



**CITY OF URBANA
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING**

DATE: Wednesday, December 03, 2025
TIME: 7:00 PM
PLACE: 400 South Vine Street, Urbana, IL 61801

AGENDA

A. Call to Order, Roll Call, and Declaration of Quorum

B. Changes to the Agenda

C. Approval of Previous Minutes

D. Written Communications

[Email](#) from Kathleen Jones regarding 108 North Webber

[Email](#) from Aimee Rickman regarding Urbana Street Naming project

[Email](#) from Christopher Evans regarding Urbana Street Naming project

E. Audience Participation

F. Continued Public Hearings

G. Old Business

H. New Public Hearings

[HP-2025-L-01](#): A request by Reverend Robert K. Freeman, Pastor, on behalf of the First United Methodist Church of Urbana, to designate “First United Methodist Church” at 304 South Race Street a Local Historic Landmark.

I. New Business

J. Monitoring of Historic Properties

K. Staff Report

Update on CLG Grant for Website and Mapping

L. Study Session

M. Announcements

New Planner II - Aimirou Sy

All City meetings are broadcast on Urbana Public Television and live-streamed on the web. Details on how to watch are found on the UPTV webpage located at <https://www.urbanail.gov/executive-department/page/urbana-public-television>.

N. Adjournment

PUBLIC INPUT

The City of Urbana welcomes Public Input during open meetings of the City Council, the City Council's Committee of the Whole, City Boards and Commissions and other City-sponsored meetings. Our goal is to foster respect for the meeting process, and respect for all people participating as members of the public body, city staff, and general public. The City is required to conduct all business during public meetings. The presiding officer is responsible for conducting those meetings in an orderly and efficient manner.

Public Input will be taken in the following ways:

Email Input

In order to be incorporated into the record, emailed public comments must be received prior to 5:00 pm on the day preceding the meeting and sent to the following email address: Planning@urbanail.gov. The subject line of the email must include the words **"HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION - PUBLIC INPUT"** and the meeting date. Emailed public comments labeled as such will be incorporated into the public meeting record, with personal identifying information redacted.

Written Input

Any member of the public may submit their comments addressed to the members of the public body in writing. If a person wishes their written comments to be included in the record of Public Input for the meeting, the writing should so state. Written comments must be received prior to the closing of the meeting record (at the time of adjournment unless otherwise noted).

Public Hearing

Any person desiring to appear at the public hearing and present testimony may speak during each public hearing at the time they appear on the agenda. This shall not count towards regular Public Input for the meeting. The Public Hearing is an opportunity for comments and questions to be addressed specific to each case. Board or Commission members are permitted to respond and engage during this time and/or the Chairperson may direct the applicant to respond during rebuttal. Comments unrelated to any of the public hearings listed on an agenda should be shared during the Public Input portion of the meeting where Verbal Input guidelines shall apply.

Verbal Input

Protocol for Public Input is one of respect for the process of addressing the business of the City. Obscene or profane language, or other conduct that threatens to impede the orderly progress of the business conducted at the meeting is unacceptable.

Public comment shall be limited to no more than five (5) minutes per person. The Public Input portion of the meeting shall total no more than one (1) hour, unless otherwise shortened or extended by majority vote of the public body members present. The presiding officer or the city clerk or their designee, shall monitor each speaker's use of time and shall notify the speaker when the allotted time has expired. A person may participate and provide Public Input once during a meeting and may not cede time to another person or split their time if Public Input is held at two (2) or more different times during a meeting.

The presiding officer or public body members shall not enter into a dialogue with citizens. Questions from the public body members shall be for clarification purposes only. Public Input shall not be used as a time

for problem solving or reacting to comments made but, rather, for hearing citizens for informational purposes only.

In order to maintain the efficient and orderly conduct and progress of the public meeting, the presiding officer of the meeting shall have the authority to raise a point of order and provide a verbal warning to a speaker who engages in the conduct or behavior proscribed under “Verbal Input”. Any member of the public body participating in the meeting may also raise a point of order with the presiding officer and request that they provide a verbal warning to a speaker. If the speaker refuses to cease such conduct or behavior after being warned by the presiding officer, the presiding officer shall have the authority to mute the speaker’s microphone and/or video presence at the meeting. The presiding officer will inform the speaker that they may send the remainder of their remarks via e-mail to the public body for inclusion in the meeting record.

Accommodation

If an accommodation is needed to participate in a City meeting, please contact the City at least 48 hours in advance using one of the following methods:

Phone: **217.384.2440**

Email: **Planning@urbanail.gov**

Watching the Meeting via Streaming Services

All City meetings are broadcast on Urbana Public Television and live-streamed on the web. Details on how to watch are found on the UPTV webpage located at <https://urbanailinois.us/uptv>.

Teri Andel

From: Teri Andel
Sent: Tuesday, October 7, 2025 11:28 AM
To: Teri Andel
Subject: Fwd: HPC Communication - Kathleen Jones - 108 North Webber

On Wed, Oct 1, 2025 at 12:04 PM Kathleen Jones <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Hello Trent,

I am writing to provide an update on progress at 108 N Webber. I should say very slow progress.

Thanks to your recommendations I have had success in engaging Spencer Vondeheide. I have met with Brian Landess who is my preference to do the masonry. However, neither of them can do the job till next year. At this point, I don't have enough details to prepare the request for the certificate of appropriateness. I am confident from my discussion with each contractor that their proposal is sensitive to preservation. As soon as I have their plans in writing I will put together the application. I will keep pushing to get this done.

-Kathleen

Teri Andel

From: Planning
Sent: Wednesday, November 26, 2025 1:21 PM
To: Teri Andel
Subject: FW: HISTORTIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION November 5 Meeting

From: Aimee Rickman <aimeerickmansemail@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, October 24, 2025 11:36 PM
To: Historic Preservation Commission <HistoricPreservationCommission@urbanail.gov>
Subject: November 5 City Council meeting question

Some people who received this message don't often get email from aimeerickmansemail@yahoo.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

***** Email From An External Source *****

Use caution when clicking on links or opening attachments.

Dear Urbana City Council,

It is my understanding that the November 5 City Council meeting may consider an Urbana street naming project and allow for public input on the matter. This is wonderful news.

An agenda for this meeting is not yet available to the public, so I do not know if this has been confirmed.

I would appreciate your help knowing if this will be on the November 5 agenda.

Thank you for your help with this, and for your work.

Aimee Rickman
1205 S. Race Street, Urbana
<https://tinyurl.com/draimeerickman>

Under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), any written communication to or from City of Urbana employees, officials or board and commission members regarding City of Urbana business is a public record and may be subject to public disclosure.

Teri Andel

From: Planning
Sent: Wednesday, November 26, 2025 1:22 PM
To: Teri Andel
Subject: FW: HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION November 5 Meeting

From: Christopher Evans <Christopher.Evans@UrbanalL.gov>
Sent: Monday, October 27, 2025 12:06 PM
To: Teri Andel <Teri.Andel@UrbanalL.gov>
Subject: November 5 Historic Commission meeting

Teri,

It has come to my attention that the November 5 Historic Commission meeting is being cancelled for lack of an agenda.

A substantial number of the public are planning to come to this November 5 meeting to discuss a street naming program for Urbana during public input of this Historic Commission meeting. A slim agenda may be the perfect time for a large discussion about what has become a growing demand from the public.

Can a street naming program be placed on the November 5 agenda?

Or, can the November 5 meeting be held to provide space for what will likely be a large public input time?

Or, can I talk to the Chairman of the Historic Commission to advise on the growing interest of a street naming program?

Thanks for your consideration,
Chris Evans, Urbana City Council, Ward 2

Under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), any written communication to or from City of Urbana employees, officials or board and commission members regarding City of Urbana business is a public record and may be subject to public disclosure.



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Planning Division

m e m o r a n d u m

TO: Urbana Historic Preservation Commission
FROM: Olivia Jovine, Director of Community Development Services & Zoning Administrator
DATE: November 26, 2025
SUBJECT: HP-2025-L-01: A request by Reverend Robert K. Freeman, Pastor, on behalf of the First United Methodist Church of Urbana, to designate “First United Methodist Church” at 304 South Race Street a Local Historic Landmark.

Introduction

On behalf of the Trustees of the First United Methodist Church of Urbana, Rev. Robert K. Freeman has submitted an application to designate the “First United Methodist Church” (“Church”), located at 304 South Race Street, as a local historic landmark. Rev. Robert K. Freeman is the Pastor and a representative of the Church. The Church Board of Trustees and All Boards Committee provided written consent and authorization for Rev. Freeman to nominate the Church property for consideration as a local Landmark by the City of Urbana Historic Preservation Commission.

The Historic Preservation Ordinance requires that the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) hold a public hearing on the application within 60 days of receiving a complete application. The application was reviewed by staff and deemed complete on October 30, 2025. At the public hearing on December 3, 2025, the HPC should take comments from the nominators, the owners, and any other parties who wish to be heard on the application. In addition, the HPC should consider all written comments received prior to or during the hearing. It is the responsibility of the nominator to provide evidence of the suitability for historic landmark status as well as documentation of such evidence.

Following the public hearing, the HPC should review all information presented to it that is pertinent to the nomination. Since the property owner has consented to the nomination, the HPC may designate the property as a historic landmark if the HPC finds that the property meets one or more of the criteria set forth in Section XII-5.C.1. **Staff finds that the nomination meets criteria a, c, e, f, and g, and recommends that the Church designate the property as a historic landmark.**

Should the application be approved, the owner would be required to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Preservation Commission for future exterior changes to the property, including any proposed demolition, as per the requirements of Section XII-6 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Background

The applicant is nominating the Church for designation as a historic landmark under several landmark criteria: its significant value as part of the architectural, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political, and social heritage of the City of Urbana; as a representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period, style craftsmanship, method of construction or use of indigenous materials and which retains a high degree of integrity; as an established and familiar visual location or physical characteristics; and yield

information in history especially in providing “a safe place” for African American and Black members of the community to gather and interact during the Civil Rights Movement.

The impressive Gothic Revival church building, completed in 1927, was designed by architect W. M. Maxwell, a University of Illinois Architecture graduate. The church has a high degree of integrity, with its open-work limestone bell tower, its Gothic Revival stained-glass windows and stonework, pointed arches, steep gabled roof, and impressive monumental staircases leading to the second-floor sanctuary all intact and well-maintained. The central part of the Church was built from limestone ashlar block with cast stone details and rests on a concrete foundation. It has a gabled roof covered in red tiles. An addition to the church’s southeast corner, completed in 1970 by architects Smith, Kratz & LeGrande, added additional preschool classrooms and meeting space as well as an accessible entrance with elevator that allowed access to the upper floors. The addition does not detract from the overall integrity of the church, as it amplified the overall civic mission of the church, and it was designed to harmonize with its materials, proportions, and Gothic detailing.

The property is prominently located in the central part of the City of Urbana and has familiar visual features. Its location at the intersection of Race Street between Green Street and Illinois Street makes it a prominent and familiar visual feature in the community, reinforced by its connection to the west entrance to Lincoln Square Mall and to its neighbors to the north, the Hotel Royer and the Urbana Free Library.

According to Pastor Robert Freeman, the third floor of the Church was used as a gymnasium and indoor basketball court, which was frequently used by African American and Black members of the community. Given the Civil Rights Movement was in full swing throughout the 1960s, this space was likely seen as a “safe space” for youth in the community. At the church they could make friends, play basketball, and hone their skills. While the gym has been renovated into offices, the history remains. While the floors were covered with carpet and drop-ceilings hung, a visitor will still hear the creak of the wood floors when walking and if a tile is missing from the ceiling, they may still see the basketball hoops hanging above them.

The nomination application provides ample evidence supporting each of these seven landmark designation criteria, plus other relevant information in support of the significance of the property as part of the community history and contribution to the Civil Rights Movement and social change. Staff appreciate the contribution by the applicant and those that assisted in the preparation of the application and supporting materials.

Discussion

According to the City of Urbana Historic Preservation Ordinance, a proposed landmark must meet one or more of the following criteria for designation: Article XII. Historic Preservation, Section XII-5 Historic Landmarks, C. 1. *Landmark Criteria*. The information provided by the applicant has been reviewed by staff and it is the staff’s opinion that the property meets the following historic landmark designation criteria.

Criteria for Nomination:

- a) *Significant value as part of the architectural, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political or social heritage of the nation, state, or community.*

The building’s architectural, artistic style, and building materials represent a particular time in the history of the City of Urbana. The Gothic Revival church building was designed by

architect W. M. Maxwell, a University of Illinois Architecture graduate. The building construction was completed in 1927. The building features include its open-work limestone bell tower, its Gothic Revival stained-glass windows and stonework, pointed arches, steep gabled roof, and impressive monumental staircases leading to the second-floor sanctuary. The central part of the Church was built from limestone ashlar block with cast stone details and rests on a concrete foundation. It has a gabled roof covered in red tiles. An addition to the church's southeast corner, completed in 1970 by architects Smith, Kratz & LeGrande, added additional preschool classrooms and meeting space as well as an accessible entrance with elevator that allowed access to the upper floors. The addition does not detract from the overall integrity of the church, as it amplified the overall civic mission of the church, and it was designed to harmonize with its materials, proportions, and Gothic detailing.



- b) *Associated with an important person or event in national, state or local history.*

According to the applicant, the building was designed by architect W. M. Maxwell, a local architect who was not nationally prominent but was a member of the church and a graduate of the University of Illinois.

- c) *Representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, craftsmanship, method of construction or use of indigenous materials, while retaining a high degree of integrity.*

The building's Gothic Revival architectural style, craftsmanship, method of construction, and building materials represent a distinguishing characteristic while retaining a high degree of structural and aesthetic integrity are inherently valuable for the study of a period in the history of the community.

- d) *Notable work of a master builder, designer, architect or artist whose individual genius has influenced an area, or notable work of a firm or group whose collective genius has influenced an area.*

The application with the supporting documents did not show that the property is the work of a notable master builder, designer, architect or artist whose individual genius has influenced an area, or notable work of a firm or group whose collective genius has influenced an area. According to the applicant, the building was designed by architect W. M. Maxwell, a local architect who was not nationally prominent but was a member of the church and a graduate of the University of Illinois.

- e) *Identifiable as an established and familiar visual feature in the community owing to its unique location or physical characteristics.*

The church building is prominently located in the central part of the City of Urbana and has familiar visual features. Its location at the intersection of Race Street between Green Street and Illinois Street makes it a prominent and familiar visual feature in the community, reinforced by its connection to the west entrance to Lincoln Square Mall and to its neighbors to the north, the Royer Hotel and the Urbana Free Library.

- f) *Character as a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian structure, including, but not limited to, farmhouses, gas stations or other commercial structures with a high level of integrity or architectural significance.*

The building is an example of a utilitarian structure with high level of integrity and architectural significance. Its pointed arches, stained-glass windows, height, light and intricate detail make it a unique example of a utilitarian structure.

- g) *Located in an area that has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.*

The property is in the area that has yielded and will continue to yield important information in the history of the community. According to the applicant, the church building has not only served as a place of worship but on many occasions has served as a community meeting place for civic and religious purposes. During the Civil Rights Movement, the third floor of the building was used as a gymnasium and indoor basketball court that was frequently used by African American and Black members of the community. Given the Civil Rights Movement was in full swing throughout the 1960s, this space was likely seen as a “safe space” for youth in the community.

Public Input

Staff published a legal ad in *The News-Gazette* to notify the public of the request and public hearing fifteen days prior to the Historic Preservation Commission meeting. Staff also sent letters to 16 neighboring property owners (within 250 feet of the subject property), notifying them of the request, and posted two public hearing signs on the property. To date, staff have not received comments for the requested landmark.

Summary of Findings

Recommended statements of findings based on the application and the completed analysis are below. The Historic Preservation Commission may revise these findings based on their review and consideration of the case, including any evidence that may be submitted at the public hearing.

1. Article XII of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance provides the City of Urbana with the authority to designate local landmarks and historic districts with the stated purpose of promoting the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the community.
2. On October 30, 2025, the City of Urbana received a landmark application to designate the property located at 304 South Race Street (“First United Methodist Church of Urbana”) as a local landmark. The application was deemed complete by staff on November 12, 2025.
3. The applicant, Reverend Robert K. Freeman, is the Pastor of the Church. Rev. Freeman is acting on behalf of the First United Methodist Church of Urbana Board of Trustees, the property owner, which consents to the landmark nomination.
4. The Urbana Historic Preservation Commission opened a public hearing on December 3, 2025, to consider the landmark designation of the subject property.

5. The Gothic Revival church building was built in 1927; it was designed by W. M. Maxwell, a local architect who was not nationally prominent but was a member of the church and a graduate of the University of Illinois.
6. The building meets five of the seven criteria for the designation of a property as a historic landmark. The building meets items a, c, e, f, and g of the designation criteria. The building has significant value as part of the architectural, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political or social heritage of the nation, state, or community; it is a representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, craftsmanship, method of construction or use of indigenous materials, while retaining a high degree of integrity; it is identifiable as an established and familiar visual feature in the community owing to its unique location or physical characteristics; it is a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian structure, with a high level of integrity or architectural significance; and it is located in an area that has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or the prehistory of the community.

Options

The Historic Preservation Commission has the following options in Case No. HP-2025-L-01:

1. Find that the nomination meets one or more of the criteria for designation as a local landmark and approve the application to designate the property as a local landmark; or
2. Find that the nomination does not meet any of the criteria for designation and deny the application.

In either case, the Historic Preservation Commission should include Findings of Fact in their motion. The Findings of Fact should summarize the Commission's justification for finding that the nomination either meets or does not meet the relevant criteria. The vote required is a majority vote of those members present and voting, but with not less than three affirmative votes.

Recommendation

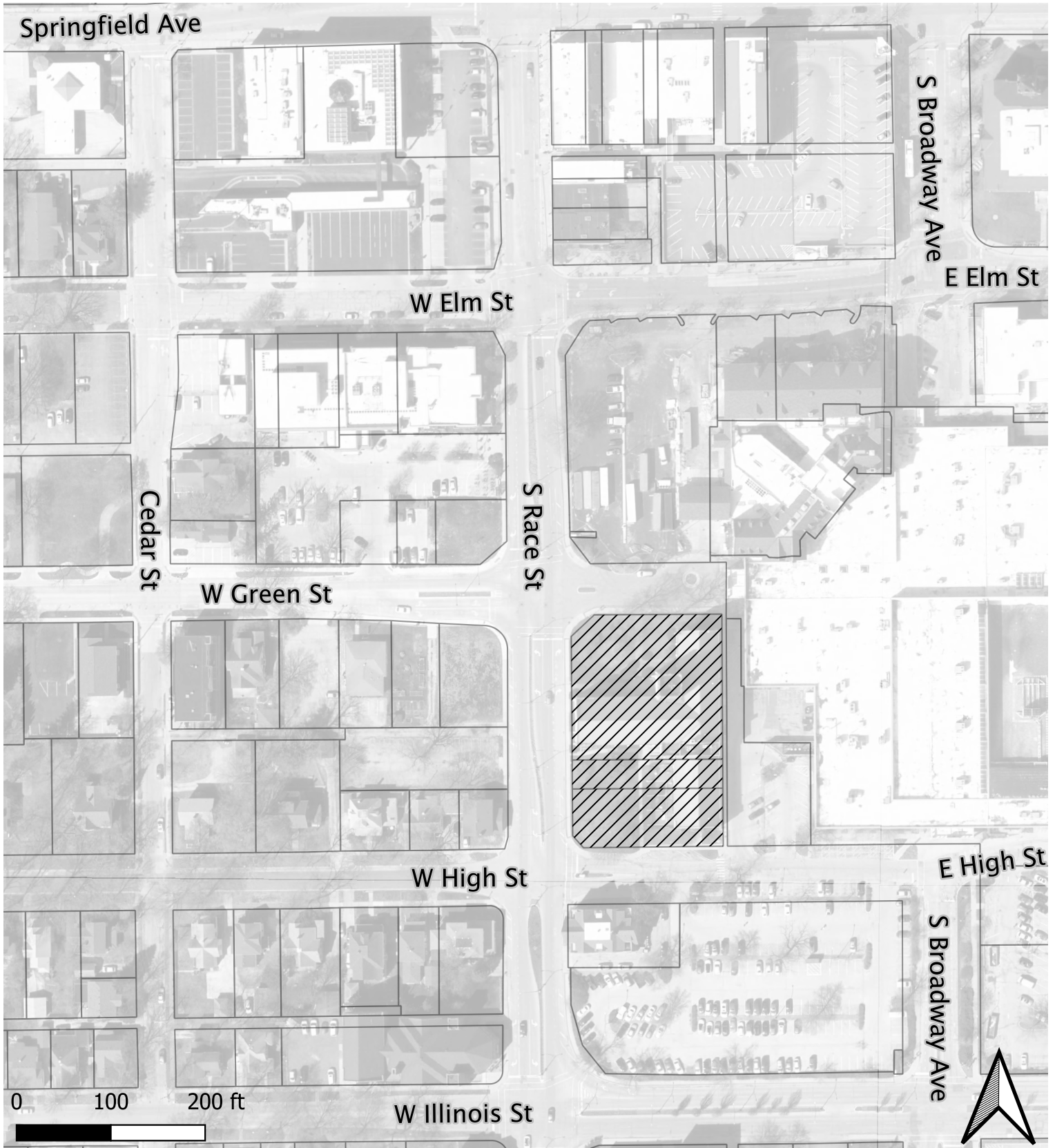
Since the property owner consents to the applicant's nomination of the property as a local landmark, the Historic Preservation Commission has decision-making authority in this case.

Based on the application and staff analysis provided above, staff recommends the Historic Preservation Commission find that the landmark nomination for 304 S. Race Street, Urbana, conforms with criteria a, c, e, f, and g of Section XII-5.C of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance and **APPROVE** the application, with Findings of Fact as stated in the Summary of Findings.

Attachments: Exhibit A: Location Map
Exhibit B: Plat
Exhibit C: Application and Nomination Statement
Exhibit D: Supplemental Photos
Exhibit E: Additional Detail Provided by Applicant

CC: Reverend Robert K. Freeman, Applicant

Location Map



Case: 2025-L-01
Subject: Landmark Designation
Location: 304 South Race Street
Applicant: Rev. Robert K. Freeman

//// Subject Property

Abstract of Title for First United Methodist Church

R. A. WEBBER,
ABSTRACTER AND CONVEYANCER,

URBANA, ILLINOIS

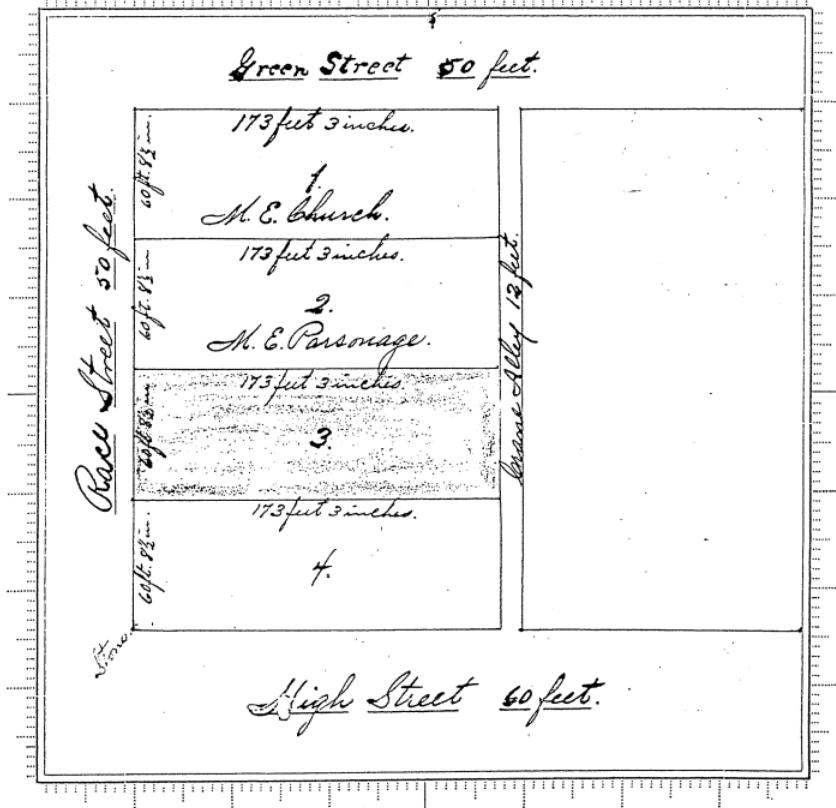
ABSTRACT

...OF...

CONVEYANCES AND INCUMBRANCES ON

*The South Half of Lot Number Three
of Elisha Harkness' Addition to the Town
(now City) of Urbana, Champaign Co. Illinois*

Section 17, Town 19, Range 9 East of 3rd P.M.



1893

SUPPLEMENTAL
ABSTRACT OF TITLE
TO

Lots 1, 2, 3 and 4 in E. Harkness (also known as Elisha Harkness) Addition of Town Lots to the Town (now City) of Urbana, except that part thereof described as follows: Commencing at a point where the South line of Green Street intersects the East line of Race Street in Urbana, Illinois, thence South on the East line of Race Street to the North line of High Street, thence East on the North line of High Street 24 feet, thence Northwesterly to a point 11.5 feet East of the East line of Race Street and 24 feet North of the North line of High Street, thence North on a line parallel with the East line of Race Street to a point 28 feet South of the South line of Green Street and being 11.5 feet East of the East line of Race Street, thence Northeasterly to a point in the South line of Green Street 39.5 feet East of the East line of Race Street, thence West on the South line of Green Street 39.5 feet to the place of beginning, all being situated in the City of Urbana,

IN CHAMPAIGN COUNTY, ILLINOIS

Last Examination by Champaign County Abstract Company
November 15, 1916 as to the South Half (S $\frac{1}{2}$) of Lot Three (3).

Last Examination by Champaign County Abstract Company
November 2, 1943 at 5:00 P.M. as to Lots One (1), Two (2) and the
North Half of Lot Three (3) and all of Lot Four (4), all being in
E. Harkness (also known as Elisha Harkness) Addition of Town Lots to
the Town (now City) of Urbana, in Champaign County, Illinois.



APPLICATION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

If there is an application fee (only applies to Historic Landmark Application without consent of the owner), the fee must accompany the application when submitted for processing. For the current fee, please refer to the most recent version of the City's "Schedule of Fees - Excluding Liquor License Fees", which can be found at <http://www.urbanaininois.us/fees>.

The Applicant is also responsible for paying the cost of legal publication fees, if any. The News-Gazette will bill the applicant directly. Legal ad publication fees vary from \$75.00 and up.

NOTE: Fields marked with an * must be completed.

NOTE: If additional space is needed to complete any field, please mark "See Attached" and attach the response at the end of this application.

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Address/Location of Subject Site* 304 S. Race Street, Urbana, IL 61801

Parcel/PIN # of Subject Site 92-21-17-212-005, 92-21-17-212-006, 92-21-17-212-007

Lot Size

Current Zoning District B-4 Central Business

Current Land Use (vacant, residence, grocery, factory, etc)* Church

Legal Description

Please see attached legal description (page 17-18)

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Name of Applicant* First United Methodist Church

Applicant Business Name First United Methodist Church

Applicant Mailing Address

Street # 304

Street Name* South Race Street

Apartment #, Suite #, Etc.

City* Urbana

State* Illinois

Zip* 61801

Applicant Email Address* office@urbanafirstmethodist.org

Applicant Phone* 217-367-8384

Multiple Applicants* No Yes

NOTE: Please attach documentation of additional applicants names and contact information.

Property Interest of Applicant(s)* Owner

OWNER INFORMATION*

This property has one owner.

This property has multiple owners

NOTE: Please attach documentation of additional owners names and contact information.

Owner Name* First United Methodist Church Board of Trustees

Owner Business Name First United Methodist Church

Owner Mailing Address

Owner Street #* 304 Street Name* South Race Street

Owner Apartment #, Suite #, Etc.

Owner City* Urbana State* IL Zip* 61801

Owner Email Address* office@urbanafirstmethodist.org

Owner Phone* 217-367-8384

CONSULTANT INFORMATION

If you are working with an architect, engineer, surveyor, site planner, or attorney, please fill in their information below.

Architect Name Dale Mize, Sophia Warner, and Kathryn Holliday

Architect Company University of Illinois School of Architecture

Architect Mailing Address School of Architecture 117 Temple Buell Hall, 611 E. Loradc

Architect Email Address keh202@illinois.edu Phone

Engineer Name

Engineer Company

Engineer Mailing Address

Engineer Email Address Phone

Surveyor Name

Surveyor Company

Surveyor Mailing Address

Surveyor Email Address Phone

Attorney Name

Attorney Company

Attorney Mailing Address

Attorney Email Address Phone

REQUEST INFORMATION

Permit Type*: Landmark Designation

Describe the exterior features of the structure, building materials, construction method, date of construction, and current condition of the structure. Include drawings or photographs to illustrate.

The impressive Gothic Revival church building, completed in 1927 to designs by architect W. M. Maxwell, is the church's fourth recorded home. The church has a high degree of integrity, with its openwork limestone bell tower, its Gothic Revival stained glass windows and stonework, pointed arches, steep gabled roof, and impressive monumental staircases leading to the second-floor sanctuary all intact and lovingly maintained. An addition to the church's southeast corner, completed in 1970 by architects Smith, Kratz & LeGrande, added additional preschool classrooms and meeting space as well as an accessible entrance with elevator that allowed access to the upper floors. The addition does not detract from the overall integrity of the church, as it amplified the overall civic mission of the church, and it was designed to harmonize with its materials, proportions, and Gothic detailing. As such, it represents a significant

Certificate of Appropriateness, advance to: **Page 5**

Certificate of Economic Hardship, advance to: **Page 7**

Landmark Designation, advance to: **[REDACTED]**

Historic District Designation, advance to: **Page 11**

HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION

Attach a map showing the boundaries and location of the property proposed for nomination.

Attach photographs showing the important structures or features of the property or structure

Indicate which of the following criteria apply to the property or structure (*check all that apply*). Additionally, attach a statement that describes the proposed landmark and its historic significance; list reasons why it is eligible for nomination; and show how the proposed landmark conforms to the criteria for designation (*see Suggested Format on the following pages*).

Significant value as part of the architectural, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political, or social heritage of the nation, state or community;

Associated with an important person or event in national state or local history;

Representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, craftsmanship, method of construction or use of indigenous materials and which retains a high degree of integrity;

Notable work of a master builder, designers, architect or artist whose individual genius has influenced an area; Identifiable as an established and familiar visual location or physical characteristics;

Character is a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian structure, including, but not limited to, farmhouses, gas stations or other commercial structures with a high level of integrity or architectural significance;

Yields, or may be likely to yield information important in history or prehistory

OUR MISSION

“HELP PEOPLE TO GET
CONNECTED TO OUR LORD
AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST;
TO ONE ANOTHER; AND TO
THE COMMUNITY!”



Robert K. Freeman, Pastor

Community Development Services Department
City of Urbana; Attn: Terri Andel
400 South Vine Street, Urbana Illinois 61801

November 7, 2025

Re: Historical Application for First United Methodist Church of Urbana

To Whom it May Concern,

During the October meeting of the Board of Trustees and All Boards Committee it was approved for Rev. Robert Kevin Freeman to apply on behalf of the church and Trustee Board for historical status.

If you have any questions concerning our request, please contact us at any time. Our office phone is (217) 367-8384 or you can reach us by email at office@urbanafirstmethodist.org

Thankfully,

Richard Govert
Board of Trustees, *President*
2107 Burwell St., Urbana IL

Board of Trustee Members

Linda Bailey
1213 W. Park Ave., Champaign IL

Thomas Engelgau
4203 Curtis Meadows Rd., Champaign IL

Steven Fink
606 Gladney Ct., Mahomet IL

Prentice Freeman-Choi
2001 Savanna Dr., Champaign IL

Rev. Robert K. Freeman
2402 Boudreau Dr., Urbana IL

Tim Rivest
1617 Bassett Ln., Champaign IL

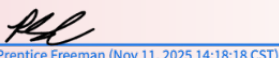
Skyler Sieving
2180 Co. Rd. 600 N, Sidney IL

Signature: 
Email: rimgovert@gmail.com

Signature: 
Linda Bailey (Nov 7, 2025 14:46:12 CST)
Email: casadibailey@gmail.com

Signature: 
Thomas Engelgau (Nov 9, 2025 11:04:13 CST)
Email: thomas.engelgau@att.net

Signature: 
Steven Fink (Nov 11, 2025 17:59:37 CST)
Email: steven.fink@frontier.com

Signature: 
Prentice Freeman (Nov 11, 2025 14:18:18 CST)
Email: pip_freeman@live.com

Signature: 
Email: robertkfreeman58@gmail.com

Signature: 
Tim Rivest (Nov 11, 2025 21:04:35 CST)
Email: tmrivest@yahoo.com

Signature: 
Skyler Sieving (Nov 11, 2025 13:50:13 CST)
Email: skylersieving@yahoo.com

This nomination was prepared by Dale Mize, Sophia Warner, and Kathryn Holliday

Summary Paragraph

The First United Methodist Church at 304 S. Race Street has significant value to the Urbana community as part of its architectural and social heritage. The current congregation traces its origins to 1836 and is the oldest recorded ministry in Champaign County; the impressive Gothic Revival church building, completed in 1927 to designs by architect W. M. Maxwell, is the church's fourth recorded home. Its location at the intersection of Race Street between Green Street and Illinois Street makes it a prominent and familiar visual feature in the community, reinforced by its connection to the west entrance to Lincoln Square Mall and to its neighbors to the north, the Royer Hotel and the Urbana Free Library. The church has a high degree of integrity, with its openwork limestone bell tower, its Gothic Revival stained glass windows and stonework, pointed arches, steep gabled roof, and impressive monumental staircases leading to the second-floor sanctuary all intact and lovingly maintained. An addition to the church's southeast corner, completed in 1970 by architects Smith, Kratz & LeGrande, added additional preschool classrooms and meeting space as well as an accessible entrance with elevator that allowed access to the upper floors. The addition does not detract from the overall integrity of the church, as it amplified the overall civic mission of the church, and it was designed to harmonize with its materials, proportions, and Gothic detailing. As such, it represents a significant development in church history, showing the congregation's evolution to adapt to the needs of Urbana as its population grew and need for daycare increased as women began to work in larger numbers.

Property Description

The First United Methodist Church (1927) is a Gothic Revival structure, designed by W. M. Maxwell, a graduate of the architecture school at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Little is known about Maxwell. He does not appear in the AIA Historical Directory of Architects, but he is believed to have lived in Urbana and have been a member of the church. The church is built from limestone ashlar block with cast stone details and rests on a concrete foundation. It has a gabled roof covered in red tile.

The main church façade faces west, presenting a large pointed-arch stained glass window at the end of the nave above the pulpit to the street. The monumental window is flanked by ornamental buttresses that create a symmetrical tri-partite design; two small windows one pointed and one rectangular, with simplified hood moldings flanking the large window. The nave is defined on both the north and south elevations by six bays – one bay contains an entrance to a stair tower and the other five contain pointed arches filled with stained glass windows with wooden tracery. On the north façade, the stair tower is accessed by a door at street level – on the south side the stair tower is accessed by a stone staircase leading to a door at sanctuary level. All of the church's stained glass windows are now protected by plexiglass covers because of issues with vandalism by gunshots. While the coverings do change the exterior appearance of the church,

they do not detract from its overall integrity and they are important means of preserving the church.

The church's main entrance, accessed by concrete stairs, also faces west, but is pushed back from the street at the rear of the nave and is part of a three-story wing that runs perpendicular to the nave and sanctuary. This wing contains offices, meetings, rooms, and a former gym on the third floor. An openwork square bell tower rises above the main entrance, marking the intersection of Race Street and Illinois Street, a major transition point between residential West Urbana and the civic downtown. The church's main sanctuary is raised above an elevated basement floor. The basement contains a large auditorium style space with raised stage used for church suppers as well as events sponsored by Urbana civic organizations and schools, like Urbana High School, which once held dances here.

To the southeast of the sanctuary and office wing, a two-story addition added in 1970 maintains the feel and proportions of the original building, using cream ashlar block limestone as cladding with a red tile roof. The façade facing Race Street has six bays, each defined by pairs of 12-light casement windows with cast stone surrounds. At the meeting of the addition and the original church, a square tower projects outward, with a double glass door facing Race Street accessed by a concrete stair. The addition is used primarily for classrooms and a daycare facility. A single glass door at ground level in the bay closest to the stair tower allows access to a fenced play yard that adjoins the addition facing Race Street.

The façade facing east is the original rear of the church. The original office wing rises three stories with conventional rectangular windows and no doors. At the juncture of the 1970 addition with the original building, an ADA-accessible entrance allows access to the building from an asphalt parking lot in the rear. This entrance, with its easy connection to parking at Lincoln Square Mall behind the church and its provision of an elevator just inside, has become the church's main entrance since its completion in 1970.

Two large grass lawns flank sanctuary of the church facing Race Street, providing green space to the city and a buffer between the church and the adjoining properties. The lawn to the north contains the church's sign and small ornamental garden of evergreen shrubs and a serviceberry tree surrounding it. Basswood tree (sign by daycare entrance), katsura tree and white pine tree (near playground). The lawn to the south has a small church sign facing south, surrounded by shrubs. Two mature oak trees mark the corner of Green and Race. A young pine tree flanks the sanctuary, along with a Ginko tree. While the setting has changed since 1927 because of Lincoln Square Mall's construction in 1964, the church remains a central landmark in downtown Urbana defining the urban experience of Race Street, much as it did before the mall's construction.

The bell tower, stained glass windows and tracery, ornamental hood moldings over windows in the sanctuary, ornamental battlements and crenellations, emphasis on ceremonial staircases, ashlar stone masonry, and red tile roof are all critical elements of the building that contribute to its feeling and workmanship. In the interior, the open auditorium style sanctuary is distinctive for

the quality of light, bringing in bright, colorful sun through the windows. Of particular note are three stained glass windows in the stair tower at the south rear of the sanctuary, where each of the three previous churches is depicted. The church's location at a prominent intersection, at the Race between Green and Illinois in downtown Urbana makes it a key visual landmark for the city.

History

The United Methodist Church is among the largest Protestant denominations in the United States, with roots dating back to the eighteenth century and the ministry of John Wesley, a clergyman from the Church of England. Wesley briefly served in Georgia in the late 1730s and formed a pietistic study group within the Church of England, later known as Methodism. After the American War for Independence, Wesley reluctantly allowed his followers in the American colonies to create a separate church, as they could no longer function under the Church of England. In 1784, the Baltimore Christmas Conference established the Methodist Episcopal Church, appointing Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury as bishops, with Wesley personally ordaining them.

The church faced divisions from its inception. In 1787, St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia separated due to segregation, which led to the establishment of the African Methodist Episcopal Church under Richard Allen in 1816. In 1796, a split from John Street Methodist Episcopal Church in New York resulted in the creation of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

Greater divisions occurred in the early nineteenth century. In 1830, the Methodist Protestant Church was founded by those who opposed the authority of bishops and the lack of lay involvement in church governance. The Wesleyan Methodist Church was formed in 1843 by Orange Scott and Luther Lee, mainly due to the Methodist Episcopal Church's reluctance to firmly oppose slavery. Within the Methodist Episcopal Church, controversy erupted in 1844 when Bishop James O. Andrew of Georgia married a woman who owned slaves. Northern delegates, who were the majority, passed a resolution barring Bishop Andrew from his duties. In response, southern delegates voted for a Plan of Separation and formed the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Black members of the MEC-S often met separately or left to join the Northern Church. In 1870, Black congregations split from the MEC-S to form the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, which was renamed the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in 1956.

In the early twentieth century, with slavery no longer an issue and declining membership in the Methodist Protestant Church, a merger occurred in 1939, uniting the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church South, and the Methodist Protestant Church to form the Methodist Church. In 1968, this organization merged with the Evangelical United Brethren Church, creating the United Methodist Church.

Following the same trajectories, the First United Methodist Church of Urbana, the oldest organized church in Champaign County, holds significant historic value, tracing its origins to 1836.¹ This congregation's roots began with Rev. James Holmes, a millwright and itinerant Methodist minister from Kentucky. Holmes arrived in the Big Grove settlement to build a mill for John Brownfield and soon organized the first Methodist class in the home of early settler Walter Rhodes. Prior to organizing the class, Holmes preached to settlers in the area, laying the foundation for a community of worship that would evolve and endure through multiple church structures over nearly two centuries.

Initially, church gatherings were held in homes, schools, outdoors, and eventually the courthouse, as there was no dedicated worship space when the society formed as part of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1836. In 1840, construction began on the first church building, a 30-by-40-foot frame structure erected on a lot at the southwest corner of the alley on West Elm between Market (now Broadway) and Race Streets. The lot, provided by the Champaign County Commissioners on the condition of timely construction, saw the building's shell completed by 1841, with flooring and interior elements finalized in 1843 under Rev. W. D. Gage. Around this time, the congregation's first parsonage, a modest structure with split-board roofing and a mud-and-stick chimney, was built.

By 1856, a larger church building was needed to accommodate the growing congregation. A new brick structure with a tall white frame steeple was constructed at the current site, a block away at the corner of Race and Green Streets. This second church, costing \$10,000, was dedicated in 1858 with a sermon by Rev. Peter Cartwright. Trustees responsible for this new building included Archa Campbell, Rollin Whitcomb, Frederick B. Sale, William M. Hooper, and William Sim. In the late 1860s, the original spire was replaced by a tower with a vestibule entrance facing Race Street.

By 1892, the congregation required yet another larger building. This third church structure, known by some as the Sheldon Memorial Church, was made possible by a \$15,000 donation from Jarius C. Sheldon and his wife Eunice, in memory of their son Clarence. Completed in 1893 and dedicated on Easter Sunday, March 25, 1894, by Rev. Dr. Terry of Evanston, Illinois, this building included a \$3,500 pipe organ donated by younger church members. Commemorative portraits of Jarius and Eunice Sheldon, as well as a plaque honoring their memorial contribution, are displayed in the current (fourth) church building. Numerous improvements were made to the Sheldon Memorial Church in 1909 and 1911, and the seventy-fifth anniversary celebration took place on December 10, 1911, led by former pastor and Bishop Robert McIntyre. Unfortunately, an internal fire damaged much of the interior of the building which led to a fourth iteration of the building.

The fourth and current building, designed by a local architect and member of the Methodist congregation W. M. Maxwell, completed in 1927, stands as a Gothic-style structure costing \$225,000, a debt the congregation carried into the challenging years of the Great Depression.

Acknowledging this debt, the congregation began a pledge campaign. Before too long five-hundred-and-forty-eight members had pledged donations to erase the debt held by the church. Under the leadership of Dr. Albert A. Belyea and Mr. Russell Stewart, the church exceeded its \$4,044.92 pledge for the Crusade in 1939 by committing to \$6,700, surpassing the goal by \$2,655.08. This generosity inspired members to tackle their own debt, leading to a major campaign that pledged \$53,000 to pay off the remaining mortgage. Finally, by the mid-1940s, the congregation's dedication and stewardship enabled them to fully pay off this mortgage. Then, in November 1946, they gathered for a celebratory mortgage-burning ceremony, with Bishop Ralph Magee commending their achievement.

Following a steady rise in membership since the building's completion in 1927, the size of the congregation nearly doubled after the debt was repaid in the late 1940s, with the membership peaking around 1960 with nearly 4,250 members. Part of this increase was likely attributed to the Church's importance as a community center and safe space for the community. According to Pastor Robert Freeman, the third floor at this time hosted a gymnasium that was frequently used by Black members of the community. Given the civil rights movement was in full swing throughout the 1960s, this space was likely seen as a "safe space" for youth in the community. At the church they could make friends, play basketball, and hone their skills. While the gym has been renovated into offices, its remnants still remain. While the floors were covered with carpet and drop-ceilings hung, a visitor will still hear the creak of the wood floors when walking and if a tile is missing from the ceiling they may still see the basketball hoops hanging above them.

Regardless, there is no doubt that First United Methodist was a place Black community members could feel welcome during the Civil Rights era. This is made apparent by the presence of Olympic Champion Jesse Owens attending the church in the 1960s while Dr. Thomas K. Cureton ran tests on his body at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Members of the church still recall his attendance fondly and remember these times of the church's history as a place where everyone could come to be a part of the community and worship too.

Noting an upward trend in membership and activities at the church, leadership began to think about updating and expanding the building once again. This time however, they decided an addition would be the answer to their need for space. This decision was not taken lightly and in fact the ongoing missionary work that was occurring around the world, alongside Cold War innovations and fears largely inspired the need for church growth according to church member Ben Jones. He hoped that people would recall "in the year of our Lord 1969, a band of Christians had faith in God and conviction as to the need for teaching his word that they gave of themselves to provide better facilities to teach the word of God." In 1970 the \$650,000 project was completed, adding an educational wing to meet the needs of the congregation, including housing for Sunday School classes, a children's library, a day care center, and space for a Boy Scout Troop. Notably, the education wing was consecrated by Lance Webb, the Bishop of the Illinois Area of the United Methodist Church, who gave the event a theme through his sermon - "The Church: Beautiful and Enduring." While this message was inspiring and gave hope to

membership, Ben Jones did not let the church forget about the debt they incurred, stating “we still have a financial obligation to fulfill and a challenge to meet to devise and underwrite a program to fully utilize the facilities we have built.” Ultimately, the church membership themselves helped to pay off the remaining debt through a pledge system much like the one they conducted to pay off the Church’s original mortgage.

In more recent times, the church's historical significance has been further solidified through physical expansions and preservation efforts. In 2013, the congregation completed a \$250,000 roof replacement to preserve the historic structure after repeated lightning strikes on the bell tower, ensuring that the tile matched the original design. These moments, alongside the donated stained glass windows depicting the prior church buildings, underscore the enduring legacy and deep roots of the First United Methodist Church within Urbana’s community. From its beginnings in 1836 as part of the Methodist Episcopal Church to its unification with the Evangelical United Brethren Church in 1968, the congregation’s journey reflects the larger history of the Methodist Church in America. This church remains a testament to the values of courage, stewardship, and unity, celebrated by both its members and the broader Urbana community.

The First United Methodist Church also has a long history of involvement in and support for a variety of community, social, and civic initiatives in Urbana and Champaign County, including women’s organizations, the creation of the Cunningham Children’s Home, the Urbana Half Century Club, and its nursery school and day care. The church’s design, with its heavy emphasis on meeting spaces on the ground floor and in the basement, emphasized the dual role as both a center of religious activity and community activity.

The history of the First United Methodist Church (FUMC) is deeply intertwined with the history of Urbana. The United Methodist Woman’s Group, now known as United Women in Faith, has served as a connection between the Church and the Urbana Community for over a hundred years.¹ The United Women in Faith (UWF) is the contemporary name for the methodist women’s organization that supports the service work of the Methodist Episcopal Church both locally and internationally. In 1910, the local side of this organization, called the Woman’s Home Missionary Society (est. 1880), was combined with the Women’s Foreign Missionary Society (est. 1869) to become the Woman’s Missionary Council. When a merger of the three branches of Methodist Churches occurred in 1939, the Woman’s Society of Christian Service, or WSCS, was formed. This new organization was intended to join the Women’s missions of all three denominations. The Women’s Society of Christian Service was united with the Wesleyan Service Guild and renamed as the United Methodist Women in 1972. In 2022, the group changed their name changed again to the United Women in Faith.

¹ [Timeline of Women in Methodism | UMC.org](https://www.UMC.org)

The Women's Society of Christian Service at the First United Methodist Church, hosted regular meetings, speaking events, and fundraisers for their members and the public. Their events were regularly announced in the local paper and often followed up by reports on the success of the activities. They had visiting speakers from the University of Illinois come at their luncheons as a way to help their membership learn about current events like the Korean War or the how they could support missionary work in the Philippines.² Every year they hosted fundraisers and donated to local and international charitable organizations. In 1953 they gave 375 dollars to help found women's Schools in India, Japan, and China.³ They also contributed to local charities. In 1953, they sent money to Huling Home in Rantoul Il.⁴

One of the First United Methodist Church's major accomplishments in Champaign County was its involvement with the founding of the Cunningham Children's Home. Joseph and Mary Cunningham were both members of the First Methodist Episcopal Church in Urbana (FUMC's denomination before the Methodist denomination mergers of the 20th century).⁵ According to published church history, Joseph Cunningham served as a Trustee on the Churches board and was elected as the delegate to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church North.⁶ Joseph Cunningham was not just an involved church member; he was also a notable citizen. He held many service roles in Champaign County. He was one of the first trustees for the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, worked as an editor for the Union Gazette, and as a county level Judge.⁷

In 1895, Joseph and Mary deeded part of their fifteen-acre home in North Urbana to the Illinois Conference of the Woman's Home Missionary Society as a Deaconess home and Orphanage.⁸ The Woman's Home Missionary Service, now known as the United Woman in Faith, has since been deeply intertwined with the leadership of the children's home.⁹ In June of 1953, the News Gazette reported on the general meeting of the Women's Society of Christian Service held at the FUMC. It opened with a report from the superintendent of Cunningham Children's home, Mrs. Merle English. She spoke about how the Youth at Cunningham wanted to "belong, and be part of the church, the home, the community."¹⁰

According to Pastor Robert K. Freeman, the Church served as the meeting place for Urbana's Half Century Club after its reorganization in 1923. The community organization "was organized and chartered by the state of Illinois in 1883 as 'Children of the Pioneers' to commemorate the

² "Miss Vioria Speaker For Urbana WSCS" *The News Gazette*, January 10th, 1954.

³ "Annual Report of the Women's Christian Service 1953-1954" FUMC Church Archive.

⁴ "Annual Report of the Women's Christian Service 1953-1954" FUMC Church Archive.

⁵ "Key Figures Associated with Urbana First United Methodist" *Urbana First Church Historical Information*, 10.

⁶ "Key Figures Associated with Urbana First United Methodist" *Urbana First Church Historical Information*, 10.

⁷ "Judge Joseph O. Cunningham Dies" *Urbana Daily Courier*, May 5th, 1917.

⁸ "Cunningham Children's Home: History At-A-Glance" document produced by Cunningham Children's Home Website, Page 1 ([Cunningham Children's Home History](#))

⁹ "Cunningham Children's Home: History At-A-Glance" document produced by Cunningham Children's Home Website, Page 8 ([Cunningham Children's Home History](#))

¹⁰ "Merle English Tells WSCS of Youth Problems." *The News Gazette* Wednesday June 10 1953.

foundation of the city by their parents' generation in 1833. Meetings were held annually until the club's disbandment in 1910. In 1923, the club was reorganized to include those who had resided in the Champaign-Urbana area for at least fifty years"¹¹ Judge Joseph Cunningham was a member of both organizations as was J.C. Sheldon.

Jarius Corydon Sheldon was both a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church and is cited as an honorary member of the Half Century Club in the organization's self titled 1947 publication.¹² J.C. Sheldon was notable for his work in the state legislature, where he helped direct money toward the development of the University of Illinois and without his Financial Assistance the third iteration of the church would not have been built. This is why the third church was dedicated to his son, Clarence C. Sheldon, who had died in 1893.¹³

In the late 1950's was introduced by the Urbana Economic Development Committee, a subcommittee of the Urban City Council, as a way to revitalize the downtown area. They recruited Victor Gruen, the man credited with the development of the first indoor shopping center, to help them design a shopping center for Urbana. When he was designing what would be Lincoln Square Mall, he "did not attempt a complete 'urban renewal' and rebuilding of the central downtown core. He deliberately chose not to use the 'bulldozer' solution. This was done to not only save on cost, but also, more importantly, to preserve those elements of the core area that contributed to the community's character and were in good condition or newly built."¹⁴

Gruen designed the mall at the center of a collection of existing Urbana landmark buildings. Each entrance to the mall connects to one of these landmarks, including government buildings, like the United State Post Office and the Champaign County Courthouse on the north side of the mall. He made the south exit face Eisner's Supermarket, a regional supermarket, that had opened a location there a few years prior to the mall, in 1955.¹⁵ To the West the mall opened out to the Urbana Free Library and First United Methodist Church. The First United Methodist Church sat just southwest of the Mall's west exit and would dominate the southward view of anyone leaving the mall. The Church was highlighted in the project because it was seen as a central part of Urbana's unique character.

According to Reverend Robert Freeman, the church gave up land to the mall development and retained a portion for a parking lot that now exists at the rear of the church on its east side, between it and the mall. With this location of the parking lot and with ADA accessible entry provided through the rear east entrance, the church's original front doors facing Race Street have been less used.

¹¹ "Description of the Urbana Half Century Club Records" Collection 6, The Urbana Free Library .

¹² Half Century Club, "Half Century Club of Urbana Illinois" (1947) 9.

¹³ "An Active Life Comes to a Close" *Champaign Daily News* (Sept 18th, 1905). And "Death of Mr. Sheldon" *Urbana Daily Courier* (Sept 18th, 1905).

¹⁴ Historical Preservation Nomination for Lincoln Square Mall, 69.

¹⁵ "Eisner Foods in Urbana opened to the public, 1955," *Champaign County Historical Archives*, accessed March 28, 2025, <https://urbanafree.omeka.net/items/show/123>.

In addition, since the Mall's Development FUMC has found new ways of catering to the larger community beyond its congregation and continuing its civic role. As the community's population and demographics change, the church has remained flexible in its programming. First United Methodist Church in Urbana is still the home of the United Methodists in Urbana, but it has taken on new roles. It is currently the home of a daycare center founded in 1974, several few community organizations including Girl Scout Troop 2222, Twin City Theatre Company, Lone Star Lodge #18, People's Chorus, Amasong Choir, Homeschooled Children's Dance Class (Summer) and a number of other church communities, Christ Community Church at the Square (Joonim Church) and Christ Community Church, both beginning in 2015. The church's 1927 design, with its ample space for classrooms, meeting and event spaces, and offices has allowed it flexibility to adapt gracefully to a changing civic environment.

Map from Champaign County GIS Consortium

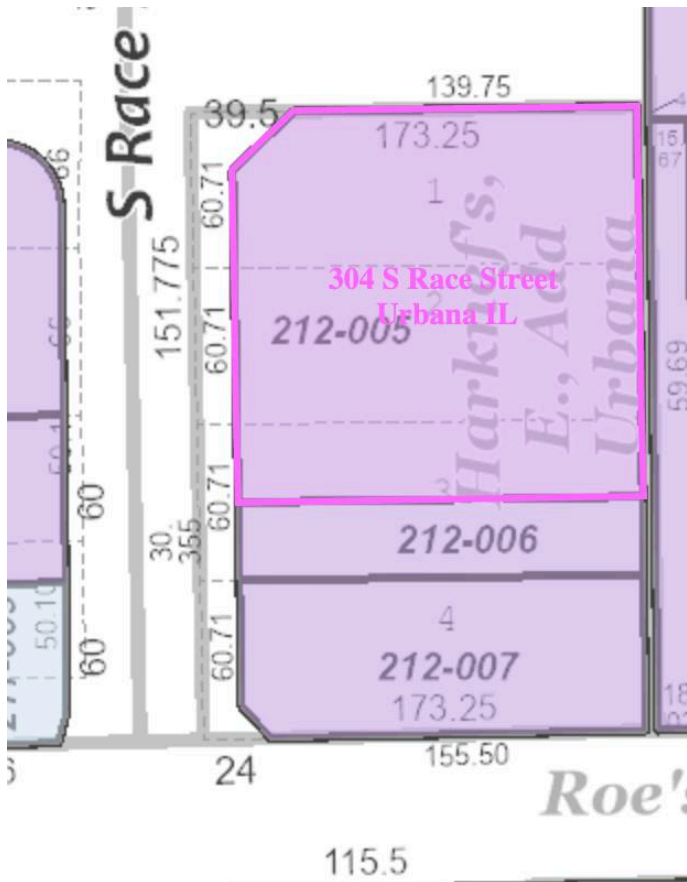


Exhibit D – Supplemental Photos

304 S. Race Street United Methodist Church



The intersection of Race Street and Green Street, Looking South



Detail of Western-Facing Façade



The Intersection of S Race Street and W High Street, Looking East



East-Facing Façade, View from Lincoln Square Mall Parking Lot

Exhibit D – Supplemental Photos



North-Facing Façade

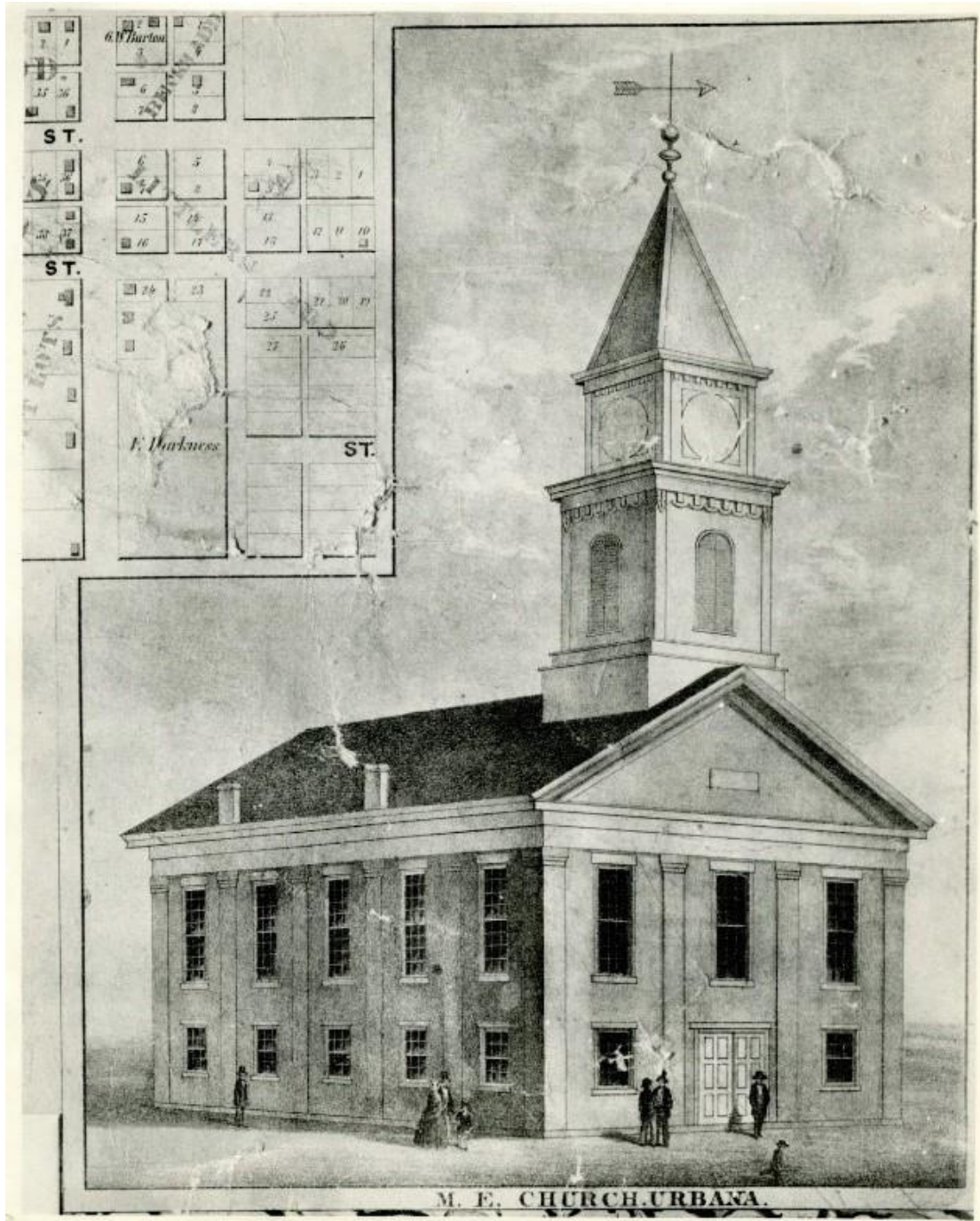


Bell Tower, View from Green Street

Images of First United Methodist Church through the Years



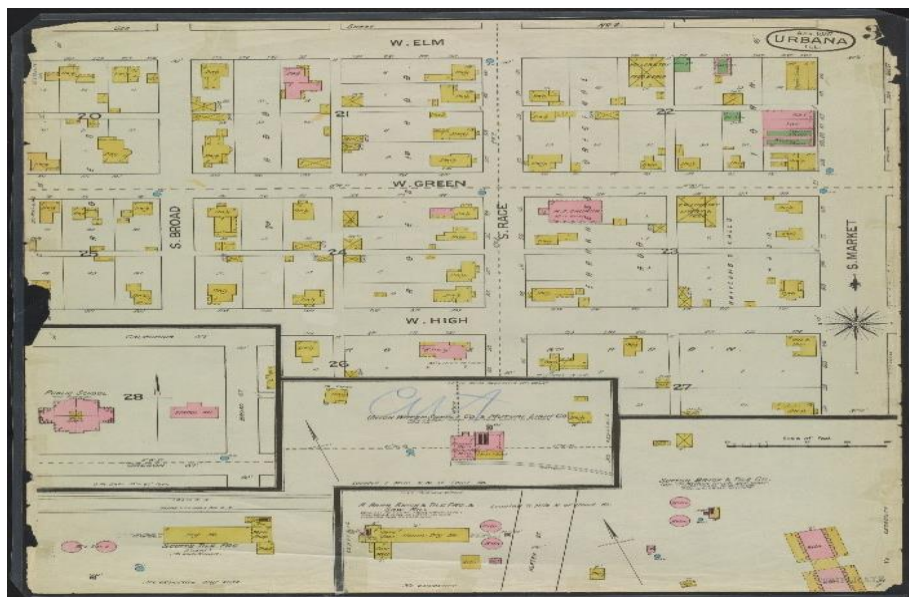
Original church building (c. 1840–1856), depicted on present stained glass window.



After the initial building was sold, the church was moved and reconstructed slightly north, on the corner of Race and Green Streets (where it is located to this day). It was a brick structure with a tall white frame steeple. This 19th-century image shows the church with its original pointed tower. (c.1856), *courtesy of The Urbana Free Library.*



The original entrance and spire were removed in order to build a new façade and spire facing Race Street. A Sanborn Fire Insurance map from 1887 shows the Methodist church with the same lateral plan and vestibule facing Race street. (c.1860s), *courtesy of The Urbana Free Library*





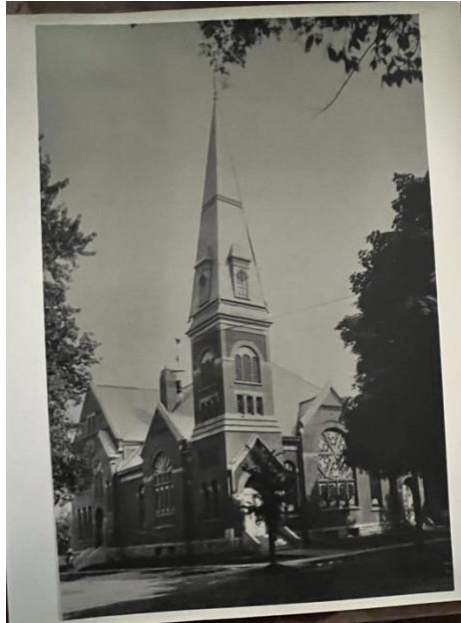
Second church building (c. 1856-1892), depicted on present stained glass window.



Basement Fellowship Hall of the church (c.1892), *FUMCU Archives*



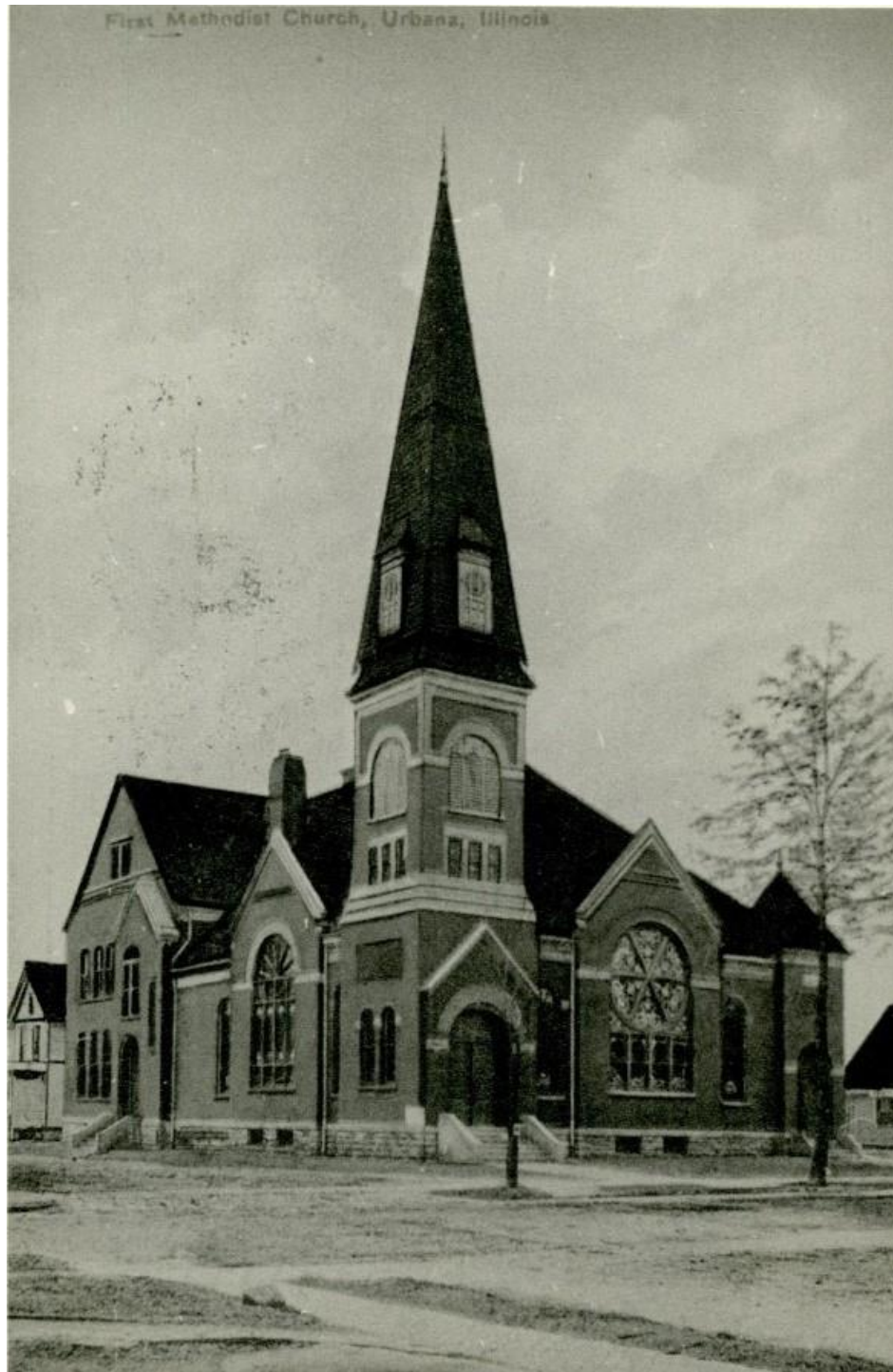
Key to the church (c. 1856-1892)



Third church building (c. 1892-1925), photograph and depicted on present stained glass window.



Third church building illustration on the Financial Statement and Apportionment Booklet (c.1900), *FUMCU Archives*



A new structure, dedicated in February of 1893, was constructed in response to the church's growing congregation and need for space. The photograph of the church shows an entirely new (and larger) layout than its predecessors. The Pictorial Directory of the First Methodist Church states that it was, "necessary to replace it [the previous building] with a more modern and better equipped structure.", *courtesy of The Urbana Free Library*

WILL BE DEDICATED.

The New M. E. Church will be Formally Dedicated To-Day.

It is finished and paid for. All the requirements have been complied with and the new M. E. church, the pride of our city, will be dedicated this morning. The members have worked long and faithfully to perfect and as a reward can boast of the finest church in central Illinois. It is convenient, commodious and artistic in every detail. Through the courtesy of Judge Cunningham we are furnished with the following brief history of the church.

HISTORICAL SKETCH.

Methodism had its origin in Champaign county, in the efforts of one James Holmes, a local preacher who came to the settlement in the autumn of 1835, in the pursuit of his business as a mill-wright. Seeing an opening for evangelical work among the scattered settlers, like a true missionary he accepted the call and set about the Master's work. A series of meetings in a log school house, a few miles north of Urbana, resulted in assembling a few who would "flee the wrath to come," into a class early in 1836. The germ thus planted grew, and a camp meeting held near this city in 1839, resulted in the formation of another class from amongst its inhabitants.

The movement now attracted the attention of the Illinois Conference, and at its session held at Bloomington in September, 1839, sent to "Urbana Mission," Rev. Arthur Bradshaw, who became the first settled pastor of the county. He remained one year, but was returned in 1841. During this pastorate a small wooden meeting house was erected by the joint labors of pastor and people, they joining in the work of felling the trees and hewing the timbers.

The society grew and received accessions each year until early in the '50s, a movement was set on foot for providing greater facilities for the public ministry of the Word, and on July 27, 1855, the cornerstone of the new structure was laid. The following year it was inclosed and finally completed and dedicated in 1859, Rev. Peter Cartright officiating.

Since 1860 a movement was started to meet the growing demands of the society for better church facilities, which languished for many months, and until December 17, 1893, when J. C. Sheldon, President of the Board of Trustees, came to the rescue with an offer, which was gratefully accepted, to erect and inclose the walls, leaving this society and its friends to complete the building. Subscriptions were by this generous offer greatly stimulated, and the old building was turned over to the demolishers on March 4, 1893, the last service being held there March 8d.

W. Pitner; 1847, C. J. T. Toller; 1848, W. G. Moore; 1849, J. C. Long; 1850, L. Anderson; 1851, C. Arnold; 1852, J. C. Long; 1853-4, W. E. Johnson; 1855, W. F. T. Sprull; 1856-7, W. H. H. Moore; 1858, M. Butler; 1859, A. Semple; 1860-1, A. S. McCoy; 1862-3, W. B. Anderson; 1864, R. Hungerford; 1865, W. H. Webster; 1866, A. S. McCoy; 1867, J. G. Little; 1869, J. Shaw; 1870, W. H. H. Moore; 1871-2-3, D. Gay; 1874-5-6, W. F. T. Sprull; 1877, D. Gay; 1878, P. C. Carroll; 1879, M. A. Hewes; 1880-1-2, J. Miller; 1883-4-5, A. C. Byerly; 1886-7, R. McIntyre; 1888, R. G. Hobbs; 1889, F. Crane; 1890, F. C. Bruner; 1891-2, M. D. Hornbeck; 1893, U. Z. Gilmer.

The present pastor of the church is Rev. U. Z. Gilmer, and the board of trustees and other officers are as follows:

Board of Trustees—J. C. Sheldon, J. C. Kirkpatrick, B. F. Boggs, N. Clifford Ricker, J. W. Shack, J. O. Cunningham, J. G. Oldham.

Rev. Alexander C. Byerly, presiding elder, Rev. Ulric Z. Gilmer, pastor.

Board of Stewards—C. W. Rolfe, E. H. Renner, G. W. Meyers, H. M. Shuck, Mary Charles, Elizabeth Viers, Rebecca Reimund, T. J. Burrill, Z. F. Sharp, A. B. Shuck, Henry Sewell.

Prof. George W. Meyers, superintendent of Sunday school; Lida M. Viers, first assistant superintendent; Charles F. Gensel, second as-

sistant superintendent.

Officers of Y. P. S. C. E.—William T. Burrill, president; Elsie A. Smith, secretary.

The doors of the church will be opened at exactly ten minutes to ten o'clock. The order of exercises will be as follows:

Order of Exercises—10:30 a. m.—Hymn, "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord"; prayer; anthem; Scripture lesson; free will offering; sermon by Bishop Thomas Bowman, D. D., L. L. D.; financial statement by J. W. Shuck, secretary of the board of trustees; Hymn, Rev. R. I. Fleming, author, tune "Sessions."

Take Thou our gift, great God, our King; Take the glad tribute that we bring; The praise we render to Thy praise; And dwell therein through all its days.

Here speaks through fire touched lips Thy word, Here breathes Thy spirit, gracious Lord; The joys that from Thy presence flow.

Speak here Thy message to the sad; Here let the sinning soul find glad; Here from their fears give saints release, May here the food of God be fed; With words of love—our life's true bread; And may we gather young and old, Into the Saviour's everlasting fold.

Take, then, the house we give to Thee; Fulfilled in it Thy purpose be; Let here chorubic wings extend; Here let the Triune God descend.

Dedication, Doxology; Benediction.

free will offering; short addresses by former pastors, Revs. Arthur Bradshaw, W. F. Sprull, J. G. Little, W. H. H. Moore, James Miller, James Shaw, and others, among whom will be Rev. F. B. Sale, only surviving member of the board of trustees of 1856; hymn, "The Hallowed Spot," the Misses Gilmer; communion service, conducted by Bishop Bowman; hymn, "Tis Midnight, on Olive's Brow"; benediction.

The structure which we dedicate to-day was built, completed and furnished at a cost of about \$21,150 which has all been paid or provided for. The cost of the organ is not in this estimate.

PASTORS AT URBANA, ILLINOIS.

1839, A. Bradshaw; 1840, J. W. Parsons; 1841, A. Bradshaw; 1842, L. Oliver; 1843, W. D. Gage; 1844, A. S. Goddard; 1845, J. Fox; 1846,

At 2:30 in the afternoon the Urbana Commandery No. 16, Knights Templar will hold an Easter service. The following program will be carried out:

Easter celebration by Urbana Commandery, No. 16, Knights Templar—2:30 p. m.—Voluntary anthem, choir; hymn, choir; prayer; Scripture lesson; Solo, "The Palms," Sir Knight Andrew Frank Fay; sermon, Sir Knight John Rogers Reasoner; Hymn, choir; benediction.

There will be services in the evening, according to the following program:

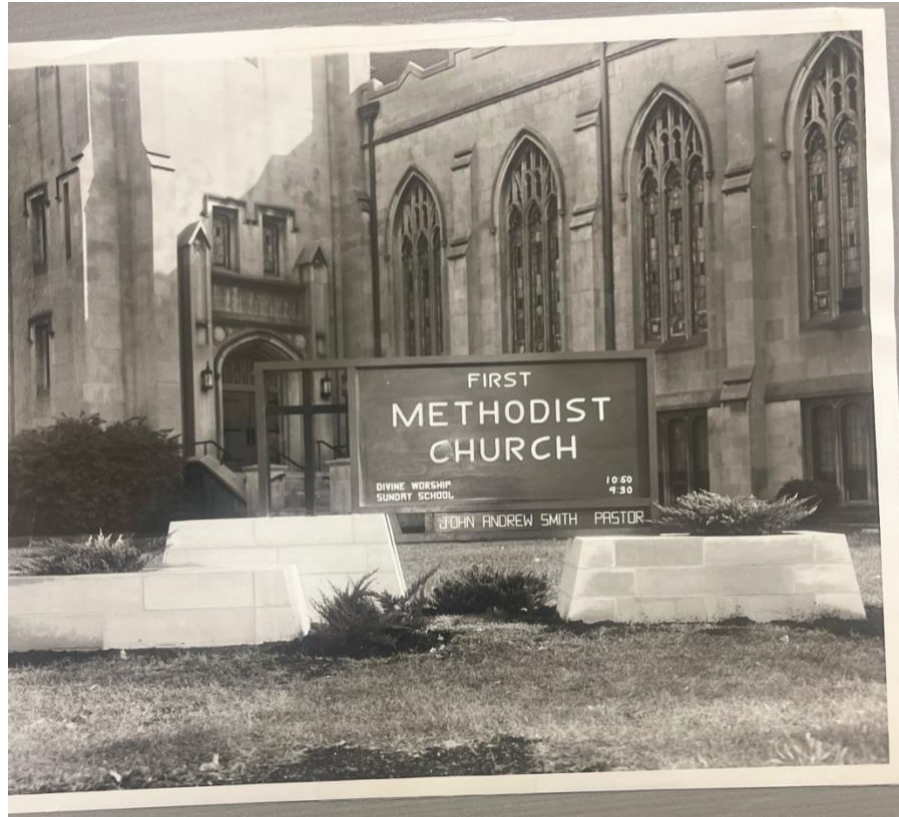
Love feast, conducted by Rev. A. C. Byerly; presiding elder; hymn, "Am I a Soldier of the Cross";



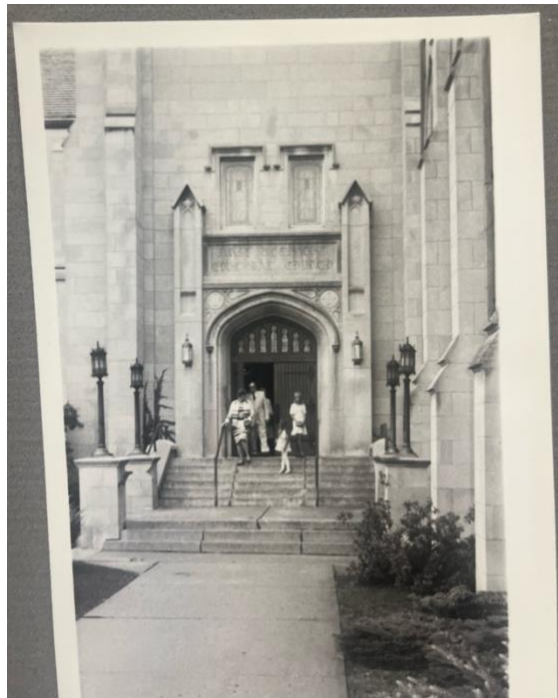
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, OF URBANA. DEDICATED SUNDAY MARCH 25, 1894.



Fourth church building photographs, *FUMCU Archives*



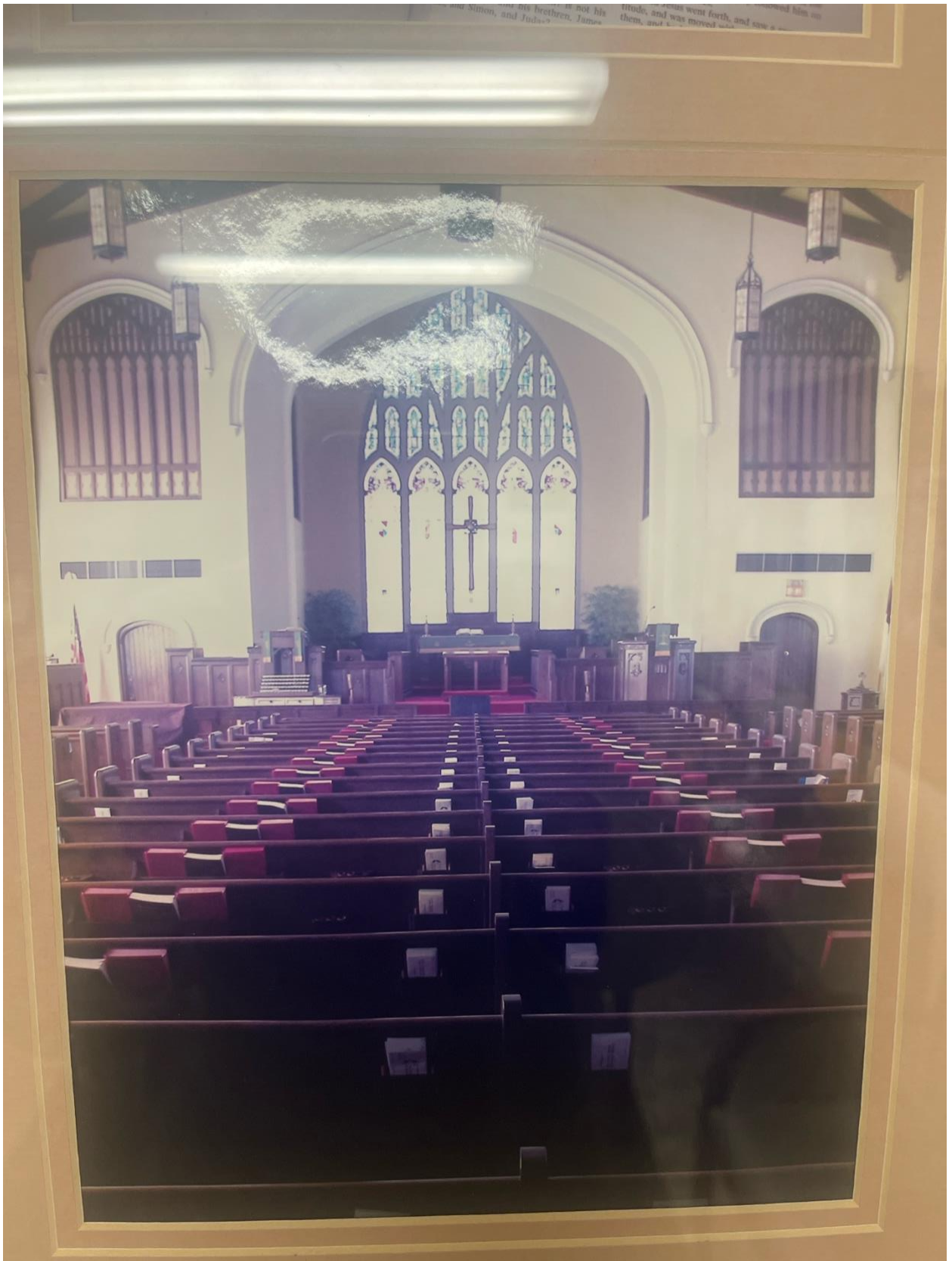
Church sign (c.1954-1967), *FUMCU Archives*



Fourth church building entrance, *FUMCU Archives*



Church Bell Tower (c.1930s), *FUMCU Archives*



Church Sanctuary (c.1990s), *FUMCU Archives*

First United Methodist Church To Dedicate New Wing

The First United Methodist Church of Urbana, Race and Green, dedicates Sunday its new education wing and other facilities in a 10 a.m. consecration service.

Bishop Lucas Webb, Springfield, bishop of the Illinois area of the United Methodist Church will officiate at the ceremony. His theme is "The Church Beautiful and Enduring."

Among others taking part in the service will be Dr. John Andrew Smith, Occupation district superintendent and former pastor of the Church, Rev. Kermit Gregory, present pastor and Rev. E. E. Atherton, associate minister.

Ben Jones, building committee chairman and C. S. Dunson, trustees' chairman will also take part in the service. The new education wing is

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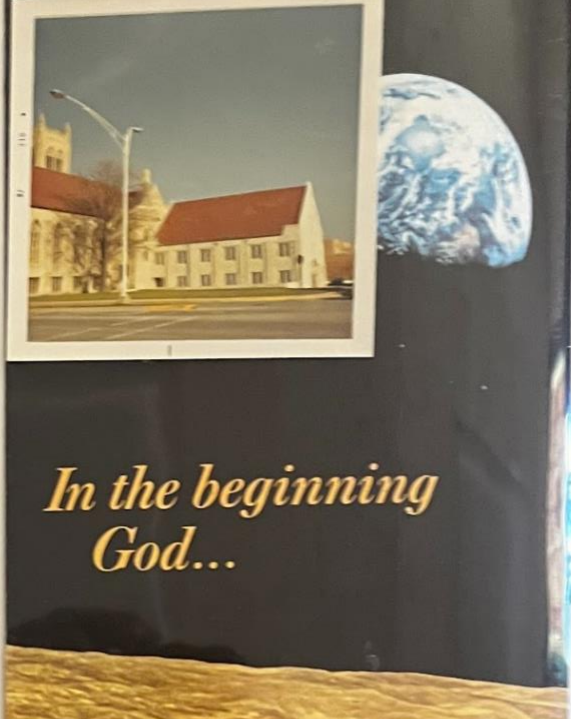
part of a \$52,000 building and remodeling plan for the church. This figure includes heating and air conditioning new classrooms, library and meeting rooms.

The church's Callahan and Phillips groups will occupy new rooms on the third floor of the building along with first and second grade Sunday school classes.

Architects for the building were Smith, Kraft and McGrath. General contractors were the English Brothers.

After the 10 a.m. worship service, Bishop Webb and Dr. Smith and their wives will form a receiving line in the new building. Refreshments will be served during the open house.

Bishop Webb, author of six books and chairman of the Commission on Worship of the Methodist Church, recently returned from an episcopal visit to Africa and Australia.



In the beginning God...

Services Set To Dedicate Cornerstone

7/1-22-1969
 Ceremony to dedicate the cornerstone of the new church school addition of the First United Methodist Church, Race and Green Sts., will be conducted at 10:30 a.m. Sunday in the church sanctuary.

Ben Jones, chairman of the building committee, and representatives of the church school will participate in the service. Church school classes will be dismissed early for attendance at the ceremony.

Weather permitting, the cornerstone will be mortared in place during the coming week, when progress on masonry work on the south wing of the new building will be ready for installation.

Plans for the addition were approved a year ago last June, and the church ran a fund drive to obtain the necessary funds for the \$7,000 sq ft. construction. Some remodeling of present facilities was also scheduled, when the project is finished, there will be air conditioning in the church parlor, kitchen facilities, more office space, a large meeting and board room and a library.

The new addition will include three stories and a basement with a youth activities room, Boy Scout room, music base classrooms, crib room and toilet facilities.

The addition is entirely roofed now, and windows are expected to be in within a week. The elevator shaft is being readied for installation of the elevator. Furnishings must still be completed, and the parlor is not finished, but little other remodeling work remains to be done.

Church members are hoping the new addition will be in use around Easter.



CONSTRUCT FOOTINGS FOR LINCOLN SQUARE.

The George A. Fuller Co. has started constructing footings for the building in Urbana's Lincoln Square. Frank Dallas, construction superintendent for the company, said the firm received another load of steel for

7/12/69
 concrete and walls Tuesday morning. Progress on the Square is continuing as expected, he said. Reflected in the rain water in the foreground is the First Methodist Church, also in the background, which is just west of the future Lincoln Square.

Newspaper article (c.1970) on addition of the education wing., FUMCU Archives

Current Images of First United Methodist Church of Urbana



Aerial images of the current building, *courtesy of Renaissance Roofing*



New church sign added in 2023



Sanctuary, 2024

Notable People with Connections to First United Methodist Church of Urbana

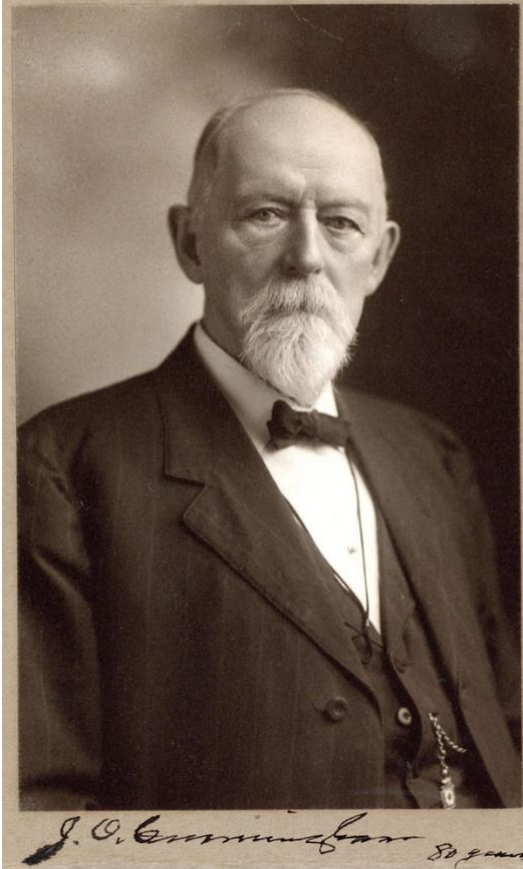


This painting of Jesus was drawn by Olympic Track star Jesse Owens. It was given to the Sunday School Department by Mr. Owens sometime between 1948 and 1951. Jesse used to attend church here and loved to tell the children stories about Jesus. The Sunday School Superintendent was Florence Sewce Kidder. The Sunday School teacher was Mrs. Julia Little. From the Robert and Florence Kidder Collection.

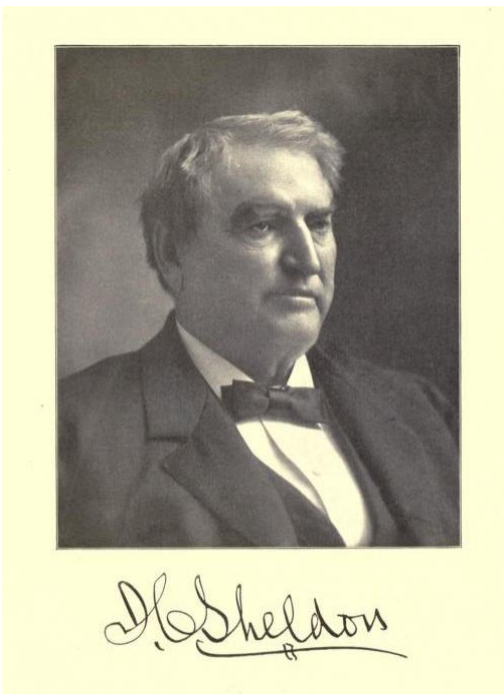


Drawing of Jesus Christ by **Jesse Owens**, Track and Field Olympian, who was an active member of the Church. Gifted to the Sunday School Department between 1948-1951.

(Photo of Jesse Owens in the 1936 Olympics from aaregistry.org)



Judge Joseph Cunningham was an active member of the Church along with his wife. He served on the Trustee Board and the Administrative Board. He was elected to be a delegate to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church North. He was a local lawyer and Judge in Champaign County. He served as a US Supreme Court Justice & was personally responsible for the Land Grant College, now the University of Illinois, coming to Urbana-Champaign and not to Bloomington. He and his wife gave his summer home to the Women of Faith to start Cunningham Children's home. Also, his wife was responsible for the Children in the home to be a part of the Sunday School program at the Church.



Jarius Corydon Sheldon (1831-1871) was a prominent Member in developing Champaign County and was responsible for the construction of the Third Church. The Church was dedicated in memory of his son, Clarence.





Former State Senator, **Scott M. Bennett** was an active member of Urbana First Church, having served on the Trustee Board. His family were members of the church as well.



Maynard Britchford (picture on the left in the center, and second picture the second from the left) was a long time active member of the church whose ancestor was a Pastor of the Church. He was responsible for establishing the church's Archive Room and organizing the historical records of the church. He was the University of Illinois' first Archivist who set up the Archives for the University.

ⁱ The history of the First United Methodist Church of Urbana is based on materials from the FUMC's archive and self-published histories, held on-site at the church. We would like to thank Reverend Robert Freeman for allowing access to these archives.