ego aside, sort of step down out of the pulpit for a night, and allow you to experience Dr. Brown the way I first did—and see if God works on you through her, too.

So today I'm going to shift things around, just a little, because the video of Dr. Brown that I want to share is a little bit longer than the amount of time I would usually preach!

And it's worth it.

I hope you'll be able to stay through the whole service, but just in case you have to run out at the end, I want to move up the core of what we do here together, and that is where we uplift our joys and concerns with one another in prayer.

Let us prepare our hearts for prayer.

PRAYER PREPARATION:

I opened with an upbeat song that's about shame. But shame is an emotion, and I find that this song evokes that emotion rather strongly.

<https://youtu.be/suhlSjSzMUk>, "Creep" ~Radiohead (Radio Edit)

When you were here before
Couldn't look you in the eye
You're just like an angel
Your skin makes me cry
You float like a feather
In a beautiful world
I wish I was special
You're so [very] special
But I'm a creep
I'm a weirdo
What the hell am I doin' here?
I don't belong here
I don't care if it hurts
I wanna have control
I want a perfect body
I want a perfect soul
I want you to notice
When I'm not around
So [very] special
I wish I was special
But I'm a creep
I'm a weirdo
What the hell am I doin' here?
I don't belong here
She's running out the door (run)
She's running out
She run, run, run, run
Run
Whatever makes you happy
Whatever you want
You're so [very] special
I wish I was special
But I'm a creep
I'm a weirdo
What the hell am I doin' here?
I don't belong here
I don't belong here

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

God of Oneness, through our ancestors Sarah and Abraham and Hagar, You showed yourself to be the same God no matter where our ancestors wandered, no matter where they called home.

You showed yourself to be the One who knew their pain and suffering under oppression, their loneliness in exile, and the One who helped restore our ancestors when they returned home.

Through Jesus, we know Your oneness in a new way, a oneness with us that outlasts the grave and transcends the world that we know.

Your Oneness was revealed to the early followers of Jesus as they recognized themselves as Your body in Christ, regardless of their culture or ethnicity or gender, or any other way of dividing.

You are One.

You bring us together and bind us as One people.

In all the divisions of the world that we know, may we be united by Your love, across gender, orientation, race, culture, economic status, language, politics— may we recognize Your face in each other and strive to be Your people, Your body, Your love to one another.

Amen. (Rev-o-lution Resources by Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell

<http://rev-o-lution.org>, (c) 2021. Used by permission.)

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 4:10-13

But Moses said to the Lord, 'O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant;

but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.' Then the Lord said to him, 'Who gives speech to mortals?

Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind?

Is it not I, the Lord?

Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak.’
But he said, ‘O my Lord, please send someone else.’

SERMON

<https://youtu.be/iCvmsMz1F7o> "The Power of Vulnerability" ~Brené Brown

I hope that God spoke to you through Dr. Brown tonight.
So I'll ask you what I always ask you: What do you say? Amen?

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:

When Dr. Brown talks about daring greatly, I can't help hearing this song in my head. (Yes, I'm dating myself.)

https://youtu.be/S_xsawAtKi4, "Dare" ~Stan Bush

Sometimes when your hopes have all been shattered
And there's nowhere to turn
You wonder how you keep going (going)
Think of all the things that really mattered
And the chances you've earned
The fire in your heart is growing (growing)
You can fly, if you try, leaving the past behind
Heaven only knows what you might find
Dare, dare to believe you can survive
You hold the future in your hand
Dare, dare to keep all of your dreams alive
It's time to take a stand
And you can win, if you dare
Everybody's trying to break your spirit
Keeping you down
Seems like it's been forever (ever), oh
But there's another voice if you'll just hear it
Saying it's the last round
Looks like it's now or never (never)
Out of the darkness you stumble into the light
Fighting for the things you know are right
Dare, dare to believe you can survive
The power is there at your command
Dare, dare to keep all of your dreams alive
It's time to take a stand
And you can win, if you dare
Dare, dare to believe you can survive
You hold the future in your hand

Dare, dare to keep all of your dreams alive
The power is there at your command, oh
Dare, dare to keep all your love alive
Dare to be all you can be
Dare, there is a place where dreams survive
And it's calling you on to victory
Dare, dare.

end