



August 21, 2020

Dear Paragould FUMC,

The God of peace be with you all!

THIS SUNDAY: “Good News for Tough Times: Romans 8-13” We made it to Romans 12! I cannot wait to preach this Sunday as we focus on these inspiring words: ***Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect... Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor.*** We are always needing to be reminded of the calling God’s grace puts on our lives. Chapter 12 is the ethical turning point in Romans. Here Paul moves from the abstractions of chapters 9-11 to the implications of a life marked by this Good News. Romans 12 is the “so what” following 9-11. Join us this Sunday for worship at 9am & 11am as we consider together what it means to be “transformed by the renewing of our minds” and to “let love be genuine.”

BACK-TO-SCHOOL DRIVE THROUGH PRAYERS | THIS SUNDAY | 7pm Join us for an evening of Back to School worship on August 23 at 7pm in the Worship Center parking lot including prayers led by our students. After our tailgate-style service, we’ll invite families to drive through the breezeway as we’ll share a backpack keychain and prayer guide for each student. This event is open to any child, any age whether planning to attend classes in-person, online, or home-school. All laity are welcome including teachers and education staff. Bring a lawn chair or sit in/on your car. Safety protocols are very simple: No mask is required if you remain in your car. A facemask is required if you want to walk around and visit with others. Looking forward to this special evening. I especially want to challenge families to be there as we begin this school year in prayer and worship. Church has been out-of-sync in many ways, but let us again center ourselves in our faith!

BACK-TO-SCHOOL SUPPLY COLLECTION We are moving ahead with our annual effort, though with a few caveats. **First**, only buy these things if you are already shopping and have easy access to the requested products. Do not make a special or untimely shopping trip. **Second**, if you would rather make a monetary donation in support of back-to-school you can mark your gift to the church and we will get that money to our local schools. **Third**, school administrators have suggested that COVID-19-specific donations would be appreciated, specifically: faces masks, face shields, and hand sanitizer. I realize these products can be hard to find. Perhaps you have access to these products through your work or maybe you can hand-make masks. You can drop off supplies the evening of the 23rd or at the Welcome Center during office hours. No one knows what the school year will hold, but no matter the circumstances, there will be students in need. It is our responsibility and joy to help care for our neighbors and children.

Face Masks | Face Shields | Hand Sanitizer | Boxes Facial Tissues | Pocket Folders | Wet Wipes | Black, Blue, Red Pens | Backpacks | Washable Markers | Highlighters | Glue Sticks | Rulers | Spiral Notebooks | Loose Leaf Paper | Crayons | Black-erase Markers | Blunt Scissors | Cap Erasers | Quart/ Gallon Ziplock Bags | 3 Ring Binders | Composition Journals | Pencils | Bottles of Glue

PASTOR’S BOOK CLUB Join us on Wed. Aug. 26 at 7pm via Facebook Live on the church’s page for “Pastor’s Book Club”. Rev. Chase will share about *Inner Compass: An Invitation to Ignatian Spirituality*

by *Margaret Silf* (Loyola Press, 2007). This book offers a unique way to navigate the depths of ourselves built around St. Ignatius of Loyola's Spiritual Exercises in searching for God. Rev. Dane recommends *Jayber Crow* by Wendell Berry (Counterpoint Publishing, 2001). Berry is a gifted essayist, poet, novelist and farmer. His fiction work on the citizens of Port William, Kentucky masterfully illuminates the loss, hope, and joy of the human experience. You'll enjoy this novel! Books are available in the Welcome Center. You could be finished reading or still reading or yet-to-read by Aug. 26. This plan is meant to be flexible and approachable! Enjoy!

FACILITIES & FINANCES Over the past two Sundays we've held business meetings including Finance and Trustees. With regard to church finances, year to date general giving is approximately 95% of 2019. All things considered, I and the Finance Committee consider this a good sign. Thank you for your consistent and regular giving despite not "passing the plates" as we would on typical Sundays. Giving to the building fund continues to be strong as well. Originally we had hoped to have a more formal update on the building fund this fall, but that will be postponed until we return to more regular conditions. For now, building fund commitments are supporting our monthly interest payments and are going toward an annual principal payment in December. With regard to facilities, the new sanctuary doors are our primary project. Those should be installed in September. We give thanks for the approximately \$40k special gifts toward the doors. We'll look forward to a prayer of blessing and celebration when the doors are complete! The Trustees have begun to look at quotes and options regarding water issues in the sanctuary and old education building. If you are in those facilities, you'll notice the water damage is a growing concern. I understand this has been a maintenance issue for many years and is a challenge for any 100 year old building. That being said, we need to take action sooner than later as the problems will only worsen. Look for more updates in the coming months.

IN-PERSON WORSHIP & ACTIVITIES Part of our Trustees meeting included discussing our COVID-19 RELAUNCH and in-person activities. I also had a couple of conversations with DS Rev. John Fleming this past week on this topic. For now, FUMC & ARUMC remain in "Stage 2" regarding reopening. Collectively, we are waiting to monitor the reopening of schools before further allowances are made. One small change is congregational singing. Formerly we were discouraged from singing, but as long as masks are worn, singing is now allowed. I thank those who are attending and supporting in-person worship. FUMC's safety measures mirror similar guidelines in all other public spaces. If you are wondering about coming to church, I want you to feel welcome and comfortable. We are creating a safe environment. If you have questions or feedback about our ministries and COVID-19, please contact me.

As a reminder, below is a summary of what to expect when you return to in-person worship.

+ You must pre-register to attend the 9am & 11am worship services via the church's website (fumcparagould.org/register) or by calling the church office each week.

+ Live-streaming, radio, and television access continue

+ Everyone in the facility will wear a facemask except those speaking or singing.

+ You can download the order of worship from fumcparagould.org/homeboundrelaunch.

+ As services end, we will make our way outside as quickly as possible.

+ Children are welcome, but no childcare will be available.

Grace & Peace,

Rev. Dane



WEEKLY RESOURCES:

1. 9am Order of Worship, Aug. 23
2. 11am Order of Worship, Aug. 23

**Include newsletter cover sheet, weekly flyer, etc