

WELCOME

Grace and Peace be with you in the name of our Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit.

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 Second Life is
a church with full real life standing in the
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.

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.

This May is also known as the spring month where in the northern hemisphere there
are blooming flowers and the beginning of summer!

May is also known for observing Memorial day, and Mothers day.
So to all those who are mom's or mom figures I want to say, "Happy day."

This May, is also a month where I will be exploring different movies, series, and
even Disney cartoons explore the intersection of cinema and our faith.

Together, we'll delve into select movies that resonate with our sacred texts,
theologians (people who write about God) and illustrate the concept of the Holy
Trinity, sparking meaningful conversations and reflections on how these themes

manifest on the big screen.

I will incorporate movie clips during the sermon, listen to a song and explore messages of hope, empowerment and joy.

Last week I asked many of you what movies you wanted me to explore and I got a list! Thank you so much for this information.

At the end of our service I will ask you to vote on next week's movies and see if we can come up with two of them.

If you were not here I will invite you to send me a private message and tell me what **YOUR** favorite movie is if you would like for me to explore it with our sacred text and our lens of faith, redemption, and joy.

Titles like Casablanca, To Kill a Mockingbird, Dead Poets Society, or Mrs. Doubtfire come to mind.

While I may not have seen them all yet, I plan to!

I will pray for your suggestions and allow the spirit to guide my reflections, as we connect through media, each other, and our faith in the context of film.

Today, we will embark on a journey through the enchanting world of Disney's Wish, where I'll be sharing a unique perspective on social justice.

Get ready for a whimsical twist that will leave you inspired and captivated.

Let's dive in together!

But first let us pray.

Come Holy Spirit and fill this place with your divine presence.

May today's musical and whimsical interaction be fun, informative, and filled with your love.

May our interactions today be joyful, enlightening, and full of love.

As we in our way, and with our own gifts actively participate in social justice and stand in solidarity with those working towards it.

Amen

Before we begin let me tell you about this movie WISH.

In the enchanting world of Wish, a captivating animated musical fantasy film created by Walt Disney Animation studios, we embark on a magical journey alongside Asha DeBose, a spirited 17-year-old girl.

Once upon a time, on a picturesque island nestled in the Mediterranean Sea, King Magnifico and Queen Amaya founded the majestic kingdom of Rosas.

This tale of wonder and adventure unfolds in the heart of their extraordinary realm.

As we engage in this adventure I want to invite you to explore the intriguing personalities of Asha, who is captivated by her enchanting surroundings, and her admiration for King Magnifico.

Have you ever encountered individuals who resemble these characters in your own life?

If there are any announcements about the life of the church, please type them in Nearby Chat during our Gathering Music.

GATHERING MUSIC

Now let us enter the City of Rosas.

This next song tells you about the story of WISH in a nutshell.

Ariana - City of Rosas

<https://youtu.be/ReykhRmJD5A?si=2RqRhTg00l8Suhs8>

SCRIPTURES

Today's scripture comes from the Apostle Paul who urges the people of Corinth to stand strong and unwavering in their faith, despite the questionable behavior of some individuals seeking supernatural experiences.

Rather than scolding them, Paul reminds them that one's popularity or importance does not determine their worthiness of God's love and the Holy Spirit's presence.

He encourages them to remain steadfast in their conviction that God is always with them.

Today's reading come from the letter to the people of Corinth by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:9-13 (The Message)

It seems to me that God has put us who bear his Message on stage in a theater in which no one wants to buy a ticket.

Were something everyone stands around and stares at, like an accident in the street.

We're the Messiah's misfits.

You might be sure of yourselves, but we live in the midst of frailties and uncertainties.

You might be well-thought-of by others, but we're mostly kicked around.

Much of time we don't have enough to eat, we wear patched and threadbare clothes, we get doors slammed in our faces, and we pick up odd jobs anywhere we can to eke out a living.

When they call us names, we say "God Bless you."

When they spread rumors about us, we put in a good word for them.

We're treated like garbage, potato peelings from the culture's kitchen.
And its not getting any better.

I'm not writing all this as a neighborhood scold just to make you feel rotten.
I'm writing as a father to you, my children.
I love you and want you to grow up well, not spoiled.

There are a lot of people around who can't wait to tell you what you've done wrong,
but there are many willing to take the time and effort to help you grow.

Word of God for the people of God,

Thanks Be to God

SERMON

In our gathering music you heard the story of the city of Rosas and the young person named Asha admiring Magnífico, an amazing king.

Magnifico, a benevolent king, rules with the well-being of his subjects in mind, having experienced loss in his youth that shaped his determination to safeguard his people by mastering sorcery and establishing a kingdom.

The tale narrates how Magnifico the King initially used his powers to aid the people, but when his powers were endangered by a faltering beginning, he delved into the realm of dark magic.

This newfound power elevated him, convincing him that he was a divine being with superior knowledge and deserving of unwavering loyalty.

At the beginning I asked you if the characters of Asha and Magnifico reminded you of someone?

Magnifico, the master manipulator, cunningly preys on the vulnerabilities and anxieties of his people, enticing them to surrender their deepest desires and wishes in exchange for his protection.

In our society, we often witness individuals falling victim to such charismatic figures, like Magnifico, who exploit their followers' trust and loyalty.

Magnifico's scheme revolves around erasing any recollection of the wishes and desires given to him, leaving his subjects oblivious to what they have sacrificed.

Is it possible to want something that is not even remembered?

Magnifico believes it is a kindness, sparing individuals from the pain of unmet expectations.

However, he does provide them with a glimmer of hope.

Occasionally, he fulfills someone's wish, leading to immediate happiness.

Do we prioritize instant gratification over lasting joy or the well-being of others?

Have we ever entrusted our dreams and desires to someone else, believing they know

what is best for us?

Have we allowed wise individuals to guide us in our aspirations, even if it means deviating from our original plans?

Or have they asked you questions to help you discern, pray, and ultimately walk alongside you regardless of what decision you made?

SONG

Chris Pine, Ariana DeBose - At All Costs (From "Wish") (Official Video)

https://youtu.be/Myad_dR8Wak?si=J-VrAEw_zga8n75c

The search for protection brings to mind the image of a child seeking refuge in the arms of a parent.

God, our guardian, watches over us and desires to envelop us in his boundless love and mercy.

But we live in a world that is ruthless and at times unfair.

The scriptures we just read says, "We're the Messiah's misfits.

You might be sure of yourselves, but we live in the midst of frailties and uncertainties.

You might be well-thought-of by others, but we're mostly kicked around."

It's important to be cautious when someone guarantees that accepting Jesus will instantly solve all your problems and make life perfect.

This was a common message I heard repeatedly when I was younger.

Even if a person is poor and struggling with addiction, turning to Christ may not immediately change everything.

While spiritual fulfillment and joy can come, practical help from church members or support groups like AA may also be necessary.

Life may improve, but it's not a guarantee that all troubles will vanish overnight. We aren't promised a life without challenges, but we are assured that God's love will guide us through difficult times.

In this story Asha holds onto the belief that Magnifico will fulfill her 100-year-old grandfather's wish, as he eagerly anticipates its realization on his birthday, clinging to hope for the future.

I mean this man has been waiting for his wish to come true and since it is his birthday and who knows how many more he has, he has hope.

However, as the story progresses, it becomes evident that Magnifico will not grant the wish, as Asha's grandfather desires to engage in music and art, activities deemed too risky by Magnifico.

The question arises: can creativity and inspiration truly pose a danger, and if so, to whom?

In the United Church of Christ there are many different paths of social Justice endeavors and I'm going to share with you these links.

There is environmental justice -

<https://www.ucc.org/what-we-do/justice-local-church-ministries/efam/environmental-justice-ministries/>

There is reproductive justice - <https://www.ucc.org/reproductive-justice/>

There are a group of people who want to provide access to people with disabilities in all aspects of the church's life and ministry. <https://uccdm.org>

There is one for sexuality education and justice.

https://www.ucc.org/justice_sexuality-education/

There is one for LGBTQ+ justice

https://www.ucc.org/what-we-do/wider-church-ministries/gsjm/lgbtqia/lgbt_about/

And recently one for Transgender and non binary justice

<https://www.ucc.org/what-we-do/wider-church-ministries/gsjm/lgbtqia/trans/>

One for Racial Justice - https://www.ucc.org/justice_racism/

There is one for public advocacy at Washington DC and they are the people who craft our General Synod resolution that the church (people like us) suggest or petition. <https://www.ucc.org/about-the-washington-dc-office/>

There is one for ecumenical and faith relations- <https://www.ucc.org/ecumenical/>

One for Latinos, Asian, Island Pacific, Youth, Young adults, children, and aging, the list goes on and on.

The reason I brought this up is because no matter what you're passionate about, there is likely a movement or a group of individuals who share that passion and are motivated to make a difference.

Asha is informed by the Magnifico the king that her grandfather's dream is too risky, as it could potentially incite a rebellion among the people and lead to chaos within the kingdom.

Additionally, he worries about the potential consequences if individuals become inspired and driven by music or a desire for change, as this could potentially lead to violence and unrest.

Chaos!

However, it is important to question whose peace is truly being threatened by these possibilities

I can list many movements that cause "chaos".

The metoo movement.

The Black Lives Matter movement.

The affirmative action movement
The voters rights movement
The gun control movement and the list goes on and on.

Each of these challenged the status quo and made many people uncomfortable.
It has made the oppressor uncomfortable.

When the people are empowered, and they learn to read, write, and think independently, changes happen.

Good changes.

Now listen, we can not chase every movement and every UCC initiative or branch of social justice.

It's important to focus on what truly matters to you, rather than getting caught up in every single cause or initiative out there.

By chasing after everything, you risk losing the joy of serving others and end up feeling stressed out.

Find your passion and pursue it, as that is where true fulfillment and happiness lie.

Just like in the Wish Movie, sometimes we need guidance to lead us into focus and explore what matters in each of our lives.

Friends, the Holy Spirit leads and motivates us, gently pushing us to reflect when our actions stray from our beliefs.

When we are feeling isolated, remember there is a guiding presence, like a star, accompanying you.

Explore these UCC movements I shared and consider joining a local group to foster connection and change initiated by the community.

Paul tells the people of Corinth, "We're treated like garbage, potato peelings from the culture's kitchen.

And its not getting any better."

He goes on to say, "I love you and want you to grow up well, not spoiled."

This pastoral letter that Paul sent to the church was aimed to uplift and remind them that despite the opinions of others, there are still countless blessings to be grateful for.

We, as a united community, have the power to support and uplift one another, even in the darkest of times.

We were never meant to face life's challenges alone; instead, we are meant to lean on each other when the weight of our struggles becomes too heavy.

Together, we have the ability to bring light into the unknown, uncovering hidden joys that may have otherwise gone unnoticed.

The Apostle Paul says, "There are a lot of people around who can't wait to tell you what you've done wrong, but there are many willing to take the time and effort to help you grow."

Many who will take the time and effort.

I see this as an investment in someone who one day will rise and pay it forward.

See that is what Julio Cesar Chavez, a prominent activist during the 70s and 80s, did when shed light on the hardships faced by farm workers, advocating for fair wages and safe working conditions.

He was there willing and ready to help them grow, create a union and believe in themselves.

Known as "La causa," this movement employed non-violent tactics and attracted individuals from all walks of life, including artists, activists, poets, musicians, clergy, and people of various faiths and backgrounds.

What struck me was Julio Cesar's understanding that true change could be achieved when individuals from diverse backgrounds, regardless of their education or profession, came together with a common goal.

It was through this unity that they were able to make a lasting impact and create positive change.

It was about passion, and ganas! (Desire to do something).

In the end Asha breaks the spell that Magnifico has on the town and encourages everyone to come together.

She says, I can not un-know what I know now!

She has to act and inspire change and it all started with her friends.

Her friends were no threat because they were kitchen staff, and young people. They were underestimated.

We are often underestimated.

Paul's letter in the message caught my attention when I read these words, "It seems to me that God has put us who bear his Message on stage in a theater in which no one wants to buy a ticket.

Where everyone stands around and stares at, like an accident in the street."

People can easily be ignored, rejected, and underestimated.

But when a dream and a passion comes alive in a person's mind it can be a threat.

There is a fear for community organizing.

There is a fear that people will come together and work together for a common goal.

That is why the enemy, greed, of money and power causes divisions among communities because scripture tells us that a house divided can not stand.

SONG

Knowing what I know now

<https://youtu.be/-PbxCxQuPaU?si=75ABREAFonSwybiQ>

Friends, church we are heirs, children of God, loved, redeemed, forgiven, uplifted and given grace.

Yes life is not easy but together we can journey, and continue seeking life that brings wholeness.

We know what justice looks like.

We know what healthy living looks like.

We know that Jesus walked on this earth making waves, changing hearts, minds, bodies and creating community .

Knowing what we know now, we can't turn a blind eye when there is injustice around you.

So what is your wish?

What is your heart's desire?

What have you abandoned because someone told you it was a bad idea, or it was not you, or for you?

What did you stop doing because it looked childish or not mature enough?

What brought you joy and perhaps you need to revisit?

I leave you with all these questions to ponder, to think about.

So make a wish, hold it in your heart and then watch it come to life with hope, faith, and God's love.

I leave you with a quote from the movie, "The greater the challenge we are willing to face, the greater the life we live"

Remember you are not alone friends, you are a star!

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

God Only Knows -

<https://youtu.be/UFiyEFmIXvA?si=CiNqCXtMcwqCKdU1>

COMMUNITY PRAYER

God only knows what you've been through and what you are going through.
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.

Vote for a movie:

Before we go lets see which of these movies you will like to vote for.
Type 1 and the movie, and then 2 and the name of the movie.
Let's have some fun exploring movies, culture, and the beauty that can be found
withing our faith.

Here are the options:

The Notebook (2004)

The Best Years of Our Lives - 1950

The Joker (2019)

Lord of the Rings The Fellowship of the Rings (2001)

School of Rock (2003)

You can type your vote while the last song plays.

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.

MUSIC FOR THE JOURNEY

God bless and remember you a star!

Your a Star

<https://youtu.be/V-ZSXJlBBrg?si=4Y9Hm5sweMMInyI7>

Go in Peace,

Amen