June 28th 2026

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.

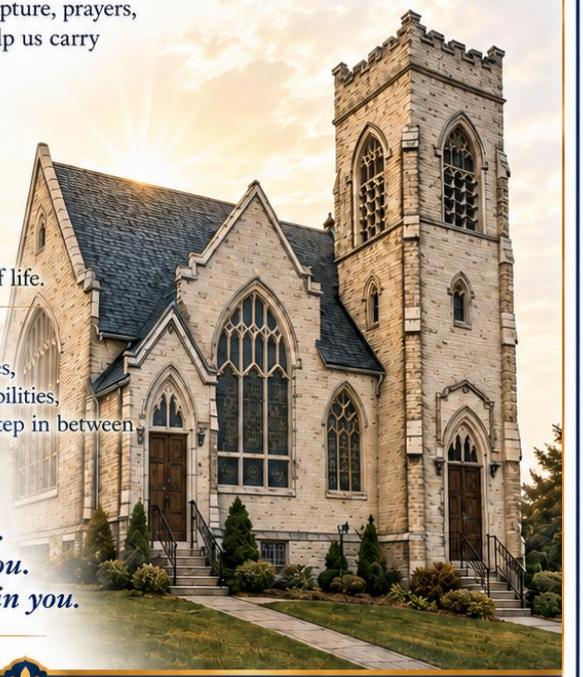
Each week, When Monday Comes offers Scripture, prayers, reflections, and simple encouragement to help us carry faith into everyday life.

- 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 There Is No Good Answer

Psalm 89: 1-4

"I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord, forever." Those are beautiful words.

They may also be difficult words for someone who is hurting.

Our congregation is carrying a great deal right now. Illness. Cancer. Grief. Family worries. Uncertainty. Pain that has lasted far longer than anyone expected.

And when suffering becomes personal, one of the hardest questions people ask is:

"Why would a loving God allow this?"

It is not a new question. Job asked it. The writers of the Psalms asked it.
The disciples asked why suffering happened.

Even Jesus cried from the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

The Bible does not criticize people for asking why.

It gives their questions a place.

As a paramedic, I saw suffering that could be traced to someone's choices—the old "hold my beer and watch this" kind of emergency. But I also saw suffering for which there was no rhyme or reason.

I remember a young mother who died suddenly from a pulmonary embolism in her home. Two of her children were lying beside her in the bed.

There was no explanation that could make that scene seem fair.
There was no lesson that could make it acceptable.
And there was certainly nothing anyone could say that would make it all right.
Experiences like that can make even a seasoned Christian wonder.

Sometimes people try to protect God by saying, "Everything happens for a reason."
But Scripture is more careful than that.

Sometimes we do not know the reason. And sometimes, there may not be a reason that makes the tragedy meaningful at all.

In Luke 13, Jesus spoke about eighteen people who died when a tower in Siloam fell on them. He did not explain their deaths as punishment. He did not say they must have deserved it. He did not offer an easy reason for their suffering. Instead, he pushed back against the idea that tragedy always tells us something about the people who suffer.

That matters. Sometimes suffering comes from human choices. Sometimes it comes from living in a fragile world where bodies fail, storms come, accidents happen, and terrible illnesses appear. And sometimes tragedy is simply tragedy.

Faith does not require us to invent a reason where no good reason can be found.

Job never received a full explanation for his suffering. God met Job, spoke to him, and reminded him that creation was larger and more complicated than Job could see. But God never told Job why all those terrible things had happened. Job received God's presence, but not a simple answer.

Perhaps that tells us something important. Faith does not mean having an explanation for everything.

Faith does not mean pretending suffering is good.
Faith does not require us to smile when our hearts are breaking.
And suffering is not proof that we have failed, lacked faith, or been rejected by God.

Psalm 89 begins by declaring God's steadfast love, but the rest of the psalm is filled with disappointment and painful questions.

The writer holds faith and anguish together.
"I still believe in Your love, God—but I do not understand what is happening."
Maybe that is one of the most honest prayers we can offer.

Christian faith does not give us a neat answer for every tragedy.

What it gives us is Jesus. At the cross, God did not remain safely distant from human pain. In Jesus Christ, God entered suffering, grief, injustice, rejection, and death.

God knows what it is to weep.
God knows what it is to hurt.
God knows what it is to feel abandoned.

And in the resurrection, God shows us that suffering and death will not have the final word.

That does not make today's pain disappear.

But it gives us reason to hope that pain is not the end of the story.

In the meantime, God gives us His presence.

Sometimes that presence comes as strength enough to get through one more day.
Sometimes it comes as peace that we cannot explain.

And often it comes through another person, a phone call, a meal, a prayer, a ride to an appointment, or someone who simply sits beside us and refuses to let us suffer alone.

We should pray for healing. We should pray boldly.

But when healing does not come in the way or time we hoped, that does not mean God has stopped loving us.

Sometimes God changes the circumstances.
Sometimes God carries us through circumstances we would never have chosen.

And sometimes, when we are too tired to hold onto God, we discover that God is still holding onto us.

We may never know why some things happen.
There may be no sentence that makes them understandable.

But we can know this: God is not distant from our suffering.

God has not abandoned us.

God is present in the valley.

And through Christ, God has promised that suffering, grief, illness, and death will not have the last word.

Faith does not require us to call suffering good.
Faith allows us to trust that God is still good in the middle of it.

And sometimes, when there is no good answer, that presence is what helps us take the next breath, face the next day, and keep singing—even through our tears.

Walking It Out This Week
When There Is No Easy Answer

This week's Scripture reminds us that faith does not always give us a clear explanation for suffering. Sometimes we understand how trouble began. Sometimes human choices have consequences.

But sometimes illness comes without warning. Grief arrives suddenly. Plans fall apart. Good people suffer, and there seems to be no rhyme or reason. In those moments, faith does not require us to pretend everything makes sense. So how do we walk this out?

First, be honest with God.
The writers of the Psalms did not hide their pain. They praised God, but they also asked hard questions.
They cried out. They wondered how long the suffering would continue.
They told God when they felt forgotten, frightened, angry, or overwhelmed.

We can do the same.
You do not have to protect God from your questions.
You do not have to pretend you are doing better than you are.

You can pray:
"God, I do not understand."
"God, I am tired."
"God, I am frightened."
"God, where are You in this?"
An honest prayer is still a faithful prayer.

Second, do not blame yourself for your suffering.
When people are hurting, they sometimes wonder whether they caused it. Maybe I did something wrong. Maybe I do not have enough faith. Maybe God is disappointed in me.

But suffering is not proof that God has rejected you. Jesus made that clear in Luke 13 when he spoke about eighteen people who were killed when a tower fell in Siloam. He did not say they were worse sinners. He did not blame them for what happened. He refused to turn their tragedy into a simple explanation. We should be careful not to do that to ourselves either.

Job suffered even though he was described as faithful. Jesus told His followers that trouble would come. Even Christ suffered grief, rejection, pain, and death.
We live in a fragile world where bodies become sick, accidents happen, people make harmful choices, and life does not always unfold fairly.
That does not mean God has stopped loving you.

Third, look for God's presence, not always an explanation.
Job never received a complete answer for why he suffered. What he received was an encounter with God. Sometimes we want God to explain what happened.

Instead, God may give us strength for the next hour.
A moment of peace.
A person who calls at the right time.
A doctor who listens.
A friend who sits quietly beside us.
A church family that remembers our name and carries us in prayer.

God does not always remove us from the valley of troubles immediately. But God promises not to leave us alone in it. You do not have to understand what is happening in order to be held by God while it is happening.

Fourth, do not try to explain someone else's pain.
When someone is suffering, we often want to say something that will make it better. But there may be no sentence that can do that.

Be careful with words such as:
"Everything happens for a reason."
"God must be teaching you something."
"At least it was not worse."
"You just need to have more faith."

Those words may be well intended, but they can make a hurting person feel even more alone. Sometimes the most faithful words are:
"I am sorry."
"I am here."
"You are not alone."
"I do not know what to say, but I care."
"May I pray with you?"

We do not always need to provide an answer.
Sometimes we simply need to provide our presence.

Finally, offer one practical act of care.
Think of one person who is carrying something heavy right now.
Do not simply say, "Let me know if you need anything."
Offer something specific.
"Can I bring you dinner on Tuesday?"
"Would you like a ride to your appointment?"

"Can I call you again later this week?"
"May I sit with you for a while?"
"Can I pray for something specific?"

A phone call, a card, a meal, a ride, or a few minutes of listening may seem small. But small acts of compassion can become visible signs that God has not forgotten someone.

When Monday comes, the questions may still be unanswered.
The illness may still be present.
The grief may still hurt.

But we can still walk forward trusting this:
God hears our questions.
God does not shame our tears.
God remains with us in the valley.

And when we are too tired to hold onto God, God is still holding onto us.

Prayer for Walking Through Hard Days

God who meets us in the valley, we bring
You the questions we cannot answer and the pain we cannot fix.

Help us be honest with You when we are frightened, angry, tired, or confused.

Remind us that suffering does not mean
we have been forgotten or rejected.
Give us enough strength for today,
enough grace for the next step,
and enough hope to keep going.

Teach us not to explain away another person's pain,
but to listen, remain present, and offer practical care.

Use our calls, meals, prayers, visits, and kindness
to remind someone that they are not alone.

And when we are too weary to hold onto You,
help us trust that You are still holding onto us.

Amen.

Faith Between Sundays

God Is Still With Us

Monday — Psalm 89:1

"I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever."

Faith does not mean pretending everything is fine. Sometimes we sing because life is good. Sometimes we sing because we remember that God has been faithful before. Today, bring God both your trust and your questions.

Tuesday — Psalm 34:18

"The Lord is near to the brokenhearted."

Pain can make God feel far away, but Scripture tells us the opposite. God draws near to those who are hurting. You may not feel strong today, but you are not forgotten, abandoned, or alone.

Wednesday — Job 42:5

"I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you."

Job never received a complete explanation for his suffering. Instead, he encountered God. We may not understand everything that happens, but we can still ask God to meet us in the middle of it.

Thursday — Romans 8:26

"The Spirit helps us in our weakness."

There may be days when you do not know what to pray. God does not require perfect words. A sigh, a tear, or the simple prayer "Help me" can be enough. The Spirit meets us even when words fail.

Friday — Galatians 6:2

"Bear one another's burdens."

Think of someone who may be carrying something heavy. Make a call. Send a card. Offer a meal, a ride, or a listening ear. You may not be able to remove their burden, but you can help them carry it.

Saturday — Isaiah 43:2

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you."

God does not promise that we will avoid every difficult place. God promises to be with us as we pass through them. As this week ends, rest in this truth: whatever you are facing, you do not face it alone.

Prayers for the Week

Walking with God One Step at a Time

Monday
God, I begin this week carrying questions I cannot answer.
Help me bring You my honest thoughts, my fear, my frustration, and my uncertainty.
Keep me from pretending that everything is fine when it is not.
Remind me that honest prayer is still faithful prayer.
Stay close to me today.
Amen.

Tuesday
Loving God, when suffering makes me question myself, remind me that pain is not proof that You have rejected me.
Free me from false guilt.
Help me remember that I am still loved, still seen, and still held in Your care.
Give me courage for whatever this day brings.
Amen.

Wednesday
God of grace, I do not ask for strength to carry the whole future today.
Give me enough strength for this day.
Enough peace for this moment.
Enough light for the next step.
Help me notice the small ways You are present around me.
Amen.

Thursday
Compassionate God, help me care for someone who is hurting without trying to explain away their pain.
Teach me to listen more than I speak.
Give me simple and honest words.
Help me say, “I am here,” and truly mean it.
Make my presence a sign of Your presence.
Amen.

Friday
God, place someone on my heart today who may be carrying more than others realize.
Show me one practical way to help.
Give me the willingness to call, visit, send a note, offer a meal, or simply sit beside them.
Use one small act of kindness to remind them that they are not alone.
Amen.

Saturday
Faithful God, as this week comes to an end, I bring You what still hurts and what still has no answer.
When I am too tired to hold tightly to You, remind me that You are still holding onto me.
Give me rest tonight, hope for tomorrow, and trust that suffering will not have the final word.
Amen.

The CUP Prayer

God, when suffering comes, help me remember the CUP:

C — Cry out honestly to You.
Help me bring You my questions, fears, and pain.

U — Uphold someone who is hurting.
Help me listen, stay close, and offer practical care.

P — Place what I cannot carry into Your hands.
Help me trust You with what I cannot understand, fix, or control.

When I cannot understand, help me trust.
When I cannot fix the pain, help me stay.
When I cannot keep going, carry me.

Amen.

From the Pew
A Cup of Cold Water—and a Bowl of Corn Nuts

During my years as a paramedic, I learned that patients did not always cooperate with the treatment plan.

You could arrive in an ambulance full of medical equipment, years of training, and an established procedure for almost every emergency imaginable. The patient, however, had not always read the procedure manual.

One day, we were called for an older woman having a diabetic emergency. She needed to go to the hospital, and there was not much question about that.

There was only one problem. She was not going anywhere without her bowl of Corn Nuts. She knew the Corn Nuts were not particularly good for her. She admitted that herself.

But at her age, she said, what did it matter?

Then, just in case that argument was not strong enough, she brought God into the discussion. “God would not have given me Corn Nuts if He had not wanted me to have them.” It is difficult to argue with someone who believes her snack food has received divine approval.

Patients being transported to the hospital were generally not supposed to eat. There were good medical reasons for that. If a patient became unconscious, needed surgery, or could no longer protect her airway, food could create additional problems.

The proper answer should have been simple: “No. You cannot bring the Corn Nuts.” Her answer was equally simple: “Then I am not going.”

Sometimes emergency medicine involves complicated assessments, lifesaving medications, and advanced medical procedures. Other times, it involves standing in someone’s home negotiating over a bowl of Corn Nuts.

I had a choice. I could insist on the rule and risk having her refuse the care she needed. Or I could recognize that, for reasons understood only by her—and possibly by God—that bowl of Corn Nuts mattered. So, the Corn Nuts came with us.

We got her into the ambulance, began treating her, and headed toward the hospital.

Somewhere along the way, she ate a few Corn Nuts.

The paramedic student ate a few Corn Nuts.
And, as I recall, I may have eaten one or two myself.
Our driver did not get any.

We were in a Type I ambulance, with only a small pass-through window between the driver's compartment and the patient-care area. He could hear us crunching away behind him, but there was no practical way to pass Corn Nuts through that little opening while traveling down the road.

He was not happy about being left out, and I could not blame him. He had to drive all the way to the hospital listening to us crunching away in the back with no way to reach the snacks.

Corn Nuts are not a quiet food. Eating one sounds a little like someone stepping on gravel inside an aluminum trash can. Our driver probably heard every crunch all the way to the hospital.

The noise became particularly noticeable when I called medical control over the radio to give my patient report. Between my words came a steady series of sounds:

Crunch. Crunch. Crunch.

I can only imagine what the person listening on the other end thought. Perhaps they believed there was static on the radio. Or perhaps they thought we were transporting the patient through a rock quarry.

Fortunately, no one broke a tooth.

It may not have been the finest example of strict ambulance dietary procedure.

But the patient was in the ambulance. She was receiving care. She was going to the hospital. And she knew someone had listened to her instead of simply giving her orders.

The trouble was that she also insisted on taking the bowl of Corn Nuts into the emergency room.

That was where I had to draw the line. Bringing a patient into the emergency department during a diabetic emergency was one thing.

Walking through the doors behind her carrying a bowl of Corn Nuts would probably have marked the end of whatever professional reputation I still had as a paramedic.

Fortunately—or unfortunately, depending upon whom you asked—there was a small accident as we moved her from the ambulance.

The bowl was accidentally dropped. Let us simply say that the timing of the accident was unusually convenient.

The patient was not happy. I am sure she told the emergency-room staff the entire tragic story of the great Corn Nut disaster. Hopefully, they attributed it to the diabetic fog and did not launch a formal investigation into the mysterious disappearance of her snack.

Before anyone becomes too concerned, no bowls or Corn Nuts were permanently harmed during the incident. The bowl and most of its contents were recovered.

Unfortunately, quite a few Corn Nuts escaped into the back of the ambulance. Once loose, Corn Nuts have an impressive ability to travel into places that are difficult to see and even harder to clean.

When we returned to the station, the battalion chief discovered the evidence. He looked inside the ambulance and asked the obvious question:

“Who has been eating Corn Nuts in the ambulance?” I explained what had happened.

I told him about the patient, her refusal to leave without the bowl, her belief that God had personally approved Corn Nuts for her diet, and the unfortunate accident outside the emergency room.

He listened patiently and then gave me his official ruling: “Next time, make sure the ambulance is clean before you get back.” That seemed fair.

My ambulance was always clean enough that you could eat off the floor. Just not Corn Nuts.

The surviving bowl eventually made its way back to the station kitchen. I am sure it became the source of many stories—and probably several increasingly inaccurate versions of the great Corn Nut incident.

Jesus once spoke about giving someone a cup of cold water. A cup of water was not a grand gesture. It did not require a large budget, an organized program, or a committee meeting. It was simply something another person needed, offered with care.

That day, compassion did not look like a cup of cold water.

It looked like a bowl of Corn Nuts.
The Corn Nuts did not cure the woman's medical problem.
They did not replace the treatment she needed.
They did not change where we were going.

But allowing her to bring them helped her feel heard and made her willing to accept our help. There is an important difference between ignoring rules and remembering why the rules exist.

Procedures matter, safety matters, good judgment matters.
But the person standing in front of us matters too.

Compassion does not mean throwing every rule away. It means remembering that rules are meant to protect people—not prevent us from seeing them.

Sometimes we become so focused on doing everything in exactly the proper way that we forget there is a frightened, confused, hurting, or stubborn human being in front of us.

Sometimes helping another person begins not by taking control, but by listening.

"What is keeping you from taking the next step?"
"What are you afraid of losing?"
"What would help you feel safe enough to accept help?"

The answer may not always make sense to us.

It may seem small.
It may be inconvenient.
It may even come in a bowl.

Jesus did not say that every act of compassion had to be impressive.
He said even a cup of cold water mattered, so something as simple as:

A phone call can matter.
A ride to an appointment can matter.
Sitting quietly beside someone can matter.
Remembering a name can matter.

And occasionally, letting someone bring along a bowl of Corn Nuts can matter.
We may not be able to solve every problem another person is facing.
But we can listen and can make room. We can help them take the next step.

And we can remember that compassion is not always neat.

Sometimes it leaves crumbs in the ambulance—and a bowl in the station kitchen that nobody can adequately explain.

Wisdom from Bird Dog
When the Toy Starts Squeaking

Bird Dog always knows what time it is. She does not wear a watch. She does not check the clock. She does not have a calendar reminder on her phone. But somehow, around 5:00 in the afternoon, she knows something important is supposed to happen.

Food, a walk, and probably a little playtime.

She can be sound asleep, looking like she has no plans for the rest of the day, and then suddenly she gets up, finds one of her toys, and starts squeaking it. Not once. Not quietly. Not politely. She squeaks it with purpose.

If I am working on stained glass, that does not matter.
If I am writing an article, that does not matter.
If I am talking with a customer, that does not matter.

Bird Dog knows what time it is, and she has decided I need to know too.

Back in my younger days, I might have found that squeaking annoying. I might have thought, “Can’t you see I am busy?” I might have tossed the toy across the room just to buy myself a few minutes, hoping maybe she would get distracted.

But Bird Dog does not get distracted. She brings it back.
Because to her, the point is not really the toy. The point is time together.
The squeaky toy is just the invitation.

And I am beginning to think God sends us a lot of squeaky toys in life.

Not always from dogs, of course. Sometimes the invitation comes from a spouse who wants to talk. Sometimes it comes from a child or grandchild who wants our attention. Sometimes it comes from a friend who needs more than a quick answer. Sometimes it comes from a stranger whose story interrupts our schedule.

And many times, we do the same thing with people that I am tempted to do with Bird Dog’s toy. We toss the “relationship toy” across the room.

We say, “I’ll think about that.”
“We’ll talk later.”

“Things are busy right now.”
“When work slows down.”
“When I get caught up.”

The problem is that life does not always slow down. The work does not always get finished. The list does not always get shorter. There will always be one more piece of glass to cut, one more article to write, one more email to answer, one more task that seems urgent.

But not everything urgent is important. And not everything important will squeak loudly enough to get our attention. That is where Bird Dog helps me.

She reminds me that some things can wait. I can work on the glass later. I can finish the story later. I can go back to whatever I was doing later. But there is something holy about stopping long enough to give attention to one of God’s creatures who is standing right in front of me.

That does not mean we can drop everything every time someone wants something. Life is not that simple. There are responsibilities we cannot ignore. There are duties that matter. There are times when we really do have to finish what we are doing.

But I also know this: most of us are not in danger of loving people too much. Most of us are not giving away too much attention. Most of us are more likely to hurry past the people God has placed in front of us because we are convinced our agenda is more important.

Bird Dog does not know theology, but she knows presence. She knows joy.
She knows that time together matters. And maybe that is wisdom worth receiving.

The people we love are gifts from God. Our family, our friends, our church family, even the strangers who cross our path, are not interruptions to real life. In many ways, they are real life.

So maybe the lesson is simple. When the toy starts squeaking, pay attention.

When someone needs your time, do not be too quick to toss them aside.

When someone keeps coming back, maybe they are not trying to bother you. Maybe they are hoping to be loved.

And every now and then, the most faithful thing we can do is stop what we are doing and play with the dog.