

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.

If you get a message stating that the video is unavailable, please toggle media in your viewer; that usually fixes the problem.

During the opening piece, please feel free to make any Announcements for the good of the community.

And frequently in my worship service, folk end up dancing right here with me, in the aisles, or in the back of the sanctuary, so if the mood strikes you—I say go for it!

GATHERING:

As I've been doing the research to preach for Pride Month this year, I've come to have this song stuck in my head.

I don't think she was talking about Harvey Milk and Stonewall when she wrote, "In '77 and '69 revolution was in the air," but she is talking about a kind of musical activism that I can certainly get behind!

[https://youtu.be/n\\_TOHtOTX5g?si=rUK0t33afmpVNCVr](https://youtu.be/n_TOHtOTX5g?si=rUK0t33afmpVNCVr), "I Wish I Was A Punk Rocker (With Flowers In My Hair)" ~Sandi Thom

Oh, I wish I was a punk rocker with flowers in my hair

In '77 and '69, revolution was in the air

I was born too late into a world that doesn't care

Oh, I wish I was a punk rocker with flowers in my hair

When the head of state didn't play guitar

Not everybody drove a car

When music really mattered and when radio was king

When accountants didn't have control

And the media couldn't buy your soul

And computers were still scary and we didn't know everything

Oh, I wish I was a punk rocker with flowers in my hair

In '77 and '69, revolution was in the air

I was born too late into a world that doesn't care

Oh, I wish I was a punk rocker with flowers in my hair

When pop stars still remained a myth

And ignorance could still be bliss

And when God save the Queen she turned a whiter shade of pale

When my mom and dad were in their teens

And anarchy was still a dream

And the only way to stay in touch was a letter in the mail

Oh, I wish I was a punk rocker with flowers in my hair

In '77 and '69, revolution was in the air

I was born too late into a world that doesn't care

Oh, I wish I was a punk rocker with flowers in my hair

When record shops were still on top

And vinyl was all that they stocked

And the super info-highway was still drifting out in space

Kids were wearing hand-me-downs

And playing games meant kick arrounds

And footballers still had long hair and dirt across their face  
Oh, I wish I was a punk rocker with flowers in my hair  
In '77 and '69, revolution was in the air  
I was born too late into a world that doesn't care  
Oh, I wish I was a punk rocker with flowers in my hair  
I was born too late into a world that doesn't care  
Oh, I wish I was a punk rocker with flowers in my hair

#### 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](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.

#### WELCOME

Welcome to First United Church of Christ and Conference Center, Second Life.

We have official standing with 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

Psalm 77

To the leader: according to Jeduthun. Of Asaph. A Psalm.

I cry aloud to God,

aloud to God, that he may hear me.  
In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord;  
in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying;  
my soul refuses to be comforted.  
I think of God, and I moan;  
I meditate, and my spirit faints.

Selah

You keep my eyelids from closing;  
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.  
I consider the days of old,  
and remember the years of long ago.  
I commune with my heart in the night;  
I meditate and search my spirit:  
'Will the Lord spurn forever,  
and never again be favorable?  
Has his steadfast love ceased forever?  
Are his promises at an end for all time?  
Has God forgotten to be gracious?  
Has he in anger shut up his compassion?'

Selah

And I say, 'It is my grief  
that the right hand of the Most High has changed.'  
I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord;  
I will remember your wonders of old.  
I will meditate on all your work,  
and muse on your mighty deeds.  
Your way, O God, is holy.  
What god is so great as our God?  
You are the God who works wonders;  
you have displayed your might among the peoples.  
With your strong arm you redeemed your people,  
the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.

Selah

When the waters saw you, O God,  
when the waters saw you, they were afraid;  
the very deep trembled.  
The clouds poured out water;  
the skies thundered;  
your arrows flashed on every side.  
The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind;  
your lightnings lit up the world;  
the earth trembled and shook.  
Your way was through the sea,  
your path, through the mighty waters;  
yet your footprints were unseen.  
You led your people like a flock  
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

SERMON "A Long Way In A Short Time"

My name is—legally and in all other ways—Jamie Jonas Sander. I took the name Jamie because it is a gender-neutral name, a family nickname, and I am a non-binary

person.

I took the name Jonas to honor my mother—it is her maiden name. And I kept the name Sander to honor my father.

And I can barely express my gratitude for being able to legally be Jamie Jonas Sander.

When I pull out my Connecticut Driver's License, and look next to the word "Sex" I do not see an "M" or an "F," I see the letter "X."

I was able to choose that third designation to honor the fact that I am a non-binary person—

and should I be stopped by the police, however they perceive my gender in that moment will not be countermanded by identification.

I can hardly express my gratitude for being able to have that simple "X" on my ID.

It has not always been so. And it may not always be so.

My father had just finished his freshman year of college in June of 1969, when the "stone bull dykes" and "transvestites" rebelled outside of the Stonewall Inn.

In 1977, when Supervisor Harvey Milk was giving his "Hope" speech on the steps of San Francisco City Hall, I was about three months old and my family was living on the US Naval Base at the mouth Piscataqua River, which separates Kittery, ME from Portsmouth, NH.

Neither of those events was very long ago, in the grand scheme of things.

Just think about it: We still have Boomers among us, my father among them.

They lived through "The Lavender Scare," Anita Bryant and John Briggs, commonplace police harassment and brutality leading to the Compton's Cafeteria Riot, the Stonewall Riots, the White Night Riot...

"You keep my eyelids from closing;

I am so troubled that I cannot speak.

I consider the days of old,

and remember the years of long ago.

I commune with my heart in the night;

I meditate and search my spirit:

'Will the Lord spurn forever,

and never again be favorable?"

On the other hand, Boomers also bear witness to the Homophile Movement,

Civil Rights,

sexual liberation,

the very beginning of the movement for Transgender rights,

Gay Liberation,

and the American Psychiatric Association declassifying homosexuality as a mental disorder.

"I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord;

I will remember your wonders of old.

I will meditate on all your work,

and muse on your mighty deeds."

My generation, Generation X, bears witness to Don't Ask Don't Tell, the Defense of Marriage Act, the AIDS crisis and the accompanying panic regarding gay men, we saw transgender people depicted in film and television as the butt of jokes, sexually assaulted to applause, and murdered.

“Will the Lord spurn forever,  
and never again be favorable?”

Gen-X also got to see the decriminalization of homosexuality and— not to leave out the Millennials, who got to see this happen as they were graduating from high school and becoming young adults— but it was during the presidency of a Gen-Xer, President Barak Obama, that we saw the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell and the Defense of Marriage Act, we saw the legalization of Gay Marriage, we saw gender identity added as a protected class, we heard the word “gay” uttered for the first time in an inaugural address, we saw the first gender-neutral bathroom within the White House complex— it's in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, next door to the West Wing, and we saw—\_finally\_—the Stonewall Inn become a National Monument.

“I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord;  
I will remember your wonders of old.”

We have come so far, so fast, it's no wonder that there are people who struggle to keep up. I have compassion for those people, I do.

And. The pattern continues today.  
In recent years we've seen an upsurge in legislation focused on silencing queer children and youth and disallowing supportive adults in school, restricting access to bathrooms, restricting access to gender affirming health care, and—dear God—restricting who is allowed to wear what kind of clothing.

And as a Country, we should be horrified.  
We should remember our history—especially since it is within the living memory of people living today.  
We cannot plead ignorance.  
We have no excuse to forget what it looks like when we attempt to legislate people into the closet.  
It looks like humiliation and dehumanization and brutality.  
Have we come a long way in a very short amount of time? Yes, we have.  
But we are not there yet.  
We must not forget.  
We cannot grow complacent.  
Silence is out of the question.  
We have to fight for the rights of all of us, including—  
—No. Given the political climate today—  
—\_especially\_— our queer youth and children.

It is not enough to say “by the time Gen-Zers are adults, we’ll have gotten there,” because the fight is happening \_right now\_.

Will we get there? Yes, we will.

But we’re going to have to fight every inch of the way.

Hopefully not in the streets, this time.

What do you say? Amen?

PRAYER PREPARATION:

Current research

(<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/acceptance-from-adults-is-associated-with-lower-rates-of-suicide-attempts-among-lgbtq-young-people-sep-2023/>)

tells us that one supportive adult in the life of a queer youth lowers their likelihood to attempt suicide to the national average for their age group.

It only takes one supportive adult to save their lives.

Just one.

I challenge you to be that adult in someone’s life.

<https://youtu.be/5uQP7Fgk5T0?si=hdA6daRymRAXj8yZ>, “Cameron” ~Jillette Johnson

Cameron's in drag, makes his father mad

Since he was a little boy he always felt more comfortable in lipstick

People call him fag, teachers turn their backs

Off the bus he runs and runs to get home before anyone can catch him

These days the world is full of aliens

The world is full of aliens

But you are a real, live human

Aren't you, Cameron?

Powder and a brush can cover any cuts

And quickly running cotton under cold water rinses out the blood marks

Cameron, you're a star

A light where there is dark

And you're a hundred times a woman

A hundred times the man that they are

These days the world is full of aliens

The world is full of aliens, but you are a human

A real, live human

Aren't you, Cameron?

You're not an alien

You're not an alien

You're not an alien

Cameron

You're not an alien

You're not an alien

You're not an alien

Cameron

Cameron's in drag, makes his father mad

Since he was a little boy he always felt more comfortable in lipstick

These days the world is full of aliens

The world is full of aliens, but you are a human

You're not an alien

You are a real, live human

Aren't you, Cameron?

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:

God of all seasons, we give thanks for the light of day and the darkness of night as we pass by the solstice.

We give thanks for the ebb and flow of creation, for the beautiful summer of the north and winter of the south.

Call us to the work of climate justice and hold us accountable, for You made us to be good stewards of the earth and we have failed.

We have misused and abused creation for our own comfort and profit.

Call us into accountability and help us, individually and collectively, to do our part to restore the earth and reduce our waste.

Guide us to be Your children, caretakers of this beautiful planet, the only one You have given us.

In the name of Christ, who came so that all might have life, may we live more simply for others.

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:

I ended today's sermon with a call to action, a call to fight, and I meant it.  
I also meant it when I said I hoped that the fight wouldn't be in the streets—  
I hold on to the hope and pray for the reality of a time when everyone lays down  
their weapon.

<https://youtu.be/-t5gGm3NWU4?si=QiZthbfUsD8lca50>, "I Know A Place" ~MUNA

I knew

When you told me you don't wanna go home tonight  
And you tried to just shrug it off when I asked you why  
Somebody hurt you  
Somebody hurt you  
But you're here by my side  
And I knew

'Cause I can recall when I was the one in your seat

I still got the scars and they occasionally bleed

'Cause somebody hurt me

Somebody hurt me

But I'm staying alive

And I can tell

When you get nervous

You think being yourself means being unworthy

And it's hard to love with a heart that's hurting

But if you want to go out dancing

I know a place (ooh)

I know a place we can go (yeah)

Where everyone gonna lay down their weapon

Lay down their weapon

Just give me trust and watch what'll happen

'Cause I know (ooh)

I know a place we can run (yeah)

Where everyone gonna lay down their weapon

Lay down their weapon

Don't you be afraid of love and affection

Just lay down your weapon

Right now

It's like you're carrying all the weight of your past

I could tell all your bruises, yellow, dark blue, and black

But baby a bruise is, only your body

Tryna keep you intact

So right now

I think we should go get drunk on cheap wine

I think we should hop on the purple line

'Cause maybe our purpose

Is to never give up when we're on the right track



And I can tell  
When you get nervous  
You think being yourself means being unworthy  
And it's hard to love with a heart that's hurting  
But if you want to go out dancing  
I know a place (ooh)  
I know a place we can go (yeah)  
Where everyone gonna lay down their weapon  
Lay down their weapon  
Just give me trust and watch what'll happen  
'Cause I know (ooh)  
I know a place we can run (yeah)  
Where everyone gonna lay down their weapon  
Lay down their weapon  
Don't you be afraid of love and affection  
Just lay down your weapon  
(Lay down your weapon)  
They will try to make you unhappy  
Don't let them  
They will try to tell you you're not free  
Don't listen  
I, I know a place where you don't need protection  
Even if it's only in my imagination  
I, I know a place we can go  
Where everyone gonna lay down their weapon  
Lay down their weapon  
Just give me trust and anything can happen  
'Cause I know (ooh)  
I know a place we can go (yeah)  
Where everyone gonna lay down their weapon  
Lay down their weapon  
Just give me trust and watch what'll happen  
'Cause I know (ooh)  
I know a place we can stay (yeah)  
Where everyone gonna lay down their weapon  
Lay down their weapon  
Don't you be afraid of love and affection  
Just lay down your weapon

\*end\*