November 29th 2026

WHEN MONDAY COMES

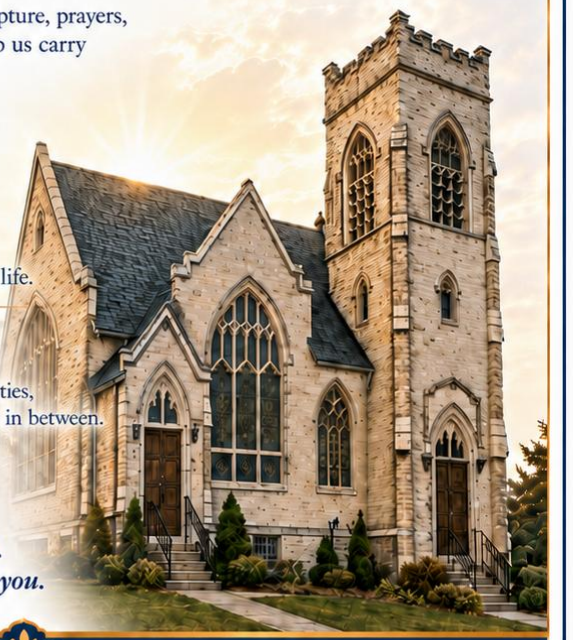
Faith for the Week Ahead

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

The Fire That Wouldn't Stay Out

November 29, 2026 — First Sunday of Advent

Scripture: Mark 13:37 — "And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

There's an old saying in the fire service that our job is to put the wet stuff on the red stuff.

Sounds simple enough. Unfortunately, sometimes the red stuff refuses to stay out!

One bitterly cold December night, we responded to a lumberyard fire. One of the large lumber storage barns was fully involved when we arrived.

We went to work and put more wet stuff on that red stuff than you could imagine.

It was so cold that the water froze on practically everything—the hoses, the apparatus, the ground, and even the firefighters. By the time we finished, we looked more like a collection of frozen statues than a fire department.

Eventually, the flames disappeared. We checked for hot spots and were convinced the fire was out. With ice covering everything, it was difficult to imagine anything could still be burning.

We began releasing the firefighters and apparatus but decided to leave one engine company behind to keep watch.

Now, I can assure you those firefighters were not particularly happy. They were exhausted, covered in ice, and anxious to return to their station.

Instead, they were being told to remain at a lumberyard where nothing appeared to be burning. They were convinced they were being punished or picked on.

And spending several hours in an old fire truck wasn't exactly a reward. Those trucks weren't particularly well known for their comfortable seats or efficient heaters!

Firefighters generally like action. Give them a fire to fight, a hose to pull, or a problem to solve, and they're happy. But assign them to fire watch, and you've just given them the firefighting equivalent of watching paint dry. Except this particular night, the paint was frozen, the fire truck was cold and drafty, and their only entertainment was listening to dispatch on the radio. If you were smart, you brought extra socks!

So, they huddled in their truck, trying to keep warm.

A few hours later, we received a call for assistance. The fire had rekindled!

Somewhere in that lumber barn, despite all the water, ice, and freezing temperatures, we had missed a hot spot.

Now the remaining engine company was facing a growing fire that threatened to spread to another building.

And they couldn't handle it alone.

We had to bring back additional firefighters and apparatus to fight the fire all over again.

But here's the part I remember particularly well. Earlier, those firefighters had complained about being left at the scene when they thought there was nothing left to do.

Now they were asking why we had left them there by themselves!

I remember one firefighter saying something like: **"You kind of put us out there all alone to fight a fire we couldn't handle."**

Well, I suppose there's no pleasing everybody!

But beneath that understandable frustration was an important truth.

They were facing something bigger than they could handle with the resources they had.

Fortunately, when they called for help, help came.

I've thought about that fire over the years, particularly when I've encountered people going through difficult times.

Sometimes we assume that because the immediate crisis has passed, the danger or difficulty is over.

But beneath the surface, things may still be smoldering.

Not long ago, a friend who had lost her husband came to talk with me.

They had spent many years together, and she was having a difficult time adjusting to life without him.

She explained that immediately after his death, friends and family had been wonderful. People called. They visited. They offered sympathy and support.

But eventually, the funeral was over.
People returned to their normal routines.
And the telephone didn't ring quite as often.

Yet she still faced the same empty house, the same loneliness, and the same terrible realization that the person with whom she had shared so much of her life was gone.

She also told me she was angry with God.

I didn't tell her she shouldn't feel that way. I've been angry with God myself at times. That doesn't mean my understanding of the situation was correct, but it certainly meant I was hurting.

I encouraged her to tell God how she felt. After all, read the Psalms. God's people sometimes cry out in fear, confusion, disappointment, and even anger.

We don't have to pretend everything is fine before we can talk honestly with God.

And that conversation brought me back to the lumberyard. The flames had disappeared, but beneath all that ice, something was still burning.

Sometimes the visible crisis is over, but the hurt is still smoldering beneath the surface. And when it flares up again, someone may discover they're facing more than they can handle alone.

Of course, grief isn't a fire we should expect someone to extinguish. It's part of loving and missing someone who mattered deeply.

And the pain can return unexpectedly.

An anniversary. A favorite song. An empty chair at the dinner table. The approaching Christmas season. Things that bring memories rushing back.

But here's what troubles me.

Sometimes we respond wonderfully to someone's initial crisis, only to disappear when the long, difficult work of living with that loss begins.

And perhaps that person is left wondering much the same thing as our firefighters: **"Why am I out here all alone trying to handle something I can't manage by myself?"**

That brings us to today's Gospel reading.

On this first Sunday of Advent, Jesus tells His disciples to **"Keep awake."** He is speaking about remaining faithful and prepared for His return.

But perhaps His command to remain watchful should also remind us not to become so absorbed in our own routines that we overlook people who still need our care.

Today, we light the first Advent candle, the Candle of Hope. Our hope isn't that life will never be painful or that every difficulty will disappear.

Our hope rests in God's faithfulness and in the promises we have through Jesus Christ.

And while we wait for Christ's return, we have work to do. Sometimes that work means checking on someone long after the funeral, the hospitalization, or the family emergency.

Not to fix everything. Not to explain why something happened.

And certainly not to tell someone they should be feeling better by now.

Sometimes it's enough to ask how they're doing—and really listen to the answer.

Sometimes being there for someone isn't exciting. There may be nothing dramatic to do, no problem we can solve, and no immediate results to show for our efforts. But just like that engine company on fire watch, our presence may become most important when someone needs us again. **Sometimes our most important assignment isn't to do something spectacular. It's simply to stay.**

The firefighters at that lumberyard weren't expected to fight a growing fire beyond their capabilities without reinforcements.

When they called, help came. And I wonder whether we sometimes need to be a little more attentive to the people around us who may not know how to ask for help.

So, here's a question for this first week of Advent: **Who might still be struggling after everyone else has gone home?**

Perhaps someone we helped several weeks or months ago deserves another visit, another conversation, or simply the reassurance that we haven't forgotten them.

Because sometimes keeping watch isn't about looking for the next emergency. **Sometimes it's about remembering that the last emergency may not really be over for the person who lived through it.** And nobody should have to face that alone.

Faith Between Sundays

Weekly Reflections: November 29 – December 5, 2026

Keeping Watch When Others Have Gone Home

First Week of Advent — The Week of Hope

Advent begins with a reminder from Jesus to remain watchful. We often think of that instruction as preparing for His promised return. And that's exactly what Jesus was teaching.

But perhaps there's another lesson we can carry into our everyday lives.

Sometimes we're very good at responding to someone's immediate emergency. We call, visit, pray, and offer assistance. But as time passes, we return to our own routines, sometimes forgetting that the person who experienced the crisis may still be struggling.

Christian hope isn't just something we believe. It's something we can share through faithful attention, compassion, and the simple willingness to remain alongside someone who needs us.

This week, we'll explore what it means to keep watch—not by worrying about everything that might happen, but by remaining attentive to God and the people He places in our lives.

Prayer for the Week

Heavenly Father, as we begin this Advent season, help us recognize the hope we have through Jesus Christ. Open our eyes to those who may be hurting, even when their struggles aren't obvious. Give us patience to listen, compassion to care, and the willingness to remain present when others need encouragement. Teach us to trust Your faithfulness while we wait for the fulfillment of Your promises. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Sunday, November 29 — Keep Awake
Scripture: Mark 13:33–37

Jesus tells His disciples to stay awake because they don't know when He will return.

Now, I don't believe Jesus was suggesting that we should spend every waking moment looking toward the sky or worrying about the future.

He was telling His followers to remain faithful to the responsibilities entrusted to them.

Think about someone assigned to watch over something important.

The assignment may involve long periods when absolutely nothing seems to happen.

But that doesn't make the responsibility unimportant.

Our Christian lives are much the same. Most days aren't filled with dramatic moments of faith.

We go about our routines, care for our families, work, shop, and interact with the people around us.

But somewhere in those ordinary activities, God may place someone in our path who needs understanding, encouragement, or simply someone willing to listen.

Being watchful means being attentive enough to recognize those opportunities.

Advent reminds us that Christ will return. Until then, we have work to do.

Today's Faithful Step: As you begin this Advent season, ask yourself: Am I so busy with my own plans that I might overlook someone who needs a little encouragement?

Prayer: Lord, help me remain faithful and attentive to the opportunities You place before me today. Amen.

Monday, November 30 — Beneath the Surface
Scripture: Psalm 80:3

"Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved."

Restoration is an interesting word. It suggests something more than simply getting through a difficult experience. It speaks of healing, renewal, and putting things back together.

But restoration isn't always quick. Someone recovering from surgery may look fine to visitors while still experiencing pain or exhaustion.

Someone who has lost a loved one may appear to be managing well, even while struggling with loneliness when the house becomes quiet. And someone facing financial or family difficulties may smile and tell everyone that everything is fine because they don't want to burden anyone else.

We often judge how someone is doing by what we can see. But not everything that hurts is visible.

The people who wrote Psalm 80 recognized their need for God's help. They didn't pretend that everything was fine. They asked Him to restore them.

Perhaps we should be careful not to assume that others have completely recovered simply because the immediate crisis has passed.

Sometimes the need for restoration remains long after the outward signs of trouble have disappeared.

Today's Faithful Step: Think of someone who experienced a difficult situation several weeks or months ago. Consider checking on them again, not because you assume they're struggling, but because you want them to know they haven't been forgotten.

Prayer: God of restoration, help me recognize the needs that aren't always visible and respond with understanding and kindness. Amen.

Tuesday, December 1 — When We're Angry with God
Scripture: Psalm 13:1–6

Sometimes we think faithful Christians aren't supposed to question God. We're supposed to trust Him, accept whatever happens, and never complain.

But have you ever actually read the Psalms? In Psalm 13, David begins by asking God how long he must endure his suffering and whether God has forgotten him.

Those aren't the words of someone pretending everything is wonderful.

They're the words of someone who is hurting. And they're included in the Bible.

There have been times in my own life when I didn't understand what was happening and wasn't particularly happy about it.

I suspect most of us have experienced something similar.

We may wonder why God allowed something painful to happen. We may feel disappointed, frightened, or even angry.

But prayer isn't supposed to be a performance where we tell God what we think He wants to hear.

God already knows what's in our hearts. The important thing is that we continue bringing those feelings to Him rather than deciding that our pain means we must stop talking to Him.

Notice that David's prayer doesn't begin with everything resolved. He brings his questions to God and eventually expresses his trust in God's steadfast love.

Faith doesn't require us to pretend we aren't hurting. Sometimes faith begins with an honest conversation with God about how much we hurt.

Today's Faithful Step: Is there something troubling you that you haven't honestly brought before God? Take a few quiet moments today and tell Him how you really feel. You don't need impressive words.

Prayer: Father, thank You for hearing me even when my prayers are filled with questions, disappointment, or pain. Help me continue trusting You when I don't understand. Amen.

Wednesday, December 2 — When Words Aren't Enough
Scripture: Romans 12:15

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep."

Have you ever visited someone going through a difficult time and wondered what you were supposed to say?

I've certainly been there. We want to make things better, so we search for the perfect words.

Sometimes we offer advice. Sometimes we explain why things might have happened. Sometimes we try to convince the person that everything will eventually work out.

Usually, we mean well.

But Paul gives us a surprisingly simple instruction.

Rejoice with those who rejoice. Weep with those who weep.

Notice that he doesn't tell us to explain away someone's grief or find an immediate solution to every problem.

Sometimes people don't need an explanation. They need someone willing to sit beside them without trying to fix everything.

Someone who will listen to the same story they've told before.
Someone who isn't uncomfortable when the tears begin.
And someone who understands that grief doesn't disappear on a schedule.

Perhaps one of the greatest gifts of Christian friendship is the willingness to be present when we have absolutely no idea what to say.

Today's Faithful Step: The next time someone shares a difficulty, resist the urge to offer an immediate solution. Listen first. Sometimes the most helpful response is simply, "I'm sorry you're going through this. I'm here."

Prayer: Lord, teach me when to speak and when to listen. Help me offer compassion rather than explanations when someone is hurting. Amen.

Thursday, December 3 — Nobody Was Meant to Do It Alone

Scripture: Galatians 6:2

"Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

Most of us enjoy helping other people. But how comfortable are we when we're the ones who need help?

Sometimes that's an entirely different story!

We don't want to inconvenience anyone. We don't want people thinking we can't manage our responsibilities. And we certainly don't want to become a burden.

But Paul tells us to carry one another's burdens. Notice that word: *one another's*.

That means there will be times when we help someone else, and times when someone else helps us.

Christian fellowship was never intended to work in only one direction. God has given us different abilities, experiences, and resources so that we can support each other.

Someone may be able to prepare a meal but need help getting to an appointment.

Another person may be unable to leave home but can offer encouragement through a telephone call.

And someone who has experienced grief may understand another person's sorrow in ways the rest of us cannot.

None of us has everything we need to handle every difficulty by ourselves.

Accepting help doesn't make us less faithful or less useful. It simply reminds us that God created us to live in community.

Today's Faithful Step: Look for one practical way to help carry someone's burden today. And if you're the one struggling, consider allowing someone else to help you.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me a willing heart to help others and the humility to accept help when I need it. Amen.

Friday, December 4 — The Second Telephone Call
Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:11

"Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing."

When someone experiences a tragedy, the first telephone call is usually easy to remember.

We hear the news. We're concerned. We call immediately to express our sympathy and offer assistance. And that's a wonderful thing.

But what about the second call? The one several weeks later, when the excitement has passed and everyone has returned to their routines?

Or the third call, months afterward, when the person may be facing an anniversary, a holiday, or another difficult reminder?

Those calls can be even more meaningful. Paul encourages Christians to build each other up.

And encouragement doesn't always require a great deal of effort.

A short telephone call.
A note in the mail.
A visit.
A message that simply says, "I was thinking about you today."

These small acts don't eliminate another person's difficulties, but they can provide reassurance that someone still cares.

And here's something worth remembering. We may never know how much that simple gesture meant to the person receiving it.

Sometimes the most meaningful encouragement comes not when everyone is paying attention, but when someone realizes they haven't been forgotten.

Today's Faithful Step: Make that second telephone call. Reach out to someone you haven't checked on recently. You don't need a special reason. Caring is reason enough.

Prayer: Lord, bring someone to mind today who could use a little encouragement. Help me turn a good intention into a simple act of kindness. Amen.

Saturday, December 5 — God's Faithfulness Doesn't Expire

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:8–9

Tomorrow we will light the second Advent candle. But before we move into another week, let's remember the foundation of our hope.

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul reminds the church that God is faithful.

That's an extraordinary promise.

Our circumstances change. Our strength sometimes fails. People disappoint us, and even those who care deeply about us cannot always be available. But God's faithfulness isn't limited to the first few days of an emergency.

He doesn't stop caring because the funeral is over. He doesn't abandon us because recovery is taking longer than expected. And He doesn't withdraw His love because we're confused, discouraged, or struggling to understand what's happening.

Through Jesus Christ, God has invited us into fellowship with His Son. That doesn't mean our lives will be free from sorrow or difficulty. It means that our hope rests in someone far more dependable than our changing circumstances.

During this first week of Advent, we've considered what it means to remain watchful, encourage others, listen with compassion, and share one another's burdens.

Those are important responsibilities. But we don't carry them out to earn God's love.

We care for others because God has already shown His love to us through Jesus Christ.

And when we're the ones who need encouragement, we can remember that same promise.

God is faithful.

Today's Faithful Step: Before this week ends, think about one person you can continue encouraging during Advent. Make a simple plan to stay in touch rather than allowing today's good intentions to be forgotten.

Prayer: Faithful God, thank You for the hope we have through Jesus Christ. Help me trust Your promises and reflect Your love in the way I care for others. Amen.

A Thought to Carry into Next Week

Sometimes we think Christian service means doing something important, accomplishing something impressive, or making a noticeable difference.

But there are times when we cannot solve someone's problem, remove their sorrow, or make their difficulties disappear.

We can only be there. And perhaps that's enough for today.

Because sometimes our most important assignment isn't to do something spectacular. It's simply to stay.

As we continue through Advent, may we remember that Christian hope isn't something we keep to ourselves. It's something we can share with people who need to know that they haven't been forgotten.

From the Pew

The Rocks We Build With

November 29, 2026 — First Sunday of Advent

I've spent a good deal of time on beaches over the years, particularly during my diving trips.

And one thing I've learned is that you never know what you're going to find in the sand.

Sometimes it's something interesting. An unusual rock, a beautiful seashell, or an old piece of glass worn smooth by years of tumbling through the surf.

Other times, it's something you'd rather not find!

An old can, a broken bottle, or one of those aluminum pop-tops that Jimmy Buffett made famous. And if you've ever stepped on one barefoot, you probably remember the experience!

But something about beaches has always fascinated me.

You can walk along the shoreline in one direction and see nothing unusual. Then, on your way back, there's a rock sticking out of the sand that you could swear wasn't there before.

Sometimes the waves uncover things that have been buried for years.

Occasionally, even old shipwrecks emerge from beneath the sand. They've been there all along. We simply couldn't see them.

I remember one particular beach on the south side of Cat Cay, a small island in the Bahamas.

From above, it looked wonderful. Beautiful sand, clear water, and the kind of place where you could imagine spending an afternoon doing absolutely nothing.

There was just one little problem. To reach it, we had to climb down about ten feet of extremely slippery, sharp rocks, probably old coral.

Now, that wasn't going to be particularly easy because we were barefoot, but the beach below looked worth the effort.

Our sandals were back on the boat because, after all, who needs shoes on a beautiful sandy beach? Apparently, we did!

Now, I should probably confess something.

I was single at the time, and one of my female diving students decided she didn't need shoes.

Being a young man with considerably more enthusiasm than good judgment, I decided I didn't need shoes either.

Apparently, common sense was another thing I'd left back on the boat!

When we finally reached the bottom of the hill, we discovered that our lovely beach had about an inch of sand covering more of those same sharp rocks.

So much for our relaxing afternoon!

Walking barefoot across those barely covered rocks wasn't particularly pleasant. And before long, one of us managed to cut his foot.

Since we're being completely truthful, I suppose I should confess that the unfortunate individual was me!

It wasn't serious enough to require stitches, but it certainly hurt. And every time I got back into the salt water for the rest of the trip, that cut reminded me of my mistake.

Actually, it reminded me of two things: the rock I stepped on and my decision to leave perfectly good sandals sitting on the boat.

And while I might have been tempted to blame that decision on a very nice young lady, the truth is she didn't make the decision for me.

I made that mistake all by myself!

Climbing back up those slippery rocks was considerably more difficult than coming down, especially with an injured foot.

For much of my life, I had a personal philosophy: **I'd rather look back and say, "I probably shouldn't have done that," than spend my life saying, "I wish I'd tried."**

Now, that philosophy led me on some wonderful adventures.

It also got me into more than a little trouble!

But I've learned something over the years.

Regrets come in two varieties. There are things we wish we'd never done, and there are things we wish we'd had the courage to do.

Both can become rocks we carry around.

And sometimes wisdom isn't simply learning to avoid risks. It's learning the difference between a worthwhile adventure and a foolish decision.

Exploring that beautiful beach was probably a worthwhile adventure.

Leaving my sandals on the boat? Well, that wasn't exactly my finest exercise in good judgment!

But there's something else about that beach that reminds me of life.

Sometimes what looks perfectly safe on the surface is hiding something that can hurt us. And sometimes we see the danger but convince ourselves it won't matter.

I've come to believe our memories and regrets can behave much the same way.

Over the years, we accumulate memories of decisions we've made, opportunities we've missed, people we've hurt, and things we wish we could do over.

Some of those memories are easy to live with. Others are a little like stepping on a sharp rock with bare feet.

We think we've put them behind us. Time passes, life moves forward, and eventually those memories seem to disappear beneath the sand.

Then something happens.

We hear a familiar song. Someone mentions a name. We visit a place we haven't seen in years.

And suddenly, there it is.

That old rock sticking out of the sand again.
The mistake we thought we'd forgotten.
The apology we never offered.
The opportunity we allowed to slip away.

And sometimes we find ourselves feeling just as guilty or disappointed as we did years ago.

I've certainly accumulated a few rocks of my own.

Some were little ones. Others were considerably larger.

And I suspect there are a few I could trip over in the dark without any difficulty!

But here's a question I've been thinking about: **If God has forgiven us, why do we sometimes insist on continuing to punish ourselves?**

Now, I realize forgiveness isn't always simple.

Some mistakes have consequences that cannot be undone.
Some relationships cannot be restored to what they once were.
And sometimes the person we need to apologize to is no longer here.

God's forgiveness doesn't mean our mistakes never happened or that we can simply ignore the damage we may have caused. We still have a responsibility to acknowledge what we've done, seek forgiveness, and make things right whenever possible.

But once we've done what we can, must we continue carrying the same guilt forever?

Consider Peter.

He was one of Jesus' closest disciples. He promised that he would remain faithful, even if everyone else abandoned Jesus.

Yet when the pressure came, Peter denied knowing Him three times. Can you imagine how often Peter must have remembered that night?

But after His resurrection, Jesus didn't tell Peter that his failure had disqualified him from ever doing anything worthwhile again.

Instead, Jesus restored him and gave him work to do. "Feed my sheep."

Peter couldn't undo his denial. But his failure didn't have to be the end of his story.

And perhaps that's where Christian hope and God's grace come together.

Grace doesn't rewrite our past. It gives us hope for a future that isn't controlled by our past.

We may not be able to remove every rock we've stumbled over, but perhaps we can learn something from those experiences.

A painful memory may teach us patience with someone who makes the same mistake.

A poor decision may help us recognize trouble before someone else walks into it.

And something we'd rather forget may become the very experience that allows us to understand and encourage another person who is struggling with guilt.

What if, instead of spending the rest of our lives tripping over the rocks of our mistakes, we began using some of them to build something worthwhile?

Perhaps an old regret can become the foundation for greater compassion.

Perhaps a mistake can become a lesson worth sharing.

Perhaps an opportunity we once missed can encourage us to have a little more courage the next time.

And perhaps the experience of receiving forgiveness can help us extend that same grace to someone else.

Each time we discover that God hasn't given up on us, we have another reason to trust His faithfulness.

That's part of the hope we celebrate during Advent.

Not the hope that we'll never make another mistake, experience another disappointment, or encounter another painful memory.

But the hope that God's grace is greater than our failures, and that through Jesus Christ, our lives can still have meaning and purpose after we've stumbled.

Looking back at that beach on Cat Cay, I suppose a good pair of beach shoes would have made the experience considerably more enjoyable.

But even the best shoes wouldn't have removed the rocks.

And faith doesn't remove every obstacle from our lives, either.

What God's grace gives us is the assurance that our failures don't have to be the end of our journey.

We can acknowledge our mistakes, learn from them, accept forgiveness, and keep moving forward.

So, the next time an old regret comes washing back into your memory, perhaps instead of asking only, "Why did I do that?" we could ask another question:

"Lord, is there something worthwhile I can build from what I've learned?"

After all, we can't control everything the tide brings ashore.

But we can decide what to do with what we find.

And I'd much rather use a few of those old rocks to build something worthwhile than spend the rest of my life stubbing my toes on them.

So, here's my advice: Take the adventure. Just remember to bring your sandals!

"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

Hiding Under the Leaves

November 29, 2026 — First Sunday of Advent

Scripture: Psalm 139:1 — "O LORD, you have searched me and known me."

Bird Dog has discovered one of the great pleasures of autumn.

A big pile of leaves!

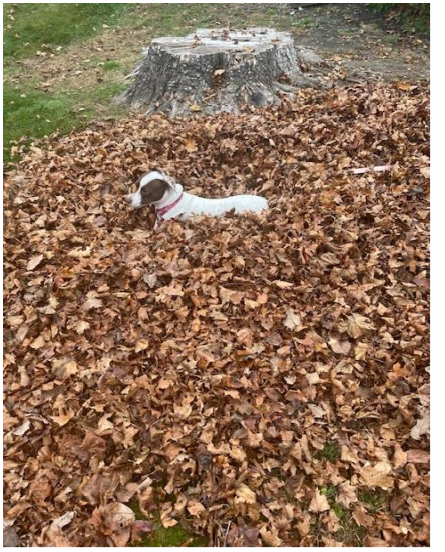
She doesn't just run through them. She likes to burrow down into them, pushing her nose deeper and deeper until much of her body disappears.

Sometimes all you can see is a little bit of dog sticking out of a mountain of leaves.

I'm not sure whether she thinks she's hiding from me or just enjoying herself.

But if hiding is her objective, she might want to work on keeping that tail down!

Watching her the other day got me thinking about how much time we humans spend trying to hide things.



Dad says God knows everything. Do you think He knows I'm in here

Not under leaves, of course.

We tend to be a little more sophisticated about it.

We hide our worries, our fears, our disappointments, and sometimes our mistakes and sins.

And we're often remarkably good at it.

During my years as a paramedic, I encountered many patients who asked me not to tell their spouses or families about a medical problem.

Sometimes they were embarrassed. Sometimes they were frightened. And often they genuinely believed they were protecting someone they loved from unnecessary worry.

I remember transporting a man who was having a heart attack. When we arrived at the hospital, it became apparent that he had been receiving treatment for a heart condition for quite some time.

His wife, who had accompanied him in the ambulance, had no idea.

She was surprised, but what I remember most was how hurt she seemed that her husband had never shared something so important with her.

Now, I want to be clear about something.

Everyone has a right to privacy, especially regarding medical information. And there can be very good reasons for keeping certain matters confidential.

But I wonder whether sometimes we become so determined not to worry the people we love that we unintentionally shut them out of an important part of our lives.

We may believe we're protecting them, when perhaps they would rather have been given the opportunity to care for us.

And then there's God.

How often do we try to hide things from Him?

Perhaps it's something we've done that we're ashamed of.

Maybe it's a fear we don't want to admit.

Or perhaps we're angry, disappointed, or struggling with doubts we think a faithful Christian shouldn't have.

So we bury those feelings beneath a nice pile of leaves and hope nobody notices.

But Psalm 139 reminds us that God already knows us.

Our thoughts, our worries, our weaknesses, and the things we'd rather nobody else discover.

And here's the wonderful part.

God knows what's underneath our pile of leaves, and He still loves us.



I have absolutely nothing to hide. My tail, however, disagrees

We don't have to pretend we're better, stronger, or more faithful than we really are before approaching Him.

Through Jesus Christ, we are invited to come to God honestly, seek His forgiveness, and trust His grace.

And while we don't have to share every private concern with everyone we know, perhaps we should remember that God has also placed people in our lives who genuinely want to help us.

Sometimes allowing someone we love to know we're struggling is an act of trust, not a sign of weakness.

So here's a little wisdom from Bird Dog.

A pile of leaves may be a wonderful place for a dog to play, but it's a poor place for us to bury our fears, worries, and mistakes.

We may be able to hide them from other people.

But God already sees what's beneath the leaves.

And thankfully, He isn't waiting for us to come out so He can condemn us.

He's inviting us to come to Him so we can experience His love, forgiveness, and grace.

As for Bird Dog, I think I'll let her keep burying herself in the leaves.

After all, unlike the rest of us, she seems to be having a wonderful time doing it!

A Little Light for Advent

Week One — HOPE

November 29 – December 5, 2026

Scripture: Romans 15:13 — "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing."

One little candle doesn't seem like much when a room is filled with darkness. But light that candle, and something changes.

The darkness hasn't completely disappeared, but it no longer has the room to itself. That's something worth remembering as we light the first Advent candle, the Candle of Hope.

Christian hope doesn't mean that every problem will disappear, every prayer will be answered the way we expect or tomorrow will necessarily be easier than today.

Our hope rests in God's faithfulness and in His promises through Jesus Christ.

And here's something else worth remembering.

We sometimes look at all the troubles in the world and wonder what difference one person could possibly make.

We don't have to illuminate the whole world. Sometimes God simply asks us to carry a little light into the part of the world where He's placed us.

Perhaps that means offering encouragement to someone who's struggling, helping a neighbor, or simply reminding someone that they haven't been forgotten.

We may not be able to change their circumstances. But we can reflect a little of Christ's love into their lives.

Hope isn't pretending the darkness doesn't exist. It's trusting that God's light is greater than the darkness.

A Little Light to Carry This Week

Each day, think of one thing that worries you and bring it honestly to God in prayer. Then look for one small opportunity to share encouragement with someone else. You don't have to solve their problems. Sometimes reminding someone that they're not alone is enough.

A Prayer

Lord, when life seems uncertain, help me trust Your faithfulness. Remind me that Jesus Christ is the source of my hope and help me reflect His light to someone who needs encouragement today. Amen.

