

Shepherd's Staff

January 2026

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.



PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR

Source: <https://www.annegrahamlotz.org/2025/12/31/prayer-for-the-new-year/>

Author: Anne Graham Lotz

...With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying... Ephesians 6:18

As I look ahead into the new year and beyond, I wonder...is this the year of His return? In the next ten years, will the world experience the rapture of the church? The seven years of tribulation? The glorious return of Jesus? And the beginning of His millennial kingdom on earth? Everything seems to point to the reality of this possibility.

While we may not know what the new year holds, we are confident of Who holds it. So today, it seems very fitting to pray for the future.

Join me as we pray together...**

Lord of eternity,

You are the great I Am...the same yesterday, today, and forever.

As we embark on the new year, our apprehension is overcome by our expectation. Could it be that we are truly approaching the end of human history as we have known it? In the next ten years will we experience the beginning of Your Kingdom on earth? Are we soon to hear the trumpet blow, and the loud voice of the archangel calling us Home? The intense yearning in our hearts cries, "Yes. Please. Let it be so."

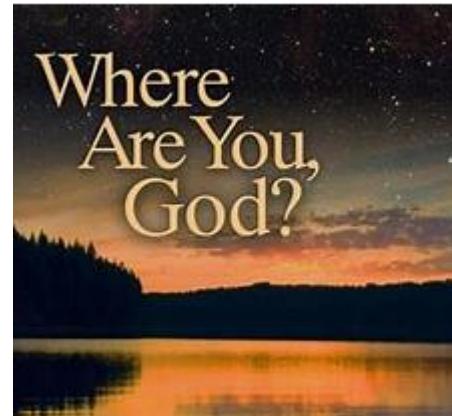
God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. You rule over the nations. You are the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. While no one can understand Your ways, we are confident that You have a plan and are working it out for our good and Your glory.

Yet we honestly confess: when Christ-followers are persecuted to the death; when gunmen open fire in churches; when religious leaders are not safe in their own homes; when floods, tornadoes, and storms ravage our land; when derogatory expletives and vicious name calling replace respectful debate and dialogue; when our political leaders put their own interests before the people's; when our business leaders lie; when our spiritual leaders contradict Your Word; when our social leaders divide; when our allies become our enemies and our enemies become our allies...what's going on? *Where are You?*

We are tempted to think You are...

Distracted...disengaged...disinterested,
Inattentive...inactive...impotent,
Out-maneuvered...out-moded...out-classed,
Unable...unaffected...

or even unaware of our fear... our helplessness...our confusion...our outrage. Why do You seem so small while our problems, disasters, and enemies seem so large? Help us to regain our focus.



God of our fathers. Lord of the nations. You are the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. No one can understand Your ways. We turn to You. We return to You. Now. "Are You not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in Your hand, and no one can withstand You."

Did You not establish us as one nation under God? Have we not pledged, "In God We Trust"? But now we find ourselves constantly bombarded with the shrill voices of those who demand we distance ourselves from You; that You are just one of many gods, if you are a god at all; that we cannot risk offending each other by calling on Your name. We hear the enemy insinuating that You are "not fixing this" because You *can't fix this*. Our faith is being assaulted.

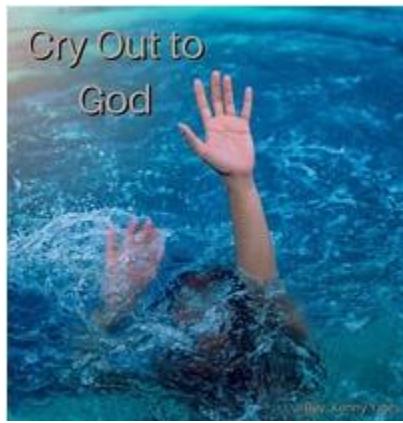
Our spirits rise up within us and seek to throw off the smothering cloak of spiritual oppression and political correctness. We shout Your Name. You are Yahweh. Jehovah—the personal God. The great I AM—the eternal God. The All-mighty—the Powerful God. You are Jesus. Savior. Immanuel. God with us, never to leave or forsake us. Your power has not been diluted or depleted over the ages. You are just as powerful...just as much in authority...as You were in Creation; in the deliverance of Your people from Egypt and in the parting of the Red Sea. You are the One who sends down the fire. Who fells the giants. Who makes wars to cease. *Who raises the dead!*

As we look ahead into the New Year and even further ahead, we choose to place our trust in You. If "...the kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord," we trust in You. If "...the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging," we trust in You. Though ..."nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall..." we trust You. When ..."the wicked draw the sword and bend the bow to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose ways are upright..." we trust in You. We trust You. *We trust You!*

Now arise, O Lord God. Look on us, Your people who are called by Your name. Listen to us, as we cry out for the New Year. Do not reject us. Have pity on us.

We feel the encroaching evil. "See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples..." Darkness and gloom are descending. Those who hate us are infiltrating us. Those who are dedicated to destroying us are all around us. Are You at the head of this army? Is this the beginning of the Day of the Lord? Have we tried Your patience and crossed the line into Your judgment? Are You holding us accountable for our sin and rebellion and defiance, for our profanity and blasphemy and idolatry? "You alone are to be feared. Who can stand before You when You are angry?" Are You?

Light of the world. "Arise, shine" Your light into the darkness of our own hearts.



Most Holy God. You are righteous. You always do the right thing. We have done wrong. Your light reveals we are covered with shame because we know better. We have had generations of blessing and prosperity, yet we have refused to thank You and instead give ourselves credit for what has come from Your hand. We have agreed with those who contradict Your Word. We have turned away from Your truth and believed lies. We have treated life casually. We have destroyed our environment selfishly. We have passed by the needy uncaringly. We have demanded entitlements defiantly. We have not listened to those who have warned us of the consequences of drifting from You. Because we don't know You, we don't know ourselves, and wallow in the uncertain twilight of gender non-binary confusion.

And now, as we look into the New Year, we come face to face with a mess. What can be done to save us from ourselves? Even as the question reverberates in our minds, the answer is given: the solution to our spiritual and moral meltdown—to the restoration of the crumbling foundation of our nation—is not politics, nor the economy, nor health care, nor welfare or immigration reforms, nor free higher education, nor the court system, nor corporate or Wall Street regulation. You are the Answer. You are the Solution. Yet instead of turning to You, we seem to be turning farther and farther away from You. *But not now.* Now we turn back. We turn around. We return to You. We run to You. We cling to You. We plead with You...

Turn to us! Draw near to us! If You do not help us, we will be defenseless. If You do not protect us, we will be exposed to danger. If You do not deliver us from evil, we will be overcome by it. If You do not have plans to give us hope and a future, we will slide into the past tense as a nation. Into oblivion.

Father of all mercies. We believe that this is a year that You care for; that Your eyes are continually on it from the beginning to its end. As You look on 2026 from January 1st to December 31st, we ask for what we know we don't deserve. We ask for Your blessing. *Please...*

And now, God of grace, as we pray for the New Year, we ask bottom-line that You send down Your Holy Spirit in fullness. Ignite the fire of revival in our own hearts. Protect us. Defend us. Comfort us. Empower us. Equip us as we put on the full armor of God so that we can stand against the devil's schemes...so that when the day of evil comes, we may be able to stand our ground...taking up the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God...and pray. With this in mind, we remain self-controlled and alert while we keep on praying until we prevail in prayer. And we keep on watching expectantly. Is this the decade of Your return? We fervently hope so! *Even so, come Lord Jesus...*

For the glory of Your great name...Jesus,

Amen



HAPPY
Birthday

1/2 Mel Riebkes
1/6 Lila Reints
1/11 Dennis Mennen
1/16 Gerald Haan
1/17 Lauren Husz
1/28 Mary Boersma

Happy
Anniversary!

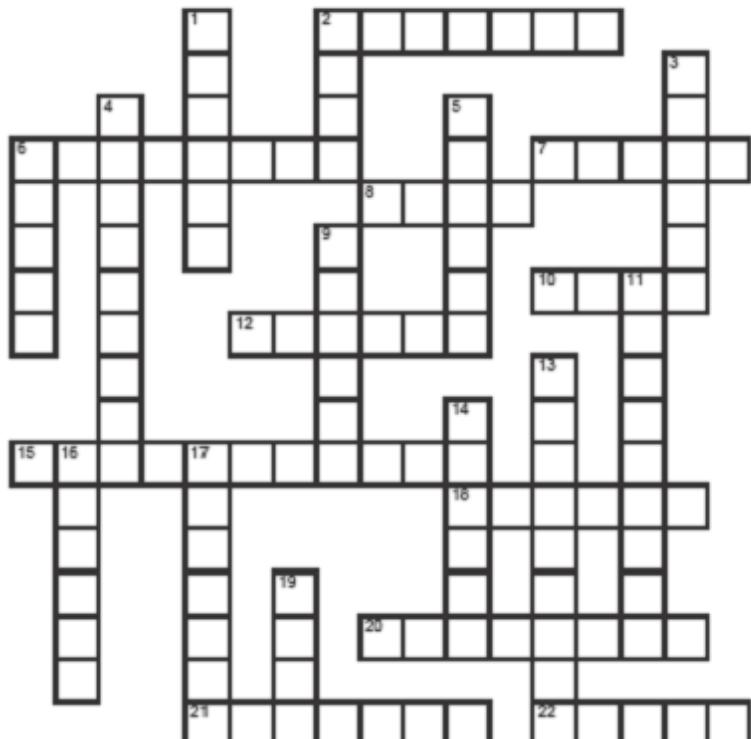
1/13 Larry & Mary Johnson



Winter Crossword

Across

2. Knitted top.
6. Snowstorm with winds.
7. Month that winter ends in.
8. When the air moves.
10. A sudden blast of wind.
12. Shake from the cold.
15. Tells you how cold it is outside.
18. Rather cold.
20. Month that winter starts in.
21. He might have a carrot for a nose.
22. Keeps you neck warm.



Down

1. Turned into ice.
2. It goes downhill fast.
3. A short coat.
4. What bears do in the winter.
5. Opposite of summer.
6. Shoes for snowy days.
9. Frozen trickle of water.
11. Ice crystal.
13. December 25th.
14. Area around the North Pole.
16. Used to warm a room.
17. Winter hand warmers.
19. Temperature (in Celsius) at which water freezes.



Arctic, Blizzard, Boots, Chilly, Christmas, December, Frozen, Gust, Heater, Hibernate, Icicle, Jacket, March, Mittens, Scarf, Shiver, Sled, Snowflake, Snowman, Sweater, Thermometer, Wind, Winter, Zero