








WHEN MONDAY COMES

Faith for the Week Ahead

✿ Please take this home and use it during the week. ✿

Sunday worship is not meant to stay in the sanctuary.

Each week, When Monday Comes offers Scripture, prayers, reflections, and simple encouragement to help us carry faith into everyday life.

-  Read it with your morning coffee.
-  Use a prayer before bed.
-  Think about the weekly question.
-  Share a thought with someone else.
-  Let God speak in the ordinary places of life.

Faith is not only for Sunday morning.

Faith is for Monday decisions, Tuesday worries, Wednesday conversations, Thursday responsibilities, Friday weariness, Saturday hopes, and every step in between.

So please take this home, keep it nearby, and when Monday comes, remember:

*God is still with you.
Christ is still calling you.
The Spirit is still working in you.*



United Presbyterian Church of Whitinsville



Another View When the Story Gets Messy

Some Bible stories are hard to read because they sound a little too much like real life. Genesis 21 is one of those stories.

Abraham's family is complicated. Sarah is upset. Hagar and Ishmael are sent away. Abraham is distressed because Ishmael is his son too. Nobody in the story looks untouched by pain.

It is not neat. It is not easy. It is messy.
And maybe that is why it still speaks to us.

Most of us know what it is like when life gets messy. Families struggle. Relationships strain. Words get said. Decisions get made. People get hurt. Sometimes someone feels pushed aside, forgotten, or sent away with very little to hold on to.

That is what happens to Hagar and Ishmael. They are sent into the wilderness with some bread and water, but not much else. But here is the part we should not miss.

God does not forget them.

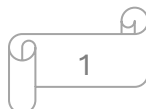
God had already promised Abraham that Isaac would carry the covenant promise. But God also promised that Ishmael would have a future too. Ishmael was not the forgotten child in God's eyes. That matters.

This story reminds us that even when people make painful choices, even when families are complicated, even when someone ends up in the wilderness, God still sees. God still hears. God still cares. The wilderness is not outside God's reach.

Psalms 13 gives us another picture of that same hope, but it does not begin with strength or certainty. It begins with an honest cry: "How long, O Lord?"

That may be one of the most human prayers in the Bible.
How long will this hurt?
How long will this uncertainty last?
How long before things change?
How long before I can see the way forward?

David does not pretend everything is fine. He does not hide his fear, his sorrow, or his questions. He brings them straight to God.



That may be the example many of us need.

A close walk with God does not mean life will never get hard. It does not mean families will never struggle, plans will never fall apart, or fear will never find us. But it does mean we can bring our honest prayers to God.

Sometimes people need to know that God is still present in the hard places they never would have chosen for themselves.

Sometimes messy seasons become the very places where we learn God is nearer than we thought. Sometimes the wilderness becomes the place where God opens our eyes. Sometimes the prayer that begins with “How long?” becomes the doorway to remembering that God has not stopped listening.

God does not always fix the story as quickly as we want. But God does enter the story.
God hears the cry.
God sees the one who feels pushed aside.
God gives strength when we are worn down.
God gives courage when fear is loud.
God gives hope when the road ahead is hard to see.

And God reminds us that His promise does not depend on our ability to keep everything neat. That is good news, because most of us cannot keep everything neat.
We need a God who can meet us in the mess.
We need a God who sees the people others overlook.
We need a God who can make a way in the wilderness.
We need a God who can hear the prayer we barely have the strength to pray.

Psalms 13 does not stay in despair. After asking “How long?” David says: “But I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.” That does not mean all the pain disappeared at once.

It means David remembered where to place his trust. That is faith.

Not pretending the wilderness is easy.
Not acting like the hurt does not matter.
Not rushing past the questions.

Just trusting that God’s steadfast love is still real, even before the whole story makes sense. So, when Monday comes, and the story feels messy, remember this:
The wilderness is not the end of the story.
The hard chapter is not the whole book.

The moment when we feel pushed aside, worn out, afraid, or forgotten is not the moment when God stops working.

God still hears.

God still sees.

God still cares.

God still meets His people in the wilderness.

God still holds us with steadfast love.

And sometimes, when life feels like nothing but wilderness, God is already preparing the next chapter.

Not because the mess is good.

Not because the pain does not matter.

Not because every wound heals quickly.

But because God is faithful. The God who saw Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness, and the God who heard David when he cried, “How long, O Lord?” is the same God who meets us when our own life gets messy.

No wilderness is beyond His reach.

No cry is beneath His notice.

No life is outside His care.

And no messy story is too broken for God to enter with mercy, strength, and hope.

Prayer for When Life Gets Messy

Faithful God, when life gets messy, help us remember that You are still near.
When we feel pushed aside, remind us that You still see us.

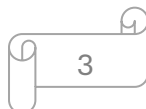
When our prayers begin with “How long?” remind us that You still hear us.
When fear surrounds us, hold us in Your steadfast love.

When the road feels uncertain, give us strength for the next step.

Teach us to trust You in the wilderness,
to cry out to You in trouble,
and to believe that no hard chapter is the whole story.

Meet us with mercy, courage, and hope,
and help us notice others who need the same.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.



Walking It Out This Week

When Life Gets Messy

This week's Scripture reminds us that faith does not always happen in neat and peaceful places.

Sometimes faith happens in the wilderness.

Sometimes faith happens in family tension.

Sometimes faith happens when plans change, feelings get hurt, and people are not sure what comes next.

Sometimes faith begins with the honest prayer, "How long, O Lord?"

So how do we walk this out?

First, be honest with God.

Psalm 13 does not begin with polite religious words. It begins with a real cry from a real person: "How long, O Lord?" That reminds us that we do not have to hide our hurt from God. We do not have to pretend we are stronger than we are. We can bring God our frustration, sadness, confusion, and fear.

A faithful prayer does not have to sound perfect.

It just has to be honest.

Second, remember that the wilderness is not outside God's reach.

Hagar and Ishmael were sent into a hard and lonely place, but God did not forget them there. God heard. God saw. God provided.

That matters for us too.

There are seasons when we may feel overlooked, pushed aside, worn out, or unsure of the road ahead. But those places are not beyond God's care. God can meet us even in the part of the story we never would have chosen.

Third, look for the water God may be showing you.

In Genesis 21, God opened Hagar's eyes, and she saw a well of water. The help she needed was not beyond God's ability to provide.

This week, pay attention to the "wells" God may place in front of you. Maybe it is a person who checks in. Maybe it is a small moment of peace. Maybe it is Scripture that speaks to your situation. Maybe it is the courage to ask for help. Maybe it is the strength to take one more step.

Sometimes God's provision does not arrive all at once. Sometimes it comes as enough grace for today.

Finally, notice who else may be in the wilderness.

Genesis 21 reminds us that God sees people who feel forgotten. If God sees them, then we are called to see them too.

This week, look for someone who may need encouragement. Someone who is grieving. Someone who feels pushed aside. Someone who has been quiet lately. Someone carrying more than they say.

A phone call, a card, a kind word, or a few minutes of listening may become a small sign of God's care. When Monday comes, the story may still feel messy. The questions may still be real. The wilderness may not disappear overnight.

But we can still walk forward trusting this:

God hears. God sees. God cares. And no wilderness is beyond His reach.

Prayer for Walking with God

God who sees us, meet us in the messy places this week.

When we are hurting, help us be honest with You.

When we feel forgotten, remind us that You still see us.

When we are in the wilderness, open our eyes to the help You provide.

Give us strength for the next step, peace for the anxious moment,
and compassion to notice others who may be struggling too.

Help us trust that no part of our story is beyond Your reach.

Amen.



Faith Between Sundays

Small Steps for the Week

Monday — Be honest with God

Scripture: *“How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?”* — Psalm 13:1

Step: Begin the week by telling God the truth.

Action: Take a few quiet minutes today and pray honestly. Do not worry about making the words sound right. Tell God what feels heavy, confusing, frustrating, or uncertain.

Tuesday — Remember that God sees

Scripture: *“God heard the voice of the boy...”* — Genesis 21:17

Step: Remember that no one is invisible to God.

Action: Think of someone who may feel overlooked, lonely, or pushed aside. Send a note, make a call, or simply let them know they matter.

Wednesday — Look for the well

Scripture: *“Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water.”* — Genesis 21:19

Step: Watch for the help God may already be placing near you.

Action: Pay attention today to small signs of grace: a kind word, a moment of peace, a helpful person, or the strength to keep going. Write one down so you do not miss it.

Thursday — Trust God in the hard chapter

Scripture: *“But I trusted in your steadfast love.”* — Psalm 13:5

Step: Trust does not mean everything is easy. It means God is still faithful.

Action: Name one situation you cannot fix on your own. Offer it to God in prayer and ask for enough strength, wisdom, and patience for today.

Friday — Take the next step

Scripture: *“Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand...”* — Genesis 21:18

Step: Faith often looks like doing the next needed thing.

Action: Choose one practical step you can take today. Make the appointment. Apologize. Ask for help. Check on someone. Rest if you need rest. Do the next faithful thing.

Saturday — Sing before the story is finished

Scripture: *“I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.”* — Psalm 13:6

Step: Hope can begin before every problem is solved.

Action: Look back over the week and name one place where God gave you mercy, strength, or encouragement. Thank God for it, even if the whole story is still unfolding.

Prayers for the Week

Monday

God who hears, we begin this week by bringing You the truth. Some things are heavy. Some questions are still unanswered. Some situations are not what we would have chosen. Help us not to hide from You. Teach us to pray honestly, even when all we can say is, “How long, O Lord?” Amen.

Tuesday

God who sees, be near to those who feel overlooked, pushed aside, or forgotten. Remind them that they are not invisible to You. Open our eyes to the people around us who may be carrying quiet pain, and help us offer kindness, encouragement, and care. Amen.

Wednesday

God of the wilderness, meet us in the places that feel dry, lonely, or uncertain. When we cannot see the way forward, open our eyes to the help You provide. Give us enough strength for today, enough hope for the next step, and enough trust to believe that this hard chapter is not the whole story. Amen.

Thursday

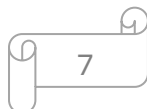
Faithful God, when life feels messy, remind us that You are still present. When relationships are strained, give us patience. When decisions are hard, give us wisdom. When fear is loud, give us courage. Hold us in Your steadfast love and help us trust You before everything is resolved. Amen.

Friday

Merciful God, help us notice those who are hurting. Make us gentle with people whose stories we do not fully know. Give us words that heal instead of wound, ears that listen with compassion, and hearts willing to make room for others. Help us become signs of Your care in someone else’s wilderness. Amen.

Saturday

God of mercy, strength, and hope, as this week ends, help us look back and see where You have been with us. Thank You for the small signs of grace, the quiet moments of peace, and the strength that carried us through. Teach us to trust that no wilderness is beyond Your reach, no cry is beneath Your notice, and no life is outside Your care. Amen.



Why the Psalms Matter

The Prayer Book of God's People

The Book of Psalms has often been called the prayer book and hymnbook of the Bible.

It was not written all at once by one person. It is a collection of 150 psalms gathered over many generations. Some are connected with King David, some with temple musicians like Asaph and the sons of Korah, some with Solomon, some with Moses, and many do not name an author at all.

The Psalms were used in worship, prayer, teaching, and personal devotion. They gave God's people words for almost every season of life: joy, fear, guilt, anger, grief, thanksgiving, trust, doubt, praise, and hope.

The book itself is divided into five smaller "books," which many believe may echo the five books of Moses. In that way, the Psalms can be seen as a worshipful response to God's law, covenant, mercy, and faithfulness.

Psalms 13 is a good example of why the Psalms still matter. It begins with the honest cry, "How long, O Lord?" That is not a failure of faith. It is a prayer of faith. The psalmist brings pain, confusion, and waiting directly to God.

That is one of the great gifts of the Psalms. They do not teach us to pretend. They teach us to pray.

For Christians, the Psalms also became deeply connected to Jesus. Jesus prayed the Psalms, quoted them, and even used their words from the cross. The early church carried the Psalms into its worship, and generations of Christians have continued to turn to them when they needed words for praise, sorrow, confession, and hope.

Presbyterians have a special history with the Psalms. In the Reformed tradition, the Psalms have been central to worship and congregational singing.

Early Presbyterians often sang metrical psalms, which were psalms rewritten in poetic form so the whole congregation could sing them together.

That matters because Presbyterians have long believed that worship belongs to all the people, not just the pastor, the choir, or the person standing up front. When the

congregation sings or prays the Psalms, the whole church joins its voice with the prayers of God's people across the centuries.

The Psalms remind us that God can handle our honest prayers.

We do not have to come to God with perfect words.

We do not have to hide our grief.

We do not have to pretend we have no questions.

The Psalms teach us to bring our whole lives before God.

And when we do not know what to pray, the Psalms often give us the words we need.

Closing Prayer

God who hears us in the wilderness,
thank You for staying near when life gets messy.

Help us trust Your love when the story is hard,
see Your mercy when the road feels uncertain,
and take the next faithful step with courage.

Remind us that no hard chapter is the whole story,
and no wilderness is beyond Your reach.

Amen.



From the Pew The Emergency Button

Years ago, I responded to a fire at a laundromat.

You might assume the fire started with a buildup of lint. Lint was involved, but the real culprit was something much more dangerous.

A wayward sock.

Somehow, the sock had been pulled into part of one of those large commercial dryers, where it caught fire. The burning sock ignited the lint, and once the lint became involved, the fire began to spread.

This may finally answer one of life's great mysteries: Where do all the missing socks go?

I used to think there was a sock monster hiding inside every washing machine. Others may believe lost socks are transported into an alternate universe where someone puts twelve socks into the wash and gets thirteen back.

More likely, they slip into corners and crevices we never think to examine. Perhaps they are hiding because they are trembling at the thought of being placed back onto our stinky feet.

Whatever the reason, at least one missing sock had decided to stop hiding and start a fire.

By the time we arrived, smoke was filling the laundromat. Instead of everyone heading calmly toward the exits, people were trying to rescue their laundry. It was a free-for-all.

People were dragging bags, baskets, and carts filled with dirty or soaking-wet clothes out of the building while we were trying to make entry with fire extinguishers and hose lines.

We found ourselves arguing with customers who did not want to leave.

“Can I get my laundry first?”

One person was worried about leaving behind a bottle of detergent.

The police eventually had to intervene and order everyone outside. Thankfully, it was a pleasant day in late fall, so everyone could wait outdoors while we located the fire, extinguished it, and cleared the smoke from the building.

No one suffered smoke inhalation, but I have never forgotten the question that scene raised: Why would anyone risk their life for dirty laundry?

One woman was standing beside one of those enormous commercial washing machines—the kind that could probably hold a month’s worth of dirty laundry for an extended family.

She was extremely upset because she could not open the machine and retrieve her clothes. She was afraid someone would steal them.

I assured her that the firefighters had no interest in taking her wet laundry. Besides, smoke was filling the laundromat, the machine was locked, and everyone was being ordered outside.

Exactly how was anyone going to steal her clothes? She remained unconvinced.

Finally, she pushed the emergency-stop button.
The washer stopped, but the door did not open.

Instead, an incredibly loud alarm began sounding throughout the laundromat. It was so loud that I fully expected Elvis to show up. He never did.

Apparently, Elvis had already left the laundromat—possibly without his tasseled socks.

The woman became even more upset. “I didn’t want to call the police,” she said. “I just wanted to get my laundry.” The police were already there and, by this time, were probably as confused as everyone else.

The alarm was meant to summon the attendant, but the attendant was already standing safely outside. It did not unlock the washer. It did not return the woman’s clothes. It simply added more noise and confusion to a building already filling with smoke.

Worse yet, it sounded very similar to the PASS alarms worn by firefighters.

PASS stands for Personal Alert Safety System. If a firefighter stops moving or becomes trapped, the device sounds an alarm so the other firefighters know that one of their own may be in trouble.

For a few moments, firefighters hearing the laundromat alarm thought one of their brothers might be down. All because someone wanted to retrieve a load of wet laundry.

Thankfully, we quickly figured out where the noise was coming from. The police persuaded the woman to leave, and I moved on to the more important task of finding what was actually burning.

But for a fleeting second, I wondered how she was going to get her clothes out that machine now that she had pushed the emergency button.

The button had not solved her problem. It had only made the situation more confusing.

There is an old Elvis Presley line that offers surprisingly good advice: “When things go wrong, don’t go with them.”

That day, the fire was one problem. Panic, confusion, and the desperate need to control everything were becoming several more.

How often do we do the same thing in life?

Something frightens us. We feel ourselves losing control. We want an answer immediately, so we push whatever emergency button we can find.

We send the angry message. We make the hurried decision. We assume the worst.

We try to force open a door that, for the moment, needs to remain locked.

Sometimes we cry out to God and expect something big to happen. We expect the alarm to be answered, the door to spring open, and our problem to be resolved before the next wash cycle.

There is nothing wrong with calling out to God in an emergency. Some of the most honest prayers in Scripture come from people who are frightened, hurting, and desperate.

But there is a difference between calling for help and insisting that help arrive exactly the way we demand.

The woman wanted one thing: her laundry. The firefighters and police wanted something far more important: her safely outside the building.

Perhaps that is also true of God.

We may be focused on protecting our possessions, routines, plans, and expectations. God may be trying to protect something far more valuable—our lives, our faith, our relationships, and the people we are becoming.

Sometimes God’s first answer is not, “Here are your clothes.”
Sometimes God’s answer is, “Get out of the smoke.”

We also hold onto things long after they have begun filling our lives with smoke. We hold onto grudges. We hold onto old mistakes. We hold onto unhealthy habits, fears, resentments, and ideas about how life was supposed to turn out.

God may be calling us toward the door, but we keep saying, “Can I get my stuff first?”

Sometimes we treat faith like the mystery of the missing sock. We do not look too deeply into the hidden corners. We attend church, say we believe in God, and hope everything will somehow work itself out.

Perhaps we are afraid that if God looks too closely, God will discover our own “stinky feet”—our failures, sins, regrets, and mismatched pieces. But God already knows what is hiding there.

God does not search the hidden places of our lives simply to shame us. God searches because hidden things can cause damage.

One small resentment can smolder.
One unspoken hurt can grow.
One dishonest choice can ignite something much larger.

Faith is not pretending the smoke is not there.

Faith is trusting God enough to let God show us what needs to be found, cleaned out, forgiven, or left behind.

After we push the emergency button, we often ask: What happens now?
The honest answer is that we may not know.

The machine may remain locked. The alarm may continue sounding. The attendant may not arrive when we expect. Our problem may not be resolved immediately.

But when God does not immediately open the door we are pulling on, it does not mean God has ignored our alarm. It may mean God sees a danger we have not yet recognized.

Sometimes we ask God to unlock the machine while God is trying to get us out of the building. Faith means trusting the One who knows where the fire is, even while we are standing outside waiting.

Of course, sometimes socks disappear because one develops a hole and gets thrown away.

I rarely have that problem.
I usually wear mine until they become holy.
Yes, I know.
That was a terrible pun.

But perhaps becoming holy really does begin when we allow God to find us with all our holes, mismatched pieces, hidden corners, and stinky feet—and trust that God still claims us as beloved.

So, when things go wrong—and sooner or later they will—call for help, listen for God, and move away from the smoke. The smartest move is not to stay where trouble is already burning.

The Sock Prayer

Dear God,

Help us notice the smoke before we find the fire, listen when You speak, and have the wisdom to move when You nudge. Keep our feet on the right path—and our socks out of trouble.

Amen.

Lost Sock Wisdom

Sometimes God can feel a little like a missing sock. We know God should be there, but we cannot seem to find Him. We search for a great sign or a clear answer, while God may be quietly present in ordinary places—in a friend who checks on us, the strength to face another day, an unexpected laugh, or a moment of peace.

So before declaring God missing, check the everyday places. Say a short prayer while folding laundry. Thank God for one good thing before getting out of bed. Encourage someone who seems worn out. Sit quietly for two minutes without checking your phone. Forgive one small irritation before it becomes a whole basket of dirty laundry.

You may never find that missing sock. It may have entered the same mysterious place as lost pens, reading glasses, and remote controls. But you may discover something far more important:

God was never missing. God was closer than you thought.

Lost Sock Hide and Seek

This week, look for God in the small things:

- Do one small thing that helps someone feel less alone.
- Thank God for something you usually take for granted.
- Send a note or message to someone who may need encouragement.
- Let one small irritation go before it becomes a whole load of trouble.
- Take two quiet minutes and simply say, “God, I am here.”
- Notice one ordinary moment that feels like a gift.

These things may not seem like much.

Neither does one sock.

But sometimes the smallest things make the biggest difference.

You may not find the missing sock, but you may discover that God has been hiding in plain sight.