“No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are invited and welcome here.”

April 25, 2021

10:00 a.m.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

PREFACE

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- If you can have multiple tabs or windows open on your device, you can pull up the bulletin for this service by going to urbucc.org. Words to The Prayer of Jesus and Closing Hymn will be on your screen as we go through the service.
- If you want to take a moment to set up your space for whatever helps you pray, meditate, or be mindful of God’s presence, please do that. A candle or cross or Bible or whatever helps you. Also, minimize distractions, like phones or alarms.
- We will be asking you to jot some things down, which you may be able to do on the device you are using or find a pad and pen/pencil.
- Later in the service we will read from the Gospel of John, Chapter 10, so if you have a Bible handy you might want to get it and turn to that passage. We will be reading from the Inclusive Bible, so you can compare it with your translation.

GREETING

“The shepherd drives the wolf from the sheep’s throat, for which the sheep thanks the shepherd as (its liberator, while the wolf denounces…the same act as the destroyer of liberty. Plainly, the sheep and the wolf are not agreed upon a definition of liberty.”

Abraham Lincoln

CALLING OUR ATTENTION TO THE PRESENCE OF GOD

The last 13 months have forced a lot of us to think more carefully about what we mean by “Church.” We may have gotten a bit lazy prior to that and used the word to mean a building. Or we may have gotten complacent and understood that those who wanted to be the church with us would gather with us on a Sunday morning, while others were “opting out” by not showing up. Today we hear Jesus use words that make clear that the fold is larger than we thought, more diverse than we thought and at the same time, more united than we thought. It should perhaps disappoint us that it took a pandemic to dislodge our complacency. So now, I ask you, who is it that you would least expect to see in our fold? A Hindu? A Muslim? An Immigrant? How about a felon or a climate change denier? Jesus said there are other sheep that do not belong to this fold and that he must gather them as well. Will we be happy to see them? I hope so. Because that is what defines “Church.”

SONG OF HOPE

“Be Thou My Vision”

David Evans

Bonita Wiley, Brenda Schafbuch, Sawyer Schafbuch, Vocalists

TAKING STOCK OF OUR BLESSINGS AND RESOURCES

“Donate” tab at urbucc.org.

The United Church of Christ provides Disaster Relief funds to areas hard-hit by the storms, fires, and other natural and human-caused disasters. To contribute to the Disaster Relief fund, go to www.ucc.org.

Jot down what you have that you can share with others - a sign in a window or yard, a card or letter, phone call or e-mail to someone who is having a hard time. Assistance to someone who needs to get the vaccine, errands run for those who are not able to get out.

Remember that homeless shelters and food pantries are still being used and need our contributions.

Think about how you can help to unify God’s flock by being generous with what God has entrusted to you.
PRAYER OF GRATITUDE
Great Shepherd, in your presence and under your leading we have everything we need. There are pleasant pastures and still waters to feed our spirits and soothe our anxieties. Make us aware of the nature of our relationship to you and our dependence upon your agency among us. There are always very good and practical reason to forage our way out of your influence. Keep us in your fold. There are often very scary threats that unnerve us and scatter our best intentions and most sincere efforts. Restore our souls. And always the shadows of death and destruction vie for our attention and clamor for the headlines of our days, but you have told us to banish fear from our lives and trust in your word. Comfort us in our distress. We know your voice. You know our weaknesses. We know your grace. You know our gifts. We thank you for tending to our flock, calling and searching and tending and healing. And we are eager to welcome and care for all the sheep. Amen.

SCRIPTURE
John 10:11-18 (The Inclusive Bible)

11“I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd would die for the sheep.
12The hired hand, who is neither shepherd nor owner of the sheep, catches sight of the wolf coming and runs away, leaving the sheep to be scattered or snatched by the wolf.
13That’s because the hired hand works only for pay and has no concern for the sheep.
14I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me,
15in the same way Abba God knows me and I know God – and for these sheep I will lay down my life.
16I have other sheep that don’t belong to this fold – I must lead them too, and they will hear my voice. And then there will be one flock, one shepherd.
17This is why Abba God loves me – because I lay down my life, only to take it up again.
18No one takes my life from me; I lay it down freely. I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it up again. This command I received from my Abba.”

The “Shepherd Sayings” of chapter 10 in John’s Gospel are sandwiched between the Healing of the Man Born Blind (Chapter 9) and the Raising of Lazarus (Chapter 11), both of which place Jesus squarely at odds with the religious leaders of the time. After the Lazarus episode, Jesus essentially goes into hiding as those opposed to him plot to kill him. He returns to Jerusalem clearly understanding that it would cost him his life.

MEDITATION
“All the Sheep” Pastor David Sickelka

PASTORAL PRAYER
Check or create your prayer list today. Add the names that need to go on it, review the names of those for whom you have been praying. Has an answer or resolution come? If so, make gratitude known to others.

LORD’S PRAYER

SONG
“O for A Thousand Tongues to Sing” Hymnal 42

BLESSING
As you disconnect and disperse from this time of worship, be mindful of the flock in which your faith is cultivated. Ruminate on the deep truths that sustain us and drink deeply of the living water that renews us. Be on your guard for the wolves of hate and greed that destroy, and be just as alert for the signs of God’s blessing that heal. And may the unity of purpose and vision that animates our lives always incorporate the multiplicity of God’s people and the gifts they bring to the flock! Amen.

POSTLUDE
THE PRAYER OF JESUS

Our *Abba 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.  
Amen.

*Abba is the ancient Aramaic word that Jesus preferred to refer to God. It is most often translated as “Father.”
O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer’s praise,  
The glories ever echoing the triumphs of God's grace!

My gracious Savior and my God, assist me to proclaim,  
To spread through all the earth abroad the honors of your name.

Jesus! the name that calms our fears, that bids our sorrows cease  
Is music in the sinner's ears, is life, and health, and peace!

Glory to God, and love and praise be ever, ever given  
By all the saints in every age, the church in earth and heaven.
This Week at UUCC

**Sunday, April 25**
10:00 am Worship
10:30 am Fellowship Hour
11:30 am PreK-5th Grade Sunday School

**Monday, April 26**
ANNUAL REPORTS DUE

Upcoming Sundays

**Sunday, May 2**
10:00 am Worship: Communion
10:30 am Fellowship Hour

**Sunday, May 9**
10:00 am Worship
10:30 am Fellowship Hour

Preschool-5th Grade Sunday School is Back in the Park!
**April 25th Lions Park @ 11am**
It was so nice to gather together April 11th for Sunday school in the park. Please join us for our last session of this program year at 11am in the shelter in the NW corner of the park. Light snacks will be available. Please wear your masks as we continue to practice gathering safely. We look forward to sharing the Creation Story and activities that honor God’s creation and our amazing Earth! Please contact Rev. Amy if you have any questions at amy.murray@urbucc.org.

Little Free Pantry
We need your help to restock the pantry. You are also invited to use it, and let people know about it. Please DO NOT leave donations of food or clothing outside the building when no one is present. Call or email the church office to arrange a drop off time.

UCAN Clothing Closet
Donation Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 9am-1pm
Drop off location: 75th St & Douglas Ave (old Palmers Deli)

The Clothing Closet is in need of children’s clothing, new packages of medium size men’s briefs and Size 5 diapers.
“We welcome into this community of faith, and affirm the participation in all aspects of church life, persons of every age, race, gender identity and expression, nationality, ability, and sexual orientation. We will continue our efforts toward inclusiveness, and stand against all forms of discrimination. We will empower ourselves, our children, and one another to be fully present in the world, living in Christ’s image and striving for justice and peace.”

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For pastoral care, please contact Pastor Dave at 276-0625 (church office), 720-6389 (cell) or david.sickelka@urbucc.org. Pastor Dave is off on Mondays but will still respond to emergencies if you call or text.