

WELCOME

Grace and Peace be with you in the name of the Holy-One-of-All!
Thank you for coming!

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

It gives me great joy to tell you that First United Church of Christ and Conference Center is a church with full real life standing in Southern California 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!

Friends, as a real 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."

This Sunday service is in voice and text.

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

If you don't know how to do that, let someone know and we'll try to help. There will be a link in Nearby so you can watch it in your browser if the viewer isn't working for you.

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

One of the blessings and responsibilities that come with our being a real church with real standing is that we, like all UCC churches, support the work of the national church not only with prayer but financially.

So we greatly appreciate any offering you can make to support this ministry. If you prefer, donations can be made on our website, firstuccsl.org.

On this Sunday I have an announcement as we are entering our Fall season. Summer is slowly making its way out. Here in Texas it is taking its sweat time with temperatures as high as 108F. Not sure if anyone else here is having as much fun as we are in Texas with the weather.

On Friday's we will be changing our worship gathering. Rev. Pastor Jamie will be leading a service this Friday and then due to a new position as a chaplain I will be leading those svc. Don't worry Pastor Jamie will be able to join us on some Sundays and we can hear them share their awesome sermons again.

Friends, we live in a binary world where there is good vs. evil, strong vs. weak, and nothing in between.

But what happens when pop-culture challenges the norm and pushes those boundaries?

I invite you to join me on Friday's to engage in a meaningful conversation and theological reflection around Superheros, Villains and pop culture.

During our time together I will play snippets, a short you-tube video of a movie, or a song, and seek a reflective time together as I challenge you to see, hear, and reflect on a topic in both voice and text.

If you have an idea of a character, or a movie you would like to explore send me a private message, or a notecard.

For I believe that God is still speaking and many times it is in unlikely places that you see, hear, and are touched by them.

So I want to invite you on the 30th to the Connect Space where you can come and sit around the couches, and chill with me as we enter this new fall programing.

Starting Friday the 30th, at the Connect space at 4SL time.

<http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/First%20UCC%20Island/243/8/1533>

And now if there are any other announcements please share with us as this next song plays.

GATHERING MUSIC

Lauren Daigle - These Are The Days (Official Video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RA8Lrtei90o>

SCRIPTURES

Today's scripture comes from the book of Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 NRSV

For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born and a time to die;

a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted;

a time to kill and a time to heal;

a time to break down and a time to build up;

a time to weep and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn and a time to dance;

a time to throw away stones and a time to gather stones together;

a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;

a time to seek and a time to lose;

a time to tear and a time to sew;

a time to keep silent and a time to speak;
a time to love and a time to hate;
a time for war and a time for peace.

Word of God for the people of God,

Thanks Be to God

SERMON - All in its time

Will you pray with me?

Holy One, we come before you to give you thanks for this season.

I ask that you touch my lips of clay, and mold them to words that are beneficial, inspire, and bring light to those who might need some comfort.

May all honor and Glory be yours.

Amen

One of the themes for this month of August according to Google search is the month of wellness.

Month to be well, find a way to do self care, implement healthy routines, and improve the way we deal with stress.

Sounds good right?

In fact a way to do well, deal with stress, and implement healthy routines is to look at time.

Time.

As I thought about this I couldn't help but think about the wise words found in the book of Ecclesiastes.

All in its time.

There is a time for everything...

Or as my parents used to remind me...Todo a su tiempo...All in its time

Each of us students, pastors, leaders, parents, grandparents, lay leaders, and all those who work spend their time juggling work life, student life, church life and home life.

While in seminary I had to learn how to navigate and balance my studies, my church life, and home.

I always felt like that rabbit in Alice and Wonderland.

You know the one running around with a huge watch around his neck, yelling, " there is no time!"

There is never enough time!

I thought after seminary when it all came to a full stop that my life would be chill.

And yes the first year after seminary I was lost.

I would wake up freaking out that a paper was due.

I would check with Doug and text him checking if I owed him a paper, a meeting, or something.

See I did my seminary internship here and Doug, Sally and Erin were my supervisors and supporters in my internship.

I was required to do write some papers, turn in some assignments, and check in with them.

It took a minute to reset my system.
Doug often reminding me that I was done.

I found myself often at New star Island sitting on the barrel by the water looking at the sky, listening to waves crash and reading.

If you go by Newstart Island there is a barrel there, feel free to sit and do the same.

I learned that I could put a screen up on my computer and be reading, or drawing while that was playing.

It was like I was looking out the window to the ocean.

I encourage you to do the same sometimes.
It is very peaceful there.

Life after seminary took a minute to reset but soon I was back like that rabbit in Alice and wonderland running again.

It seems like it's easy to fall back into a life of having too much to do.
Without it I'm lost.

I could be the only one.
But I am terrible at self-care.

What about you?
How do you do?
How do you prioritize your well-being?
How do you do self-care?

In today's text, we hear that there is a time for everything.

Yet, sometimes there does not seem to be enough time in the day to complete everything in my checklist and my checklists checklist.

Seems like there are always things that I must do!

But even then, we know that the time will come when we must rest.
Or our bodies will start sending hints.

My friend the Rev. Dr. Marilyn Pagan-Banks had this post on Face book that caught my

attention.

It said, 'If you don't make time for your wellness, you will be forced to make time for your illness. Read that again.'

Our bodies have a way to shut down when they have had enough.

The readings in Ecclesiastes talk about the dualism of the polarities of life and fate.

We can go deeper into the book and define each counterbalance.

Yet later on in the text, we read that despite this balance, our fate becomes our own. Or does God determined our fate?

We could venture into predestination and down the rabbit hole we can go.

Now these are the kind of conversations that I can't wait to have with you all on a Friday afternoon during our studies together.

Today for the sake of time lets explore these readings.

As I was reading the Jewish Study Bible I read about how a Rabbinic commentary might go beyond contextual meaning.

For example, when we read "there is a time to throw away stones and gather stones," it reference to the end of Jewish exile and Israel's gathering.

A time to rejoice for a return to their land.

A time to rebuild and gather all that was scattered.

Sometimes the time to see a positive counterbalance seems to take a lifetime as it did in those days.

Within our context today we see the cycle of these actions that balance and cancel each other play out.

I can better relate to this as how there is balance in the force.

We have been in a time where we have paused our celebrations, and our gatherings.

That time when we had to mask up while others refused to do so.

Oh how can we forget the time of the pandemic?

Did things go back to normal?

What was normal?

What is normal?

There is a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing.

It seemed an eternity during the pandemic when we had to refrain from being too close.

Oh and what a joy it was when we returned to our time together in person.

There is a time to weep and mourn.

And boy did we mourn during that time seeing how Covid took many.

We mourn today to know that the death toll related to Gaza's is over 40,000 since the Hamas attack in Israel on Oct. 7

This is far from over, and how can we see a counterbalance to such grief?

But there are positive possibilities.

During the pandemic we could not see that science would free us from the Covid clutches and in time we were able to laugh and dance together again.

It is hard to see the end of this Gaza conflict but we hold on to a prayer a cry to a cease fire.

A common cry for peace.

There is a time to tear down and a time when you lose it all.

I come from south Texas by the Rio Grande's whereas as a child, a hurricane, came and flatten our home.

I don't remember this, but there are photos of me holding my dad's hand looking at the ruins.

I remember asking my padre one day, "what were you thinking in this photo?"

He said "I was wondering. I was wondering how soon we could start cleaning and rebuilding."

Without insurance and loans, my dad said it took some time.

BUT The time came when we rebuilt, and we had a home again.

A lesson that I learned from my parents was that one must take time to see the damage, to cry and grieve, but the time comes when one must rise again.

Such resilience is how I can read the text cause I read it with a Latino lens.

March 31st is Julio Cesar Chavez's day.

But if anyone knew about time and patience it was Señor Chavez.

This guy knew what it was to plant, and replant, and replant, and re-build.

As a young man, César Chávez felt the sting that comes from being excluded because of his language or education.

His family lost the small farm to foreclosure during the great depression.

In the fields of Arizona, he learned what being a migrant worker means.

While in seminary I worked with a professor, Dr. Lozada as his teacher's assistant for many years.

During that time, he had a traveling seminar to the border of El Paso.

During this trip he took the class to a migrant workers area where we saw a bucket of chiles standing in the middle of the common area.

This was there to illustrate how long it took to collect everyone of those chiles and how little each person was paid for them.

I was born and raised by the border as you know but this was different.

See I know what it means to be raised as a borderlander but I never worked the fields.

During that trip I got to see and hear the stories of women talking about their struggles in the field.

I heard the stories of the mothers who carry their babies at times strap to their backs as they work.

Life is hard, a struggle, with great suffering of all kinds, but they get up and go to work every day.

They know the time is to plant the fields and work because the time will come when it will all be done and over.

There is a time to plant and a time where there is nothing to do in the fields.

You might think I left the border of El Paso depressed.

But you know, I actually left with a sense of pride in my people.

I saw another borderland, and experience another way of life.

Yes, there are hard stories, but also survival tales.

I returned home with such gratitude in my heart having seen not only the struggles, but the work done around the struggles.

I was touched by the laughter, the testimonios and stories of hope.

This theme of renewal, of implementing healthy routines, reminded me of what Gloria Anzaldua calls the "mestiza con-sciousness, the consciousness to be revitalized."

The season of building, planting, the time to get on the ground, and start moving things, start making a way, start making a new.

Start thinking of new ways to care for our lives.

Start renewing the way we think about ourselves.

To believe that we deserve love, and a good life.

There is a time when one feels like death is upon you but believe me, there is also a time to drink of the living water.

The living water of the one who calls you home.

The water that slowly brings you back to life as we try to learn to trust in letting go of the burdens, the baggage that holds us back.

Trusting that we have a Holy Divine loving presence in our lives giving us strength, showing us a new path to take.

Todo a su tiempo...All in its time.

Because it takes some time, and it might also take someone to help us see that path.

The Divine-healer can be seen in those around us who are ready to lend a hand.

There is a time to tear and a time to mend.

But mending, planting, creating, becoming is not done in silos.

We are a community.

Yes, here at First UCC in Second life, we are a community, your not alone.

Yes, there is a time like Jesus would often do and go hide, pray alone.

Yes, there is a time to lamen, to grieve, and to be angry.

Yes, be angry.

But there is also a time when we must rise, and seek community.

There is a time to be silent and a time to speak and to take to the streets.

Did you know that Martin Luther King Jr and Cesar Chavez exchanged letters of encouragement to each other?

Did you know that?

King wrote to Chavez after a hunger strike.

"We are together with you in spirit and the determination that our dreams for a better tomorrow will be realized."

Our dreams.

News reminds us that the violence against our transgender siblings, our African American Siblings, our Asian siblings, our kids at the border are real.

There is a time to sit and watch and a time to plan and move.

But all this work also require us to be healthy, to be well.

We can't give what we don't have.

We can't pour from an empty cup.

Gloria Anzaldua calls it the faculta of the Mestizo consciousness.

The faculty the thinking about the shifting of our mindset.

From analytical reasoning to the actual doing, the planting, the moving, the going.

Anzaldua said for our people, rigidity means death.

It is not easy, but we chose to move, to act, to create a way that brings us hope, life, and learn to adjust our perspective.

We know what it is to be down and to be afraid, and to face challenges.

Fear is real.

The challenges in our lives are real, and sometimes we cannot see past today, which is why I want to encourage and remind you that you are not alone.

I would like to often think of the Holy Spirit as this subtle counselor.

But also, that Holy mischief that reminds me to smile, to laugh, and to see the kindness, the grace and the beauty in others.

The one that reminds us to see the joy that is deep that is what helps those in the margins see hope when at times we can't see it in sight.

Ada María Isasi-Díaz calls

it being in the lucha, the struggle.

She says that those in the margins are resilient, how they live and how they hold on to hope.

What keeps you in the Lucha?
What keeps you in that struggle?
Self-care is a struggle for me.
I often feel that when I stop to rest, I'm lazy.

There is so much to do!

You can probably relate that each day can be a struggle mentally, physically and even spirituality.

A struggle even today, especially in this season as our political climate is upon us.

What is political machine BS and what is a real threat to our nation, on our Christian values?

What are the Christian values we hold on to?

Do they match the teachings of Christ?

Or...

Do we justify wrath, hate, control, death, and killings in the name of God and based it on the Hebrew scriptures to make it "biblical?"

Pay attention to this.

The lucha is real!

Sometimes it takes step by step, shaking at best, trying at best to find your way back.

Because that is where help can be found.

REACH.

For some that means reaching for family, for others it means family of choice.

For others it means counseling.

With no shame just knowing that God makes a way.

Cesar Chavez, in his movement, went out to find and recruit students, activities, musicians, religious laity, and the clergy of all faiths and no faiths.

Because he knew it takes the energy and the passion of people to make things work. It takes a community sometimes to be brought back to life.

It takes many gifts.

It takes honoring and respecting each other's culture, our life experiences, that makes our trade our tools that makes our work come alive.

It takes passion.

It takes ganas.

It takes a desire to live.

For some of us we find those ganas, and passion when we realize others see us too. If you have joy, share it, smile, we need that glow.

It is like a sunshine.

We all need a little sunshine that reaches in those dark corners.
Keep smiling, keep laughing, you have no idea who around you might need it.
Rest.
That is also loving yourself and caring.

There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens,
and I invite you, friends, to come into this season ready to plant, to water and
care for.
You have to also care for it.
You can't just plant it and leave it.

That means that you and I need to take the time to implement something healthy in
our lives.
So let me challenge you today to think about this next question.

Ask yourself, "What can I do to improve my overall health and wellness?"

I genuinely believe that despite the balances, counterbalance of life, and effects,
I trust that
The God-of-the-oppressed, the God-of-those-in-the-margins, has made away.

A grace strong enough to pick us up.
A reminder that we are so valuable that we MUST take a moment to care for us.

May it be so,

Amen

PRAYER PREPARATION:

We have come to the time where we come together in prayer.

Let us give thanks for the gift of this day
and pray for the life of the world.

If you have a prayer of joy or concern that you wish to lift to God, and have
supported by the energy of those gathered here, we invite you to share.

As this song plays, in the silence of our hearts or type your request in the nearby
chat.

SONG

Lauren Daigle - Rescue (Official Music Video)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYR0xP1j4PY>

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.

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PASTORAL PRAYER -

Creator God,

You call us to love and serve you with body, mind, and spirit through loving your creation and our siblings.

Open our hearts in compassion and receive these petitions on behalf of the needs of the people and the world.

Amen

BLESSING FOR THE JOURNEY

Go forth from this place knowing you are loved beyond imagination.

Remember to rest for that is also God's love in your life.

Go in peace come back with hope and don't forget to dance.

Amen

MUSIC FOR THE JOURNEY

NF - Time

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1ZVSffCk9g>

All shall be well!

Go in Peace!