

July 19th, 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 Remembering Our Way Back to Praise

Psalm 100 is one of those psalms that almost sounds too cheerful at first.

“Make a joyful noise to the Lord.”

“Worship the Lord with gladness.”

“Enter his gates with thanksgiving.”

It sounds like the psalmist is inviting everybody to worship with their heart turned all the way up. Not just show up. Not just sit politely. Not just make sure the bulletin is in the right order and the microphone works. Psalm 100 invites us to come before God with joy, gratitude, praise, and gladness.

And that can be a beautiful thing. It can also be a difficult thing.

Some days we do feel thankful. Some days we can see God’s goodness clearly. The sun is shining, the family is doing well, the bills are paid, the doctor’s report was better than expected, and the coffee was hot enough to be considered a blessing. On those days, Psalm 100 feels natural.

But there are other days when praise does not come as easily. There are days when someone is grieving, someone is sick, someone is worried about money, someone is lonely, someone is exhausted, or someone is quietly carrying a burden nobody else can see. On those days, “make a joyful noise” may feel less like an invitation and more like one more thing we are failing to do.

That is where Psalm 124 helps us.

Psalm 124 does not pretend life is easy. It looks back over trouble and says, “If it had not been the Lord who was on our side...” That is not a clean, easy, happy verse. That is a survivor’s verse. It sounds like someone looking back and saying, “I do not know how we got through that, except that God held us.”

The psalm remembers danger. It remembers fear. It remembers what it felt like when the waters were rising and the flood threatened to sweep everything away. This is not cheap happiness. This is not pretending everything was fine when it was not fine.

Psalm 124 is the song of someone who has been through something and can now look back and say, “God was with us there, even when we could not see it clearly at the time.”

Walter Brueggemann called psalms like this psalms of reorientation. Reorientation does not mean everything goes back to the way it was before. It does not mean the trouble never happened. It does not mean the loss did not matter.

Reorientation is what happens when God brings us through disorientation and teaches us to see life, faith, and hope in a new way.

In emergency management, people sometimes talk about the “new normal” after a disaster. That phrase can sound simple until you are sitting with someone in a shelter who has lost a home, a routine, a community, or someone they love. Many people want life to go back to the way it was before the storm, the fire, the illness, the death, or the change.

And sometimes, by God’s grace, parts of life do return. But sometimes they do not.

Sometimes the old normal is gone. No amount of wishing, praying, or working can make everything exactly as it was before. That is a hard truth, and it should be spoken gently. When people are hurting, they do not need someone to explain their pain away. They need someone willing to sit with them in it.

Maybe that is part of what reorientation means. It is not pretending the disaster did not happen. It is not forcing people to smile and call everything fine. Reorientation is learning, slowly and sometimes painfully, that God is still with us even when life will never be exactly the same again.

Psalm 100 is praise. Psalm 124 is memory. Together they teach us something important: sometimes we praise God by remembering what God has already carried us through.

That kind of remembering matters.

How many times has God helped us in ways we did not deserve and could not have arranged on our own? How many people has God placed in our lives at just the right time? How many doors opened that we could not have forced open? How many times did we receive strength for a day when we were sure we had none left?

How many times did God give us patience, wisdom, courage, forgiveness, friendship, family, education, experience, or opportunity — gifts we may have slowly started treating as if we earned them all by ourselves?

It is very easy to take blessings for granted. Most of us do not mean to do it. We just get busy. We move from one problem to the next. We start counting what is missing more quickly than we count what has been given. We remember the one thing that went wrong and forget the ten things God quietly held together.

That is why thanksgiving is not just a holiday or a polite prayer before a meal. Thanksgiving is a spiritual practice. It is one of the ways we train our souls to notice God.

C.S. Lewis once wrote that praise does not merely express enjoyment, but completes it. In other words, when we enjoy something deeply, we naturally want to share it. We tell someone about a good meal, a beautiful sunset, a funny story, a helpful friend, or a kindness we did not expect. The joy feels unfinished until it is expressed.

Maybe thanksgiving works the same way.

When we give thanks to God, we are not simply being polite. We are completing the joy. We are saying out loud what our hearts need to remember: God has been good. God has been faithful. God has helped us, forgiven us, sustained us, and given us more than we could ever claim to deserve.

But there may be someone reading this who does not feel very thankful right now.

If that is you, Psalm 100 is not asking you to fake joy you do not have. God is not helped by our pretending. The Lord already knows the truth of our hearts. Sometimes the most faithful prayer we can offer is not a joyful shout, but a tired whisper: “Lord, help me remember that You are still here.”

And if you cannot sing today, maybe the church can sing around you for a while. That is part of why worship is something we do together. Some days we bring the praise. Some days we borrow it.

Gratitude is not pretending the hard things are not real. Gratitude is remembering that God is real in the middle of the hard things.

Thanksgiving does not pay every bill. It does not instantly heal every illness. It does not make every hard thing disappear. We should be honest about that. Some people are in real trouble, and the church should never hand them a cheerful slogan and walk away. If someone is hungry, they need food. If someone is sick, they need care. If someone is grieving, they need compassion. If someone is overwhelmed, they need help, not a lecture about being more grateful.

But gratitude can still do something powerful.

Gratitude helps us remember that trouble is not the whole story. Gratitude reminds us that God has been faithful before, and because God has been faithful before, we can trust Him with the next step. Gratitude does not deny pain. It gives pain somewhere to stand. It says, “This is hard, but I am not alone. This is uncertain, but God has not abandoned me. This is not what I wanted, but the Lord is still my helper.”

That may be what Psalm 124 means when it says, “Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” The God who made heaven and earth is not distant from us. God is not watching our troubles from a safe distance. God is with His people. God sustains. God rescues. God strengthens. God holds on even when our grip is weak.

And as Christians, we see this most clearly in Jesus Christ. In Christ, God does not love us from far away. God entered into the pain, confusion, injustice, sorrow, and suffering of this world. The cross tells us that God knows what suffering is. The resurrection tells us that suffering, sin, and death do not get the final word.

That does not answer every question. It does not make every hard thing easy. But it gives us hope strong enough to keep walking.

It also changes how we pray. If we remember God’s goodness, we may begin to ask different questions. Not only, “Lord, will You help me do what I have already decided?” but also, “Lord, is this what You want? Is this Your will, or only my plan dressed up in religious language?”

That is not always an easy prayer. Most of us are pretty good at making plans and then asking God to bless them afterward. But gratitude teaches trust. When we remember how God has guided us before, we become more willing to let God guide us now. Thanksgiving helps loosen our grip on our own way and opens our hands to God’s way.

So perhaps part of Psalm 100's invitation is this: do not let God's goodness pass by unnoticed.

Stop during the day and say thank you. Thank God for life, family, friends, work, rest, food, shelter, forgiveness, education, experience, people who helped you, and even lessons learned the hard way. Thank God for the gifts you used well, and ask forgiveness for the gifts you may have squandered or taken for granted.

A thankful heart does not pretend life is easy. A thankful heart remembers that life is a gift.

So maybe Psalm 100 is not asking us to pretend. Maybe it is inviting us to remember. Remember God's goodness. Remember God's mercy. Remember God's faithfulness. Remember the people God used to help you. Remember the strength that arrived when you thought you were done. Remember the grace you did not earn. Remember the blessings you may have stopped noticing.

And then, from that place of memory, make a joyful noise.

It may not always sound like a hymn. Some days it may sound like a whispered "thank you." Some days it may sound like, "Lord, I am still here." Some days it may sound like, "Help me trust You today." Some days it may even sound like laughter after a long season of tears.

This week, maybe the first step is simple: pause once each day and remember one place where God has helped you. Write it down. Say it out loud. Tell someone. Let that memory feed your faith.

Because praise begins when we remember that the Lord is good, His steadfast love endures forever, and His faithfulness is for all generations.

Faith Between Sundays

Taking the Next Faithful Step - Walking with God one day at a time

Psalm 124 looks back over trouble and says, “If it had not been the Lord who was on our side...” Psalm 100 calls us into worship, thanksgiving, praise, and joy. Together, they show us what reorientation can look like in real life.

It is not always about everything going back to normal. Sometimes it is learning how to live faithfully in a new reality.

This week, we will practice four simple steps: tell the truth about where we are, remember what is still true, take the next faithful step, and look for someone else who may need help finding their next step.

A simple prayer for the week: “Lord, You are still with me. Help me tell the truth, remember Your faithfulness, and take the next faithful step. Amen.”

Sunday — Begin with Worship and Remembrance

Read Psalm 124 and Psalm 100.

Psalm 124 reminds us to look back and say, “If it had not been the Lord who was on our side...” Psalm 100 reminds us to look up and say, “The Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever.” Together, these psalms help us begin the week with honest memory and faithful praise.

Try this: Before worship today, or sometime this afternoon, ask yourself: Where has God helped me through something hard? Then offer one simple prayer of thanks.

Prayer: Lord, as we gather for worship, help us remember that our help is in Your name. Open our hearts to Your Word, our voices to Your praise, and our lives to Your guidance. Teach us to worship honestly, with gratitude for Your goodness and trust in Your steadfast love. Amen.

Monday — Remember Who Is on Your Side

Read Psalm 124:1–2.

The psalm begins, “If it had not been the Lord who was on our side...” This week, take a moment to look back over a hard season in your life. You may not have understood everything at the time, but where can you now see that God helped you keep going?

Try this: Write down one sentence that begins, “If it had not been for the Lord...”

Prayer: Lord, when we look back over hard seasons, help us see the ways You carried us. We may not have understood everything at the time, and we may still have questions, but help us remember that we were never alone. Thank You for being on our side. Amen.

Tuesday — Tell the Truth About What Feels Overwhelming

Read Psalm 124:3–5.

The psalm uses strong images: being swallowed up, swept away, overwhelmed by raging waters. Life can feel that way sometimes. Naming what is hard does not mean we lack faith. It means we are being honest with God.

Think about this: What is something in your life that has felt overwhelming? Have you been honest with God about it?

Prayer: God of mercy, some days life feels like rising water. Fear, grief, stress, and uncertainty can feel overwhelming. When we feel swept away, steady us. When we feel trapped, free us. When we do not know what to pray, let Your Spirit pray within us. Amen.

Wednesday — Give Thanks for What Did Not Get the Final Word

Read Psalm 124:6–7.

Sometimes God’s help feels like rescue. Sometimes it feels like endurance. Sometimes it feels like simply having enough strength for one more day. The psalm says, “We have escaped like a bird from the snare.” That does not mean life was easy. It means the trap did not get the final word.

Try this: Thank God today for one thing that did not get the final word in your life.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for the things that did not get the final word. Thank You for grace stronger than failure, hope stronger than fear, and love stronger than loss. Help us notice the small signs of rescue and give thanks for them. Amen.

Thursday — Take One Next Faithful Step

Read Psalm 124:8.

“Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” That is a big sentence for ordinary days. The God who made heaven and earth is also present in hospital rooms, kitchens, shelters, workplaces, family struggles, quiet grief, and uncertain tomorrows.

Taking the next faithful step does not mean solving everything. It may mean making the phone call, saying the prayer, accepting help, offering the apology, taking the walk, sitting quietly with God, or doing the small thing that love, wisdom, or faith is asking of you today.

Try this: Choose one next faithful step and take it today.

Prayer: Maker of heaven and earth, our help is in Your name. Help us trust You with what we cannot fix. Give us wisdom for what we can do, patience for what we must wait through, and courage to take the next faithful step. Amen.

Friday — Help Someone Else Find Their Next Step

Read Psalm 100:1–4.

Psalm 100 calls us to worship with joy and thanksgiving. But thanksgiving does not have to be fake. Sometimes thanksgiving is loud and joyful. Sometimes it is quiet and stubborn. Sometimes it simply says, “God, life is still hard, but You are still good.”

One way we live out thanksgiving is by helping someone else. Sometimes God uses our own hard seasons to make us more compassionate toward others. We do not have to have all the answers. Often, the gift is simply being present.

Try this: Reach out to someone who may need encouragement. It can be simple: a call, a note, a meal, a ride, or the words, “I was thinking of you today.”

Prayer: Lord, teach us thanksgiving that is honest and real. Help us not forget Your goodness, even on imperfect days. Use us to encourage someone else who may need help finding their next faithful step. Amen.

Saturday — Rest in God’s Steadfast Love

Read Psalm 100:5.

“For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever.” Reorientation does not mean we forget what happened. It means we begin to see again that God’s love has not left us. The storm may have changed things, but it did not change God’s goodness.

Think about this: What would it look like to live today as someone who is still loved, still held, and still being guided by God?

Prayer: Faithful God, Your steadfast love endures forever. As this week comes to a close, help us rest in that promise. Heal what is wounded, strengthen what is weary, and prepare us to walk into tomorrow with hope. Amen.

From the Pew

Holy Spirit Protocols

In emergency management, I remember sitting with people after disasters who kept asking the same question in different ways:

“When will things go back to normal?”

Sometimes that was a practical question. When can we go home? When will the power come back? When will the roads open? When will help arrive?

But sometimes it was a much deeper question. What they were really asking was, “Will life ever feel safe again? Will I ever feel like myself again? Has God forgotten me?”

Those are hard questions to hear, because sometimes the honest answer is that life may not go back exactly the way it was. Homes can be rebuilt, but they are not always the same home. Routines can return, but grief may still sit at the table. Bodies can heal, but sometimes they carry scars. Families can keep going, but an empty chair is still an empty chair.

That is where people need more than a cheerful slogan. They need something steady enough to hold onto when everything else has changed.

In emergency services, we had protocols.

Protocols were there for a reason. When the call was bad, when people were hurt, when emotions were high, and when everything around you felt chaotic, protocols gave you something steady to follow. They did not make the scene easy. They did not answer every question. They did not take away the pain of what was happening. But they helped you know what to do next.

As a paramedic, though, one of the worst feelings was arriving at a scene or finding a medical condition where the protocols did not quite cover what was happening. Protocols are necessary, but they cannot cover every possible situation. People are too complicated. Emergencies are too unpredictable. Life does not always fit neatly into the binder.

In those situations, we were supposed to contact medical control for orders. For those of us who grew up watching *Emergency!*, it was a little like Johnny and Roy calling Rampart. I think that show may have had something to do with why I became a paramedic in the first place.

But real life was not always as clean as television. Sometimes communications were poor. Sometimes radios did not work. Sometimes you were standing there with a patient who needed help, and you could not get the guidance you wanted when you wanted it.

That is a tough place to be. You have training. You have experience. You have protocols. But you also know the moment is bigger than the page in front of you.

Life can be that way too.

Most of us will never stand in the middle of the kind of emergency scene first responders see. But all of us, sooner or later, stand in the middle of something that changes life. A diagnosis. A death. A job loss. A family crisis. A child going down a dangerous path. A relationship that breaks. A body that will not do what it used to do. A future that suddenly looks nothing like the one we had planned.

I saw that kind of life-changing loss when I was deployed as part of an emergency management mutual-aid response after Hurricane Katrina.

While working in the Bay St. Louis area, I met a woman in one of the shelters. I will not use her name, but I have never forgotten her.

When I first met her, she asked something I have thought about many times since:

“Has my life reached a point where the only place I have to go is a shelter?”

That is a hard question to hear.

She had lost almost everything. Her apartment had been washed away by the storm surge. The company she worked for had been destroyed. Some of her friends were missing, and one was never found. She was alone, with no family there to help her.

She had no car because it had been washed away and flooded. In that area, when hurricanes were forecast, many people parked their cars along the main four-lane road coming from Interstate 10, hoping they would be safer there. But Katrina was so strong that the storm surge came right up that road and washed vehicles off into the swamps on either side.

She had no insurance to cover the contents of her apartment. Her car only had liability insurance, not comprehensive coverage. Even her bank had been destroyed, and she was going to have to go north to another branch just to get what little savings she had. But she had no car to get there.

So, there she was, living in a shelter, with almost everything familiar gone.

But then she said something else: ***“While I am here, I want to do something.”***

And she did.

She helped wherever she could. In fact, she became so helpful that she was doing things some disaster personnel should have been doing. She understood the people in that shelter because she was one of them. She knew what it felt like to stand there with no home, no car, no plan, and no easy answer.

Over the months I was there, I got to know her well. After a while, she discovered that helping people affected by disaster was something she cared deeply about. A few months later, she applied for a job with FEMA. She was hired, became a valued employee, worked many disasters, and eventually became a supervisor.

In fact, as the years went on, I responded to several disasters where she was my supervisor. The woman I had first met in a shelter after she had lost nearly everything was now helping lead disaster response for others.

Over the years, she often said that her disaster, although it caused her to lose everything, also gave her everything. It gave her experience, compassion, and understanding. It helped her see what disaster survivors really needed because she had been one herself.

Now, I want to be careful here. Not every tragedy turns into a job opportunity. Not every loss comes with a clear explanation. We should never look at someone in pain and say, “Do not worry, something good will come from this,” as if that makes the hurt go away.

But sometimes, by the grace of God, life is rebuilt in ways no one could have imagined at the time. Sometimes the very place where we were broken becomes the place where we are able to help someone else. Sometimes God does not take us back to the old normal but leads us into a new calling.

And when life-changing things happen, people respond in different ways.

Some people reach out. Some pull inward. Some get angry. Some get quiet. Some become sarcastic because sarcasm feels safer than grief. Some keep everyone at a distance because they do not know what will happen if they let anyone get too close. Some start to wonder if God has turned against them.

That last one may be more common than we admit. When life hurts badly enough, some people begin to think, “God must hate me,” or “I must have done something wrong,” or “I do not deserve God’s grace.”

Pain can tell us terrible lies about God. Grief can make us feel abandoned. Fear can convince us that silence means God has walked away.

That is why we need what I might call **HSP: Holy Spirit Protocols**.

Now, I know that is not an official theological term. I probably would not try to sell embroidered HSP shirts at a seminary bookstore. But the idea matters.

Human protocols are helpful, but they have limits. There may be a situation they do not cover. There may be a question they do not answer. There may be a moment when the radio does not work and medical control cannot be reached.

But the Holy Spirit is not limited that way.

There is no scene in life where God's Spirit says, "I have no guidance for this." There is no grief too deep, no fear too tangled, no failure too final, no loss too complicated, and no soul too broken for the Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit reminds us what is true when life feels chaotic. The Spirit points us back to the promises of God when our circumstances are trying to tell us something else. The Spirit helps us remember that suffering is not proof that God hates us. Loss is not proof that God has abandoned us. Pain is not proof that we are beyond grace.

The Spirit's protocol does not always begin with answers. Sometimes it begins with a **STEP**.

S — Stop and breathe.

When life changes suddenly, our minds may race ahead, trying to solve tomorrow, next month, and the rest of our lives before we have even made it through today.

Sometimes the first faithful thing is simply to stop, breathe, and remember that God is present in this moment. We do not have to understand the entire journey before taking the next step. We do not have to solve every problem in one afternoon. We do not have to carry tomorrow before tomorrow arrives. Stop. Breathe. Remember that God is here.

T — Tell God the truth.

"Lord, I am afraid."

"Lord, I am angry."

"Lord, I do not understand."

"Lord, help me."

That kind of prayer may not sound polished, but it is real. God does not require us to disguise our fear or tidy up our grief before coming to Him.

Real prayer is not pretending everything is fine. Real prayer is bringing God what is actually inside us. Sometimes telling God the truth is where healing begins.

E — Entrust to God what you cannot fix.

We can do what is ours to do, but we cannot control every outcome, repair every relationship, answer every question, or carry the whole future.

The Spirit helps us place those things into hands stronger than our own.

Entrusting something to God does not mean it no longer matters. It does not mean we stop caring or stop doing what we can. It means we recognize that there are burdens too heavy for us to carry alone.

Sometimes the most faithful prayer we can offer is, “Lord, I cannot fix this. I am placing it in Your hands.”

P — Proceed with the next faithful step.

Not the whole journey.
Not the complete plan.
Just the next faithful step.

That step may be praying, making a telephone call, accepting a meal, going to an appointment, asking for help, getting some rest, or simply making it through the day.

Sometimes the next faithful thing is not heroic. Sometimes it is letting someone pray for us. Sometimes it is accepting a ride, a conversation, or a quiet presence. Sometimes it is allowing someone else to carry part of the load for a while.

The next step may not look impressive, but it is still a step. And sometimes that is how God begins leading us into a new normal.

So, when we do not know what to do, the Holy Spirit’s protocol may be as simple as this:

Stop and breathe.
Tell God the truth.
Entrust to God what you cannot fix.
Proceed with the next faithful step.

Psalms 124 says, “If it had not been the Lord who was on our side...”

That is not a neat and tidy verse. That is a survivor’s verse. It sounds like someone looking back over trouble and saying, “I do not know how we got through that, except that God held us.”

Psalm 100 calls us to enter God's gates with thanksgiving and praise. But that praise does not have to be fake. It does not have to pretend life is easy. Sometimes thanksgiving is simply remembering that God is still good, even when life is still hard.

That is reorientation.

It is not always getting the old life back. Sometimes there is a new normal. Sometimes the illness remains. Sometimes the loved one does not return. Sometimes the job is gone. Sometimes the family situation is still painful. Sometimes we do not get the answer we wanted.

But God is still there.

The Holy Spirit does not promise that every scene in life will be easy. The Spirit does not hand us a slogan and say, "Smile more." The Spirit helps us do the next faithful thing.

In emergency work, protocols helped guide the responder through the scene.

In faith, the Holy Spirit guides the believer through the storm.

And unlike human protocols, God's Spirit is never outdated, never unreachable, never confused, and never caught off guard. The Spirit keeps pointing us back to Jesus Christ, who entered suffering Himself and showed us that pain, sin, and death do not get the final word.

So, if you are in a hard season, please do not let your pain convince you that God hates you. Do not let grief tell you that you are alone. Do not let fear tell you that grace is for everyone except you.

The Lord is still on your side.

Your help is still in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

And even if all you can do today is stop, breathe, and whisper, "Lord, help me," that may be enough for the next step.