

IF MY PEOPLE WILL PRAY...

Welcome Week Prayer Devotional Guide

August 17 - 23, 2025



Winfree Church

Share Christ | Serve Others

If My People Will Pray - Welcome Week Guidance

(Reference Joseph Cox's www.prayersfor.com)

Praying for a new pastor can be a meaningful way to support the transition and help the pastor feel welcomed. Here are some practical tips to guide your prayers:

- **Focus on Specific Intentions:** Pray for the pastor's strength, wisdom, and guidance as they begin their new role. Ask for blessings on their family and for the congregation to be open and supportive.
- **Personalize Your Prayer:** Mention the pastor by name and include any specific needs or challenges they might face. This makes your prayer more heartfelt and personal.
- **Use Different Methods of Prayer:** You can pray silently, write your prayers in a journal, or participate in a group prayer session. Each method can create a unique sense of connection and support.
- **Pray for unity:** Request a spirit of harmony and cooperation within the church. Pray that the congregation and the new pastor work together smoothly.
- **Include Gratitude:** Thank God for bringing the new pastor to your church. Show appreciation for the chance to grow and learn through their leadership.

Here are some suggestions to get you started:

- **Seeking Divine Guidance:** Lord, we ask for Your wisdom and guidance as we welcome our new pastor. Help us to be open-hearted and supportive, embracing the changes and new directions You have planned for us. Amen.

- **Related Scripture:** "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." — James 1:5

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- **Strength for Our Pastor:** Dear God, please grant our new pastor the strength and courage they need to lead our congregation. Fill them with Your Spirit, and let them feel our steadfast support. Amen.
 - **Related Scripture:** "I can do all this through him who gives me strength." — Philippians 4:13
- **Open Hearts and Minds:** Lord, open our hearts and minds to the teachings and guidance of our new pastor. Help us to be receptive and eager to grow in our faith under their leadership. Amen.
 - **Related Scripture:** "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding." — Proverbs 3:5
- **Unity in Transition:** Heavenly Father, please grant us unity and harmony as we move into new leadership. May we work together with love and respect, building a strong and united community. Amen.
 - **Related Scripture:** "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." — Ephesians 4:3
- **Gratitude for New Beginnings:** Thank you, Lord, for this new beginning with our pastor. We are thankful for the opportunity to grow and serve together. Bless our journey and keep us steadfast in our faith. Amen.
 - **Related Scripture:** "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" — Isaiah 43:19

Winfree Church - Seven Days of Prayer for Spiritual Growth

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Day 1: A call to Listen to the Holy Spirit - Acts 13:2-4

“WHILE THEY WERE WORSHIPING THE LORD AND FASTING, THE HOLY SPIRIT SAID, “SET APART FOR ME BARNABAS AND SAUL FOR THE WORK TO WHICH I HAVE CALLED THEM.” THEN AFTER FASTING AND PRAYING THEY LAID THEIR HANDS ON THEM AND SENT THEM OFF. SO, BEING SENT OUT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, THEY WENT DOWN TO SELEUCIA, AND FROM THERE THEY SAILED TO CYPRUS.”

Throughout the book of Acts, we see many examples of the Holy Spirit leading and guiding the early church’s work and mission. From the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to empowering miracles, leading Philip to the Ethiopian’s conversion, and guiding the apostles on their missionary journeys, the work of the Spirit was exactly as Jesus had promised.

In our passage on this first day of prayer for our new pastor, the leaders of the first church were called to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. “Set aside Barnabas and Saul...” for the mission that God had called them to, to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentile world. We also see the work accomplished through the Spirit’s guidance of Peter, Paul, Barnabas, Silas, John Mark, Timothy, and many others.

What will our prayer be today and every day as we wait for the calling of a new senior pastor? Will you pray with me today, asking God to give us ears to hear the Spirit’s guidance? Will you pray that the family of Winfree will be obedient to the Holy Spirit’s leading? Will you pray that the Holy Spirit is speaking to the heart of the person who is called? The one who is being “set aside” for Winfree. Will you pray that the “one being set aside” is obedient to the voice of the Holy Spirit? Will you pray that we will always be guided by the voice of the Holy Spirit—not just in this moment, but forever? Today and always, may we answer the call to listen to the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Day 2: Honoring Legacy in New Beginnings - Isaiah 43:19a

BEHOLD, I AM DOING A NEW THING; NOW IT SPRINGS FORTH, DO YOU NOT PERCEIVE IT?

I vividly remember our family's move to Richmond in September 1962. I was 10 years old, and relocating from Newport News to Richmond evoked mixed feelings. I was eager to make new friends, start at a new school, and experience life in a city with a busy downtown and tall seven-story buildings (thank you, Miller & Rhoads and Thalhimer's). There was so much more to explore! So much promise!

At the same time, I felt sad to leave my extended family and a way of life that was very meaningful. Sunday dinners after church were spent at my cousins' house, followed by running through open fields and tossing a football with my older brother, then enjoying dessert and singing large family hymns.

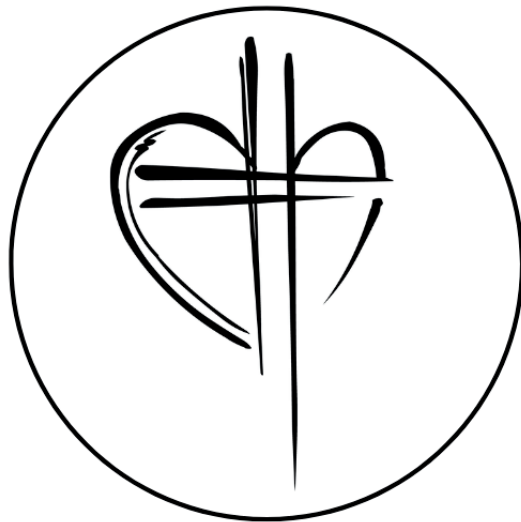
Sundays "out in the country" meant so much to me. It was a unique way of life that helped shape me spiritually. But a new rhythm emerged in September 1962 when we moved to Richmond. New routines appeared that would become meaningful in their own ways.

I will always cherish the Sundays of my youth in Newport News. I didn't realize it back then as I do now. The Sunday routine of those days was fundamental. It shaped me in ways I didn't understand until later. They had such a deep impact on how I faced the future. Over time, I've come to see how the legacy of those days influenced the new, different, and exciting days ahead.

Winfree has a blessed history. Our covenant defines who we are as God's people. We have always been a church that loves God and serves others. Essentially, it is a pattern of behavior that we have carried forward through the years and during times of transition. It is our legacy.

Day 2: Honoring Legacy in New Beginnings - Isaiah 43:19a

We are, at this moment, experiencing a new beginning, just like I did in September 1962. Our future with a new senior pastor will be different, but it's exciting to see what the new day will bring. We can confidently know that the legacy of our past will strengthen our future. It is our springboard. As God spoke to Isaiah, "Behold, I will do something new. Now it will spring forth." Will you pray with me today that our new senior pastor will lead us into new ways that honor our past while opening our eyes to "the yet to take place" under God's watchful eye? That what has been foundational for Winfree Memorial Baptist Church in the past is preserved but also shaped and fashioned in new ways under new leadership?



DAY 3: Openness to a New Shepherd – Ecclesiastes 3:1

THERE IS A TIME FOR EVERYTHING, AND A SEASON FOR EVERY ACTIVITY UNDER THE HEAVENS...

Let's acknowledge that most of us resist radical changes in our lives, especially concerning our spiritual journey within the church. Are we asking God each day to renew our minds and hearts with His divine Will for our church's future? Have we thoughtfully considered the traditions of Winfree that we should preserve versus those we can let go? Reflect on these questions as we pray for our new Shepherd, who will guide us in spiritual growth and prepare us to serve Winfree and our Midlothian community.

God appoints those called to Christian ministry. We value inspiring sermons each Sunday. We look forward to warm and caring pastoral support from our ministers. We rely on them for guidance. We expect them to stand with us through dark times and brighter days. We ask them to pray for us. Honestly, are we asking too much from one minister? Maybe it's time more of us ask our new Pastor to help us grow in Christian service that will be recognized in our Midlothian community as a New Light. Ask God for our new Pastor to equip the saints of Winfree for service beyond our expectations.

What are your hopes for our new Senior Pastor? Do you look forward to your "spiritual cup" being filled with inspiring sermons and Bible studies? How might you respond to a Senior Pastor who says he has no obligation to "fill your cup," but instead believes that God's Will for us in life is to "empty our cups"? Could you be willing to engage more deeply with Winfree as a servant of God and His people? We are called to die to ourselves and live for Christ.

DAY 3: Openness to a New Shepherd – Ecclesiastes 3:1

How will our new Shepherd inspire and guide us? New Testament theologian, NT Wright reminds us why we need new beginnings:

MADE FOR SPIRITUALITY, WE WALLOW IN INTROSPECTION. MADE FOR JOY, WE SETTLE FOR PLEASURE. MADE FOR JUSTICE, WE CLAMOR FOR VENGEANCE. MADE FOR RELATIONSHIP, WE INSIST ON OUR OWN WAY. MADE FOR BEAUTY, WE ARE SATISFIED WITH SENTIMENT. BUT NEW CREATION HAS ALREADY BEGUN. THE SUN HAS BEGUN TO RISE. CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED TO LEAVE BEHIND, IN THE TOMB OF JESUS CHRIST, ALL THAT BELONGS TO THE BROKENNESS AND INCOMPLETENESS OF THE PRESENT WORLD ... THAT, QUITE SIMPLY, IS WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CHRISTIAN: TO FOLLOW JESUS CHRIST INTO THE NEW WORLD, GOD'S NEW WORLD, WHICH HE HAS THROWN OPEN BEFORE US.

Can heaven wait? There is a time and season for renewed commitment within our Winfree family to find new ways to shine the Light that is Jesus by supporting a new Shepherd at Winfree. What kind of Shepherd are you willing to follow to fulfill our mission of ***Share Christ... Serve Others?***



DAY 4: Renewing Our Commitment to Leadership – 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

**WE ASK YOU, BROTHERS , TO RESPECT THOSE WHO LABOR AMONG YOU AND ARE OVER YOU IN THE LORD AND ADMONISH YOU, AND TO ESTEEM THEM VERY HIGHLY IN LOVE BECAUSE OF THEIR WORK.
BE AT PEACE AMONG YOURSELVES**

There are many reasons I am thankful for the Apostle Paul. One of the main reasons is that Paul was an encourager who sincerely cared for the communities he established and led. Often, Paul had to motivate his communities from afar, sometimes writing to one church while beginning a new one elsewhere. He even reached out to offer encouragement while he was in prison.

Paul understood that in his absence, other leaders were needed to keep the spiritual fire burning, foster faith growth, and help believers persevere and stay faithful through trials and persecutions. He recognized the dedication of church leaders — teaching, preaching, administering, and caring pastorally. These roles and more were embraced by the leaders in his communities. It was not easy, by any stretch of the imagination — a diligent effort, to say the least! But it was a labor of love. Paul would make sure these leaders were qualified and carefully chosen because of the important roles they would play in the church's growth.

Written from Corinth, Paul encourages the believers in Thessalonica to support their leaders because of the challenging, time-consuming, and resource-heavy nature of their work. Out of their love for Christ, the Thessalonians are urged to hold their leaders in high regard, support them, and stand behind them.

Very soon, we will welcome a new senior pastor—someone who will work diligently to lead, preach, teach, administer, and pastorally care for our Winfree church body. This is no easy task, but one rooted in love for the Lord.

DAY 4: Renewing Our Commitment to Leadership – 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

Will you pray with me today that the Winfree church family will do everything we can to support our new senior pastor and our other pastoral staff? Will you pray with me that our Winfree family will reach out in love and support to the families of our pastors? Their strength is vital, and they will need our encouragement. Will you pray with me that our ongoing love and support for our new senior pastor and his family will be used by God to advance His mission for Winfree?



DAY 5: Our Need for a Shepherd – Ephesians 4:11-12

SO CHRIST HIMSELF GAVE THE APOSTLES, THE PROPHETS, THE EVANGELISTS, THE PASTORS AND TEACHERS, 12 TO EQUIP HIS PEOPLE FOR WORKS OF SERVICE, SO THAT THE BODY OF CHRIST MAY BE BUILT UP

We have been taught that every good and perfect gift comes from God. Jesus gave five different leadership gifts to serve others who do not know God's love. Who were these recipients? Apostles were messengers sent with authority to spread the Gospel—the Good News of Jesus among people. Prophets delivered God's revealed word with insight and clarity. Evangelists shared the Gospel message with lost sheep. Teachers guided others in sound doctrine and Christian living. Shepherds (pastors) watched over the flock of sheep. Each had a unique role in the church, but all shared a common goal—to lift high Christ by strengthening believers' spiritual foundations.

The Apostle Paul wanted believers to grow from spiritual childhood to Christlike maturity. How can we meet others where they are on their journey through life to help them develop into spiritually mature Christians? We need a shepherd to guide us in discovering our gifts for service that can lead to maturity in Christlikeness. Paul emphasized four goals we should revisit: 1) unity in our faith through shared truth from God and trust in Christ; 2) understanding of the Good Shepherd's relational closeness and doctrinal clarity; 3) stability and discernment to resist false teachings about our relationship with God and each other; and 4) the growth of spiritual maturity by striving to imitate Christ in our actions that reflect His pure heart while recognizing our depravity..

DAY 5: Our Need for a Shepherd – Ephesians 4:11-12

Shepherding a flock requires divine wisdom to transform the spiritually weak into strong witnesses for Christ. As each type of leader and their followers grow spiritually, every member faithfully operates in God's truth, enabling the body to love those we serve with joy. Ponder and pray today about your role in supporting our new Shepherding Pastor as we come together with this Shepherd to do God's Kingdom work on earth as it is done in heaven



DAY 6: Continuing Our Call to Be Transformed – Romans 12:2

DO NOT BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD, BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWAL OF YOUR MIND, THAT BY TESTING YOU MAY DISCERN WHAT IS THE WILL OF GOD, WHAT IS GOOD AND ACCEPTABLE AND PERFECT

Bless the heart of the Apostle Paul. He was always in preacher mode, and I love that about him. He was constantly urging, appealing, asking, and desiring that his churches grow spiritually. He also constantly challenged them to imitate him in his love for Christ and his call to walk worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The twelfth chapter of Romans begins with an appeal from Paul, asking for two things. In verse one of chapter twelve, Paul encourages us, by God's mercy, to present our bodies as living sacrifices that are acceptable to God. We are to take responsibility for ourselves. Our bodies belong to God first. Paul explains that by offering ourselves as living sacrifices, we are worshipping the God who gives us life.

Paul quickly echoes the message from the verse highlighted earlier in today's devotional. His point is that we must refuse to conform to this world, to follow its customs, standards, and patterns. Don't become complacent or compliant. Don't get comfortable. I believe Paul fears that if we do not confront the culture around us, we will conform to it. Just as Paul urges us to see our bodies differently, he also urges us to change our perspective. Think in new ways. ***“Be transformed,”*** Paul says, ***“by the renewal of your mind so that you can prove what God's will is.”***

DAY 6: Continuing Our Call to Be Transformed – Romans 12:2

believe Paul is telling us that transformation is an ongoing process that we must continuously pursue. It's not a destination where we arrive and then become comfortable, a place of complacency. Transformation involves moving forward, becoming more, making progress, and embracing change. However, it should always be in ways that please God. I think that's what Paul means when he writes to the Philippians, ***“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”***

Reflecting on Winfree's rich and blessed history, consider how we have always been a church seeking transformation, striving to be more for God. As we prepare to welcome a new senior pastor to Winfree, will you pray with me today that we embrace the opportunity before us to continue seeking growth? Will you pray with me that God is guiding a senior pastor to our Winfree family who will challenge us to think in new ways? Will you pray with me that our new senior pastor, like the Apostle Paul, will encourage us to avoid complacency and comfort? Will you pray with me that, as a congregation, we will work together with Winfree's leaders to Share Christ... Serve Others in innovative and transformational ways?

DAY 7: Fulfilling Our Mission – Ephesians 2:10

FOR WE ARE GOD'S HANDIWORK, CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS TO DO GOOD WORKS, WHICH GOD PREPARED IN ADVANCE FOR US TO DO.

God's greatest creation is revealed in humans. Not in the people we have become because of our sin, but in the perfect beings He formed from dust to walk in a beautiful garden with. Philip Yancey explains it this way:

WE IN THE CHURCH HAVE HUMILITY AND CONTRITION TO OFFER THE WORLD, NOT A FORMULA FOR SUCCESS. ALMOST ALONE IN OUR SUCCESS-ORIENTED SOCIETY, WE ADMIT THAT WE HAVE FAILED, ARE FAILING, AND ALWAYS WILL FAIL. GOD REPRODUCES AND LIVES OUT HIS IMAGE IN MILLIONS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE LIKE US. IT IS A SUPREME MYSTERY. WE ARE CALLED TO BEAR THAT IMAGE AS A BODY BECAUSE ANY ONE OF US TAKEN INDIVIDUALLY WOULD PRESENT AN INCOMPLETE IMAGE, ONE PARTLY FALSE AND ALWAYS DISTORTED, LIKE A SINGLE GLASS CHIP HACKED FROM A MIRROR. BUT COLLECTIVELY, IN ALL OUR DIVERSITY, WE CAN COME TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS TO RESTORE THE IMAGE OF GOD IN THE WORLD.

God has given us the greatest gift in the world to share—the gift of authentic life by modeling Jesus Christ. Each of us fails to model Jesus perfectly, even our pastors. But we are not called to be perfect; we become perfect through Christ, who, although perfect and sinless, sacrificed His life as a ransom for ours so that we might be seen by God the Father as perfected in the Light of Christ Jesus. Take time to thank God for His gracious and perfect gift.

DAY 7: Fulfilling Our Mission – Ephesians 2:10

How, then, should we eagerly seek opportunities in the coming days to partner with our new Pastor in reaching people where they are on their life journey? Maybe you know what it's like to be confused by the strong and mistaken messages of modern culture. Perhaps you once attended church but left because you felt there was too little grace there. Christians can be very angry toward others who sin differently than they do, yet we all sin. So why would anyone want to return to Winfree or any church? Let's commit to transforming Winfree from just a friendly community of believers into a place where grace is accessible to everyone. In our flaws, may we let the Light of Grace shine through. ***We are gathered to be God's church. We are not here by chance; rather, God, through His grace, is making us a fellowship to embody and express the very Spirit of His Son (Winfree Covenant). Let's unite with our Pastor to Share Christ...Serve Others.***

