

September 13th 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.

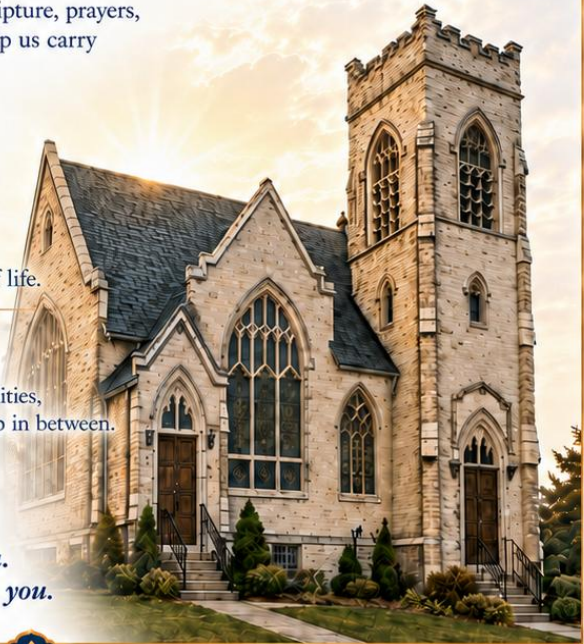
- ☕ Read it with your morning coffee.
- 🙏 Use a prayer before bed.
- 📖 Think about the weekly question.
- 👥 Share a thought with someone else.
- ♥ Let God speak in the ordinary places of life.

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

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

Another View

Get Out of God's Chair

There is a difference between having convictions and appointing ourselves judge.

That difference can be harder to see than we like to admit.

Paul talks about believers who disagreed over food, religious practices, and other matters of conscience. Some believed they could eat certain foods. Others believed they should not. Some observed certain days. Others did not.

Paul does not tell them that nothing matters.

He does not say there is no such thing as right or wrong.

What he does say is: **“Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister?”**

And then he reminds them: **Each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.**

In other words: There is already someone sitting in the judgment seat.

And it is not us.

That does not mean we stop thinking seriously about how we live.

It may mean we start asking a different question.

Instead of: **“What is wrong with that person?”**

perhaps we ask: **“What does love require of me here?”**

That question can change a lot.

Years ago, I stopped drinking alcohol. I do not make a rule out of that for anyone else.

I stopped because I learned something along the way. I found my drinking made it easier for someone else to drink when they were trying not to.

I became their excuse. If I was drinking at a business dinner, then they could say to themselves: “Mark is drinking. It must be okay.”

I never wanted to be that excuse again. So now, when I am in a social situation, I usually order first.

Water or a soft drink.

Every now and then I will joke that I allow myself one root beer a week.

Nobody gets lectured, nobody gets judged.

But somewhere at that table there might be a person who desperately wants not to drink and is worried they will be the only one who is intent drinking like everyone else. Maybe my small choice makes their choice just a little easier.

Paul dealt with something similar in Corinth. Some Christians knew that meat which had been associated with pagan sacrifices was, in the end, still meat.

But Paul asked them to think beyond: **“Am I allowed to do this?”**

He wanted them to ask: **“What might my doing this do to the person beside me?”**

Christian freedom is not just about proving what we have a right to do.

Sometimes love means willingly giving up something we have every right to do because another person's wellbeing matters more than proving our freedom.

And this principle reaches far beyond what we eat or drink.

You can be standing with a group of people when the conversation suddenly turns toward someone who is not there.

Maybe it is on the golf course.

Maybe it is over coffee.

Maybe it is after church.

Someone makes a comment.

Someone else adds another.

Before long, what started as conversation has become gossip.

We have all been there. And we have choices.

We can add another story.

We can laugh.

We can speculate about motives.

Or we can simply not feed it.

Change the subject.

Say something kind.

Walk away.

Sometimes faithfulness does not require a speech.

Sometimes faithfulness means refusing to keep the wrong conversation alive.

A simple question can help: **Is this conversation helping anyone?**

Or perhaps an even harder one: **Would I be comfortable having this conversation if Jesus were standing here participating in it?**

That question has a way of clearing the room.

Because judgment often grows fastest when the person being judged is not present.

We start with something they did.

Then we decide why they did it.

Then we decide what kind of person they must be.

Before long, we have moved from observing behavior to pronouncing a verdict on someone else's heart.

And somewhere along the way, we sat down in God's chair.

Jesus warned about that.

“Do not judge, so that you may not be judged.”

And then: **“For with the judgment you make you will be judged.”**

That should probably make us a little uncomfortable.

Would I want God to judge me with the same rigidity, assumptions, and lack of mercy that I sometimes use when judging somebody else?

Would I want God to hear one sentence from my life and assume:
He knows the whole story?

Would I want God to judge my worst moment as though it represented everything about me?

Thankfully, God sees more than we see.

God knows the story we do not know.
The fear we cannot see.
The struggle nobody has shared.
The regret somebody carries home.
The battle being fought quietly behind a smile.

So perhaps getting out of God's chair does not mean we stop caring how people live.

It means we stop pretending we know everything God knows about them.

And then we turn our attention toward the one life God has actually placed under our care:
our own.

How am I speaking?
What example am I setting?
Am I making someone's path easier or harder?
Am I helping another person stand, or giving them another reason to stumble?
Am I adding grace to this conversation, or just adding another opinion?

Paul gives us a much better question than: **“What am I allowed to do?”**
He gives us: **“What does love require of me here?”**

Sometimes love orders the water first.
Sometimes love changes the subject.
Sometimes love refuses to repeat the story.
Sometimes love lets someone else make a different faithful choice without demanding that they explain themselves.

Sometimes love simply remembers: **I am not sitting in God's chair.**

And thank God for that.

Because one day each of us will stand before God.

I will not stand before you.

You will not stand before me.

And neither of us will be asked why everybody else failed to live exactly the way we thought they should.

So perhaps before we judge, criticize, repeat, or condemn, we can ask one simple question:

Is this helping anyone?

And if the answer is – no

Maybe it is time to get out of God's chair and let love have the next word.

Faith Between Sundays

Weekly Reflections: September 13–19, 2026

Let Grace Have the Next Word

Forgiveness does not erase what happened. It does not make wrong right, remove necessary boundaries, or require us to forget.

But forgiveness does decide something important:

What happened yesterday does not get to control what happens next.

Joseph could not change what his brothers had done to him. Peter could not avoid being hurt by other people. Neither can we.

But we can decide whether hurt becomes bitterness, whether disagreement becomes judgment, and whether anger gets carried into the lives of people who had nothing to do with it.

This week, when something hurts, irritates, disappoints, or angers us, perhaps our first question can be:

What does love require of me next?

Prayer for the Week

God of mercy, when old hurts pull us backward, help us place them into Your hands. When we are tempted to judge, remind us that Your chair is already occupied. When anger begins to spread into other parts of our lives, help us stop and choose another way. Give us wisdom to speak truth, courage to set healthy boundaries, humility to forgive, and grace enough to let love have the next word.

Amen.

Sunday, September 13

Get Out of the Chair

Scripture:

“Am I in the place of God?” — Genesis 50:19

Joseph had every reason to want revenge. His brothers had betrayed him and changed the course of his life.

But Joseph understood something important: final judgment was not his responsibility.

Sometimes we exhaust ourselves trying to do God's job.

We replay the offense, decide what someone deserves, and imagine how justice ought to be delivered.

Joseph asks a simpler question:

Am I in the place of God?

No.

And perhaps that is good news. We can tell the truth about what happened without carrying the responsibility for vengeance.

Today's faithful choice:

Think of one hurt you are still carrying. Tell God honestly what happened, then say:

“This judgment belongs to You, not me.”

Monday, September 14

Watch the Leash

Scripture:

“Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing.” — Isaiah 43:18–19

Sometimes an old hurt acts like a leash. We move forward until a name, place, photograph, or memory suddenly pulls us backward.

SNAP. And emotionally we are standing right where we were years ago.

God does not ask us to deny our past. But neither does God want yesterday permanently controlling tomorrow.

When the leash pulls today, notice it. Then hand it back to God.
You may have to do that more than once. That is okay.

Today's faithful choice:

When an old hurt returns today, stop before replaying the whole story. Take one slow breath and pray: **“God, help me live here today instead of back there yesterday.”**

Tuesday, September 15

Don't Feed It

Scripture:

“No evil talk should come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up.” — Ephesians 4:29

Gossip usually needs help to survive.

Somebody starts the story.

Somebody adds a detail.

Somebody speculates about why the person did it.

Someone else remembers another incident.

Before long, a conversation has become a trial—and the defendant is not even in the room.

We cannot always control what conversation begins around us.

But we can decide whether it keeps moving through us.

Sometimes faithfulness simply means refusing to feed the wrong conversation.

Today's faithful choice:

Before adding something to a conversation about another person, ask: **“Is what I am about to say helping anyone?”** If not, let it stop with you.

Wednesday, September 16
Make the Road Easier

Scripture:

“Resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another.” —
Romans 14:13

Sometimes love is surprisingly quiet.

It may be choosing not to do something we have every right to do because our example could make someone else's struggle harder.

It may be ordering first.

Changing the subject.

Not laughing at the joke.

Not forwarding the message.

Standing beside the person who otherwise might stand alone.

Christian freedom is not merely asking: **“Am I allowed to do this?”**

Love asks: **“What will my choice do to the person beside me?”**

Today's faithful choice:

Look for one small way to make someone else's good choice easier today. You do not have to announce it. Just quietly help clear the path.

Thursday, September 17

Stop Keeping Score

Scripture:

“Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” — Matthew 18:21

Peter wanted a number.

Jesus gave him an answer too large to keep comfortably on a scorecard.

The message was simple: **Stop counting.**

We are very good at keeping relational accounts.

“I apologized last time.”

“She has done this three times.”

“He never calls me first.”

“I’ve forgiven enough.”

Soon the relationship becomes bookkeeping.

Grace does not mean ignoring repeated harmful behavior.

Boundaries may still be necessary.

But love does mean resisting the temptation to keep a running total of every failure.

Today’s faithful choice:

Notice one relationship where you have been keeping score. Today, erase one item from the ledger.

Friday, September 18

Remember Your Own Mercy

Scripture:

“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.” — Ephesians 4:32

The servant in Jesus' parable forgot something very quickly.

He forgot what had just been forgiven. Perhaps we do too.

Before deciding how much mercy another person deserves, it helps to remember how much mercy we ourselves live on every day.

None of us approaches God saying:

“I have done everything perfectly. I require no grace.”

We come because we need mercy.

And forgiven people are called to become forgiving people.

Today's faithful choice:

Before criticizing someone today, remember one time when you needed patience, another chance, or forgiveness yourself. Let that memory shape what you do next.

Saturday, September 19

Who Gets the Last Word?

Scripture:

“You intended to do harm to me; but God intended it for good.” — Genesis 50:20

Joseph never said the evil was good.

He said evil did not get the final word.

That may be one of faith's greatest acts of trust.

Someone else may have written a painful chapter in our lives.

But they do not get to write the ending.

God can create compassion from suffering.

Wisdom from mistakes.

Service from scars.

New beginnings from places we thought were finished.

We may not yet know what good God can bring.

But we can refuse to believe that evil gets to decide the ending.

Today's faithful choice:

Think about one difficult experience from your life. Instead of asking only, **"Why did this happen?"** ask: **"God, what good might You still bring from this?"**

As another Sunday approaches, remember:

You do not have to sit in God's chair.

You do not have to keep every score.

You do not have to carry every hurt.

And you do not have to let yesterday decide tomorrow.

Let grace have the next word.

From the Pew

The Great Fire Pup Fiasco

Early in my fire service career, I was always looking for ways to become more involved and take on a little more responsibility. One of the things I volunteered for was our fire safety programs in the schools.

We would bring the fire truck, some turnout gear, talk about smoke detectors, crawling low under smoke and, of course, the great childhood fire-safety commandment:

Stop, Drop, and Roll.

And sometimes we brought along the star of the program.

Fire Pup.

Fire Pup was our department mascot—a large furry dog costume with an enormous head and very limited visibility.

Like many important duties in the fire service, wearing the Fire Pup suit usually fell to the newest firefighter—the probie.

It was almost a rite of passage.

You could learn how to stretch a hose line, raise a ladder, operate an air pack and perform all kinds of important firefighting skills, but somewhere along the way you also needed to spend an afternoon trapped inside an oversized dog costume waving at kindergarteners.

I had done my time.

Now it was somebody else's turn.

On this particular day, that somebody was my good friend Ray Jones, who was a brand-new firefighter at the time.

We were doing a program at a school with probably 150 kindergarten and first-grade students packed into the gymnasium. We had gone through the presentation, and now it was time for the big finish.

I announced: “Alright, who’s ready to meet Fire Pup?”

The place erupted.

Behind the curtain on the stage was Ray, dressed in the Fire Pup suit and wearing that enormous head that you could barely see out of.

Everything was ready for the grand entrance.

Except we had forgotten one minor detail.

How Fire Pup was actually going to get out from behind the curtain.

Ray began pushing against the curtain, trying to find the opening.

Unfortunately, instead of finding the opening, he began slowly working his way toward the front edge of the stage.

None of us realized what was happening until it was too late.

Down went Fire Pup.

Right off the front of the stage.

He hit the gym floor, and that enormous Fire Pup head launched into the air, rolled across the floor and made this beautiful little half-circle before finally coming to rest several feet away.

For a second, the gym became completely silent.

Then one little kid stood up and screamed:

“FIRE PUP’S DEAD!”

I had become a firefighter because I wanted to help people.

I never imagined part of the job description would include traumatizing 150 kindergarteners.

Fortunately, Ray was fine.

His dignity was another matter.

While we were trying to figure out how to reassure an entire gym full of horrified children, one of the smallest kids walked over, picked up Fire Pup's head, carried it back to Ray and handed it to him.

"Here's your head back."

We eventually got everybody calmed down.

I explained that Fire Pup was okay, that it had simply been an accident, and that accidents are one of the reasons we learn about safety in the first place.

Just as I thought I had successfully rescued the presentation, another little voice came from the crowd:

"Yeah, Fire Pup. You should learn to be more careful."

Lesson received.

From then on, Fire Pup did not make dramatic entrances from the stage.

We put him at floor level with everybody else.

But Ray's fall did not end that afternoon.

You have to understand firefighters.

Firefighters can remember an embarrassing incident considerably longer than they can remember where they left a piece of equipment.

For years afterward, whenever we were preparing for another public event, someone would inevitably say:

“Wonder if we should let Ray wear the Fire Pup suit again. Maybe he’ll lose his head.”

That is how firefighters show compassion.

Ray became permanently known as the firefighter who fell off the stage dressed as Fire Pup and terrorized an entire elementary school.

The funniest part came when we returned to that same school the following year.

Several of the kids remembered Fire Pup.

In fact, they asked if Fire Pup was going to **lose his head again** because they wanted to see that trick.

Apparently our fire-safety demonstration had communicated an entirely different lesson than the one we intended.

And Ray had unintentionally created a fan base.

Looking back, though, there may have been more happening that day than any of us realized.

Things do not always go according to plan.

Sometimes we are the one falling off the stage.

Sometimes we are standing nearby watching someone else fall.

And sometimes we are the little child who simply walks over, picks up what was lost and says: **“Here’s your head back.”**

Paul wrote: “Serve one another humbly in love.” — Galatians 5:13

Faithful service is not always dramatic.

Sometimes it is simply helping someone stand again.

Sometimes it is steadying someone who has been shaken.

Sometimes it is refusing to define a person forever by the moment when everything went wrong.

Ray fell off that stage once.

We firefighters made sure he fell off it hundreds of additional times by telling the story again and again.

With Ray, it was affectionate teasing among friends.

He was one of us. He understood the culture, and eventually the story became part of the firehouse family history.

But outside relationships like that, remembering someone's fall can become something very different.

We can begin to identify people by the worst moment of their lives.

The person who failed.

The person whose marriage fell apart.

The person who made the terrible decision.

The person who disappointed us.

The person who lost control.

The person who once fell off the stage.

Forgiveness does not require us to pretend the fall never happened.

Ray fell off the stage.

Fire Pup's head really did roll across the gym floor.

One hundred fifty children really did think we had just killed the fire department mascot.

We never had to pretend otherwise.

But grace means that the fall does not have to become the whole story.

Maybe that is something worth remembering when Monday comes.

Sooner or later, all of us lose our footing.

Sooner or later, the curtain does not open where we thought it would.

Sooner or later, something we carefully planned goes completely sideways.

And when that happens, perhaps one of the most faithful things we can do for one another is surprisingly simple:

Walk over.

Pick up what fell.

Help somebody stand.

And if necessary, hand them their head back.

Just don't be surprised if somebody asks you to do the trick again next year.

Words of Wisdom from Bird Dog

Why Do I Keep Going Back There?

There is a patch of thick weeds at the park
that Bird Dog finds absolutely fascinating.

Every time we walk past it, she wants to go
investigate.

And I mean **every time**.

She pulls on the leash.

She sticks her nose toward the weeds.

She tries to get closer.

The funny thing is that she doesn't really trust
the place.

She knows something is strange in there.

Sometimes she hears something move and
jumps backward.

She is obviously a little afraid of whatever may be hiding in those weeds.

You would think that would solve the problem.

“That place scares me. Maybe I should stay away from it.”

That would seem reasonable.

But the next morning?

There she is again.



Bird Dog trying to get into the
alluring weeds

Pulling toward the same weeds.

Apparently, Bird Dog's curiosity has a very short memory.

Of course, before we laugh too much at her, we might want to think about ourselves.

We have weeds too.

Places we know we probably shouldn't go.

Habits we said we were finished with.

Conversations we know never end well.

Thoughts we know will only make us angry.

People whose social-media pages we know we should stop checking.

The same worry we have already turned over to God seventeen times.

The same old hurt we promised ourselves we weren't going to replay again.

And yet somehow, we find ourselves standing at the edge of those weeds saying:

“I wonder what's in there today?”

The Apostle Paul understood the problem.

He wrote:

“I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.”

Apparently, this problem existed long before Bird Dog discovered her weed patch.

There is something in us that can be strangely attracted to the very things we know are not good for us.

Sometimes familiarity itself is part of the attraction.

We know what is in those weeds.

We know how the old argument goes.

We know how resentment feels.

We know the old habit.

We know the familiar fear.

It may not be healthy, but it is familiar.

And familiar can sometimes feel safer than changing direction.

That may be especially true with an old hurt.

We can carry resentment for so long that we almost don't know what life would feel like without it.

We say we want to move forward, but then we walk past the old weed patch.

Someone mentions the person's name.

We remember what happened.

And suddenly we're pulling on the leash again.

“Maybe I'll just think about it one more time.”

The problem is that we rarely find anything new in there.

The weeds usually contain exactly what they contained yesterday:

anger,

fear,

regret,

resentment,

and things that go bump when we get too close.

Maybe faith sometimes means recognizing:

I already know what's in there. I don't have to investigate again.

God may be trying to lead us down the path while we are pulling with all our strength toward something He is trying to lead us past.

That doesn't mean temptation, resentment, worry, or an old habit suddenly disappears.

Bird Dog will probably want to investigate those weeds tomorrow morning.

The important thing is that she doesn't have to go where the urge is pulling her.

Neither do we.

We can notice the pull and keep walking.

We can say:

“I've been in those weeds before. There is nothing there I need today.”

Then we can loosen our grip on whatever keeps drawing us back and follow where God is leading instead.

Maybe maturity in faith isn't reaching the point where the weeds never interest us again.

Maybe maturity is learning that **we don't have to follow every pull we feel.**

Sometimes the most faithful thing we can do is simply keep walking past.

Bird Dog Says:

“You don't have to sniff every weed just because something in there gets your attention.”

Or, translated for humans:

Just because something pulls you back doesn't mean you have to go.”



UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WHITINSVILLE

51 Cottage Street, Whitinsville, MA 01588

Sunday Worship at 10:30 a.m.



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



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