

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."

Our 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

By now, many of you may have heard the sad news that our cherished founder, pastor, and friend, Rev. Dr. Jerry Gerber, has passed away, transitioning from our community to his eternal home.

The scripture reminds us in 1 Thessalonian 4:13-14 that we should not grieve without hope, as we believe we will reunite one day.

While we hold onto that hope, we still feel the weight of our loss.

This gathering is an opportunity for us to express our grief and support one another.

So the service will be a little different with music, readings and prayer.

This is not a memorial for Pastor Jerry, which will come later, but a space for lamentation, prayer, and reflection as we navigate our first Sunday without him.

We also extend this invitation to anyone who has recently experienced loss, providing a moment to remember and seek solace together.

Let us Pray:

God who cried, We are grateful that you are well acquainted with grief.

That you make space for our deepest sorrows is a tender offering in this season. Show us how to mourn.

Show us how to weep, and curse, and remember well the one who has departed.

Make our grieving honest, that we would never feel as if we must force sorrow for our love to be real.

Help us to weep when we need, and laugh when we need, showing great patience for our interior intricacies.

We understand that death visits each of us.

But this feels cruel and disorienting, like we've been ripped from what we've known life to be and thrust into this hollow those for whom death has come too soon.

Show us who we are in their absence, what breathing feels like with less air in the room.

And have mercy on the dead and dying, that they would be able to grieve for themselves—that they could honor their own loss and meet death settled in themselves, with an inner calm that is prepared to encounter the uncharted.

May the unknowable be kind and healing and liberating to this person whom we have loved.

Amen.

(Black Liturgies: Prayers, Poems and meditations on staying human by Cole Arthur Riley)

If there are any announcements about the life of the church please share with us while our gathering music plays.

Before I play this I have been sharing that this Friday Pastor Jamie's service transitions into a form of book study that we will hold in the upper room.

I have been talking about The Connect Space and realized that if someone would show up here on a Friday they might not know where that space is.

Therefore because this audio is shared upstairs we will be offering our biblical study up there.

This is the space where Pastor Jerry did the book of John.

So next Friday, come join us.

We shall start with something simple, lets talk about Grace, Wonder Woman and some readings by Ada Maria Isasi Diaz.

If you want to watch the movie before our gathering it is the 2017 Wonder Woman: Directed by Patty Jenkins. With Gal Gadot.

But please know you don't have to watch them before our gathering, I'll play some snippets on it.

And now, I shall play one of Pastor's Jerry's favorite songs - They will know we are Christians by our Love.

GATHERING MUSIC

They'll Know we are Christians by Our Love

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wo4ij0Is6as>

A reading from Queer Contemplations by Cassidy Hall
by Laura Jean Truman

It's a privilege to live in a time when we're permitted to wonder. We have this gift because of our queer ancestors—trans and nonbinary and genderqueer people who did the analysis and taught the history lessons, who put their own bodies in harm's way . . . so that we could have space to wonder out loud.

It's a gift to hold this sacred trust.

We hold it with fear and trembling, because it's so sacred.

We also hold it lightly and with delight, because it's so sacred.

We are permitted to play.

We are permitted to be this free.

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In 2013 Pastor Jerry founded this place.

Jerry knew that he wanted to create a place that many could access regardless of their locations, or time zones.

I am grateful for this place because it has become my home, the place to serve and be in community with each of you.

During my time in seminary it became my hope, a peaceful place to find friends from all over geographical locations.

Since then it has been a home to many and perhaps we will never know the depths of the reach this ministry has.

However, we want to invite you friends who knew Jerry to think about those stories and share them with us at his memorial.

We will send out notices once we have a day for the memorial.

Song

Rebecca St. James, for KING + COUNTRY | You Make Everything Beautiful (Official Music Video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vTSpGn9-N5Q>

Scriptures:

“Now he is God not of the dead but of the living, for to him all of them are alive.”
Luke 20:38

Word of God for the People of God,
Thanks be to God

Rev. Jamie -
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.

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.

BENEDICTION - Rev. Chris
(adapted from Cole Arthur Riley, Black Liturgies)

As we go forth into the night,
may we find our bodies resting
against the chest of God,
keeping rhythm with her breath.
In the name of the Lover, the Beloved, and Love itself,
Go in peace, come again in hope.
Amen.

MUSIC FOR THE JOURNEY
Alicia Keys - We Are Here (Official
Video)<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HrKmDgk8Edg>