

As we gather together there is some technical information that most of you already know, but just in case someone doesn't:

The service will be in voice and text.

There is a copy of the service in the red book by the door to the sanctuary. You'll want to grab one of those if you need the YouTube links or want the lyrics for today's worship music.

Speaking of which, worship music will be in the media player.

If you get a message stating that the video is unavailable, please toggle media in your viewer; that usually fixes the problem.

During the opening piece, please feel free to make any Announcements for the good of the community.

And frequently in my worship service, folk end up dancing right here in the aisles or in the back of the sanctuary, so if the mood strikes you—I say go for it!

GATHERING:

I was an adult in Seminary before I'd even heard of this man. It was 2009 before he posthumously received the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Here he is making a strong argument for being out of the closet in 1978.

<https://youtu.be/LkEi6zlgzt8?si=pEToJIXYJ-YupRVI>, ~Harvey Milk in Los Angeles

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Most churches have a time of offering.

Making an offering, sharing what you can in God's name, is a spiritual practice.

That offering can be one of prayer or of presence,

of work on behalf of the church doing things like reading scripture or serving on the board of directors,

of helping with any of the many things that are needed for the church to function, and/or, that offering can be one of money.

As a UCC church, we support the work of the wider church both with prayer and with donations.

And it's true that we don't have a physical building, but there are monetary costs for this ministry to function.

So if you would like to make an offering by participating in leading worship or social events,

or if you would like to become a member of this church,

let any clergy or staff member know.

If you would like to make a financial offering to support this ministry there is a donation bowl by the door to the sanctuary,

or if you prefer you can make a donation in RL currency on our website:

www.firstuccsl.org

And since we are a 501(c)(3) public charity, monetary donations are tax deductible in the U.S.

We thank you for the blessing of your presence and your offering of support.

WELCOME

Welcome to First United Church of Christ and Conference Center, Second Life.

We have official standing with the Eastern Association of the Southern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ as a Real Life church located in Second Life.

And I still think that's pretty cool, because I have sat in South Central Pennsylvania—I have sat in Northern Maine—

and I am currently sitting in Central Connecticut—

and I still think it's pretty cool that we can partner with my brothers and sisters
and non-binary siblings all across the country
and all of you wherever you are!
Speaking of wherever you are:
"No matter who you are,
or where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here."

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 62:1-4

Song of Trust in God Alone

To the leader: according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.

He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall never be shaken.

How long will you assail a person,
will you batter your victim, all of you,
as you would a leaning wall, a tottering fence?

Their only plan is to bring down a person of prominence.

They take pleasure in falsehood;
they bless with their mouths,
but inwardly they curse.

SERMON "Hope Speech"

It's Pride Month. And I don't know about you, but I'm feeling an edge to it this year.

Maybe it's because I am a Nonbinary person and the Federal Government of my beloved homeland has done its level best to erase people like me—
to pretend that what matters most about who I am is what some doctor thought about my genitals when I was born.

Maybe it's because I'm trans-feminine and 26 of the 50 US States have passed legislation banning gender-affirming health care for youth—
which is exactly when my gender-affirming health care would have done me the most good.

It's a shame that I had to wait as long as I did to feel whole and healthy.

Maybe it's because I'm a Christian and the loudest voices in this case do not represent the God of Love and Grace and the saving work of Christ that I believe in.

Maybe it's because all of that so strongly echoes the roots of the Pride Movement. The Stonewall Uprising against police harassment, gender-based strip searches, brutality, and other abuses of power.

And then, of course, there's Harvey Milk, the first openly gay elected official in the United States.

He was elected to the position of City Supervisor representing the Castro in the city of San Francisco.

I say "of course" because the fearful rhetoric and hate-filled lawmaking that he was fighting against also used "protecting the youth" as their rallying cry.

In this case, the loudest Christian voices were not on the side of Hope. The loudest Christian voices were not on the side of Truth.

The loudest Christian voices were not on the side of Justice.

In this case, the loudest Christian voices were attempting to legislate gay people into the closet and in so doing dehumanizing them.

In this case, the loudest Christian voices were dressing their disdain and hatred in the language of love.

And those voices are still out there, amplified by Fox News, by the internet, by the President of my beloved homeland; impossible to get away from.

It's Pride Month, and I'm feeling an edge to it this year. It's time to go back to our roots and see why it's important for me to be out as a Nonbinary and Trans-feminine person.

To see why it's important for Nonbinary and Transgender and Queer people of all stripes to come out and be proud.

And why it's important for our allies to stand with us, to vote for us, to put us in places of leadership.

The year is 1978, and in the wake of Anita Bryant's successful "Save Our Children" campaign, John Briggs is championing California Proposition 6—a proposed state law which would have banned openly gay people from working in California's public schools.

The rhetoric has been dark—supporters of Proposition 6 intentionally confuse gay people with pedophiles and claim that “homosexuals” cannot reproduce; they recruit your children.

The day is June 25th, and the first openly gay elected official in United States History is standing on the steps of San Francisco City Hall, giving a speech for what is now known as San Francisco Pride.

He opens his speech by introducing himself, “My name is Harvey Milk,” he says, “and I'm here to recruit you.”

Here is world-renowned actor, Sir Ian McKellen, doing his words more justice than I can:

https://youtu.be/fAOjMQcCu2o?si=OZ_q0ZDjDNwWvdbi, “The Hope Speech” ~by Harvey Milk (Ian McKellen, Almeida Theatre)

What do you say? Amen?

PRAYER PREPARATION:

<https://youtu.be/X9vol-8HYEc?si=2I6Rzt4UIKSZKmlh>, “Give Them Hope” ~Harvey Milk

We have come to our time in worship that I really do believe is the core of what we do here together, and that is where we uplift our joys and concerns with one another in prayer.

And so I would like to invite you to enter this time of prayer with a sense of reverence.

We're about to enter into a conversation with God, and that shouldn't be done lightly,

but rather "... with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:2-3)

Please type your prayers into chat, or if you need to use voice simply emoting raising your hand so everybody can have a voice.

And as we pray together, you may wish to respond to others with words like, "God

hear our prayer," or with any other words the Spirit leads to you use.

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.

And that we pray them in the name of the Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

LISTEN!

We have done a lot of talking. Let us take a moment of silence to listen to what God might be saying.

Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening...

PASTORAL PRAYER:

Loving God, Mother and Father and Creator of us all, we give thanks for all the ways You have nurtured and cared for us, knowing each flaw, each hurt, each tender and sore space.

You care for us as a parent cares for their children.

You guard our hearts like a mother hen gathers her chicks for protection.

May we know Your love and care, Gentle and Fierce God, and may we love wildly and fiercely.

May our love drive us to demand the world to change, for the oppressed and marginalized, the most vulnerable among us.

May we be fierce in our call for justice against systems of oppression, and gentle in our treatment of each one made in Your image.

May we be open to Your transformative love in our lives and in our world.

Amen. (Rev-o-lution Resources by Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell

<http://rev-o-lution.org>, (c) 2021. Used by permission.)

BENEDICTION:

And now it really is just this simple:

God loves you.

So, don't forget to love each other.

Go with God.

Go in Peace.

And amen!

CLOSING:

Let's end the service with what is probably my all-time favorite song about hope!

And, incidentally, another example of a cover that I like better than the original.

xD

<https://youtu.be/2IEc9ZqPi3I?si=z6BJ563lg2Faj9Bm>, "Better Things (Live)" ~Dar Williams

Here's wishing you the bluest sky

And hoping something better comes tomorrow

Hoping all the verses rhyme,

And the very best of choruses to
Follow all the doubt and sadness
I know that better things are on their way.
Here's hoping that the days ahead
Won't be as bitter as the ones behind you
Be an optimist instead,
And somehow happiness will find you.
Forget what happened yesterday,
I know that better things are on their way.
It's really good to see you rocking out
And having fun,
Living like you've just begun.
Accept your life and what it brings,
I hope tomorrow you find better things.
I know tomorrow you'll find better things.
Here's wishing you the bluest sky
And hoping something better comes tomorrow
Hoping all the verses rhyme,
And the very best of choruses to
Follow all the drudge and sadness
I know that better things are on the way.
I know you've got a lot of good things happening up ahead.
The past is gone, it's all been said.
So here's to what the future brings,
I know tomorrow you'll find better things.
I know tomorrow you'll find better things.

end