








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 at Whitinsville

Another View
The Next Step with God
Genesis 12: 1-4 & Matthew 9: 1-13, 18-26

Sometimes faith is described as if it always feels strong.

As if faithful people always know where they are going. As if they always feel brave. As if they never get tired, never feel ashamed, never grieve, never doubt, and never wonder where God is in their life.

But the Bible tells a much more honest story. In Genesis, God speaks to Abram and says, “Go.” Abram is not handed a full map. He is not given every answer. He is simply called to leave what he knows and trust God with what comes next.

That is not easy faith. That is moving faith.

Then, in Matthew 9, Jesus shows us what that movement can look like.

A paralyzed man is carried by others and told, “Get up.”
Matthew is sitting at a tax booth when Jesus says, “Follow me.”
A woman who has suffered for years reaches out just to touch the edge of Jesus’ cloak.
A grieving father comes to Jesus because his daughter has died.
And a little girl, beyond everyone else’s hope, is taken by the hand and raised.

Again and again, faith moves.

But it does not always move boldly. Sometimes faith is carried by friends. Sometimes faith looks like getting up when you would rather stay down. Sometimes it looks like leaving behind shame. Sometimes it looks like reaching out with a trembling hand. Sometimes it looks like bringing your grief to Jesus because you do not know where else to go.

And sometimes faith begins with a question whispered from a tired heart:
“God, if You are there, where are You in my life?”

That question does not disqualify us from faith. It may be the very place where faith begins to move again.

Jesus did not come only for people who had everything figured out. In Matthew 9, Jesus says, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.” He came for the broken, the weary, the ashamed, the doubting, the grieving, and the ones who are not even sure they know how to pray anymore.

That is also why Jesus did not stay only with the safe, comfortable, religious crowd. He called Matthew, a tax collector, and then shared a table with other tax collectors and sinners. These were not the respectable church-group people of the day. Tax collectors often made their living by taking more than they should from their own people. They were disliked, distrusted, and pushed to the edges.

Yet Jesus sat with them. Jesus did not avoid messy people. He moved toward them.

That bothered the Pharisees. They could understand public religion. They could understand sacrifices, rules, appearances, and control. But they struggled to understand mercy. Jesus answered them with words we still need to hear: "I desire mercy, not sacrifice."

That may be a word the church needs again and again.

It is easy for Christians to become comfortable spending most of our time with people who already believe, already know the words, already know the hymns, and already know how church works. There is nothing wrong with Christian fellowship. We need worship, Bible study, prayer, and encouragement from one another.

The church should be a place where we are strengthened, not a place where we hide. But if our faith never moves beyond the walls of the church, we may be missing part of what Jesus is showing us.

Faith is not meant to sit still. Faith is not meant to become a private club. Faith is not meant to be performed for show. Faith is meant to flow outward in mercy.

A step with God does not have to be large.

It may be one prayer.

One honest question.

One phone call.

One apology.

One act of mercy.

One decision to come back to worship.

One moment of letting someone else carry you for a while.

One trembling hand reaching toward Christ.

And sometimes that step is toward someone else: someone hurting, someone doubting, someone ashamed, someone grieving, someone who has been pushed aside, or someone who has no idea, yet what God can do in their life.

We do not show our faith to impress people. We show our faith so others can see the love of Christ through us.

Not pushy. Not prideful. Not pretending we have all the answers.

But kindly, humbly, and honestly.

As we take those steps, something begins to happen. We may not see the whole road at once, but we often begin to see the next part more clearly. Trusting God, obeying God, and trying to walk in God's way can open our eyes to His will, His purpose, and His direction for our lives.

God works with us as we walk with Him.

That does not mean we control the journey. It does not mean we get to see the whole destination before we begin. It means we learn to partner with God rather than trying to do everything by ourselves. Faith is not rebellion. Faith is not pride. Faith is not demanding that God bless the path we already chose. Faith is learning to say, "Lord, I may not know exactly where this road leads, but I want to walk it with You."

Anyone who has led people into a hard place understands this. A fire crew going into a burning building does not know every hidden danger ahead. A medical team walking into a difficult call does not know every decision that will have to be made. A student learning besides a seasoned medic does not know everything yet.

But if the crew trusts the leader, if they know the leader has their well-being at heart, if they know the leader will stand with them and not abandon them when things get hard, they can keep moving. Faith is something like that.

We do not follow Jesus because we know every turn in the road. We follow because we trust His heart. We trust that He is good. We trust that He does not abandon the tired, the afraid, the ashamed, the grieving, or the unsure. We trust that He walks with us, calls us forward, and gives us enough grace for the next step in front of us.

And when that faith is real, it should not become stagnant. Faith has been described as something like flowing water. That is a good image. Water that sits too long can become stale. But living faith keeps moving. It keeps flowing toward the places where mercy is needed.

Anyone who has fought a large fire knows you need more than a small handline and a weak water supply. When the fire is serious, you need real water flow. You need pressure. You need a source that will not run dry.

In the fire service, a porta-tank is often used when there is no hydrant or steady water supply nearby. It can help for a while, but it is limited. It has to keep being refilled by tankers. And if the water is not moving, it is not doing what water is meant to do.

If you have ever been fighting a fire and lost your water supply, you know how fast that gets your attention. God's mercy is not like stagnant water sitting in a tank. God's grace is an unlimited supply.

The love of Christ keeps flowing. The mercy of God does not run dry. The Spirit does not call us only to sit beside the water and admire it. The Spirit sends us to carry that living water into the places where people are tired, afraid, ashamed, grieving, doubtful, and thirsty for hope.

God told Abram, "Go."

Jesus told Matthew, "Follow me."

Jesus told the paralyzed man, "Get up."

Jesus took the little girl by the hand.

Each one was called into movement.

But not all movements look the same. Abram had to leave what was familiar. Matthew had to get up from the tax booth. The paralyzed man had to receive help before he could stand. The woman who had suffered for years only had enough strength to reach out. The grieving father simply came to Jesus with his sorrow.

That is important to remember. God does not ask every person to take the same step. And God does not always ask us to run. Sometimes obedience looks like a long walk into the unknown. Sometimes it looks like standing up after shame. Sometimes it looks like letting others carry us. Sometimes it looks like reaching out with the little strength we have left.

The grace of God meets us there.

Not after we have everything figured out.

Not after we feel strong enough.

Not after we can explain the whole journey.

Not perfectly. Not dramatically. Just honestly and faithfully.

So, when Monday comes, maybe the question is not, "Do I have everything figured out?"

Maybe the better question is: What step is God asking me to take now?

Maybe that step will bring us closer to God.

Maybe it will bring us closer to someone who needs mercy.

Maybe, by taking that step, we can discover that God was not as far away as we feared.

Maybe Christ has been closer than we knew.

Maybe the Spirit is already helping us get up, move forward, and let God's mercy flow through us.

Walking It Out This Week

This week's Scriptures remind us that faith often begins with movement.

God told Abram, "Go."

Matthew left the tax booth behind.

A suffering woman reached out with the little strength she had.

A grieving father brought his sorrow to Jesus.

None of them had the whole road figured out. But each one took a step. This week, do not ask yourself, "How do I fix everything?"

Ask instead: **What step is God asking me to take today?**

Take one honest step toward God.

Set aside a few quiet minutes this week and pray honestly.

Not perfectly.

Not dramatically.

Just honestly.

You might pray:

"Lord, I do not have everything figured out. I do not always know where You are leading me. But I want to walk with You. Show me the next step."

Take one step away from hiding.

Matthew was sitting at the tax booth when Jesus called him. That tax booth may have represented his work, his choices, his reputation, and even his shame.

Still, Jesus said, "Follow me."

This week, ask yourself: Where have I been hiding from God?

Maybe it is behind busyness.

Maybe it is behind guilt.

Maybe it is behind anger.

Maybe it is behind the thought that God has no use for you anymore.

Then take one small step out of hiding.

Take one step toward mercy.

Jesus said, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice."

This week, look for one person who needs mercy more than judgment.

It may be someone who is tired.

Someone who feels forgotten.

Someone who is grieving.

Someone who has made mistakes.

Someone who does not feel welcome.

Someone who is not sure God cares about them.

Offer one act of kindness, one word of encouragement, one patient conversation, or one prayer.

Take one step beyond the comfortable circle.

It is good to be strengthened by worship, prayer, Bible study, and Christian fellowship. But faith is not meant to stay only with people who already believe. Jesus moved toward people others avoided. This week, notice someone outside your usual circle.

Say hello and Listen.

Ask how they are doing.

Invite them to coffee.

Let them know they matter.

You do not have to preach a sermon. Sometimes the first step is simply showing someone the kindness of Christ.

Take one step with someone else.

The paralyzed man did not get to Jesus by himself. He was carried by others.

There are times when we need to help carry someone else. There are also times when we need to let others carry us.

This week, ask: Who needs me to help carry them for a while?

And also: Where do I need to stop pretending I can carry everything alone?

Keep the water moving.

Faith is not meant to become stagnant.

God's mercy is not a limited supply sitting in a tank. God's grace keeps flowing, and we are called to let that mercy flow through us into the world.

This week, do one thing that lets God's love move through you.

Make the call.

Write the note.

Offer the apology.

Say the prayer.

Help the neighbor.

Visit the lonely.

Forgive what you can.

Ask for help where you need it.

Not because you have everything figured out.

Because faith moves. And sometimes one faithful step is enough for today.

A Prayer for the Week

Lord Jesus, when I am tired, help me take one more step.

When I am afraid, remind me I am not alone.

When I am ashamed, lead me toward Your mercy.

When I am grieving, hold me close.

When I am unsure, show me the next faithful thing to do.

Help me walk with You this week — not perfectly, not dramatically,
just honestly and faithfully.

Amen.

Faith Between Sundays

Small Steps for the Week Ahead Listening to the Spirit

Monday — Step Into the Unknown

Genesis 12:1 - “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.”

Think about this: Abram did not receive the whole map before he started walking. Where might God be asking you to trust Him with one step, even before you know the full destination?

Tuesday — Step Toward the Call

Matthew 9:9 - “Follow me.”

Try this: Before making one decision today, pause and ask, “Does this help me follow Jesus more closely?”

Wednesday — Step Toward Mercy

Matthew 9:13 - “I desire mercy, not sacrifice.”

Try this: Look for one person who needs mercy more than judgment today. Offer patience, kindness, forgiveness, or encouragement.

Thursday — Step With Help

Matthew 9:2 - “And just then some people were carrying a paralyzed man lying on a bed.”

Think about this: Sometimes faith means helping carry someone else. Sometimes it means letting someone carry us. Which one might God be asking of you this week?

Friday — Step Toward Hope

Matthew 9:21 - “For she said to herself, ‘If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well.’”

Try this: Bring one hidden worry, hurt, or need to Jesus today. Even a small reach toward Christ is still a step of faith.

Saturday — Step Into New Life

Matthew 9:25 - “He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up.”

Think about this: Where have you given up hope too quickly? Ask God to show you where new life may still be possible.

Sunday — Step Back Into Worship

Genesis 12:4 - “So Abram went, as the Lord had told him.”

Try this: Come to worship ready to listen for the next step God may be placing before you.

Prayers for the Week
Walking with God One Step at a Time

Monday

Lord, help me step into this week with trust. I do not know everything that is ahead, but I know You are already there. Give me courage for the road in front of me. Amen.

Tuesday

Jesus, when You call me to follow, help me listen. Lead me away from anything that keeps me stuck, and guide me toward the life You want for me. Amen.

Wednesday

God of mercy, make my heart more like Yours. Help me offer patience instead of judgment, kindness instead of criticism, and grace instead of pride. Amen.

Thursday

Lord, teach me to give and receive help. Show me who needs to be carried for a while, and give me the humility to let others help carry me when I am weak. Amen.

Friday

Jesus, meet me in the places where I am tired, afraid, ashamed, or hurting. Help me reach toward You, even with the little strength I have. Amen.

Saturday

God of new life, take me by the hand and help me rise. Where hope feels gone, remind me that You are still able to bring healing, courage, and peace. Amen.

Sunday

Lord, bring me back to worship with an open heart. Strengthen me through Your Word, Your people, and Your Spirit, so I can keep walking with You. Amen.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, help us walk with You this week.

When we are tired, give us strength.

When we are afraid, give us courage.

When we are unsure, show us the next step.

When we meet someone who needs mercy, help us not walk past them.

Let our faith keep moving, our hearts keep trusting,
and Your love keep flowing through us.

Amen.

From the Pew Let Go of What Is Pulling You Under

One of the most embarrassing things that ever happened to me started as a rescue.

I was on one of my first dive trips, running a boat with about twenty people on board. We were out near Bimini, looking for a mooring buoy so we would not have to drop anchor on the coral.

We always towed a Zodiac, a small inflatable boat used to shuttle divers, handle gear, or reach places the larger boat could not safely go. It was also for safety just in case someone happened to fall overboard they could grab onto the zodiac and not drift off into the ocean.

As we were looking for a mooring, someone spotted what looked like a buoy in the distance, so we headed toward it.

As we got closer, we realized it was not a buoy. It was a person.

He was floating alone, in full dive gear, with no boat in sight. Something was wrong. He had not inflated his buoyancy compensator and was barely staying afloat. He was just kicking, trying to keep his head above water.

We yelled over to him, and he signaled for help.

As we got close, he made a beeline for our Zodiac. Instead of climbing in from the stern, he tried to climb in from the side and rolled it right over on top of himself.

So, I did what I thought I was supposed to do. I ran to the back of the boat and dove in.
No fins.
No mask.
No gear.
Just instinct.

And in the process, I lost my swim trunks.

Now I had a man in the water who needed help, a flipped Zodiac on top of him, twenty people watching from the boat, and the only guy swimming out to help was suddenly not dressed for the occasion.

Not exactly how you picture a rescue going. But at that moment, there was a choice.

Be embarrassed or help the guy. So I swam over.

We later learned he had been floating for about forty-five minutes. It was his first ocean dive. He had gotten separated from his group and his dive partner. He was new, and when you are new, it is easy to drift.

That can happen in faith too.

We start out close to God, close to worship, close to other people, but little by little we drift. We get separated. We try to handle life on our own. And before we know it, we are out there kicking as hard as we can just to stay afloat.

The strange thing was, he had equipment that could have helped him. He could have inflated his buoyancy compensator. He could have dropped his weight belt. But in the fear and confusion of the moment, he did not use what he had been given.

And then there was me. I knew better too.

I had been trained. I had been told over and over again not to jump into a rescue unprepared. Make sure you are safe first. Assess the situation. Use the right equipment. Do not become part of the problem.

I used to tell firefighters and paramedic students, “You cannot rescue anyone if you become a victim too.” And yet there I was.

No fins.

No mask.

No plan.

No swim trunks.

Just instinct, adrenaline, and maybe a little bit of rescue ego.

It was what I used to call putting on the “Baywatch hat” — that moment when you think you are going to be the big hero and save the day, but you have not slowed down long enough to ask whether you are actually doing it the right way.

We can do that in faith too.

Sometimes we resist God by refusing to move or by doing nothing. Sometimes we get ahead of God by doing what we want and then calling it faith. We decide we already know the plan. We assume we know what God wants. We jump in without prayer, without listening, without wisdom, and without asking whether we are following Christ or just following our own wants, fears, pride, or ego.

Faith does move. But faithful movement is not the same as reckless movement.

Abram stepped into the unknown, but he stepped because God called him. Matthew left the tax booth because Jesus said, "Follow me." The suffering woman reached out because she trusted Christ could heal her. The grieving father came to Jesus because he knew where hope was found.

The next step matters. But so does listening for the One who is calling us to take it.

When I finally reached the diver, I told him to drop his weight belt.
That is one of the first things you are taught. Get rid of what is pulling you down.
But he did not want to let it go.
He was afraid he would lose it. He was afraid he would have to pay for it.
Think about that for a moment.
He was holding on to something that was making it harder for him to stay alive.

And if we are honest, we do the same thing.

We ask God for help. We want life to get better. We want to move closer to Christ. But sometimes the help we need begins with letting go of something that is pulling us under.

A grudge - A fear - A shame - A habit - A pride.
A hurt we have carried too long.
A way of living that keeps us separated from God and others.

Sometimes the next step with God is not adding something new.

Sometimes it is letting go.

That diver never once looked at me and said, "Where are your swim trunks?"
He did not care.
He was just glad someone showed up.

For the record, the next time you jump off a boat to help someone, it is probably a good idea to hold on to your swimsuit.

I never did find mine. Somewhere down around ninety feet, there may still be a grouper wearing it and telling all his fish friends about the day some guy jumped off a boat and lost his suit before he ever reached the water.

But that is not what the diver remembered. He remembered that someone came.

I have seen the same thing on fire calls and medical calls. When someone is hurting, afraid, or in trouble, they are not usually asking whether you look perfect. They are not asking whether you have everything figured out. They are just grateful that someone came to help.

Maybe that is something the church needs to remember.

People around us may be tired, ashamed, grieving, afraid, or unsure where God is in their life. They may feel like they have drifted too far. They may be holding on to things that are pulling them under. They may not need a perfect speech or a perfect Christian.

They may simply need someone to show up with the mercy of Christ.

And maybe we need that too.

When you are in over your head, let go of what is pulling you down.

Hold on to the One who keeps you afloat.

And before you jump into the next thing, ask whether you are following Jesus or just wearing your own “Baywatch hat.”

Then, when Christ really does call you to move, take the step.

Not perfectly.

Not dramatically.

Just honestly and faithfully.

Prayer

Lord Jesus,
help us let go of whatever is pulling us under.

When we drift too far, bring us back.

When we panic, steady us.

When we try to be the hero, slow us down long enough to listen.

And when someone else is struggling, help us show up with mercy.

Give us courage to take the next step,
wisdom to know when to ask for help,
and enough humility to hold on to our swimsuit when we jump in.

Amen.

Romdog's Wisdom for the Week

Stay Close

Romy was technically a cat.

But we called him **Romdog** because he acted more like a dog than a cat. He would fetch, follow us around, do tricks, play hide and seek, greet visitors, jump into laps, and somehow become part of every conversation.

Romy did not wait for a formal invitation.

He showed up.

When I came home from cancer surgeries and was recuperating, Romdog stayed close. He did not have medical training. He did not offer advice. He did not explain why things were hard. He simply stayed with me and never held back affection.

Maybe animals are one of God's quiet reminders of what love can look like.

Romy did not hold grudges.
He did not withhold affection.
He did not run away when life got uncomfortable.
He just wanted to be near the people he loved.

In Matthew 9, Jesus keeps moving toward people who need mercy. He moves toward the sick, the ashamed, the grieving, the overlooked, and the ones others pushed aside. He does not hold back compassion.

Romdog's wisdom is simple:

Stay close.
Show affection.
Do not make people earn your love when they are hurting.
Be willing to become part of what is happening.

And if someone is cooking, be ready to help — even if your main contribution is making cat hair an official household condiment.



This week, look for someone who may need you to stay close.

Not perfectly.
Not dramatically.
Just faithfully.

Maybe Romdog's lesson is simple: when someone you love is hurting, do not make them face it alone.

Show up.
Stay close.
Offer love freely.
And when possible, keep the cat hair out of the food.

That may not solve everything, but it just might help someone remember they are loved by God too.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for the animals You place in our lives.

For the ones who greet us at the door,
stay close when we are hurting,
make us laugh when life feels heavy,
and remind us what love can look like
without grudges, conditions, or long explanations.

Help us learn from that kind of love.

Teach us to stay close to people who are tired, lonely, grieving, or afraid.

Help us offer kindness freely.

Help us show mercy without making people earn it.

And when we do not know what to say, help us simply be present.

May our love remind someone this week
that they are not alone,
they are not forgotten,
and they are deeply loved by You.

Amen.

Why Presbyterian History Matters **The Church Has Always Been Called to Move**

Presbyterians have long memories. We remember that the church is not just a building, a Sunday service, or a group of people who already know the hymns. The church is called to follow Jesus into the world.

One-way Presbyterians have described that calling is through the **Six Great Ends of the Church**. These were adopted more than a century ago, in 1910, and they still help describe what the church is called to be and do.

They remind us that the church exists for:

- The proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind.
- The shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God.
- The maintenance of divine worship.
- The preservation of the truth.
- The promotion of social righteousness.
- The exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.

That may sound like old church language, but the heart of it is still very alive.

- The church is called to proclaim good news.
- The church is called to care for people.
- The church is called to worship God.
- The church is called to seek truth.
- The church is called to work for what is right.
- The church is called to show the world a glimpse of God's kingdom.

In Matthew 9, Jesus does not keep mercy safely inside the religious crowd. He moves toward the sick, the ashamed, the grieving, the overlooked, and the ones others pushed aside. He says, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice."

That sounds a lot like the church's calling. We gather on Sunday to be strengthened. Then we are sent into Monday to live what we have received.

The Presbyterian tradition reminds us that faith is not meant to sit still. Worship should lead to witness. Prayer should lead to mercy. Fellowship should lead to care. Truth should lead to courage. And the love of Christ should be visible enough that others can see a glimpse of God's kingdom through us.

So, when Monday comes, we are not just carrying home a bulletin. We are carrying a calling.

One step - One act of mercy - One honest prayer - One faithful witness.
One glimpse of God's kingdom at a time.