God Bless, Pastor Howard

**FIRST Thoughts**

Warren Buffett has often said, “If you live long enough, you’ll see everything in the markets.” But he admits, the last week has been a first for him. The changes to our daily lives in just a week or two is a first for most of us. I’m writing to let you know that we will not have in-person worship for at least the next two Sundays (March 22 and 29), and we will evaluate our options nearer the end of the month. This is the first time I have cancelled worship services because of a pandemic. It is possible that it will be some time before we are able to worship again in person. I’m hoping we will feel safe gathering again in April for Palm Sunday and Easter, but I realize that might change. The CDC has already recommended that all groups of 50 or more be suspended for at least 8 weeks, which would take us well past Easter. We will try to keep our office open unless we are instructed not to.

We will make every effort to “stream” a worship service at 10:45 am on Sundays which you can access via audio on the radio (AM 1020) and through the church website (www.fumc-cdale.org, click “listen live”). We also have plans to stream worship by video - right now we are looking at YouTube Live.

I encourage you to continue your financial support of the church by mailing a gift (214 W. Main St., Carbondale, IL 62901). Or you can now give online through our website. We are fortunate that our Finance Team already researched online giving options in recent months and our Church Council approved the use of a company called Tithe.ly to handle the gifts.

In addition to these helpful words, I also stumbled on the interesting fact that the word “quarantine” has origins in an ancient Italian practice of making ships from countries with plague wait offshore for 40 days until they could be sure there were no latent cases onboard. There is also a fascinating connection to the season of Lent. The desert Jesus fasted in was called “quarantine” (15th century) and there was a 40 day time period. Perhaps we should all look for a spiritual opportunity in the midst of anxiety and inconvenience. We can treat it like a prolonged sabbath.

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**FIRST Thoughts—continued**

This is not the first time a church has had to cope with a pandemic. During the Bubonic Plague, Martin Luther wrote this to a friend:

“I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance infect and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me, however, I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely as stated above. See this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God.”

Luther’s Works, Volume 43, pg 132, from the letter “Whether one may flee from a Deadly Plague” written to Rev. Dr. John Hess.

Nearer our time, just over 100 years ago, when church services were cancelled during the Spanish Flu pandemic, there were these helpful thoughts. Monday, October 14, 1918

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA: “We have had the strange experience of a churchless Sabbath,” wrote the Methodist revivalist George R. Stuart in the Age-Herald. “What has it taught us?” Most importantly, the pandemic should convince “Intelligent Christians” to trust science rather than seeking to “tempt God to perform a miracle in the preservation of our health… Christians do not discount their faith in the omnipotence of their God by keeping their bodies and homes and streets clean and non-germ producing; by using care in traffic and travel, accepting vaccination, sprays and disinfectants and keeping God’s own laws of health and life. Any other course is the fruit of ignorance and false teaching.”

In addition to these helpful words, I also stumbled on the interesting fact that the word “quarantine” has origins in an ancient Italian practice of making ships from countries with plague wait offshore for 40 days until they could be sure there were no latent cases onboard. There is also a fascinating connection to the season of Lent. The desert Jesus fasted in was called “quarantine” (15th century) and there was a 40-day time period. Perhaps we should all look for a spiritual opportunity in the midst of anxiety and inconvenience. We can treat it like a prolonged sabbath.

- Begin a family worship time.
- Use the time for reading scripture and other spiritual books.
- Memorize scripture verses that give you comfort.
- Start a daily or weekly practice of a simple home worship service.
- And, of course, pray. See a prayer I have appreciated on the facing page.

I don’t know what decisions we will make in the next few weeks, but we certainly pray that they will help “flatten the curve” of Covid-19 and contribute to saving lives, caring for the “least of these” and protecting our caregivers including medical staff. It may be helpful to keep track of what local schools are being asked to do and assume that churches are getting similar directions.

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Most Carbondale First United Methodist Church events scheduled for the Time Period March 17 to March 29, 2020 have been canceled to ensure the health and welfare of our parishioners (confirm with your group leaders whether your meeting/event is happening). Please watch the FUMC Website for updates to the Schedule http://www.fumc-cdale.org/

**“Prayer for a Pandemic”**

May we who are merely inconvenienced
Remember those whose lives are at stake.
May we who have no risk factors
Remember those most vulnerable.
May we who have the luxury of working from home
Remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making their rent.
May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close
Remember those who have no options.
May we who have to cancel our trips
Remember those that have no safe place to go.
May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market
Remember those who have no margin at all.
May we who settle in for a quarantine at home
Remember those who have no home.
As fear grips our country, Let us choose love.
During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other,
Let us find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors. Amen.

**Asburian Deadlines:** Just a reminder that Mondays by Noon is the deadline for submitting articles and other revisions to that week’s Asburian. Please send submissions/revisions to barbm@fumc-cdale.org.

**Church Office Hours:** The Church Office will be open Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to Noon and 1 to 5 p.m. The Church Office will be closed on Fridays.

**Mat Makers:** Recycled bags are needed to make sleeping mats for the homeless. You can drop off recyclable plastic bags in the Atrium in the box labeled “Recycling Bags for Mat Project.” The ladies have made 188 mats as of today.

**Volunteers for 8:15am Welcome Center and Refreshment Hosts**
If you do not plan to attend church on the dates you are scheduled to serve, please telephone the church office (457-2416) or e-mail Barb at barbm@fumc-cdale.org. Thank you. Kathy Swindell, Coordinator

**KIDS BIKE-A-THON**
WHEN: SATURDAY, APRIL 25 (tentative date)
WHERE: 1:00 – 2:30 P.M. in the FUMC North Parking Lot
**Bring your bike and ride laps to raise money toward the purchase of new life-jackets for Little Grassy United Methodist Camp**
Watch for registration details coming soon!!!!
BE SURE TO TAKE A MOMENT TO WISH THE FOLLOWING CHURCH MEMBERS

April 1   April 4   April 7   April 10   April 13
Carl White   Ann Bongiorno   Logan Frick   Ruth Hefferman   Michael Bitting
April 2   April 5   April 8   April 11   April 14
Necia Jannings   Maya Benyas   Elaine Crain   Cuty Jung   Connie Morgan
April 3   April 6   April 9   April 12   April 15
Sarah Matthews   Elaine Crain   Maya Benyas   Grace Ober  "Boot Camp for the Soul"
April 4   April 7   April 10   April 13   April 16
Ann Bongiorno   Ruth Hefferman   Michael Bitting   Cuty Jung   Logan Frick
April 5   April 8   April 11   April 14   April 17
Maya Benyas   Elaine Crain   Kyle Morgan   Grace Ober  "Boot Camp for the Soul"
April 6   April 9   April 12   April 15   April 18
Michael Bitting   Scott Holcomb   Allan Brittin   Cecil Brown   Brian Henry
April 7   April 10   April 13   April 16   April 19
Ruth Hefferman   Logan Frick   Michael Bitting   Elaine Crain   Maya Benyas
April 8   April 11   April 14   April 17   April 20
Cutty Jung   Grace Ober   Logan Frick   Michael Bitting   Ruth Hefferman
April 9   April 12   April 15   April 18   April 21
Cuty Jung   Grace Ober   Michael Bitting   Ruth Hefferman   Logan Frick
April 10   April 13   April 16   April 19   April 22
Allen Brittin   Cecil Brown   Brian Henry   Jerry Levelsmier   John Bedient
April 11   April 14   April 17   April 20   April 23
Cecil Brown   Brian Henry   Jerry Levelsmier   John Bedient   Lori Black
April 12   April 15   April 18   April 21   April 24
Jerry Levelsmier   John Bedient   Lori Black   Zach Goodson   Molly Morgan
April 13   April 16   April 19   April 22   April 25
Lori Black   Zach Goodson   Molly Morgan   Jerry Levelsmier   John Bedient
April 14   April 17   April 20   April 23   April 26
Connie Morgan   Mike Peterman   Lynda Beck-Willison   Taylor Williams   Samuel Baker
April 15   April 18   April 21   April 24   April 27
Kelsie Walker   Bailey Brittin   Mia Henry   Henry Jannings   John Rider
April 16   April 19   April 22   April 25   April 28
Karen Frick   Gene Morgan   Claire Beaupre   Lydia Beck-Willison   Taylor Williams
April 17   April 20   April 23   April 26   April 29
Jack Robertson   Larry Good   Jackson Beaupre   Greg Cook   Rylan Hill
April 18   April 21   April 24   April 27   April 30
Elaine Evers   Lorelei Fink   Lovett Fink   Julieta Monteiro-Leitner   Penny Murden-Thomas
April 19   April 22   April 25   April 28   May 1
Henry Jannings   John Rider   Jared Sheffer   Ryan Tripple   Ordez Davis
April 20   April 23   April 26   April 29   April 32
Meg Buser   Mike Durr   Beverly Verduin   Samantha Holcomb   Bryn Matzenbacher
April 21   April 24   April 27   April 30   May 3
Steve Mitchell   Mike Kelley   Charlotte Vancil   Elaine Evers   Lorelei Fink
April 22   April 25   April 28   April 31   May 4
Charlotte Vancil   Elaine Evers   Lorelei Fink   Lovett Fink   Julieta Monteiro-Leitner
April 23   April 26   April 29   April 32   May 5
Mike Kelley   Charlotte Vancil   Elaine Evers   Lorelei Fink   Lovett Fink
April 24   April 27   April 30   May 2
"Boot Camp for the Soul" Reflection and change take work, hard work. Lent can be like a boot camp for the soul, a restart in a focused area. We walk this season together, demanding the best of ourselves, ready to support one another, and prepared to see truths that shatter our self-understanding. After that, our Easter series is “Closer and Closer” - the resurrection means deeper relationships with God and one another.

SUMMER CHURCH CAMP
is just around the corner!
 Camps are available for Kindergarten to Adults.
 Please check out www.igrc.org/camping to see this year’s full camping guide. If you have any question on camping information or registration, please contact Yiwen: yiwenbi@yahoo.com, 618-457-2416
Carbondale First UMC will pay half of the registration cost for students from our church who wish to attend a IGRC camp and half for one friend who attends with them.

FUMCNext-Carbondale had planned to send a letter this week to all FUMC members/friends addressing the issue of LGBTQ inclusion in the denomination to be discussed when the General Conference meets in May. Along with the letter was a copy of an e-mail that FUMCNext planned to e-mail to the delegates of the General Conference. Because of COVID 19, everything is subject to change right now. FUMCNext is not mailing the letter this week with the copy of the e-mail to the delegates. We plan to mail the letter at a better time. We do want to keep you informed as we move forward. We pray everyone stays health.
Mission Committee News...

This Able Veteran sent thanks for the $1,500 that was received from the March to the Manger. The organization currently has 11 service dogs in training. They will be paired with their veteran in a graduation ceremony on May 3, 2020. This Able Veteran continues its breeding program and is partnering with Hellroaring Kennels in Montana. This program got fully underway in late 2019. A first satellite location will soon be formally opened in Maryland—TAV East Chapter. Two new trainers have years of experience training mobility dogs. The next PTSD Service Dog Trainer Academy will be held September 12-21, 2020.

Save these dates:

6th Annual 5K Color Run, Saturday, June 6, 2020
Taylorville VFW Riders PTSD Awareness Run, July 11, 2020
Veteran Graduates Refresher Training Class, October 1-4, 2020

Volunteer Opportunities:

- A volunteer is needed for Nametags for the month of August. Please contact the Church Office if you are interested.
- A volunteer is needed on Thursdays after 1 p.m. in the Church Office to help stuff Sunday Bulletins (one hour).
- Refreshment Hosts for Sundays (8:15 a.m.) to provide juice and snacks.

Please contact Joy or Barb in the Church Office for volunteer opportunities at (618) 457-2416.

SUNDAY CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Children’s Opportunities, Sundays

Sundays at 9:30 a.m. Children’s Sunday School (K-5th grade) uses the Deep Blue from Cokesbury.

Sundays at 10:45 a.m. Children’s Church (K-5th grade). All children are invited to Children’s Church following the Children’s Time at the 10:45 a.m. worship service.

Youth Opportunities, Sundays at 9:30 a.m.

9:30 a.m. Junior/Senior High Class meets in the Youth Room and uses a variety of materials connecting the lessons of the Bible with issues relevant to today’s youth.

Adult Opportunities, Sundays at 9:30 a.m.

Renew Class - Renew is a multi-generational Women’s Study Group that focuses both on the Bible and devotional books enhancing scriptural study. All women are welcome!! We meet in the Chapel, Room 404.

The Electives Class - Scripture studies following the lectionary led by Rev. John Sims. They meet in the Heritage Room. All are welcome!

Small Group Opportunities

FUMCNext-Carbondale meets in the Heritage Room. Help us explore ways we can share the love of Christ with all people? Come share your ideas. Looking forward to seeing you!

Gentle Toning, Stretch, and Yoga Techniques meets on Thursdays at 5:45 p.m., Rm 404, the Chapel.

Golden Yoga meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9:30 a.m., Rm 404, the Chapel. A fee is charged for this class.

Grateful Hearts Grateful Hearts is a group of women who meet to strengthen their faith through Bible study, fellowship, and prayer. They began the Lenten study Seven Mile Miracle by Steven Furtick on Wednesday, March 4. The group meets on Wednesdays at 6 pm in room 308. All women are welcome.

Men’s Group All men of the church are invited to coffee and refreshments on Tuesday mornings at 8:30 a.m. in the Heritage Room. We discuss anything and everything from the perspective of our relationship with God.

Saturday Night Live is a group of “mature” or “maturing” adults who meet monthly for dinner and fellowship. The group usually meets the first Saturday of the month at 5:30 p.m. Watch the Asburian calendar for dates and location information. Everyone is welcome.

Youth Group meets on Wednesdays at 6 p.m. in the Youth Room. Time and location to be determined.