

# Shepherd's Staff

March 2025

*We gather to worship, we go to serve our Lord.*

**"You will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth!"**

Parkersburg Christian Reformed Church

Sunday Worship 9:30 a.m. ~ Church School 10:45 a.m



## Keeping Our Focus on Jesus This Easter

Source: <https://www.crosswalk.com/special-coverage/easter/reminders-to-keep-our-focus-on-jesus-this-easter.html>

It's hard to believe Lent begins this coming Wednesday, March 5, and we will once again have an opportunity to reflect on the appropriate preparations for Easter. Following is a message by Dr. Jack Graham, Senior Pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church, the author of numerous books, and a renowned Bible teacher.

During this glorious Easter season, we remember that Jesus paid the price for the sins of the world when He was crucified on the Cross. But we know the rest of the story—our Lord and Savior defeated death. He died on the Cross for our sins and rose again on the third day; and He lives so that we may live also. When we know Christ, when we have a personal relationship with Him, we can live every day sustained and strengthened by His presence living in us.

Rather than giving valueless, fleeting attention to gifts, candy, eggs, or Easter Bunny surprises this year, let us focus on the greatest comeback of all time—the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. I encourage you to reflect on these three reminders as you seek to draw closer to Jesus.

### 1. Our Hope Is in Jesus



True hope is not rooted in ourselves or others—from any self-help guide, new-age mentality, or optimistic mindset. It is not in our financial stability, our intellect, or in a political party. These things are all merely guises of hope—cheap, fleeting, unreliable, and as foundational as a house built upon shifting sand. Even in churches today, the popular message of “creating our own hope” is rampant. Yet this teaching is both ill-advised and downright harmful to all individuals.

Rather, authentic hope is birthed from Christ and Christ alone. His death on the Cross, His Resurrection, and His Holy Spirit within us are our hope. While we are fickle, jaded, weak, broken, and sinful, Jesus is perfect. Yet He loves us and allows us to be one in Him. This is the miracle Paul speaks about in Ephesians 5 when it comes to the holy marriage between Christ and His Church. It is, indeed, a profound mystery!

Though the storms of life will inevitably come—most of which are out of our control—we remain hopeful in Christ. His Spirit fills us with freedom and peace amidst the chaos of life. This is not false hope in a false God; this is not an illusion painted to make life simply more palatable. No, this is real hope—a hope that never fails, never fades, and never disappoints—righteously founded at the foot of the Cross.

### 2. His Atonement Is Our Freedom

There is no freedom like surrendering to God. When we offer our lives fully to the Lord, we are free from fear, from our old selves, from our bondage to sin, and from our pasts. The repercussions of our previous life no longer define us or haunt us; rather, we are allowed to step



into real freedom—in our new identities—so that we might boast in the Cross by sharing our testimonies, praising God for what Jesus has done for us, all for the sake of pointing others to Him.

In turn, we are free to love, free to make decisions that align with the Word of God without fear, and free to have endless joy in all we do! It is in this freedom that we are no longer ashamed, chained to the ripple effects of our actions or others' actions against us. No, it is at the Cross we are set free regarding our testimonies; it is at the foot of the cross that our past pains have been laid down and put to death, and it is at the empty tomb that they have been turned into something good and beautiful.

The beauty that grows from these ashes is purely because of Jesus' atonement on the Cross. The One who was without sin became sin that we might know this transformative freedom that now consumes us.

### **3. May We Rejoice in the Resurrection *Every Day***

Rather than letting this message pierce your heart momentarily for Easter, I encourage you to let it transform every aspect of your life permanently. Although we will never be able to adequately offer gratitude for what Jesus has done, every waking minute is an opportunity to rejoice in the gift of His sacrifice. We are here to joyfully and freely share what Jesus has done. We are not here to make a decent living, earn a comfortable retirement, or simply "be good people." Rather, we are here to surrender our lives to Christ, becoming slaves to righteousness in the freedom we have found for the sake of others.

Each day, we have the divine opportunity to pray, to offer up ourselves, to commune with Jesus, and to delve into the most valuable piece of literature that exists—the Bible. This book is the living, breathing Word of God, powerful enough to transform each and every life on the planet. It is a miracle in and of itself, set apart and holy, telling the real story of the real Jesus.

Though we were undeserving, Jesus died for us. Though we might as well have pierced His hands, feet, and side ourselves, He pierces through our hearts with His overwhelming love. Though we are often faithless, He remains forever faithful. Real love is Jesus. We must allow this truth to transform us from the inside out so that we never take the Cross lightly—on Easter or any other day.

I pray that we will each evaluate our hearts, discerning our current priorities revolving around this Westernized holiday. In this evaluation, I challenge you to reflect upon all that Jesus has done in your life, how you came to know Him, and how He has freed you. I encourage you to offer your heart and life fully to Him. Pray He would bring permanent transformation that impacts you from this Resurrection Day forward. Meditate on this powerful truth:

*Because He lives, we are made alive, made new, and made holy.*

**RESURRECTION**



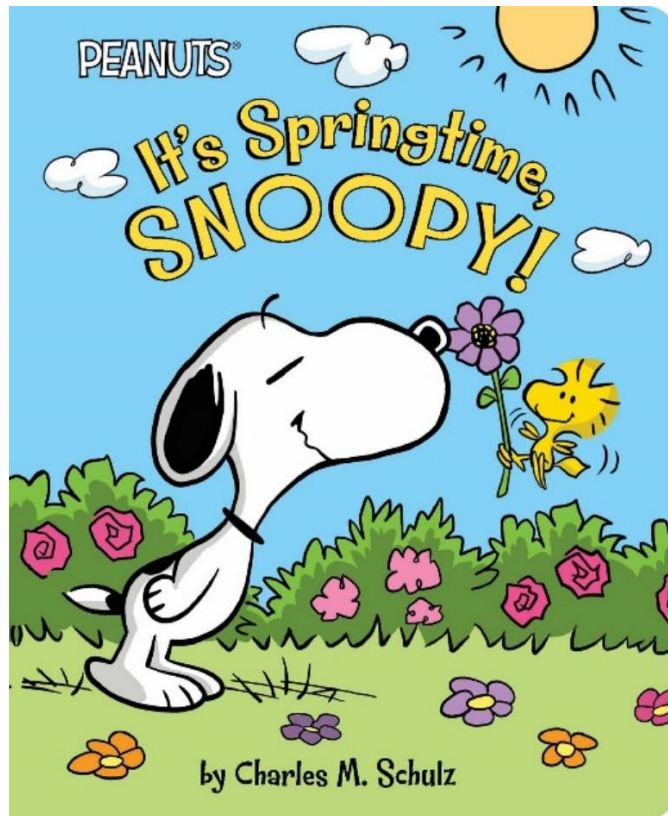
- 3/11 Kathleen DeGroot
- 3/15 Kay Swanson
- 3/28 Rhonda Meester
- 3/31 Patricia Pott



3/19 Pat & Deb Prier

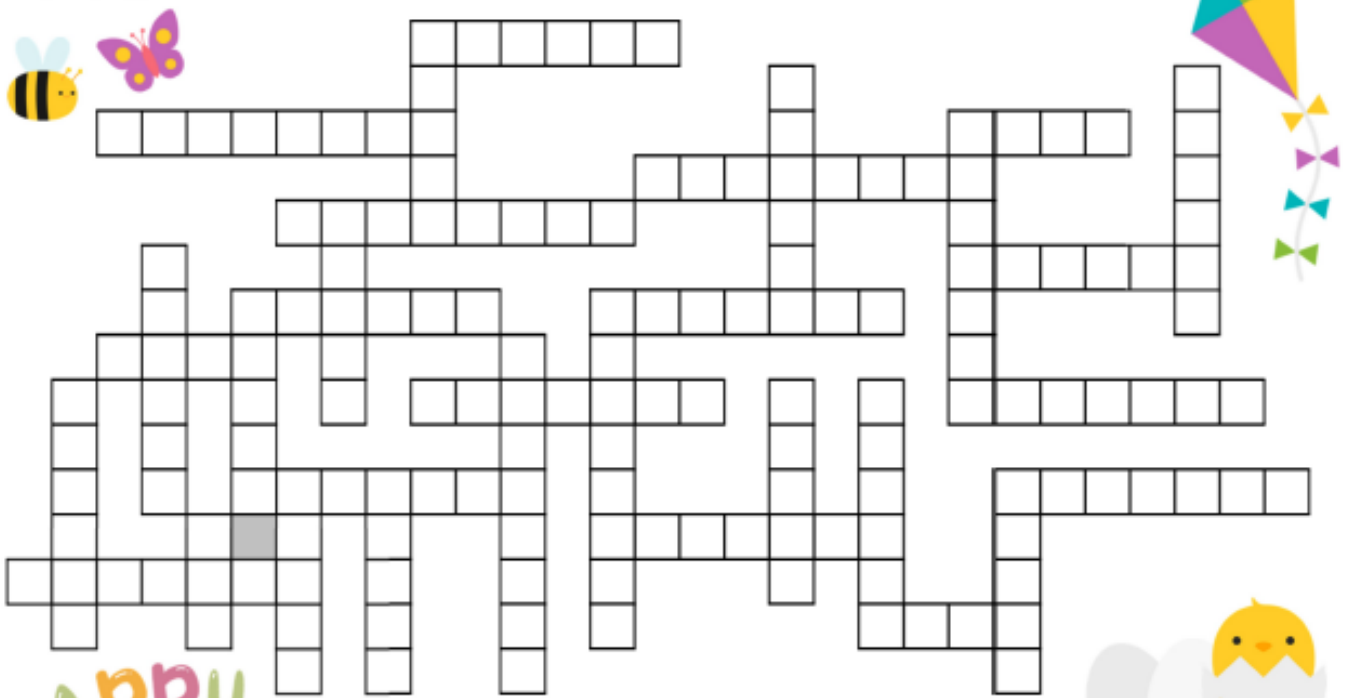


**Reminder:** If you have anything you'd like included in the Shepherd's Staff, please try to have it to Wendy Armstrong by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month. The goal is to have the newsletter in your mailboxes on the last Sunday of the month.



# Spring Word Fill In

Write the words in the correct place on the grid based on the number of letters.



**HAPPY**  
*Spring!*



**3 letters**

May

**4 letters**

kite  
thaw  
nest

**5 letters**

hatch  
windy  
seeds  
March  
April  
boots  
green

**6 letters**

vernal  
season  
chicks  
garden  
pollen  
sprout  
robins  
growth

**7 letters**

foliage  
showers  
insects  
puddles  
verdant  
tadpole  
equinox  
bunnies

**8 letters**

blossoms  
planting  
umbrella  
raincoat  
sunshine

