

## April 2026



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### Let's Welcome Pastor John McCarty!

Dear friends in Christ,

My name is John McCarty. I've been asked to provide a brief autobiography to introduce myself to you all. This is a thumbnail sketch of my life, and I look forward to you and I getting to know each other more deeply as we minister together here at Westgate Baptist.

I was raised mostly in suburban neighborhoods in Delaware with my younger sister, Gillian. Our parents were not Christian even though they had been raised in the church. They felt that we would choose our beliefs when we grew old enough to decide. I do remember having some exposure to Christian churches, and individual Christians but I never had an experience that drew me to find out more about Jesus. Mostly, I felt judged by those representing Christ, unworthy to approach Him. Nevertheless, looking back, I see God reaching into my life to slowly ease my resistance, and bring me to salvation.

It was not until my early twenties that I came to a tipping point in my relationship with God. Half-way through my sophomore year in college I got a new roommate who happened to be a new Christian. His name was Mark, and he tried his best to introduce me to Jesus. I tried my best to stall him and dismiss his invitations to church until finally I agreed to attend services with him to shut him up. One Sunday led to more and finally one week I remember feeling the pull of the Spirit to go forward on the altar call. Because of the tears in my eyes I couldn't see the lyrics of the hymn "Just As I Am" before I stumbled forward to the front. I prayed with the pastor and gave my life to Jesus.

Almost immediately it was as if my life fast-forwarded toward what God wanted me to do over the next years. I felt a call to do something more with my life than just become a therapist, which had been my goal



after graduation. It seemed as if God was nudging me toward pastoral ministry to broaden my impact on people's lives.

In 1986, after graduating with a BA in psychology from Shippensburg University, I began attending Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. My call continued to change as I found the facets of what God was revealing to me. This change came as result of an exceptionally good internship at a south Jersey church, and later as I met and became engaged to my wife, Margie.

After a challenging first pastorate in upstate New York, I had all but given up on the ministry, and resigned myself to working in restaurants, or anywhere else other than the church. It was not until a few years after we had moved to Pennsylvania with our first son and were raising a second that I felt that maybe God had not given up on me as a pastor. White Hall Baptist contacted me for pulpit supply. As it happened, they were looking for a pastor, so I eventually agreed to be interim pastor. They called me as pastor, and God used this time as one of reinvigorating, and healing me as a person, and as a pastor.

I was called to Clifford Baptist Church within a year of moving to northeast Pennsylvania. For nearly ten years I stayed there, and hoped I could help the congregation move forward, to become used by God to change people's lives. There seemed more interest in maintaining the status quo, and I soon felt that it was time to resign.

We eventually moved to Carbondale as I had started as interim pastor at Berean Baptist Church. Our family settled into the parsonage, and I worked to help this church find its place in the community. While the church folks were generally cooperative at first, responsive to my ministry, things changed when it came to reaching out into the neighborhood. The focus on themselves, and their limited finances had become their main concern. As I was struggling with how to deal with this attitude, Margie received the call to move to Bloomsburg to serve two churches there.

We moved to Bloomsburg in June in the midst of a pandemic, and even as I searched for work, I asked God that if He had another pastorate for me, that it work out the best way possible. In the meantime, I started working as a cook at a local restaurant. I began serving at White Hall again as pastor in 2021. It was a wonderful reunion with parishioners with whom I had served previously as well as some new folks to me.

As we began to feel God calling my wife Margie to a new church in Lemoyne, it became clear we would have to move again. Now I work at Trøegs in Hershey and am looking forward to what, the Lord has for us all here at Westgate. May God guide and direct us as we serve Him together!

Pastor John McCarty

### Prayer for a Pastor

**Thank You for the pastor You have placed in our lives. Continue to fill him with Your wisdom, Your peace, and Your steady guidance. Strengthen him in the long days, refresh him in the quiet moments, and surround him with Your protection. Let his words carry Your truth, and let his heart rest in Your presence. Bless his family, his ministry, and every person he serves.**

**Amen.**



## Why Eggs? Why Rabbits? A Grown-Up Realization from My Childhood Easter Memories



As a kid growing up, Easter was simple. Every year we dyed eggs in every shade the little tablets could manage, I got a brand-new Easter outfit (usually something pastel and slightly itchy), and we always had ham waiting for Easter dinner. I woke up Easter morning to a basket full of candy that somehow appeared overnight. That was Easter to me — color, sugar, ham, and the thrill of finding eggs in places no egg should ever be.

And honestly, I never questioned any of it. Not once did I stop and think, “Why eggs? Why rabbits? What’s going on here?” I just accepted that somewhere in the universe, a very organized bunny was running a seasonal candy-distribution business.

It wasn’t until I was much older and I had kids — that I finally thought, “Wait a minute... why DO we do all this?” And once that question landed, I felt like I needed to understand. *So, I did what any grown-up does when faced with a theological mystery: I Googled it.*

Rabbits don’t lay eggs, and eggs don’t hop, yet somehow, they’ve become the unofficial mascots of Easter. The story behind it is delightful, and it points us toward the deeper joy of the season.

### **The Egg Revelation**

Christians used eggs as a symbol of the Resurrection. The egg looks closed, still, and ordinary — but inside is life waiting to burst forth. Early believers saw in that a beautiful picture of the tomb: sealed, silent, and then suddenly full of miracles.

Some traditions even dyed eggs red to remember Christ’s sacrifice, then cracked them open to celebrate the empty tomb. Over time, the colors got brighter, the designs got fancier, and eventually chocolate got involved (*a development no one regrets*).

### **Rabbits: The Energetic Little Messengers of Spring**

Now, the rabbit hopped into Easter a bit differently. Rabbits have always been symbols of new life because, well... they’re very good at producing it. In the 1700s, German immigrants brought the idea of the Osterhase — the Easter hare who delivered eggs to children. Kids loved it, parents tolerated it, and before long the Easter Bunny was as much a part of spring as tulips and allergy season.

While the rabbit isn’t a biblical symbol, it does whisper a truth we know well: God’s blessings are abundant, overflowing, and full of life.

### **Seeing It Differently Now**

Looking back, I love that my childhood Easter was full of color and candy and mystery. But I love even more that, as an adult, I can see the deeper meaning behind the fun.

Eggs remind us of new life.

Rabbits remind us of abundant life.

And Easter reminds us of the Risen Christ, who brings both.

So now, when I see a child clutching a chocolate bunny and asking the same questions I never thought of asking, I smile. Because I finally understand — and the meaning is even sweeter than the candy ever was.

**(This is an old groaner.)**

**A man was blissfully driving along the highway, when he saw the Easter Bunny hopping across the middle of the road. He swerved to avoid hitting the Bunny, but unfortunately the rabbit jumped in front of his car and was hit. The basket of eggs went flying all over the place. Candy, too.**

**The driver, being a sensitive man as well as an animal lover, pulled over to the side of the road, and got out to see what had become of the Bunny carrying the basket. Much to his dismay, the colorful Bunny was dead.**

**The driver felt guilty and began to cry. A woman driving down the same highway saw the man crying on the side of the road and pulled over. She stepped out of her car and asked the man what was wrong.**

**"I feel terrible," he explained, "I accidentally hit the Easter Bunny and killed it. What should I do?"**

**The woman told the man not to worry. She knew exactly what to do. She went to her car trunk and pulled out a spray can. She walked over to the limp, dead Bunny, and sprayed the entire contents of the can onto the little furry animal.**

**Miraculously the Easter Bunny came to back life, jumped up, picked up the spilled eggs and candy, waved its paw at the two humans and hopped on down the road. 50 yards away the Easter Bunny stopped, turned around, waved and hopped on down the road another 50 yards, turned, waved, hopped another 50 yards and waved again!!!!**

**The man was astonished. He said to the woman, "What in heaven's name is in your spray can?" The woman turned the can around so that the man could read the label. It said:**

**"Hair spray. Restores life to dead hair. Adds permanent wave."**



## Do Dogs Go to Heaven?

I've carried this question my whole life: Do dogs go to heaven? With me recently losing my bestfriend, I still wrestle with wanting to know the truth. Many of us have lost our best friends — the ones who greeted us at the door, followed us from room to room, and loved us with a devotion that felt almost holy. It's only natural for me to hope they'll be waiting for us, tails wagging, when we cross into heaven. I can picture my past dogs right alongside my loved ones, as if they've simply been keeping watch until I arrive.

But then comes the harder part: I've heard Christian theologians say that dogs don't have souls, and therefore can't be in heaven. That idea has always troubled me. How could God create such loyal, loving companions — creatures who comfort us in our grief, celebrate our joy, and love us with a purity we rarely manage ourselves — and then not allow them into His eternal kingdom?

So I did some research on what the bible says about our furry friends and even though the Bible doesn't give us a verse that says, "*Thou shalt find Spot chasing heavenly tennis balls.*" Scripture, does paint a picture of a God who delights in creation.

### **Here's where my faith steps in.**

#### [Isaiah 11:6-9](#)

Summary: Isaiah describes God's restored kingdom — wolves with lambs, leopards with goats, lions eating straw, and children playing safely among them.

*Why it matters:* This is one of the clearest biblical pictures of animals living in God's peaceful future.

#### [Isaiah 65:25](#)

Summary: Again, Isaiah describes animals living in harmony in the new creation.

*Why it matters:* It reinforces that animals are part of God's vision for the world made new.

#### [Matthew 10:29](#)

Summary: Jesus says not even a sparrow falls without the Father knowing.

*Why it matters:* If God cares this deeply for the smallest bird, how much more for the companions who walked beside us.

[Psalm 36:6](#) - Your righteousness is like the highest mountains, your justice like the great deep. You, Lord, preserve **both people and animals..**

### **So do dogs go to heaven?**

Here is the most faithful answer I can offer: If God's kingdom is the place where all things are made new, where love is fulfilled, and where nothing precious is lost — then yes, I believe God can gather our beloved animals into that joy.

And maybe, just maybe, when we finally step into God's presence, we'll hear the familiar sound of paws running toward us — a reminder that God's love is bigger, wider, and more tender than we ever imagined.

Written by Lora Shirey in honor of Rayray



## 30 Sayings of the Wise – Proverbs 22:16-21

### Our Continued Series from Last Month

Many of you have read these before—some may have even studied or memorized them—but I thought they would make a meaningful addition to our newsletter each month. These sayings offer simple, steady reminders of the Lord’s wisdom and guidance in our everyday lives.

(Sayings 1-4 In January; - Sayings 5-9 in February; - Sayings 10-15 in March Newsletters)

## Wisdom from the Proverbs



### Saying 16 — Walk Wisely

Proverbs 23:16

“Listen, my child, and be wise; keep your heart on the right path.”

A gentle reminder that wisdom is not accidental — it’s a daily choice of direction.

### Saying 17 — Avoid Drunkenness and Gluttony

Proverbs 23:17

“Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat.”

Wisdom calls us to moderation, self-control, and a life that honors God with our habits.

### Saying 18 — Listen to Your Parents’ Instruction

Proverbs 23:18

“Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.”

A beautiful call to honor, gratitude, and generational respect.

### Saying 19 — Seek Truth and Hold to It

Proverbs 23:19

“Buy the truth and do not sell it — wisdom, instruction, and understanding.” Truth is a treasure worth guarding; wisdom is worth every effort to obtain.

### Saying 20 — A Joy to the Heart

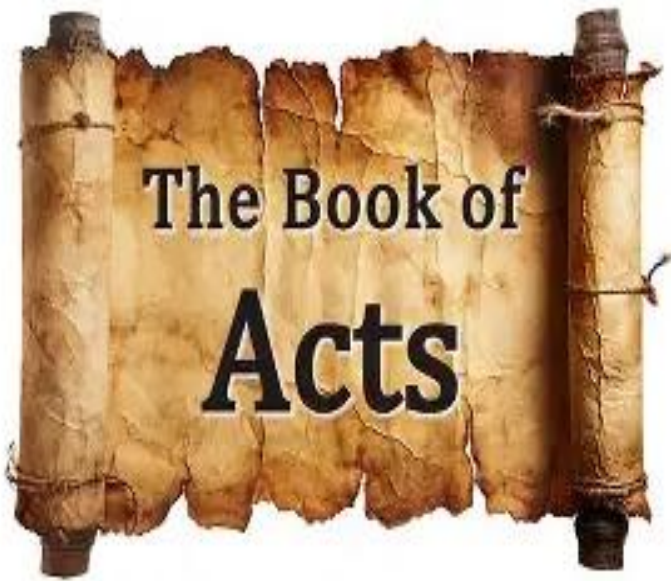
Proverbs 23:20

“The father of a righteous child has great joy; a wise child brings delight.” Wisdom blesses not only the one who walks in it but everyone around them.

### Saying 21 — Guard Your Heart from Envy and Sin

Proverbs 23:21

“Do not let your heart envy sinners but always be zealous for the fear of the Lord.” A steady reminder that our hope and reward come from God, not from comparing ourselves to others.

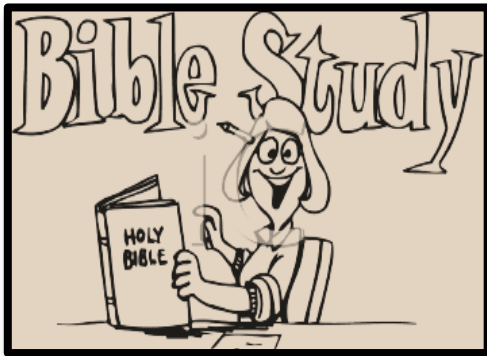


## Sunday School

Every Sunday at 9:15 am

Gary Stump will begin a study on the book of Acts beginning April 12th

In Acts, Luke sketches the spread of the Gospel from Palestine to the capital of the Roman empire in less than 30 years in an era where the primary transportation was on foot and without radio, TV, telephone or even paper or printing presses; While Jesus had left them, the Holy Spirit provided valuable guidance and encouragement to minister and grow the church in spite of persecution.



## Ladies Bible Study.

Lead each Tuesday by Lynda Williams at 9:30 am in the Fellowship Hall

Join us as we gather for coffee, fellowship, prayer and study. We would love to study God's word with you!

*Our current study "The Promises of God"*

## FAITH IN THE FIRE

Experience a moving documentary about Nigerian Christians who remain steadfast in the face of persecution.



You are invited to a screening event, and you will also:

- Meet the Barnabas Aid USA Staff
- Learn more about the work helping suffering and persecuted Christians around the world
- Food & drinks will be served afterwards

With limited seating, please RSVP to:

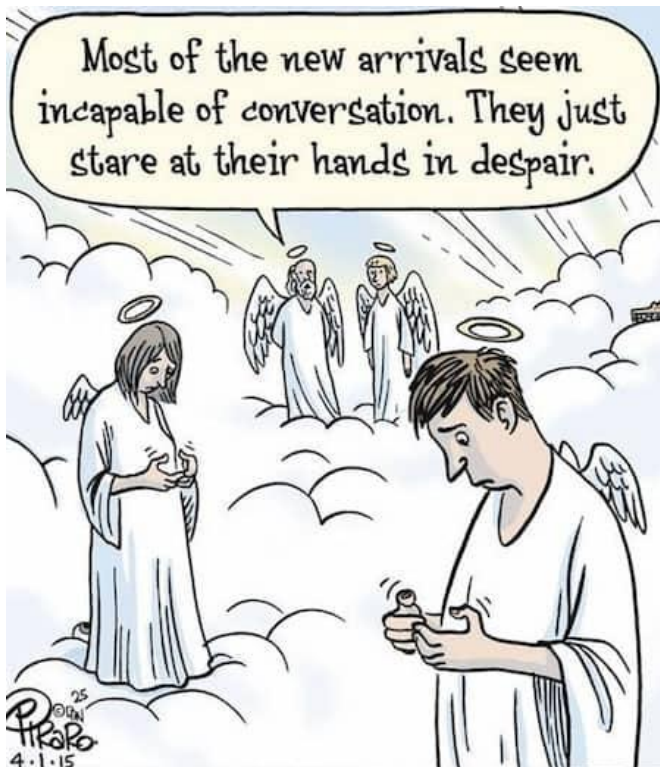
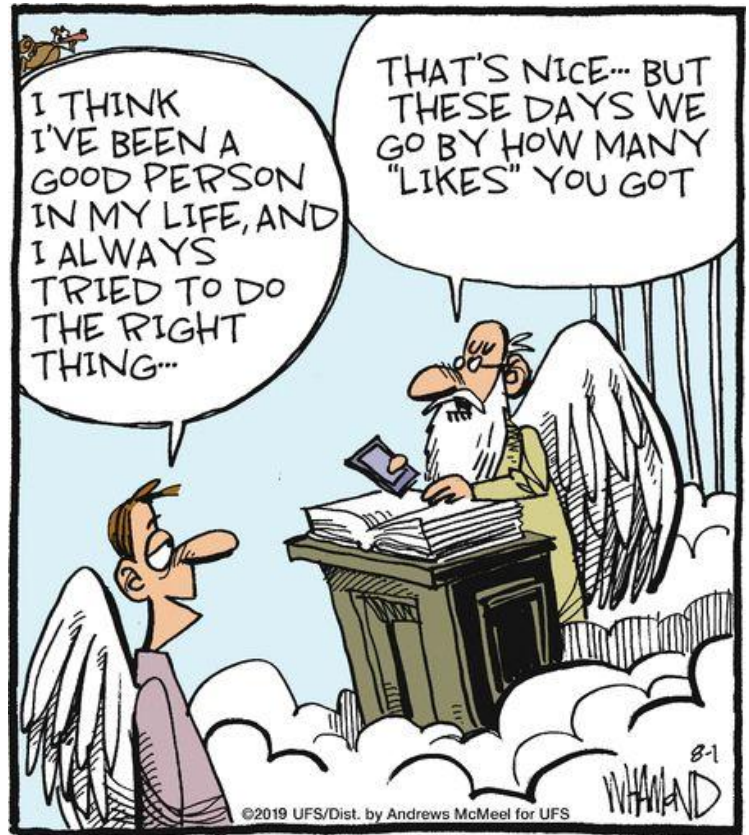
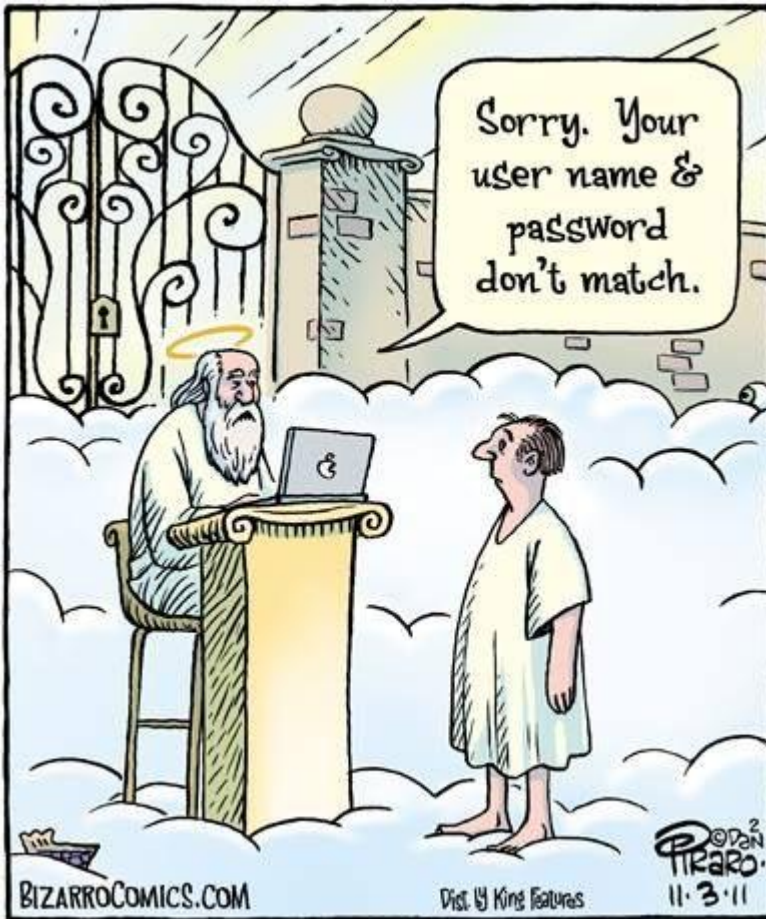
[usa@barnabasaid.org](mailto:usa@barnabasaid.org) or 703-288-1681

Thursday April 23<sup>rd</sup> – 6:00pm-8:00pm

80 Abbeyville Road

Lancaster, PA 17603

*Christian  
Technology  
Humor*

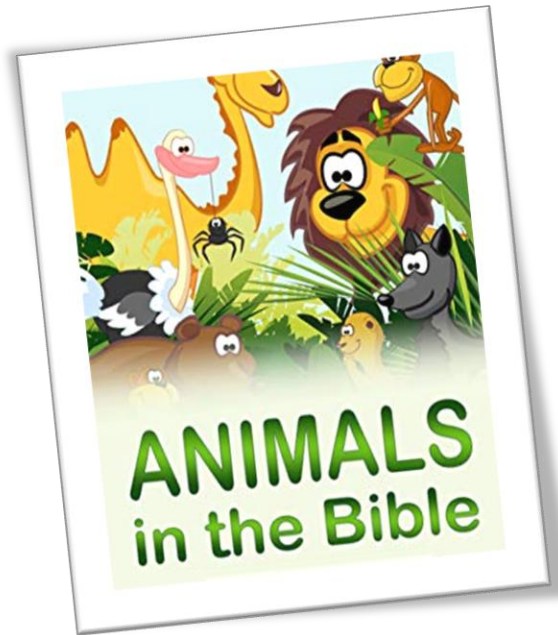
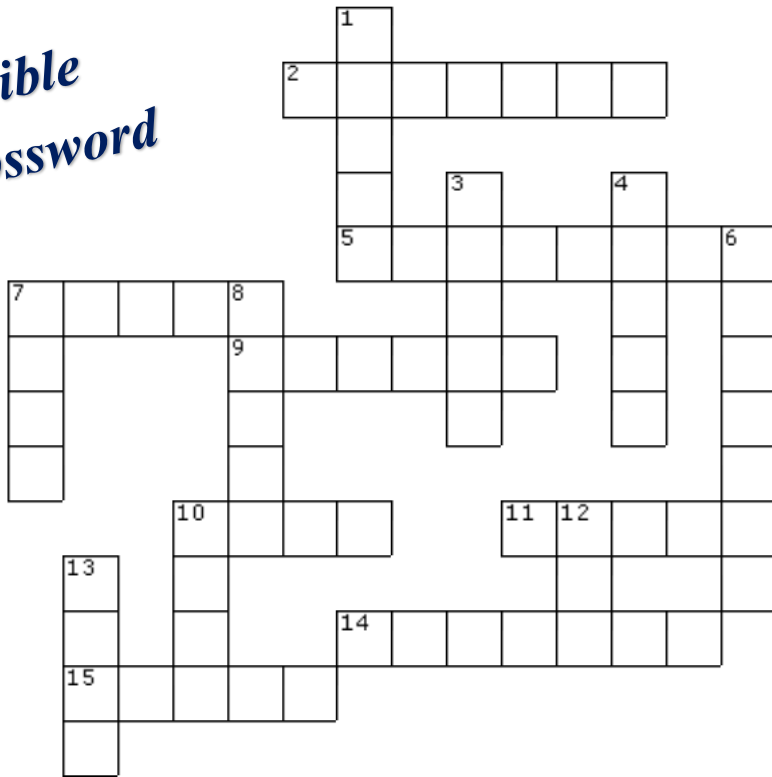


**“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”**

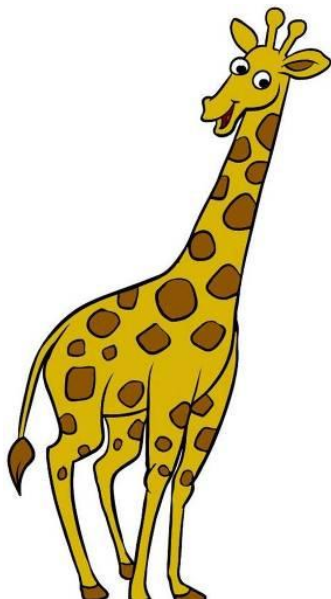
— Psalm 34:18

*May we never take for granted the quiet gift of safety, and may our gratitude move us to pray for those who long for the same peace.*

# Bible Crossword



*Test your knowledge  
Answer on last page  
No peeking*



## ACROSS

- 2 Food of John the Baptist
- 5 Therefore do not fear; you are of more value than many \_\_\_
- 7 Daniel was thrown into a den of \_\_\_
- 9 Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous \_\_\_
- 10 As the \_\_\_ pants for streams of water, so I long for you, O God.
- 11 First bird released by Noah
- 14 Before the \_\_\_ crows, you will

- disown me three times!
- 15 Most frequently mentioned animal in the Bible

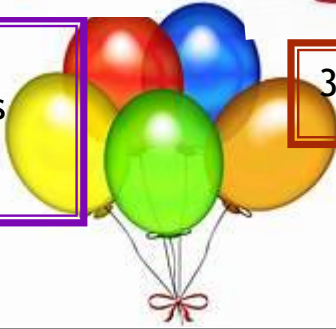
## DOWN

- 1 Jesus' parable of the sheep and \_\_\_
- 3 It is easier for a \_\_\_ to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God
- 4 White animal in Revelation
- 6 Eden tempter
- 7 The \_\_\_ of God, who takes away the sin of the world!
- 8 Do not give what is holy to

- the dogs; nor cast your pearls before \_\_\_
- 10 The Holy Spirit appeared at Jesus' baptism as this animal
- 12 Industrious insect of Proverbs
- 13 Jesus fed 5000 with two \_\_\_ and five loaves of bread



12<sup>th</sup> Gary Stump  
 13<sup>th</sup> Joan Batzer-Williams  
 16<sup>th</sup> Lloyd Appleby



30<sup>th</sup> Daniel & Loretta Chure

2026 Total Funds Received including Kachin & Reformation thru March 31, 2026			
Month	Actual	Budget	Variance
January	\$ 3,133	\$ 8,731	\$(5,598)
February	\$ 14,520	\$ 8,731	\$ 5,789
March	\$ 22,779	\$ 10,037	\$ 12,742
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 40,432</b>	<b>\$ 27,499</b>	<b>\$ 12,933</b>



 **Prayer List & Ongoing Prayer**

*As a church family, we hold one another close in prayer. Please continue to lift up those who are healing, grieving, searching for direction, or carrying burdens they haven't spoken aloud. So please continue to pray for all our church members and our church.*

*Also pray for the sick, the poor, the hungry, the homeless, the depressed, the lonely, the abused, and all who have lost everything through war, floods, fires, or other devastating circumstances.*

*Your prayers matter. They bring comfort, strength, and hope in ways we may never fully see.*