September 27th 2026

WHEN MONDAY COMES

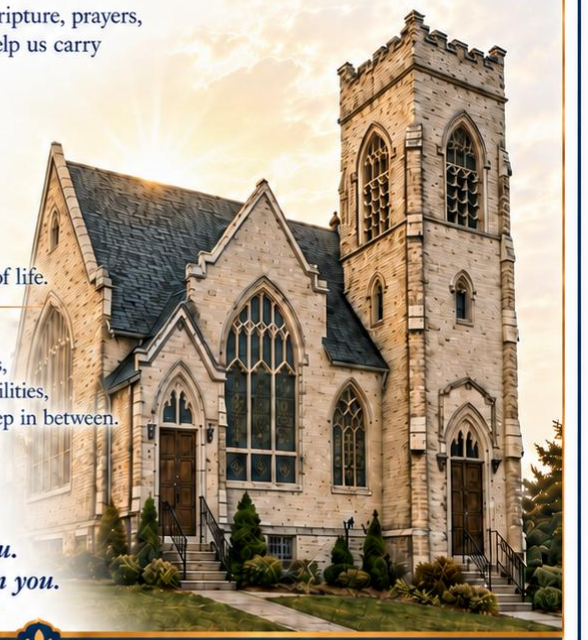
Faith for the Week Ahead

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
What Does Our Father See?

Matthew 21:23–32

The religious leaders came to Jesus with a question.

“By what authority are you doing these things?”

It sounded like they wanted an answer.

Jesus quickly showed that what they really wanted was an answer they could use.

So, He asked them a question about John the Baptist.

Was John’s authority from God or from people?

Suddenly the religious leaders had a problem.

If they said John was from God, Jesus could ask why they had not believed him.

If they said John was not from God, they were afraid of the crowd because the people believed John was a prophet.

So, they gave the safest possible answer: **“We don’t know.”**

But Matthew tells us they had already discussed the possibilities.

They were not really asking: **“What is true?”**

They were asking: **“Which answer keeps us out of trouble?”**

I wish that problem had disappeared two thousand years ago. It hasn’t.

Sometimes we are more concerned with how something looks than whether it is right.

What will people think?
Will this make me look foolish?
Will people still respect me?
Will everyone think I am a good Christian?

Then Jesus tells a story about a father and two sons.

The father asks both of them to go work in the vineyard.

The first son says: **"No."**

Not exactly the answer Dad was hoping for.

But later he changes his mind and goes.

The second son gives the perfect answer: **"I will go, sir."**

Polite, respectful and exactly what a good son should say.

There was only one problem: he never went.

Jesus asks which son actually did what the father wanted.

Even the religious leaders knew the answer: **The first one.**

The son who started wrong but changed.

The son who gave the bad answer but eventually got his feet moving in the right direction.

The sermon I was reading on this passage made an important point: we probably shouldn't get too comfortable deciding that we are always the first son and somebody else is always the second. At different times, we can look a lot like either one.

That gets uncomfortable rather quickly.

As I get older, I hear people my age talking about younger people.

Why are they still living at home?
Why do their parents still help them financially?
Why haven't they bought a house?
Why don't they have a better job?
Why are grandparents helping raise the children?

Sometimes those concerns are very real. Parents worry because they love their children.

But perhaps every now and then we should turn the question around.

We are somebody's children too – we are children of God.

So, before we spend too much time measuring how our children or grandchildren are doing, perhaps we should ask:

What does our Father see when He looks at us?

Maybe I have a successful career.
Maybe I own a house.
Maybe I paid my bills.
Maybe I built up a nice retirement account.
Maybe everybody thinks I did pretty well.

Wonderful. But I doubt God is sitting in heaven saying, **"Now that is an impressive 401(k)."**

Apparently, God has never been particularly impressed with our résumés. Which is unfortunate, because some of us spent a lot of years working on them.
God may be looking at something else.

Did I love people?
Did I forgive?
Did I show mercy?
Did I tell the truth when it cost me something?
Did I notice someone everybody else ignored?
Did I help when there was nothing in it for me?
Did my hands and feet ever go where my mouth said they would?

That last question gets me. Because sometimes I like people knowing that I helped.

I like being thanked.
I like hearing that I did a good job.

I wish I could say every good thing I have ever done came from a completely pure Christian heart.

It didn't. Sometimes there is a little voice inside wondering whether anybody noticed.

Maybe you have that voice too. Apparently, it does not pay rent.

So perhaps one useful question is: **If nobody ever knew I did this, would I still do it?**

If nobody thanked me?
If my name never appeared anywhere?
If somebody else got the credit?

Would it still be worth doing?

Then there is another danger.

Sometimes we become so sure that we know what a successful life is supposed to look like that we miss where God is already working.

Jesus pointed to tax collectors and prostitutes. These were not the people the religious leaders would have held up as examples.

Their lives had problems and they had things that needed changing.

But when John called people to turn toward God, some of them did. The religious leaders saw those lives changing and still would not reconsider their own position.

That should make us careful.

The person whose life looks unsuccessful by my standards may be learning something about humility, compassion, repentance, mercy, or dependence on God that I still need to learn.

And the person who looks successful by every worldly measure may still be saying, "Yes, Father," while never actually going into the vineyard.

Maybe the question is not: **"Which son is that other person?"**

Maybe it is: **"What kind of child am I being today?"**

The good news in Jesus' story is that the first son was allowed to change.

His first answer was not his final answer.

He got it wrong. Then he reconsidered, he turned around and he went.

That is grace.

Sometimes we discover that our motives were wrong.
Sometimes we realize we cared too much about appearances.
Sometimes we realize we have been judging somebody else more carefully than we have been examining ourselves.
Sometimes our lips have been saying **"Amen"** while our feet have been saying **"No."**

We can change, we can turn around and we can go.

God is not asking whether we have always been the perfect child.

He is asking whether we are still willing to listen when He calls.

So maybe the question for this week is not: **"Do people think I am a Christian?"**

Maybe it is: **"When my Father looks at the way I actually live, what does He see?"**

Because lips that say **"Amen"** mean very little if our hands and feet never follow.

And sometimes the most faithful thing we can do is stop worrying about whether we look like the right son — and simply go work in the vineyard.

Let Your Feet Say Amen

It is fairly easy to agree with Jesus.

Love your neighbor? Amen.
Forgive? Amen.
Help people who are hurting? Amen.
Tell the truth? Amen.
Put others ahead of yourself? Amen.

Then Monday morning arrives.

Jesus' story of the two sons reminds us that faith is more than giving God the right answer. One son said no and eventually went. The other said yes and stayed home.

God does not expect perfection from us. But He does keep calling us to listen, reconsider, change direction when necessary, and take the next faithful step.

This week, instead of asking only, **"What do I believe?"**, perhaps we can also ask:

"What will I do today because I believe it?"

Prayer for the Week

Lord, help my actions match the faith I profess. Show me where pride, fear, habit, or concern about appearances keeps me from following You. Give me the humility to change my mind when I am wrong, the courage to do what is right, and eyes to notice the people You place in front of me. May my hands and feet say the same "Amen" as my lips. Amen.

Sunday, September 27 — The Answer Isn't Enough

Scripture: Matthew 21:28–31

One son told his father no, but later changed his mind and went to work. The other gave the perfect answer—"I will go"—but never showed up.

Jesus asks a very simple question: Which one actually did what the father wanted?

Most of us know plenty of correct Christian answers. The harder part comes when those answers require something from us.

Faith is not only knowing the right thing. Sometimes faith is putting on our shoes and going.

Today's faithful choice: Choose one thing you know God has been nudging you to do and take one actual step toward doing it.

Prayer: Lord, help me move beyond good intentions and take the next faithful step You are asking of me. Give me courage to follow through when obedience requires more than simply saying the right words. Amen

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Monday, September 28 — Who Gets the Credit?

Scripture: Philippians 2:3–4

"Look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others."

Doing good feels good. Being noticed doing good can feel even better. There is nothing wrong with appreciating a thank-you. But occasionally it is worth asking:

Would I still do this if nobody knew? Some of the most Christlike things we ever do may never be announced, posted, thanked, or remembered by anyone except the person we helped. God still sees them.

Today's faithful choice: Do one helpful thing today without needing anyone to know you did it.

Prayer: God, help me serve others without needing recognition or praise. Teach me to be satisfied knowing that You see the good that is done, even when no one else does. Amen.

Tuesday, September 29 — Teach Me the Path

Scripture: Psalm 25:4–5

"Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths." We usually enjoy asking God to show somebody else the right path.

It becomes considerably less comfortable when we realize we may be the one who needs directions. Following God requires enough humility to admit:

"Maybe I don't have this completely figured out." That is not weakness. That is how we learn.

Today's faithful choice: Before correcting somebody else today, ask yourself, **"Is there anything God might be trying to teach me here?"**

Prayer: Lord, teach me Your ways and help me recognize when I still have something to learn. Give me the humility to listen before I assume I already know the right path. Amen.

Wednesday, September 30 — You Can Change Direction

Scripture: Ezekiel 18:31–32

God calls His people to turn and live. Sometimes we treat changing our minds as weakness.

We say, "But I already took a position."
"I already told everybody what I thought."
"I can't change now."

Of course we can. The first son in Jesus' story did. Realizing we were wrong yesterday does not require us to stay wrong today. Repentance is simply turning toward a better direction.

Today's faithful choice: If you know you were wrong about something, admit it. No speech necessary. "I was wrong" will usually do the job.

Prayer: God, give me the courage to admit when I am wrong and the wisdom to change direction. Keep pride from trapping me in a mistake simply because I am afraid to reconsider. Amen.

Thursday, October 1 — God Is Already at Work

Scripture: Matthew 21:31–32

Jesus told the religious leaders that tax collectors and prostitutes were entering the kingdom ahead of them.

Those were probably not the people the religious leaders expected God to use as examples.

We can make the same mistake. We see someone's job, house, clothing, past mistakes, family situation, politics, education—or lack of it—and decide we know their story.

God may be doing something inside that person we cannot see. And they may have something to teach us.

Today's faithful choice: Look at someone you might normally judge and deliberately remember: **God knows their whole story. I do not.**

Prayer: Lord, keep me from judging others by what I can see on the outside. Help me remember that You may already be doing something in their lives that I do not yet understand. Amen.

Friday, October 2 — God Looks Past the Résumé

Scripture: Philippians 2:5

"Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus."

We spend much of life building résumés.
Jobs – Homes – Education – Promotions – Bank accounts – Awards.

There is nothing wrong with accomplishment. But Jesus never said, "Blessed are those with excellent retirement portfolios." Christ points us toward humility, service, mercy, sacrifice, and love. Eventually every earthly résumé becomes outdated. Character goes with us.

Today's faithful choice: Do something today that measures success by Christ's standards rather than the world's.

Prayer: God, help me measure success by love, mercy, humility, and service rather than by what the world applauds. Shape my heart so that what matters to You becomes what matters most to me. Amen.

Saturday, October 3 — Let Your Feet Say Amen

Scripture: Philippians 2:13

"For it is God who is at work in you."

This week was not about earning God's love by doing more. It was about letting what God is already doing **inside us become visible outside us**.

Sometimes we will get it wrong.
Sometimes our motives will be mixed.
Sometimes our lips will say yes while our feet hesitate.

God keeps working. And tomorrow we get another chance to follow. Perhaps that is enough for today:

Listen, turn when necessary. Take the next step.
And let your feet say the same "Amen" your lips do.

Today's faithful choice: Before going to bed, ask yourself one simple question: **"Where did I see God working in me this week?"** Then thank Him for not giving up halfway through the job.

Prayer: Lord, let the faith I speak with my lips become visible in the way I live and treat others. Keep working in me, and help my hands and feet say the same "Amen" as my words. Amen.

From the Pew

So Now What?

By Jean Finnegan

I just finished reading Mark's comments about Andy's time with us in his "God Isn't Finished Yet" from September 6th. It made me start thinking about God, Andy, and what was happening at the church.

I thought, **God, where are we going from here?**

I sat and prayed, and I watched a squirrel through my window who was very determined to get into a bird feeder. The squirrel kept at it, and he finally succeeded.

I thought, *If only we could use that same zeal toward what God wants us—or me—to do when the time comes.*

I pray we do.

Andy was indeed a gift for a short time.

So now what?

I have not had much time to get to know him, but when I have been with Andy, I have seen many gifts that are so important to ministry.

He listened attentively.

He really cared about what you were saying and feeling, and then he would share what God was saying to him.

Andy was our gift from God at a time when we needed it.

God gave us a chance to catch our breath.

I don't know who God will bring to minister with us next, or what new people will join us.

They may surprise us.

But I do know this: **It will be the right fit for us.**

We just need to trust God. He knows what we need.

— **Jean Finnegan**

"Have something from your pew? A story, question, observation, or moment when faith showed up during the week? We'd love to hear it."

Wisdom From Bird Dog

The Hole We Keep Falling Into — Part Two

Apparently, the Dog Was Paying Better Attention

Last week I told you about Bird Dog and the hole along one of our regular walking routes.

She had stepped into that hole more than once. The last time, she lost her balance, rolled over into the grass, and stayed there for a while as though she had decided the walk—and possibly life itself—was over.

"Quality control says this hole is still suspicious."

Eventually she got back up.

The hole was still there.

Bird Dog was still Bird Dog.

And the walk continued.

I thought I had learned a pretty good lesson from her.

We all have holes we sometimes fall into—old habits, fears, doubts, and ways of thinking that trip us up even when we know they are there.

Grace helps us get back up.

That seemed like a perfectly good ending.

Apparently, Bird Dog had scheduled a second lesson.

Over the next few weeks, I noticed something.

Bird Dog stopped stepping into the hole.

When we approached that part of the walk, she started giving it plenty of room.

Apparently, she had learned from experience.

I was rather proud of her.

I probably should have been taking notes.

Not long ago, Bird Dog and I were walking early in the morning while it was still dark.

My hip was hurting. I was hobbling along thinking about surgery, getting older, and the unfortunate discovery that some of my original factory parts apparently have an expiration date.

I was sore.

I was frustrated.

And, if I am going to tell the story truthfully, I was feeling a little sorry for myself.

I was thinking more about everything that hurt than I was thinking about where I was walking.

You probably know where this is going.

I caught the edge of **the hole**.

Not another hole.

The same hole.

The one Bird Dog had fallen into.

The one I knew was there.

The one I had already written an article about.

My bad hip would not let me recover my balance, and down I went.

My first concern was Bird Dog. I was afraid I might fall on her.

I did not need to worry.

Bird Dog was nowhere near the hole.

She had learned.

So, there I was lying in the wet morning grass, hurting considerably more than I had been thirty seconds earlier, while Bird Dog stood nearby looking at me as though she were thinking:

“What are you doing down there?”

I was angry.

Angry at my hip.

Angry about getting older.

Angry that my body could no longer recover from something that years ago might have been nothing more than a stumble.

And somewhere inside all that frustration was the temptation to ask why God was letting this happen.

Then an inconvenient fact entered the discussion.

I knew the hole was there.

My hip may have been the reason I could not catch myself.

Getting older may have made getting back up more difficult.

The darkness certainly did not help.

But none of those things put my foot beside that hole.

I did that.

I wasn't paying attention.

There is a difference between blaming ourselves for everything that goes wrong and accepting responsibility for the part that actually belongs to us.

Sometimes things happen that we never caused and could not prevent.

People become sick.

Bodies wear out.

Other people hurt us.

Circumstances change without asking our permission.

Faith should never become a way of telling hurting people that everything bad in their lives happened because they did something wrong.

But sometimes we really do know where the hole is.

And sometimes we step toward it anyway.

Grace helps us get back up.

But perhaps grace also asks:

“What did you learn?”

Bird Dog had learned something.

Apparently, her human needed remedial instruction.

But the lesson was not finished.

As I lay there, I discovered something else.

The grass was cold.

And wet.

Very wet.

By the time I finally managed to get back onto my feet, my pride was not the only thing hurting. I was soaked.

Then I thought about Bird Dog.

Almost every morning when we leave the sidewalk and step into the grass, she hesitates.

Usually, I encourage her along.

Come on, Bird Dog. Let's go.

That morning I suddenly had a little more sympathy.

Cold, wet grass feels awful.

She had apparently been trying to tell me that for quite some time.

Sometimes empathy begins when we experience, even briefly, something another person—or another dog—has been experiencing all along.

Then came another lesson I wasn't expecting.

As I hobbled toward home, Bird Dog and I ran into a man we know from the park.

Bird Dog likes him, and I have talked with him many times. He does not have a home right now and apparently sleeps somewhere around the park. At different times I have asked whether he needed food, something to eat, or hand warmers when the weather turned cold.

That morning he immediately noticed something was wrong.

I was limping.

And I was wet.

I told him about the hole and mentioned how miserable it was lying in the wet grass.

He quietly told me that he often wakes up wet from the morning dew.

That stopped me.

I had been wet for a few uncomfortable minutes because I fell into a hole.

He sometimes wakes up wet because he has spent the night outside.

Suddenly my wet clothes looked a little different.

Then he asked me a question I am usually the one asking him:

“Do you need some help?”

There was a twist I had not expected.

Normally I am checking to see whether he needs something.

That morning, I was the one hobbling home.

And he was the one making sure I got there.

He never said:

“Why did you step in a hole you already knew was there?”

He never laughed at me.

He never lectured me.

He simply made sure I made it home.

There was grace in that too.

Sometimes we become so accustomed to thinking of ourselves as the person who gives help that we forget how humbling—and how important—it can be to receive it.

And sometimes the person we think needs our help becomes the person God uses to help us.

I came home from that walk with more than a sore hip and wet clothes.

I came home with a little more sympathy for Bird Dog.

A little more understanding of what another person experiences every morning.

And perhaps a little more appreciation for how grace can come from directions we do not expect.

I still intended to go back and fill that hole.

Apparently, I wasn't the only one thinking about it.

I had told a neighbor who lives behind us about my fall. She knows about my hip. She knows Bird Dog and I walk through that park every day.

And she was concerned. So, she went out with dirt and filled a hole.

There was only one small problem: **It wasn't the hole I had fallen into.**

Until then, I didn’t even know there were two holes.

Apparently, Bird Dog and I had been walking through something of a gauntlet.

At first, I laughed. Then I thought about what she had actually done.

My neighbor is about the same age as I am. Carrying dirt and filling a hole was not necessarily easy for her either.

But she heard that I had fallen. She worried that I might fall again.

And she went out and did something about it.

Nobody asked her.
There was no committee.
No meeting.
No vote.

She simply saw a danger and tried to make the path safer. And the more I thought about it, the more I realized she may not have filled the wrong hole at all.

It may not have been **my** hole. But it was still a hole.

I could have stepped into that one the next week.
Bird Dog could have.
A child running through the park could have.
Another older person walking in the dark could have.

Someone she will never meet may never know that they avoided a fall because a neighbor heard somebody had been hurt and decided to carry some dirt into the park.

That is an interesting thing about kindness.

We do not always get to know who benefits from it.

Sometimes we think we are helping one person and discover that the good travels farther than we expected.

So, Bird Dog and I went back out to deal with the hole I had actually fallen into.

This time I brought dirt and Bird Dog supervised.

Judging from the photograph, she also considered doing some excavation of her own, which rather defeats the purpose of filling holes, but apparently every public-works department has management issues.

When we finished, I stood there thinking about everything one little hole had started.

Bird Dog learned to avoid it.

I learned that knowing where a danger is does not help much if I stop paying attention.

Falling in wet grass gave me more sympathy for Bird Dog.

My friend in the park reminded me that a few minutes of discomfort for me can be a daily reality for somebody else.

The person I usually tried to help became the person helping me.

And then my neighbor heard that I had fallen and went out to repair a danger—even if it turned out to be a different one.

A fall had somehow brought out the best in a dog, a man sleeping outside, and a neighbor with a shovel.

That does not make the fall good.

Pain does not automatically become good just because something good eventually grows out of it.

But sometimes grace has a strange way of gathering people around the places where somebody has fallen.

One person notices.
Another person helps.
Someone walks beside us.
Someone brings dirt.
Someone gets the shovel.

And sometimes somebody repairs a hole we did not even know was there. Maybe that is part of what community is supposed to look like.

We cannot fix everything for one another.
We will misunderstand what somebody needs.
We may offer the wrong kind of help.
We may even fill the wrong hole.

But perhaps imperfect compassion is still better than perfect indifference.

My neighbor may not have fixed the hole that put me on the ground.

But she did something equally important.

She noticed that I had fallen.

And she cared enough to try to keep it from happening again.

There are plenty of holes along the road.

Some we fall into by accident. Some we keep returning to.

Some were dug by circumstances we never chose and some are sitting there waiting for somebody to notice them.

We cannot fill every one.

But when God places one in front of us that we actually have the ability to repair, perhaps faith asks more than whether we can walk around it ourselves.

Perhaps faith asks whether we can make the path safer for the person coming behind us.

Bird Dog learned to avoid the hole.
My neighbor filled one.
I finally filled the one I fell into.

And somewhere in all of that I think God may have been reminding me that grace is not only what helps us stand back up.

Sometimes grace is the person who makes sure we get home.
Sometimes grace is the neighbor carrying dirt.
Sometimes grace is discovering that somebody noticed we were hurting.

And sometimes grace is realizing that the hole somebody else filled may have saved a person none of you will ever know.

We cannot remove every hole from the road ahead.

But when God gives us the ability to repair something, avoid an old mistake, help another person, make amends, or make the road a little safer, sometimes faith means more than simply getting back up.

Sometimes faith means getting the shovel.

Bird Dog Says: "Grace helps you get back up. Wisdom remembers where the hole is. And love sometimes fills a hole for someone you may never meet."

God's Fuel

Share a Little of What You've Been Given

Every day God gives us something to work with.

A little time. A little patience. A little kindness. A little energy.
Maybe even enough money left after the morning coffee to buy one for somebody else.

Most of us already know we should pray for people, encourage them, show appreciation, and help when we can.

The problem is usually not that we disagree. We just get busy.

So, this week, how about doing **one small thing on purpose each day?**

Take a few extra minutes to pray for someone.
Make somebody smile.
Give a sincere compliment.
Send a card, text, or note to someone you appreciate.
Call someone you have not talked with in a while.
Pay for the coffee of the person behind you.
Do something helpful without needing anyone to know you did it.

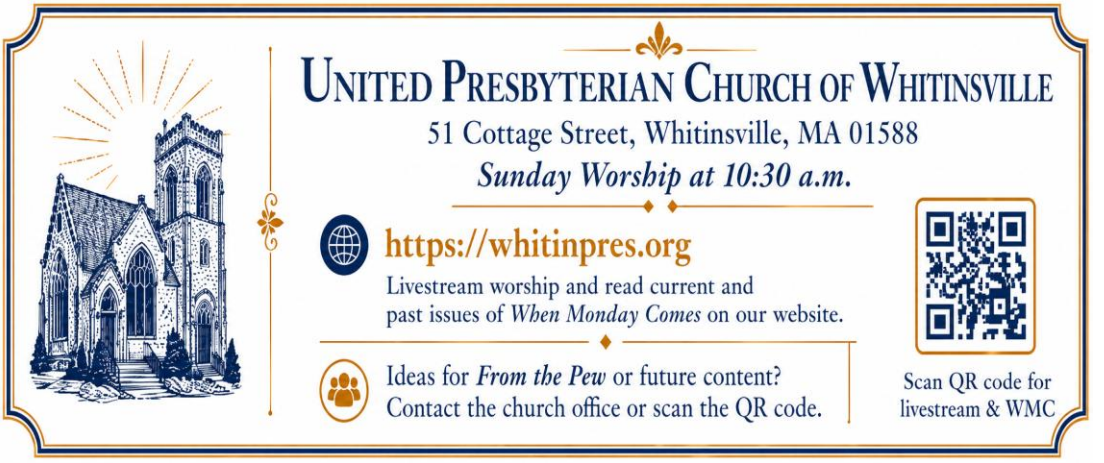
Nothing dramatic. No need to save the world before Thursday.

Just take a little of the patience, love, encouragement, time, or generosity God has put in your tank and pass some of it along.

We may never know whether the small thing mattered.

The person we encouraged may have been having a terrible day.
The person whose coffee we bought may have needed one reminder that strangers can still be kind.
The person who received our card may have wondered whether anybody remembered them.
The person we prayed for may never even know.
That does not make the gift smaller.

So here is the challenge for the week:

Use a little of God's fuel each day to make somebody else's road a little easier.

Not because somebody is keeping score. Simply because God has been generous with us and the fuel in our tank was never intended only for ourselves.