



Welcome to Urbana First United Methodist Church!

*Our mission is to journey with people to get them
connected to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; to
one another; and to the community, through
intentional discipleship!*

May 4th, 2025

Third Sunday of Easter

10:30 a.m. Worship Service

The Parables of the Kingdom

Liturgical Color: White & Gold

APPROACHING GOD'S THRONE

PRELUDE

Jesus is All the World to Me (c. W. Thompson)

John Muir, *organ*

GREETINGS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Steve Fink, *liturgist*

+CALL TO WORSHIP

Rejoice, people of God: this is our Sabbath day.

Rejoice, friends in Christ: this is our time for worship.

God ordained the Sabbath, rest and restoration.

God is worthy of worship, our Creator, Healer, and Inspiration.

So then, let us worship God.

(Beth Merrill Neel)

SEEKING GOD'S FACE

OPENING PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Liturgist

All: Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and
forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead
us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the
power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

+HYMN OF CELEBRATION *Come and Follow Me*

Insert

1. *(Song Leader)* Come and follow Me. Joy is waiting! Leave all behind, and
don't delay! Hear Me calling you. Do you trust Me? I am the Life, the
Truth, the Way. If you believe Me, just obey.

2. Come and follow Me. Walk on water! Step out, though all may seem unclear. Claim My promise and trust My power. I am I AM! Ignore your fear! I am I AM, and I am here.
3. Come and follow Me. Share My suffering. Hear now My call to come and die. Trade what's passing to find what's greater. Come learn the joy of sacrifice! Lose all the world and gain My life.
4. Come and follow Me. Needs are crying. Friend, if you love Me, feed My sheep. Serve the needy in daily places, even when none may see.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

All: I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; The third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

AFFIRMATION OF GRADUATES

Rev. Robert K. Freeman, *directing pastor*

Dalton Knerrer | *Master of Science in Crop Science*

Keanen Swanson | *Master of Science in Finance*

Christina Vogel | *Master of Science in Animal Science*

Jack Wall | *Bachelor of Science in Crop Sciences; Crop Agribusiness*

David Williams | *Master of Science in Civil Engineering; Structures*

Skyler Sieving | *Master of Science in Organizational Leadership, Certificate Instructional Design and Technology*

OFFERTORY

Hymn of Promise (arr. L. Larson)

Steven Crook, *soloist*

+PRESENTATION OF GIFTS & OFFERING

UMH no. 95

All: Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise Him all creatures here below; praise Him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

HEARING GOD'S VOICE

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Mark 4:1-20

Liturgist

CHORAL ANTHEM

Grow in Grace (c. M. Archer)

Sanctuary Choir

THE MESSAGE

The Secrets of the Kingdom

Rev. Robert K. Freeman

TIME OF REFLECTION

You are invited to come and pray at the altar, light a candle to illuminate your prayers before God, or remain where you are for a time of contemplation and reflection during the musical selection.

COMMUNION

page 4

+HYMN OF RESPONSE

Here I Am, Lord

UMH no. 593

1. I, the Lord of the sea and sky, I have heard my people cry. All who dwell in dark and sin My hand will save. I who made the stars of the night, I will make their darkness bright Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord. Is it I Lord? I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.

2. I, the Lord of the snow and rain, I have borne my people's pain, I have wept for love of them. They turn away. I will break their hearts of stone, Give them hearts for love alone I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send? *Refrain*
3. I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame, I will set a feast for them. My hand will save. Finest bread I will provide Till their hearts be satisfied I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send? *Refrain*

SENDING FORTH

Rev. Robert K. Freeman

POSTLUDE

Celebration (c. J. Mansfield)

John Muir, *organ*

+Please stand as you are able

Scripture Lesson: Mark 4:1-20, The Parable of the Sower (ESV)

¹ Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. ² And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: ³ “Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. ⁵ Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. ⁶ And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. ⁸ And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.” ⁹ And he said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

The Purpose of the Parables

¹⁰ And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. ¹¹ And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, ¹² so that

“they may indeed see but not perceive,
and may indeed hear but not understand,
lest they should turn and be forgiven.”

¹³ And he said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? ¹⁴ The sower sows the word. ¹⁵ And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. ¹⁶ And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷ And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. ¹⁸ And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, ¹⁹ but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. ²⁰ But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”

Easter Lilies

James & Virginia Ashton
Peggy Buck

Jim & Mona Kaiser
The Kaiser Family

Our Family Members
Suellen & Steve Fink

Richard & Marge Cox
Ted & Christine Frank
Paul Frank & Cynde Jordan

The People I Love
Jodie Frink

Nellie & Howard Freeman
James & Clara Pailin
Zaia Love
Rev. Robert & Felecia Freeman

Amy Govert Thomas
Rich & Marie Govert

The Easter Season
Larry & Margie Jobe

Marilyn Tucker
William Tucker

John Merz and Loved Ones
Nancy Merz

Lewis & Charlotte Aurelius
Lura Aurelius
Rev. & Mrs John E. Muir
John and Deb Muir

Mr. & Mrs. Summerville
Sbandra Summerville

Our Family
Gwain & Cindy Zarbuck



*IN HONOR OF
*IN LOVING MEMORY OF



COMMUNION LITURGY

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to you, Lord**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to praise you, Lord.**

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

You have made from one every nation and people to live on all the face of the earth.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit. He commissioned us to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth and to make disciples of all nations, and today his family in all the world is joining at his holy table.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. Renew our communion with your Church throughout the world, and strengthen it in every nation and among every people to witness faithfully in your name.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever. Amen.

United Methodist Hymnal p. 9-10



Urbana First UMC News and Announcements

WEEKLY PRAYER REQUESTS

Prayer is how we communicate with God. In prayer, we share our hearts. We also pause to listen for wisdom and guidance. As John Wesley wrote, "All that a Christian does, even in eating and sleeping, is prayer, when it is done in simplicity, according to the order of God." Please be in prayer for these members & friends of the Urbana First Community:

Special prayers for the following people:

Homebound: Betty Newton, Nancy Moser, Gladys Baxley, Tom and Anna Engelgau, Darla Kvidera, Jean Gates, Leila Swenson-Gaines, Marjorie Mead, Joyce Smith

Prayer Concern: Marjorie Jobe, Brenda Runyon, Averie Spencer (Infant health issues) and Family, Nancy Lopeman, Pastor Freeman, Marie Govert (cancer treatments), Cynthia Jordan, Shirley Gordon, Nancy Merz, Courtney Zech (cancer), Marjorie Jobe, Fred Shep (Accolade Rehab), and Al Thomas (Clark Lindsey Rehab)

BUILDING UPGRADES AND REPAIRS

We are still working towards raising funds to complete the repairs needed to our historic building and Bell Tower. Thank you all for your continued support and dedication to this massive project! **Total Yet to be raised is: \$68,351**

GOD SIGHTED THROUGHOUT URBANA FIRST UMC

We were honored to baptize three people this past Sunday, Kaleb Reid (Montecello), Brad Frerichs, and Olsen Frerichs (Rantoul)

We were honored to pack 684 food packets with the help of the U of IL Nabor House. This was done through the Midwest Distribution Center



Midwest Mission



Distribution Center



A STUDY ON THE GOSPEL OF MARK

In this week's reading of Mark 4:1-20, Mark recounts the parable of the sower, one of Jesus' most well-known parables. Jesus tells a story about a sower who went out to sow seeds. As he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, some fell on rocky ground, some fell among thorns, and some fell on good soil.



1. The Different Soils:

- **Path:** The seed that falls along the path represents those who hear the word but immediately Satan comes and takes away the word from their hearts, preventing them from believing.
- **Rocky Ground:** The seed that falls on rocky ground represents those who receive the word with joy but have no root, so they endure only for a while. When tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, they quickly fall away.
- **Among Thorns:** The seed that falls among thorns represents those who hear the word but the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things choke the word, making it unfruitful.
- **Good Soil:** The seed that falls on good soil represents those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit—thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold.

2. Significance of this Scripture:

- **Understanding Human Responses to the Gospel:** The parable illustrates the different ways people respond to the message of the kingdom of God. Some people reject it outright, some receive it superficially but quickly abandon it, some are distracted by worldly concerns, and some truly embrace it and bear fruit.
- **Importance of Soil Preparation:** Just as a farmer prepares the soil before sowing seeds, this parable emphasizes the importance of preparing one's heart to receive and respond to God's word.
- **Encouragement and Challenge:** The parable both encourages believers to persevere in their faith and challenges them to examine their own hearts to ensure they are receptive to God's word and bearing fruit in their lives.

This scripture text this week provided for me a good lesson on how important soil is. In nature, plants require good soil to thrive and produce fruit. In Mark 4:1-9 we are provided profound insight into the nature of faith and discipleship, urging us to cultivate hearts that are fertile soil for the word of God to take root and produce abundant fruit.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, your words expose my innermost thoughts and desires. I am an open book before you when I read your book. May your truths work as I read of your holiness, truth, and love. May the power of your word be known in my life so that I might genuinely have the abundant life you came to give. Amen.*

Questions to guide your thinking:

1. How does the process of sowing seeds and the various types of soil resonate with the human experience of receiving and responding to spiritual truth?
2. What role does the sower play in the parable, and what does his action of scattering seeds reveal about God's role in spreading the message of the kingdom? How do the different types of soil represent various attitudes and responses to the gospel message among people?
3. Which type of soil do you most closely identify with in your spiritual journey, and why?
4. How can we cultivate "good soil" in our hearts to ensure that we are receptive to God's word and able to bear fruit in our lives?
5. What practical steps can we take to remove obstacles such as distractions, worries, and worldly desires that may hinder our spiritual growth?

This Week at Urbana First

Sunday, May 4, *Graduation Sunday*

9:15 a.m.—Sunday School (*Library*)
10:00 a.m.—Fellowship (*Parlor*)
10:30 a.m.—Worship Service
10:50 a.m.—Children's Church
(Dismissed before sermon)
11:30 a.m. – Graduation Dinner (*Parlor*)

Monday, May 5

6:30 p.m.—Twin City Rehearsal (*FH*)

Tuesday, May 6

(Office Closed)

5:00 p.m.—People's Chorus (*Parlor*)
6:30 p.m.—Twin City Rehearsal (*FH*)

Wednesday, May 7

10:30 a.m.—Midweek Bible Study (*Parlor*)
6:30 p.m.—Men's Bible Study
6:30 p.m.—Choir Rehearsal (*Sanctuary*)
6:30 p.m.—Twin City Rehearsal (*FH*)

Thursday, May 8

6:00 p.m.—Girl Scouts Meeting (*FH*)
6:30 p.m.—OES Women's Group (*Parlor*)
6:30 p.m.—Twin City Rehearsal
(*3rd Floor Conf.*)

Friday, May 9

Church Office Closed, Staff Sabbath Day
4:00 p.m.—Marck Dance Rehearsal (*FH*)

Saturday, May 10

11:30 a.m.—Marck Dance Recital (*FH*)
4:30 p.m.—People's Chorus Fellowship
(*FH*)

Sunday, May 11,

Mother's Day Service

9:15 a.m.—Sunday School (*Library*)
10:00 a.m.—Fellowship (*Parlor*)
10:30 a.m.—Worship Service
10:50 a.m.—Children's Church

Happy Birthday to:

Anne Brown— May 6

Church Office Hours

Monday-Thursday: 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Daycare Hours: 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.



“Helping people to get connected to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, to one another, and to the community!”

304 South Race Street, Urbana, Illinois
217.367.8384—office@urbanafirstmethodist.org
WWW.URBANAFIRSTMETHODIST.ORG

REV. ROBERT K. FREEMAN, DIRECTING PASTOR
Parsonage: 217-607-8113

CHILDREN'S CENTER DAYCARE: (217) 367-0842
KATIE BEAULIN, DAYCARE DIRECTOR
RACHEL HARP, ASSISTANT DAYCARE DIRECTOR