

August 16th 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.



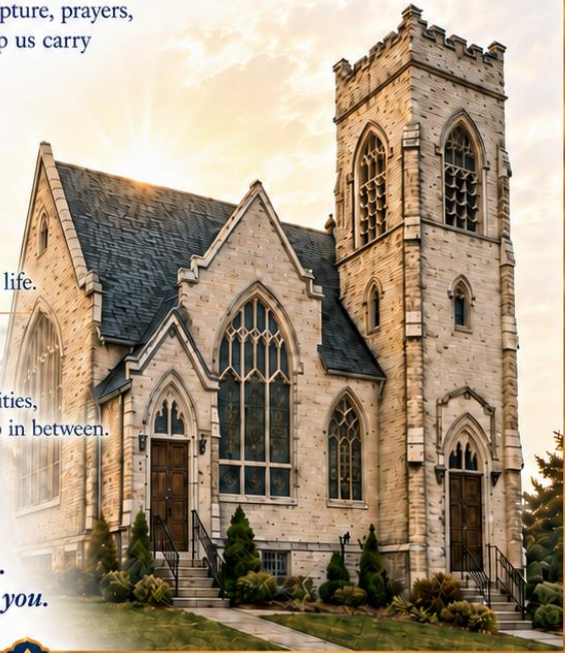
Let God speak in the ordinary places of life.

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

CONNECT WITH US

51 Cottage Street • Whitinsville, MA 01588
Sunday Worship at 10:30 a.m. • <https://whitinpres.org>

Another View
Mercy Is Not a Private Club
Isaiah 56: 1 and 6-8 Romans 11: 1-2a and 29-32

In Jesus' parable of the vineyard, some workers are hired early in the morning. Others come at noon, still others late in the afternoon, and a final group arrives when only an hour remains in the workday. Yet when evening comes, the vineyard owner pays every worker the same wage.

Those who worked all day are offended. They are not angry because the owner failed to pay them what he promised. They are angry because he gave the late arrivals the same generosity.

The vineyard owner asks them, "Are you envious because I am generous?"

That question reaches far beyond wages and working hours. It asks whether we can rejoice when God extends mercy to someone who did not arrive when we did, worship as we do, understand faith as we do, or belong to our particular religious tradition.

Romans 11 addresses a similar temptation.

Some Gentile Christians apparently began to believe that Israel's rejection of the gospel meant God had rejected the Jewish people. Perhaps they thought they had replaced Israel and had now become God's favored group.

Paul answers emphatically: "Has God rejected his people? By no means!"

Israel remains beloved because "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." God's mercy toward the Gentiles does not mean God has stopped loving Israel. Paul sees a movement of mercy: Israel's stumbling opened the gospel outward to the Gentiles, and the mercy shown to the Gentiles would somehow become part of God's continuing work among Israel.

This movement did not begin with Paul.

In Isaiah 56, God speaks to foreigners who have joined themselves to the Lord. They may have feared that they would always remain outsiders, separated from God's people. Yet God promises to welcome them, bring them to His holy mountain, and give them joy in His house of prayer.

Then comes the beautiful declaration:

“My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.”

Isaiah does not say that Israel has been discarded so that foreigners can take its place. God continues gathering Israel while also gathering others alongside them. The circle becomes wider without erasing those who were already within it.

That is important:

God’s mercy toward one group does not require the rejection of another.

Paul does not pretend that religious differences are insignificant. He is a follower of Jesus Christ, and he proclaims Christ boldly. Yet he also refuses to declare that God has abandoned the people whose faith does not include the same confession about Christ that he holds.

Paul understands something churches sometimes forget:

Receiving mercy does not make us owners of mercy.

Christians believe that God has acted decisively through Jesus Christ. We need not water down that belief or pretend that every religion teaches exactly the same thing.

Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and other faiths hold important and sometimes profound differences.

Even within Christianity, Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Pentecostals, and others do not agree on every doctrine or practice.

But disagreement does not give any one group permission to claim God as its private possession.

No denomination owns Christ.

No congregation controls the gates of heaven.

No group has the authority to tell God, “You may show mercy to us, but not to them.”

The workers who arrived early did not own the vineyard. The workers who arrived late did not set their own wages. Every one of them depended upon the generosity of the owner.

The same is true of us.

Some people have belonged to the church since infancy. Others come after a lifetime of searching. Some enter with confident faith. Others arrive carrying doubts, disappointment, or wounds inflicted by religious interactions. Some know every hymn, prayer, and tradition. Others do not know when to stand, when to sit, or even where to find the bathroom.

Yet all are dependent upon the same grace.

God's house was never intended to become a private club for people who have already figured everything out. It should be a place where people can encounter God, receive mercy, ask honest questions, and grow in faith without first being accepted into an inner circle.

This does not require the church to abandon its beliefs. It requires the church to distinguish between the gospel and the customs through which we express it.

Fire departments sometimes discover this difference in a very practical way.

Neighboring cities and fire districts may use hydrants with completely different hose connections. The hydrants may differ in size, shape, color, number of outlets, the way they are opened, and even the threads used to attach the hose.

A hose from one department may not screw onto the hydrant in the next community.

For that reason, fire engines carry adapters—special fittings that connect one type of hydrant thread to another type of hose. Without the correct adapter, firefighters may be standing beside a hydrant filled with water while the fire continues to burn because they cannot make the connection.

The answer is not to replace every hydrant or force every department to use identical equipment. The answer is to understand the differences, carry the right adapters, and know how to use them.

The adapter does not change the water.
It makes the water accessible.

Churches also need adapters: language people can understand, patience with questions, explanations of worship, willingness to listen, different opportunities for participation, and hospitality that does more than shake a visitor's hand.

People also come to God from very different places. Their lives may look different. Their religious experiences may look different. Their understanding may be incomplete. Some may have been shaped by another Christian denomination, another religion, no religion at all, or a painful encounter with religion.

They may look as different from one another as hydrants from several neighboring jurisdictions. Yet we still trust that the grace comes from God.

The hydrant may be large or small, red or yellow, old or new, fitted with two outlets or four. It may open with a different wrench and require a different connection. But firefighters approach it expecting water.

In the same way, we should be cautious about assuming that God's grace can flow only through the religious forms, traditions, or experiences most familiar to us.

The gospel remains the gospel. Christ remains Christ. But our way of helping someone connect with that grace may need to change.

Romans 11 reminds us that God was not finished with Israel simply because many had not accepted Christ. Isaiah 56 reminds us that God intended His house to welcome people from beyond Israel. The vineyard parable reminds us that God may welcome and reward people whose journey looks very different from ours.

None of these passages teaches that beliefs are meaningless or that every religious claim is identical.

All of them warn us against arrogance.

We should be careful whenever we find ourselves saying:

"We are the only ones who understand God."

"Our church is the only real church."

"Those people are merely pretending."

"They cannot belong until they become more like us."

Perhaps the better question is not, "Do these people fit into our church?"

Perhaps it is, "Are we willing to carry the adapter?"

God's mercy is not diminished when it reaches someone else. The early workers did not receive less because the late workers were treated generously. Gentile Christians did not lose God's love because God remained faithful to Israel. Israel did not lose its place in God's promises because foreigners were welcomed into God's house.

There is enough mercy in God for those who arrived early, those who came late, those who are certain, those who are questioning, and those whose journey we do not yet understand.

We may not know exactly how God will complete the work of salvation. Paul himself finally reaches the limit of explanation and responds with worship:

“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!”

Our responsibility is not to draw boundaries around God's mercy. Our responsibility is to receive it gratefully, share it generously, and never resent the vineyard owner for welcoming someone else.

The hydrants may look different. The fittings may not match.
But the water still belongs to God.

Faith Between Sundays **Making Room for Mercy One Day at a Time**

Romans 11 asks, “Has God rejected his people?” Paul answers immediately, “By no means!”

Although many in Israel had not accepted the gospel Paul proclaimed, God had not forgotten His promises. Paul reminds the Gentile Christians that “the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”

Isaiah 56 also shows God welcoming foreigners into His house of prayer. These passages do not teach that every religion is identical or that beliefs do not matter. Christians confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Yet we are recipients of God's mercy—not its owners.

This week, consider how we can hold our faith with conviction while remaining humble, welcoming, and willing to make room for people whose journeys differ from ours.

A Simple Prayer for the Week

Merciful God, thank You for welcoming me before I had everything figured out. Keep me from placing limits around Your grace. Help me remain faithful to Christ while showing patience, humility, and love toward others. Amen.

Sunday — Mercy Is God's to Give Read Romans 11:30–32.

Paul describes a mysterious movement of mercy. Gentiles received mercy, and Paul trusts that Israel will also receive mercy. Neither group can boast because everyone depends upon God's grace.

Reflect:

- Can I rejoice when God is generous to someone whose journey differs from mine?
- Have I confused receiving mercy with controlling who else may receive it?
- Where do I need to trust God instead of judging another person?

Try this: Think of someone you find difficult to understand and pray, “God, help me see this person as someone You love.”

Prayer: Merciful God, forgive me when I place limits around Your grace. Remind me that I stand before You by mercy, not because I have earned a favored place. Amen.

Monday — God Does Not Forget

Read Romans 11:1–2a and 29.

Paul asks whether God has rejected Israel and answers, “By no means!” God's promises do not disappear whenever human beings stumble. That is good news for all of us. Our hope rests not in our perfect faithfulness but in God's enduring faithfulness.

Reflect:

- Have I feared that God had given up on me because of a failure?
- Have I given up on someone God may still be pursuing?
- What promise of God do I need to remember today?

Try this: Write down one time when God remained faithful during a difficult or uncertain season.

Prayer: Faithful God, thank You that Your love is stronger than my failures. Help me trust that You are still working, even when I cannot see the outcome. Amen.

Tuesday — A House for All Peoples

Read Isaiah 56:6–8.

Foreigners who feared they would remain outsiders were promised a place among God’s people. God declared: “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.”

A welcome sign is not enough. True hospitality helps people understand, participate, form relationships, and know that their presence matters.

Reflect:

- Would a first-time visitor understand our worship service?
- Are there unwritten rules that newcomers do not know?
- Is the front door open while the inner circle remains closed?

Try this: Imagine entering your church for the first time. Notice one thing that might be confusing and one thing that would help you feel welcome.

Prayer: God of all people, help us notice strangers, explain what is unfamiliar, welcome questions, and make room for new relationships. Amen.

Wednesday — Carry the Adapter

Neighboring fire departments may use hydrants with different threads, outlets, and operating systems. Firefighters carry adapters so their hoses can connect. The adapter does not change the water. It makes the connection possible.

Churches also have different traditions, language, music, and customs. We do not need to make every church identical, but we should help people connect through patience, clear explanations, and genuine hospitality.

Reflect:

- Which parts of my faith are central beliefs, and which are familiar customs?
- Have I treated my preferred style of worship as the only faithful style?
- What unnecessary barrier could I help remove?

Try this: Choose one church term—such as communion, benediction, Session, or passing the peace—and practice explaining it simply.

Prayer: Lord, help me distinguish between the living water of Your grace and the fittings through which I am accustomed to receiving it. Keep me faithful and flexible. Amen.

Thursday — Check the Board

A firefighter may fully open a hydrant and still receive no water because the hydrant is out of service. If leaders failed to check the warning list, they may blame the firefighter instead of recognizing the real problem.

Churches can do the same thing. We promise welcome, help, and belonging—but are those promises working?

Reflect:

- Do our actions support the welcome we advertise?
- Are volunteers given the information and support they need?
- Is something in our church quietly out of service?

Try this: Choose one promise your church makes and ask whether someone seeking that help would actually receive it.

Prayer: God of truth, help us examine ourselves before blaming others. Show us what needs to be repaired, renewed, or communicated more honestly. Amen.

Friday — People Remember

When something goes wrong, leaders may remember the problem that needed to be solved.

The person who was blamed may remember the yelling.

A volunteer may hesitate to serve again because a mistake was met with embarrassment rather than guidance. A young person may stop asking questions because the first honest question received an impatient answer.

Reflect:

- Has someone become hesitant because of how I responded?
- When I am under pressure, where does my frustration go?
- Is there someone I need to encourage or apologize to?

Try this: Thank someone whose effort may have gone unnoticed. Be specific about what you appreciate.

Prayer: Gracious God, make me careful with my words. Help me correct with kindness, lead with humility, and repair harm when my frustration has wounded someone. Amen.

Saturday — Bring Another Line

When one hydrant fails, another fire engine may find a working source and stretch a supply line from the next block.

That crew could stand at a distance criticizing what went wrong. Instead, they bring the water.

When a person, ministry, or congregation is struggling, our first response does not always need to be, “How did this happen?” Sometimes the better question is, “What can we bring?”

Reflect:

- Who around me may be running low on strength?
- Am I offering help or merely explaining what they did wrong?
- What practical support could I bring today?

Try this: Contact someone who may be discouraged or overwhelmed. Ask, “What would be helpful right now?” Then listen.

Prayer: God of abundant mercy, make me part of the help You send. Teach me to bring compassion before criticism and assistance before blame. Amen.

At the end of the week, consider one final question:

Am I helping people connect with God’s mercy, or am I guarding the fittings?

The connections may require patience.

The people seeking God may arrive by different roads.

But the grace still belongs to God.

From the Pew

Someone Out of Water?

There are certain sentences firefighters never forget.

One of mine came from the captain of Station Two, who walked toward our pumper wearing the expression of a man who had just been handed material he could use for the next ten years.

“Someone out of water?”

There is absolutely no competition between fire stations.
That statement is, of course, completely untrue.

We were Station One, the first-in pumper at a working structure fire. Our crew had advanced charged hose lines into the building through heat, smoke, and fire. They expected us to establish a continuous water supply before the approximately 300 gallons in our tank disappeared.

That was my responsibility as the Fire Equipment Operator, or FEO.

The crew trusted that when they opened the nozzle, water would come out. They were not interested in excuses, municipal water-department procedures, or an interesting discussion about hydrant maintenance.

They wanted water—and preferably before the tank gauge reached empty.

Our probie had connected the supply hose to a hydrant about 150 feet away. He opened the valve, but no water came.

He ran back toward the pumper and yelled over the engine noise that the hydrant was not flowing.

I told him to go back and open it farther.

He ran back to the hydrant. A few moments later, he returned.

“I turned it until it stopped!” I sent him back again.

He turned the valve some more, or at least tried to. He ran back and forth between the hydrant and the pumper several times, asking, “What can I do?”

Meanwhile, the firefighters inside were using the remaining tank water to knock down the fire. They were yelling over the radio because they knew their water supply was disappearing.

They yelled at me.

I yelled at the probie.

The probie yelled at the hydrant.

At one point, he began hitting it with the hydrant wrench, apparently hoping that intimidation might cause it to reconsider its decision not to provide water.

You have to admire probies. They desperately want to be part of the solution. If turning, pulling, running, pleading, or striking municipal property with a large wrench might help, they are willing to try it. Unfortunately, all the yelling and hydrant abuse produced exactly zero gallons per minute.

We had made a wrong assumption.

The probie had not failed to open the hydrant. The hydrant was out of service.

Normally, a red plastic cover warned crews not to use it, but the cover had disappeared. Perhaps neighborhood children removed it. Perhaps the wind carried it away. Perhaps Bird Dog objected to someone covering one of her favorite roadside landmarks.

Whatever happened to the cover, the hydrant remained dry.

There was another warning we had missed.

Public Works or the water department maintained a list of hydrants that were out of service. In those days, the list could be extensive and difficult to remember, but it was still part of the FEO’s responsibility to check the board at the beginning of the shift.

I had not checked it carefully enough.

Today, enhanced dispatch systems and onboard routing displays can warn firefighters about out-of-service hydrants before they arrive. Back then, much more depended upon someone remembering to look at the board and retain a long list of locations.

That someone was supposed to be me.

The crew inside had done what they were trained to do. The probie had opened the hydrant as far as it would go. Yet under pressure, I blamed the person closest to the visible problem instead of asking whether the larger system had failed—and whether I had missed something important.

As we sometimes said in the fire service, water runs downhill. That day, blame did too.

Fortunately, the interior crew had enough tank water to knock down the fire. Our second-in pumper found another hydrant on the next block and stretched a supply line to our engine.

Suddenly, we had all the water we needed.

That was when the Station Two captain arrived with his helpful question:

“Someone out of water?”

The comment was not forgotten.

For quite some time afterward, I was reminded that Station Two had saved Station One’s back end. Running out of water while your crew is inside a burning building is not something that disappears quickly from firehouse memory.

The probie eventually returned from the useless hydrant, exhausted from running back and forth and looking for another assignment. Then he noticed the new supply line coming from the second-in pumper.

Over the noise of the engine, he shouted, “Where did that water hose come from?”

At that moment, the only answer I could offer was:

“How do I know? It’s magic. Go see the incident commander for another assignment.”

It was not magic, of course.

It was another crew recognizing what we needed, finding a working source, and bringing the water before ours completely ran out.

Afterward came the report and a conversation with the Battalion Chief that was neither light nor humorous. The fire had been controlled and everyone had gone home safely, but a successful ending did not erase what had gone wrong.

We still had to ask difficult questions.

Why had the out-of-service list not been checked?

Why had the probie been blamed for something beyond his control?

What needed to change before the next fire?

Grace had arrived with a second supply line, but grace did not eliminate accountability.

At the next fire, our probie was noticeably reluctant when someone told him to tag the hydrant.

“I remember what happened the last time,” he said. “I couldn’t get a drop of water, and you yelled at me. I don’t want that to happen again.”

That stopped me.

The failed hydrant had been out of service. He had done everything he knew to do, but my frustration had convinced him that the failure belonged to him.

By the next alarm, a firefighter who once ran eagerly toward the hydrant was now afraid to take the assignment.

I assured him that I should not have blamed him and would not yell at him if the next hydrant failed to provide water. I might, however, yell at him for something else—such as eating a doughnut inside the pumper.

Food in the cab was a serious offense. A doughnut with sprinkles would have been especially troubling.

I warned him that if I ever caught him doing that, he would be riding the tailboard—the narrow platform once found across the back of older fire engines.

There was only one problem.
Our pumper did not have a tailboard.
He would therefore have to run very fast to keep up.

I never claimed to be a perfect supervisor.

But beneath the joking was something I needed to understand.

People remember how leaders treat them when something goes wrong. A few angry words spoken under pressure may continue echoing long after the emergency has ended.

I remembered the failed water supply.
The probie remembered being blamed for it.

Churches need to remember that distinction.

A volunteer may hesitate to serve again because the last mistake was met with criticism instead of guidance. A visitor may never return because an awkward moment was treated as an inconvenience. A young person may stop asking questions because the first honest question received an impatient answer.

Leaders may remember only the problem that needed to be solved.
The person who was yelled at may remember the yelling.
Churches also face their own versions of dry hydrants.

A congregation may tell people:

“You are welcome here.”
“Someone will contact you.”
“We will help you.”
“Join this ministry.”
“You will find a place to belong.”

But what happens when the welcome is out of service?

What happens when nobody follows up, a volunteer receives no training, a person asking for help is sent from one person to another, or a newcomer discovers that the inner circle is much harder to enter than the front door?

Too often, we blame the person standing beside the hydrant.

“They did not try hard enough.”

“They were not committed.”

“They should have asked again.”

“They just did not fit in.”

Sometimes the person is doing everything we told them to do.

They have opened the valve as far as it will go. They have run back and forth asking what else they can do. They may even be emotionally striking the hydrant with a wrench, trying desperately to make a broken system work.

Before blaming them, perhaps leadership needs to check the board.

Are our promises of welcome actually supported by personal relationships?

Do we give people meaningful ways to become part of the congregation?

Do we provide volunteers with the information, tools, and support they need?

Are our ministries functioning, or are we directing people toward something that quietly went out of service years ago?

Pressure can make blame travel faster than truth. When people are frightened, tired, or embarrassed, it is easy to pass frustration down the line until it reaches the person with the least experience and the least authority to fix the problem.

But yelling at a probie cannot make a dry hydrant produce water.

It may only make the probie afraid to approach the next hydrant.

Grace means more than finding another water supply. Sometimes grace means returning to the person we blamed, admitting that we were wrong, and giving them the confidence to take the assignment again.

The next time someone hesitates to volunteer, return to church, ask a question, or accept responsibility, we should not immediately question their courage or commitment.

Perhaps they remember what happened the last time.

There is also another lesson in what Station Two did.

They could have remained on the next block criticizing our operation. Instead, they found a working hydrant and brought us another line.

When a church, ministry, leader, or individual runs out of strength, perhaps our first response should not be, “How did you let this happen?”

Perhaps it should be, “Where can we find another source, and how quickly can we get a line to you?”

There will be time later for honest reports, difficult conversations, changed procedures, and possibly years of good-natured reminders about who saved whom.

But first, bring the water.

God’s grace sometimes reaches us that way—not by pretending our original plan worked, but by sending help from around the next block.

The second line saved the operation.

The difficult conversation helped prepare us for the next one.

And the probie reminded me that leaders are responsible not only for keeping the hose line supplied, but also for making sure the people serving beside us are willing to take hold of it again.

And, for the record, no matter how large the wrench may be, some hydrants simply cannot be intimidated.

Words of Wisdom from Bird Dog When the Sprinklers Start

Most mornings, Bird Dog and I walk past the church before the automatic sprinklers turn on.

The sidewalk is dry, the weather is pleasant, and Bird moves along happily, inspecting the grass, checking for squirrels, and attending to whatever important business requires a dog's immediate attention.

Every now and then, however, we get a late start.

That is when Bird discovers that someone has arranged for it to rain only on her side of the sidewalk.

The sky may be blue. The sun may be shining. There may not be a cloud anywhere. Yet streams of water suddenly begin sweeping back and forth across the grass and sidewalk.

Bird does not appreciate this.

She stops and stares at the sprinkler as though it has deliberately interrupted her morning schedule. She watches the water move away, begins walking forward, and then discovers that it is coming back.

Apparently sprinklers cannot be trusted.

Sometimes we try to time our passage between the sprays. Sometimes we move into the street to avoid them. Bird would prefer crossing to the other side, where the squirrels may mock her but at least they do it without getting her wet.

Occasionally, the sprinklers start just as we approach. One moment the walk is going perfectly; the next moment all heck breaks loose.



At that point, Bird is ready to abandon the entire operation. She turns toward home, apparently deciding that whatever business she intended to conduct can wait until conditions improve.

I cannot really blame her.

Our faith can sometimes look very similar.

We begin the day expecting a pleasant walk. Life seems orderly. Our plans make sense. We believe we know where we are going and how long it should take to get there.

Then the sprinklers start.

An illness appears. A relationship becomes strained. A job changes. A bill arrives. Someone disappoints us. A prayer seems unanswered. Something we believed was secure suddenly is not.

Like Bird, we may stop and stare at the disruption, wondering who allowed this to interfere with our carefully planned walk.

We may ask God:

“Why is this happening?”

“Why now?”

“Why here?”

“Wasn’t everything going just fine?”

Sometimes we are tempted to turn around and go home spiritually. We stop praying. We withdraw from others. We avoid the next step because we are afraid another spray of cold water is waiting for us.

But the sprinklers do not mean the walk has ended.

They may mean we need to slow down, watch carefully, choose a slightly different path, or accept that we may get a little wet.

Faith is not the promise that every sidewalk will remain dry.

Faith is trusting that God is still with us when the sprinklers begin.

God may guide us around the water. God may help us wait for the right moment to move forward. God may send someone to walk beside us. Sometimes God may simply give us the courage to continue through a place we would rather avoid.

The difficult moment is not necessarily evidence that we chose the wrong path or that God has abandoned us. It may simply be one uncomfortable part of a much longer walk.

Bird does eventually continue.

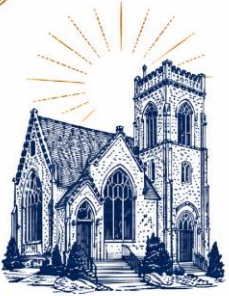
She may glare at the sprinkler. She may move faster than usual. She may keep as much distance from the water as the leash allows. But she discovers that the spray does not cover the entire journey.

A few steps later, the sidewalk is dry again.
That is worth remembering when life suddenly changes.
The sprinklers may start without warning.
Our plans may be interrupted.
We may get wet.
But we do not have to abandon the walk.

God is still beside us, the path continues beyond the spray, and even the squirrels across the street do not get the final word.

Bird Dog's Wisdom

Do not mistake one wet stretch of sidewalk for the end of the whole journey.



UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WHITINSVILLE

51 Cottage Street, Whitinsville, MA 01588
Sunday Worship at 10:30 a.m.

<https://whitinpres.org>

Livestream worship and read current and past issues of *When Monday Comes* on our website.



Ideas for *From the Pew* or future content?
Contact the church office or scan the QR code.



Scan QR code for
livestream & WMC