

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

"I Will Sing of You Love, Love, Love" Christopher Grundy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJeVqR0Mngs>

First United Church of Christ and Conference Center Second Life is a church with full real life standing in the

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 every day.

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.

INTRODUCTION - Pastor Kris

Our service today will be a little different than usual.

As has become our custom,

Our worship today will include elements of a meeting of our congregation.

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.

Taking care of the "business" of the church is one way we worship 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 Psalm 133

PSALM 133 (NRSVUE)

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.

Now I invite forward the president of our congregation, Doug

PRESIDENT'S REPORT - Doug

Thanks, Yadi

And thank you all for being here this evening (or morning, or afternoon, depending where you are!).

Our last congregational meeting was our Annual Meeting last April.

A lot has happened in the past 6 months,

most notably the the passing of our Pastor Emeritus, Pastor Jer.

Pastor Jamie, previously working in the chaplain candidacy program at Yale New Haven Hospital in Connecticut,

is now working full-time as a chaplain there. Yay Jamie!

As a result they are not doing the Friday services any longer, but will be preaching occasionally on Sundays.

Pastor Kris continues in her D Min program, which takes a lot of her time, but we enjoy having her here every time she can!

Pastor Yadi has been exploring other programs on Thursday or Friday evenings, as well as recruiting additional pastors to preach and teaching them SL!

Tonite is a worship and congregational meeting with two items on the agenda;

1 Approve our proposed budget for 2025

I didn't want to wait until the next Annual meeting to approve this, so we will be talking about it and voting tonite.

2 Vote to schedule our next Annual meeting next Fall at this time

Over the past couple of years (totally my fault) I let the date of the Annual Meeting slip from the Fall to the Spring, but I want to get it back to the Fall.

There may be other congregational meetings if the need arises.

Does anyone have any questions for me?

If so, please type them in Local Chat.

So let's move onto the Financial report and the budget

FINANCIAL AND BUDGET 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 2025.

Doug - Thank you to Robin for putting this all together.

Will all those who approve of this budget please stand.

Thank you, please sit.

All those opposed please stand.

Thank you.

[Doug announces vote]

VOTE TO MOVE THE MEETING

Now for the second vote we have for tonite

Will all those who approve scheduling our next annual meeting to Fall 2025 please

stand

Thank you, please sit

Thank you.

[Doug announces vote]

Lastly, a thank you to those who volunteer in the leadership of this church,
the Board:

myself

Joyous Schism

Robin, Treasurer

and Pastors Jamie, Kris, and Yadi

And thanks to all you

We are grateful for the gift of your presence and participation in the governance of
this church.

MUSIC

"Prayers for Freedom" - MaMuse

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

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION

The lectionary gospel reading for this Sunday comes from the Gospel of Mark.

It comes right after Jesus invited the little children to come to him,

And he blessed them.

Let us listen to God speaking through the words of Mark, chapter 10, verses 17
through 27.

MARK 10:17-27

As he was setting out on a journey,

a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him,

"Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus said to him,

"Why do you call me good?

No one is good but God alone.

You know the commandments: '

You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness.

You shall not defraud. Honor your father and mother.' "

He said to him, "

Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth."

Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing;

go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor,

and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."

When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving,

for he had many possessions.

Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples,

"How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!"

And the disciples were perplexed at these words.

But Jesus said to them again,
"Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!
It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle
than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."
They were greatly astounded and said to one another,
"Then who can be saved?"
Jesus looked at them and said,
"For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible."

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

"Free, Free, Free" - Pastor Kris
Let us pray ...
This is a tough little story
And it convicts us.
It's easy to hear this story and think,
"Oh, that's about rich people,
I'm not rich, so I'm clear,"
And then tune it out.
Or dismiss it because it seems so unrealistic,
Most people can't give away everything
And become wandering monks.
If that's what Jesus requires of us
I'll never measure up so why bother?
I'm sorry, but no.
This is a story for all of us.
This teaching is not just about wealth,
Not about how much you own,
Or how much money you have,
It's about freedom,
Inner, spiritual freedom,
Freedom from unhealthy or disordered attachments.
And we've all got them.
Anything, any behavior, any habit,
That helps us avoid a deep, honest, authentic
Engagement with others or with God
Is a form of disordered attachment.
In terms from the Hebrew Bible,
It becomes an idol.
It becomes something we worship, instead of God.
But I like the image of an attachment,
Like a rope that yanks us off of the path
We want to walk with God.
The apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans:
"I do not understand my own actions.
For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate."
That "thing" in his life was hooked onto him,
A disordered attachment.
Which might be the disordered attachments in your life?

The man who spoke to Jesus in this story
It's like there were strings attached
From all his many possessions
That kept him from walking with Jesus.
Those possessions were more important to him than God.
He had a disordered attachment to them,
Having possessions or money isn't intrinsically bad,
If we can hold them lightly,
Instead of being bound by them,
And be ready and able to give them away.
Disordered attachments often develop because of past experience,
and may initially have been survival mechanisms,
but are no longer life-giving.
Now instead of keeping us safe,
these patterns and responses only keep us from healthy, honest,
and authentic relationships with God, with others, and with ourselves.
Sometimes there are attachments that tie us up in knots, but are unavoidable,
Because the disordered systems of the world put us in chains.
Can a mother working three jobs to pay for food and shelter for herself and her
children
Give away all she earns?
No, and Jesus would not ask it of her.
Instead, Jesus would ask
those who would follow him to work to free her,
to change the disordered systems oppressing her.
To help her break those chains.
This idea of freedom is not the same as our western,
Individualistic idea of freedom.
It is a freedom from these disordered attachments,
And a freedom to . . .
A freedom to be our best selves,
Who we were created to be,
A freedom to work for the kin-dom,
For the freedom of all,
A freedom to live and move and have our being in God.
Because not all attachments are dis-ordered.
We live in a web of relationships to each other,
To the earth and the other beings that live with us on it,
To God.
That is a web of life which supports us,
Instead of tying us up and controlling our actions.
We need healthy attachments and relationships in our lives,
we are interconnected and interdependent beings,
whether we want to be or not.
We have relationships with family, friends, co-workers;
we are dependent on the doctors who save our lives in the hospital, the teachers who
we learned from in school,
the electrician who makes sure the wiring in our homes is safe;
we are in relationship with those we help along the way.
Freedom is not about whether or not we have attachments,

but whether they are healthy, life-giving, compassionate attachments;
whether they are of Love.
I think it is interesting the author of Mark's gospel places this story after Jesus rebuked his disciples
For keeping the little children from him.
The disciples, perhaps, had an unhealthy attachment
to their idea of what was due to their Teacher,
To his authority, and dignity,
Which reflected to them, as his disciples,
With a place of privilege at his side.
Jesus would have none of that,
Told them to get over it,
To cut that disordered attachment to their elevated status as disciples,
And let the children come to him.
Ouch. It must have smarted to be told they were in the same status as children.
It isn't easy, as the rich man in the gospel story discovered,
To cultivate spiritual freedom.
As Jesus tells them, it is only possible with the grace of God.
The Disney classic, Pinocchio, could be a parable of true freedom.
The title character begins life as a puppet,
controlled by strings that make him appear alive.
His creator, the toymaker Geppetto,
wishes upon a star that Pinocchio could be a real boy,
and his puppet comes to life.
At one point, Pinocchio sings proudly,
"I've got no strings to hold me down/to make me fret or make me frown,/ I had strings, but now I'm free/there are no strings on me."
The first time he sings it, he falls flat on his face.
He continues to experience one disaster after another,
until he realizes Geppetto is in danger because of him
and risks his life to save him.
It is because of that that Geppetto's wish is granted
and Pinocchio is brought to life not as a stringless puppet but as a "real boy."
Spiritual freedom means cutting the strings that "hold us down,"
While recognizing the web of healthy, loving relationships in which we live.
Inner freedom is the freedom to dance within the web of love,
To live with gratitude as real, human beings,
And to sing: "free, free, free,
Lord, I'm free."
Amen.

Some of you may have seen this video,
I've used it before, I just love it.
There are several clapping patterns,
As well as a simple song.
Melanie DeMore will lead you through them.
I invite you to chose one and participate, wherever you are,
Follow her direction,
Along with the choir and audience in the video.

“Free, Free, Free” Melanie DeMore
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIoOaLRwedo>

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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.
Amen.

BLESSING FOR THE JOURNEY

Our worship and our congregational meeting are over
Our ministry to the world is just beginning
The world is waiting
For us to cut the strings that hold us down
and with gratitude accept the freedom to be one in Christ
working for the freedom of all.
Go in peace
Come again in hope.
Amen

MUSIC FOR THE JOURNEY

“Grateful” Empty Hands Music
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s02o98Zpzg8>