

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 the Eastern Association;  
Southern California Nevada Conference of the  
United Church of Christ (UCC).

Our service will be 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 Chat 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.

And 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.

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](http://firstuccsl.org).

My name is Rev. Yadi Martínez-Reyna, I am one of the Pastors in this community.  
And anyone you see with a "Minister" tag is an ordained UCC minister in real life.

Today friends is the Second week of Advent.

As we enter this season of advent we will light a candle every Sunday.  
Advent is the season when we prepare and awaken to the signs of God's love and  
justice unfolding in our midst.

We await the birth of the Christ-child and will light the candles of Hope, Peace,  
Joy, and Love.

Would you pray with me?  
Come Holy Spirit and fill this place with your presence.  
We invite you on this day to prepare our hearts as we listen, ponder, mediate, and  
receive the good news.

May your peace flow and be within us today.  
Amen

Candle Lighting Ritual (Luke 3:1-6) - Advent week 2 - Peace

When conflict seems never-ending, relationships rocky,  
When we want to deny and pretend,

The Holy invites us to make space for truth-telling  
That we may find Peace

(Light the second blue candle of Peace)

Where in the world do we find Peace these days?

As this song play I want to invite you to share your thoughts.

Carrie Underwood & John Legend - Hallelujah (Official Music Video)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KiFSKLTj0U>

#### SCRIPTURES

Today's reading comes from the book of Luke 3:1- 6 NRSV

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Itureaea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
‘Prepare the way of the Lord;  
make his paths straight.

Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth,  
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

Word of God for the people of God

Thanks be to God

SERMON

The Name -

Today's reading is filled with names.

The Who's who of historical names.

The names of the powerful and perhaps for that time the famous.

Pontius Pilate the governor.

Herod the ruler of Galilee.

His brother Philip ruler of Iturea and Trachonitis.

Lysanias, ruler of Abilene

The Chief-Priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas.

Then you have the son of Zacharias, John.

Not John ruler, governor, brother of, priestess of, chief of something.

Nope.

I have been going to a predominant Black Affirming Pentecostal Church in south Dallas from the Fellowship of Affirming Ministries.

I drive an hour out to go to this congregation.

Yes I am an ordained Pastor but I go there for community and for my younglings to have a place to go to Sunday school and also have community.

One thing I noticed at my church of attendance is that everyone has a name or a title.

When I first started going I simply introduced myself as Yadi. I was not there to preach, teach, or lead but to simply find community and be among the flock.

But they have called me Rev. Yadi since my arrival.

There is also brother, sister, deacon, elder, sibling, Pastor, and the list of titles go on.

One day, I asked a fellow clergy there who also attends the church why the titles.

She said, because historically it was the church the only place where people had respect, or were seen as something other than property.

And those who have gone to school and have received a title it is known that it came with great sacrifice, so it is honored. It is simply respect one not given out there much.

Ah, it made sense and from that point on I'm the Rev.

John is just John but Luke wants us to know where he came from the son of Zacharias.

Who is that?

Well because his dad was a Priest but he was also the husband of Elizabeth the a relative to Jesus mom, Mary.

So they are cousins, and John is the first known PK. (Pastor's kid)

I find this intriguing. My youngling walks around calling himself a pk since given that title.

But check this nugget of information out.

It is in Luke 1:39-45 that we first see John's name when Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth, who was also pregnant.

When Mary entered the house and greeted Elizabeth, the baby inside Elizabeth leaped

in her womb.

All this got me thinking John was ready to get to work!

John had a mission and a calling to be the one who announces, and creates a path for Jesus ministry.

We hear all those titles, rulers, governor, Chief but none of them are doing anything for the people, they are the Empire.

Which leads to the realization that regardless of the context of its political history, the message of hope, of joy, and good news is moving forward.

Such is our standing as people of faith.

Regardless of who sits in the White House, Parliament, Kingdoms, and Palaces, we move forward with the message of hope, joy, and good news.

John comes from the wilderness, a place of withdrawal, a place of testing, a place of solitude.

Perhaps John was an introvert.

I once read a leadership book titled "The introverted leader," that blew my mind.

Basically it said that introverts think, plan, sit and ponder their moves and steps.

Most of them are how to avoid too much attention to themselves while doing the job right and efficiently.

Makes sense that they can be great leaders even in the background!

Well, maybe John was a bit of both cause he had no problem going out to preach and call out Herod's sin.

The City of Tiberias was built by Herod Antipas and it sits on the Sea of Galilee during this time.

It is in the sea of Galilee where the Jordan river flows into that John goes out to share the message of good news.

It is in this area that Herod is able to hear John speaking regarding repentance of sins and the forgiveness of them.

This is what eventually gets John killed, he calls Herod out about living a sinful life.

Stay with me here.

I believe that regardless of our stand in our lives whether we are introverts or extroverts or both, we are valuable to the mission and vision of God.

In our own ways as introverts we share the good news of hope, joy, and love when we are kind to others.

Some are great activists writing letters and planning things while the extroverts go out and march.

John was in the wilderness and from there he went out to call for people to make a way. He calls for people to make room.

He calls out to clear the way.

Such is our Advent services as we light the candles as a reminder to make the way, and prepare for the birth of Jesus.

Today we light the candle of Peace.  
WE make way for the good news to reflect peace.  
Peace that comes from letting go and from feeling and understanding forgiveness.

Did you know what the greek word is Aphiēmi which is letting go or to release.  
John comes out from the wilderness and calls out make way, prepare to let go.  
Prepare to be at peace.

Prepare to find your peace when you let go, when you come and be Baptist as a symbol  
of rebirth and renewal.  
Forgiveness was not in the water.  
Forgiveness is not on the words of accepting Jesus and salvation.  
Forgiveness, the good news is from making way and then letting go.

I once heard a person say I want to be follower of Jesus and be a good person but if  
you only knew the kind of person I have been.  
If you only knew the kind of things that I have done.  
Let go.  
Prepare the way this advent to light up the candle to peace, to make way for the  
real love of the one who calls you to be made new.  
John says clear the way.

There is all around us the “bus-yness” and the demanding schedules of a year coming  
to an end and things at work or at home having to wrap up.  
The central message of today is prepare the way -  
It comes from the wilderness not from emperors, or governors or big names but from  
the wilderness.

Friends as we clean our houses, make room for the tree, the gifts, or simply the  
lights and candles of the season, make way for the light of peace to be born in you,  
let go.  
Let 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.

Be Alright - Evan Craft, Danny Gokey, Redimi2  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9NLnlPs-m58>

## 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.

## PASTORAL PRAYER

God of welcome, may we see those others don't.

May we find peace when it seems impossible to find.

May we remember your love when we have trouble loving ourselves.

And above all may we feel your love deep for us and those others might not see.

In Jesus name,

Amen.

## BLESSING FOR THE JOURNEY

Our worship is over

our ministry to the world is just beginning.

The world is waiting.

Go in peace, come again in hope.

Amen.

Let's dance.

Crowder - Thanks Giver

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxDKchUybN0>