

WELCOME - Pastor Kris

Thank you for coming!

We're so glad you've chosen to worship with us today.

This is a sacred time, as we gather in community to open our hearts to God.

I invite you to light a candle,

As our candles are lit here in our sanctuary,

to remind us of God's presence with us,

and to set aside this as a time of worship for you.

Our service will be in voice and text.

Music will be on the media viewer, so be sure that you have media turned on. .

There will be a link in Nearby Chat if you want to view the video in your own browser.

I'm going to start our Gathering Music and run the rest of the announcements underneath.

GATHERING MUSIC

"Room at the Table" Carrie Newcomer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=920M5bdQ4N4>

First United Church of Christ and Conference Center Second Life 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 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."

We celebrate God's Love everyday.

and seek to be a place of belonging for those who need it, where all people will be included, accepted and supported in their journey of faith and their struggles in life.

If you would like a bulletin for today's service you can find it in the red binder in the back.

If you would like to make a donation to support this ministry

there is a donation bowl in the back,

or you can go to our website

firstuccsl.org

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

Today we will celebrate holy communion.

All are welcome at the Lord's Table.

You may wish to gather the elements

some bread, a cookie, or cracker,

and something to drink: wine, juice, water, whatever is at hand.

There is no right way to participate,

as long as it helps you feel more connected to God

and to those here and around the world

who share this sacred table with you.

INTRODUCTION - Pastor Kris

Our service today will be a little different than usual.

As we did last year,
we decided to roll our Annual Meeting of the congregation into the worship service.
We do this for several reasons.
First, and most importantly,
Having the "meeting" as an integral part of worship emphasizes the truth
That they are fundamentally the same.
They are both the "work" of the church.
Both are necessary for us as a community.
When we engage in governing the church, we are worshiping God with our actions,
Not just our words, hymns and prayers.
And we need to see that the Spirit is present and working in both worship services
and church business meetings.
The difference is one of style and format, rather than substance.
God is in all of it.

We also recognize that all of us have busy lives,
And for some coming here for a separate meeting,
or staying after the worship service,
can be a hardship.
So combining them has a practical purpose as well.

Lastly, we recognize that all those who come to our services here at First UCC SL
Are important to our church community,
Not just those who have chosen to become members.

So today, interwoven with the traditional elements of our worship service and
moments of quiet reflection,
will be items of the business of the church.
We ask that if you have a First UCC tag, friend, member, staff, minister,
Please wear it.
There will be moments when we will need votes of the congregation.
A quorum is present.
You can vote by standing, and I will count.
Any questions at this time?

Let us begin by a reading of the lectionary Psalm passage for today,: Psalm 133

PSALM 133 (NRSVUE) - Pastor Yadi
How very good and pleasant it is
when kindred live together in unity!
It is like the precious oil on the head,
running down upon the beard,
on the beard of Aaron,
running down over the collar of his robes.
It is like the dew of Hermon,
which falls on the mountains of Zion.
For there the Lord ordained his blessing,
life forevermore.

RECOGNITION OF MEMBERS, CLERGY, BOARD - Joyous Schism

The Psalmist sings of kindred living together in unity.
Unity does not mean uniformity,
but a commitment to be together in relationship and mutual respect.
We are grateful for all those who have made commitments to First UCC SL,
And celebrate that in the presence of those gathered here today.
All are welcome at First UCC SL,
But membership is a commitment to form a deeper connection with our church
community,
To walk this part of their spiritual journey with us.
If you would like to become a members, you let any minister or Doug.
Some members have made further commitments to this community,
to serve this community on the Board of Directors or as one of our volunteer clergy
on our pastoral staff.,
Our Board consists of at least three required members.
and our pastors,
I'm going to ask our current board members present here tonight to stand:
Doug Bagration, President ant Secretary
Robin, Treasurer
Joyous Schism, At large
Rev. Jamie Sanders
Rev. Chris Ng
Rev. Yadi Martinez-Reyna
Under our current by-laws, formal congregational approval is not required to elect
directors.
However, I would ask that everyone please stand at this time in appreciation of the
willingness of these folks to serve God through First UCC SL
and to assent to their representation of this congregation on the Board of Directors
for the upcoming year.
Thank you, you may be seated.

RECOGNITION OF REV. DR. JEROLD GARBER (Jerome Newstart) AS PASTOR EMERITUS - Doug
All of our pastors serve on a volunteer basis, as our church does not have the
income to support regular monetary compensation.
But it is a blessing to be able to serve out a calling to God here in this
community.
Pastor Jer is our Founding Minister,
started this ministry.
Jer built the islands, the buildings,
gardens and landscaping,
leading worship and psalter services starting in 2013.
and led it to become an official authorized church of the United Church of Christ in
November 2016..
As this ministry grew, Jer organized volunteers, served as President of the Board,
staffed a booth at the UCC General Synods,
introducing people to a church with no brick-and-mortar presence,
that existed solely within the virtual universe of Second Life,
Pastor Jer has retired, and stepped back from a formal ministerial role,
and took needed time away on sabbatical,
though not completely away
He has been behind the scenes changing our seasons on the islands

and the liturgical seasons by changing paraments and flowers in this sanctuary. However, he has expressed a desire to return on an occasional basis.

The Board has therefore voted to recommend that this congregation call Rev. Dr. Jerold Garber, known here in SL as Jerome Newstart, as Pastor Emeritus, of First UCC SL.

A Pastor Emeritus has no official responsibilities to this church, and does not sit on the Board of Directors, but is recognized for long service, and may assume whatever duties they feel called to perform, such as preaching and teaching, with the assent of the staff and Board.

For example, Pastor Jer has just begun offering a Bible Study on John, Thursdays at 5pm SLT.

Does anyone have any questions?

If so, you can type them in Nearby Chat.

Does anyone want to make a motion to recognize Pastor Jer as Pastor Emeritus Second? Is there any discussion?

Alright, let us vote on calling Rev. Dr. Jerold Garber as pastor and teacher of First United Church of Christ Second Life.

All in favor, please stand to be counted.

Please sit down.

All opposed, please stand to be counted.

[Doug Announces vote].

PRAYER - Pastor Kris

Let us pause for a moment, to join our hearts in prayer.

God of yesterday, today and tomorrow,

As we gather to reflect on the year past and plan for the future,

We thank you for the work of all those who make this church live,

And ask your blessing on those who have committed to do your work through First UCC SL.

May we all continue to bless and be blessed as we share your light and promise

In Jesus name,

Amen.

“Blessed to be a Blessing” - The Many

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rN05YsQeq8Y&t=28s>

FINANCIAL REPORT - Robin or Doug

Another way we participate in this ministry is through the giving of our financial gifts.

Even though all our pastors are volunteers

and we don't have a physical building

there are still financial costs to be able to provide this ministry.

So we appreciate all those who have blessed us with financial support.

Here is our financial report and present the budget for the coming year.

Will all those who approve of this budget please stand.

Thank you, please sit.

All those opposed please stand.

Thank you.

[Doug announces vote]

PRESIDENT'S REPORT - Doug

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE - Pastor Kris

Worship is a time when we,

as a community,

join our hearts together,

to connect to God and to each other.

So this time is the essence of what we do here together.

If you have a prayer that you wish to lift to God,

and have supported by the energy of those gathered here, type it in Nearby Chat at this time.

As people share their prayers in text

please read them prayerfully

and hold this space as sacred and safe

to open our hearts to God.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers.

Lord hear our prayers.

Those voiced here today.

Those spoken only in the depths of our hearts.

Those for which we have no words.

We lift them all to you, O Lord,

with faith in your boundless love and grace.

We pray all this in the name of the one who taught us to eat and to pray together, saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name.

Thy kin-dom, thy will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us

And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil,

for thine is the kind-dom and the power and the glory forever.

Amen.

"To The Table" Zach Williams

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBKQ8M_kB4

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION - Pastor Kris

The lectionary gospel reading for this Second Sunday of Easter is from the Gospel

according to John.

In fact, the lectionary gives us this same gospel reading every Second Sunday of Easter.

It's that important a story.

Note that I said this is the Second Sunday of Easter, not after Easter.

Easter isn't just one Sunday in the liturgical calendar, it's a whole season, also known as Eastertide.

So our reading today, appropriately, begins on the evening of the First Sunday of Easter.

It was just that morning that the empty tomb was discovered. We are right back there, and things are not all trumpets and joy with the disciples.

This is the story of Thomas and Jesus' first appearances to the male disciples.

Jesus appeared first, if you remember, to women disciples at the tomb.

Let us listen to God speaking through the words of John, chapter 20, verses 19 through 31.

JOHN 20:19-31 - Pastor Yadi

On the evening of that first day of the week,
when the disciples were together,
with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders,
Jesus came and stood among them and said,
"Peace be with you!"

After he said this, he showed them his hands and side.

The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you!

As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

And with that he breathed on them and said,

"Receive the Holy Spirit.

If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven;

if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve,
was not with the disciples when Jesus came.

So the other disciples told him,

"We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them,

"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were,
and put my hand into his side,
I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were in the house again,
and Thomas was with them.

Though the doors were locked,
Jesus came and stood among them and said,

"Peace be with you!"

Then he said to Thomas,

"Put your finger here; see my hands.

Reach out your hand and put it into my side.

Stop doubting and believe."

Thomas said to him,

"My Lord and my God!"

Then Jesus told him,

“Because you have seen me, you have believed;
blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”
Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples,
which are not recorded in this book.
But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of
God,
and that by believing you may have life in his name.

The Word of God for the People of God.
Thanks be to God.

"Crowded Table" - Pastor Kris

Let us pray ...
So where was it that the disciples were gathered,
What house, what locked room?
Scholars, including Diana Butler Bass,
suggest that it was the same upper room
Where they had been with Jesus
To celebrate the Passover meal,
The Last Supper with him,
Just a few days before.
And Jesus shows up,
Not just once, but twice:
The night of Easter Sunday,
And a week later,
When he returned to Thomas could see him too.
Jesus goes from the table, to the cross, to the tomb, and back to the table.
Jesus doesn't go back to the cross,
Or meet the disciples back at Calvary where he was executed.
He never even mentions the events of that bloody Friday,
Beyond showing them his wounds
To reassure them that he was real.
Diana Butler Bass suggests that our Christian emphasis on the cross is misplaced,
That the TABLE is the point.
Christians tend to view the events of the Last Supper through the lens of the cross.
Prefiguring Jesus' crucifixion.
But what if we are supposed to view the crucifixion through the lens of that last
supper?
Not that the cross is unimportant,
But perhaps we have kept our eyes too much on the cross and not enough on the table,
And all that it represents.
Community, connection, liberation, joy!
And God's presence with the people on the journey.
Jesus loved meals,
No wonder so many of the stories of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances where at
tables form meals of various kinds,
With all sorts of people,
just like the tables of other meals in Jesus' earthly life,
not just with disciples but with sinners, tax collectors and ordinary women, men,

and children.

It is at the table that we experience again
God's liberating love and grace for all

And isn't that the message of Easter?

So pull up a chair,

Bring your friends.

No matter how crowded,

There is always room for more,

All are welcome.

When we gather to share a meal,

even if the doors are locked,

Jesus will be there with us.

Amen.

"Bread for the Journey"

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

SHARING THE LORD'S TABLE

So here we are again at the table,

gathered together

at many tables across the world,

that are really one table.

This table is open to all who seek nourishment for the soul.

Come just as you are,

this table is set for you.

Take the elements you have gathered,

hold them in your hand as we pray:

Prince of Peace,

bless this bread, this cup,

may they be vibrant with your presence,

nourishing what is deepest in us.

Amen.

We remember with all Jesus' disciples across time,

that Passover night when Jesus took bread on the table,

blessed it and broke it and shared it

with his disciples, his closest friends and said,

take, eat, and remember me.

Let us eat the bread of life together.

(pause to eat)

And in the same way, he took a cup of wine,

the juice of the vine,

and said this is the cup of blessing,

a new relationship in my blood,

drink, and remember me.

Let us drink this cup of blessing together.

[pause to drink)

Let us pray.
Lord of new life,
we give thanks for the nourishment we receive at your Table.
May it inspire us to move out from the locked doors of our lives
in to the sunlight of a new Easter morning.
Amen.

BLESSING FOR THE JOURNEY - Pastor Yadi
Our worship and our congregational meeting are over
Our ministry to the world is just beginning
The world is waiting
For us to next the next faithful step together
Knowing Jesus walks alongside us.
Go in peace
Come again in hope.
Amen.

“Crowded Table” The Highwomen
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPfI8zBWub4>