

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:

Today's service will include some time for us to get into some discussion with one another regarding a video that we watched last week.

Don't panic!

I have the discussion set up in a way that will be accessible whether you were there last week or not.

But part of that video referenced this perfume advertisement, and it's important for you to have the reference, so let's start there!

https://youtu.be/N_kzJ-f5C9U, "I'm A Woman" ~Enjoli Perfume Commercial (1979)

I can put the wash on the line, feed the kids, get dressed, pass out the kisses and get to work by 5 to 9.

'Cause I'm a Woman, Enjoli!

(Announcer): Charles of The Ritz Creates Enjoli. The New 8 Hour Perfume for The 24 Hour Woman.

I can bring home the Bacon!

Chorus: Enjoli.

Fry it up in a Pan!

Chorus: Enjoli.

And Never, Never, Never let you forget You're a Man!

'Cause I'm a Woman!

Chorus: Enjoli!

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

[Please feel free to type announcements for the good of the community into Local Chat.]

–Jamie's Avatar Announcement:

Yes! Jamie has a new avatar for the first time in something like a decade!

They came out of the closet as a non-binary (gender-fluid) person in SL, IRL, and everywhere nearly three years ago,

and they have been going through some changes IRL that they wanted to share with you!

This new avatar, while not a photographic reconstruction by any means, comes a lot closer to how they have been presenting themselves to the world, IRL.

–Offering Announcement:

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.

[Please feel free to type announcements for the good of the community into Local Chat.]

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

1 Samuel 17:33 & 37

Saul said to David, 'You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth.'

...David said, 'The Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine.'

So Saul said to David, 'Go, and may the Lord be with you!'

SERMON OF SHARING: "The Arena"

Last week, we spent some time with Dr. Brené Brown, a Clinical Social worker and research professor at the University of Austin, because in recent years I have noticed God working on me through her work.

Today I would like for us to talk about what we learned from that video together.

Let's start off with this really strong moment in the video where Dr. Brown asks two questions of her audience in rapid succession—so I will, too.

The first is, "How many of you think of vulnerability as synonymous with weakness?"

Please say "Yes" or emote raising your hand if you feel that being vulnerable is

being weak.

Second question: How many of you, when you see other people being vulnerable, experience it pure courage?

Please say “Yes” or emote raising your hand if you see vulnerability in others as courageous.

SHARING

Not only does Dr. Brown teach us that vulnerability is not weakness, she says that it is our most accurate measurement of courage.

And it is the birthplace of creativity, innovation, and change.

So, what keeps us from courage in vulnerability?

If it’s not weakness, what’s keeping us from embracing it?

Dr. Brown says that what stands in our way is shame.

Now, just to be clear, she’s not talking about guilt. The difference between guilt and shame can be summed up this way:

Guilt is, “I made a mistake.”

Shame is “I am a mistake.”

Dr. Brown drew from the famous “Man in the Arena” quote from Theodore Roosevelt, the point of which is to say that the comments from the Peanut Gallery don’t matter—what matters are the actions of the people in the arena.

Win or lose, the people daring greatly are the people who matter.

And then she says, “When you walk up to that arena and you put your hand on the door and you think, ‘I’m going to try this,’ shame is that gremlin who says, ‘Uh-uh, you’re not good enough.’”

I’m tempted to pause here and ask you if that rings true, but honestly—we’ve all felt a little shame.

Well. Unless you’re sociopath, maybe. So it’s my hope and my prayer for you that you’ve felt a little shame!

I think that this may be where the meat of our discussion really lies today, and I have one of you to thank for it!

You see, Dr. Brown argued that shame feels the same for everyone, but that it is organized by gender.

She said that shame for women is based in the underlying message of the Enjoli commercial we watched at the beginning of the service: “Do it all, do it perfectly, and never let them see you sweat.”

And she says that for men, shame is based in the message, “Never appear weak.”

It was at about this time in the video that one of you—I won’t name names—asked in local chat, “Is shame organized by gender? What do you think, Jamie?”

I’ll tell you what I think! But first—what do you think?

SHARING

Thank you for blessing us with your thoughts, feelings, and stories.

I’m going to end this part of worship with a recording of “The Man in the Arena.” And I invite you, when it’s done and if you hear God in it, to say “amen.”

<https://youtu.be/A311CnTjfos>, “The Man in the Arena” ~Theodore Roosevelt (Read by Shane Morris)

PRAYER PREPARATION:

Last week we opened with a scene from the film Gremlins because Dr. Brown uses those vile little creatures as a metaphor for shame— and Gremlins are best defeated by hauling them out into the light.

This song has both sides of that shame coin:

“I wanna hide the truth / I wanna shelter you.”

but also,

“...look into my eyes / It's where my demons hide”

<https://youtu.be/pvrkfb1C4tE>, “Demons” ~Imagine Dragons

When the days are cold

And the cards all fold

And the saints we see are all made of gold

When your dreams all fail

And the ones we hail

Are the worst of all, and the blood's run stale

I wanna hide the truth

I wanna shelter you

But with the beast inside

There's nowhere we can hide

No matter what we breed

We still are made of greed

This is my kingdom come

This is my kingdom come

When you feel my heat, look into my eyes

It's where my demons hide

It's where my demons hide

Don't get too close, it's dark inside

It's where my demons hide

It's where my demons hide

At the curtain's call

It's the last of all

When the lights fade out, all the sinners crawl

So they dug your grave

And the masquerade

Will come calling out at the mess you've made

Don't wanna let you down

But I am hell-bound

Though this is all for you

Don't wanna hide the truth

No matter what we breed

We still are made of greed

This is my kingdom come

This is my kingdom come

When you feel my heat, look into my eyes

It's where my demons hide

It's where my demons hide

Don't get too close, it's dark inside

It's where my demons hide

It's where my demons hide

They say it's what you make

I say it's up to fate

It's woven in my soul
I need to let you go
Your eyes, they shine so bright
I wanna save that light
I can't escape this now
Unless you show me how
When you feel my heat, look into my eyes
It's where my demons hide
It's where my demons hide
Don't get too close, it's dark inside
It's where my demons hide
It's where my demons hide

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

The Ascension is a mystery to us, O God.

We know that Christ is not above us physically, but the oneness You have known from the beginning is the oneness Christ experienced at the Ascension, a oneness we live into as the body of Christ on earth.

It is a mystery how all of us, with all our differences, with all our struggles and

challenges, can be one in You, but You have ordained it so.
Help us to live into the Body of Christ with our diversity of gifts and strengths,
to remember we need one another, and to build each other up.
Christ is our head, we are the body, and we are joined at the heart by our love for
one another.
May we seek to share that love and oneness with the world.
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:

You know that I love sending you out into the worlds with something upbeat.
Which lead me directly to this next song—it is all about daring greatly, being
willing to fail and get back up again, to make mistakes.
But it has a hidden meaning for me.
What feels like a lifetime ago, I created my first Second Life account. (No, this
isn't my first.)
I couldn't have put it into words, then, but I was seeking love and affirmation
about who I am—non-binary and queer in so many ways.
I was absolutely blessed by the fact that the very first community I ran into was a
furry community. They accepted me just as I was and just as I was growing into.
So—this song is also for them.
<https://youtu.be/c6rP-YP4c5I>, "Try Everything" ~Shakira

Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh
Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh
Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh
Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh
I messed up tonight, I lost another fight
Lost to myself, but I'll just start again
I keep falling down, I keep on hitting the ground
I always get up now, see what's next
Birds don't just fly, they fall down and get up
Nobody learns without gettin' it wrong
I won't give up, no, I won't give in
'Til I reach the end, and then I'll start again
No, I won't leave, I wanna try everything
I wanna try even though I could fail
I won't give up, no, I won't give in
'Til I reach the end, and then I'll start again
No, I won't leave, I wanna try everything
I wanna try even though I could fail
Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh

Try everything
Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh
Try everything
Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh
Try everything
Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh
Look how far you've come, you filled your heart with love
Baby, you've done enough, take a deep breath
Don't beat yourself up, no need to run so fast
Sometimes we come last, but we did our best
I won't give up, no, I won't give in
'Til I reach the end, and then I'll start again
No, I won't leave, I wanna try everything
I wanna try even though I could fail
I won't give up, no, I won't give in
'Til I reach the end, and then I'll start again
No, I won't leave, I wanna try everything
I wanna try even though I could fail
I'll keep on making those new mistakes
I'll keep on making them every day
Those new mistakes
Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh
Try everything
Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh
Try everything
Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh
Try everything
Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh
Try everything

end