



January 2020

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

When three women came to Jesus' tomb expecting to anoint his dead body they were surprised to see that the stone sealing the tomb had been rolled back. When they entered the tomb, looking for a corpse, they were terrified to see an angel, appearing as a young man dressed in a white robe. The angel comforted and assured them:

"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell the disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee'" (Mark 16:6-7, my emphasis).

When Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt and into the wilderness, *the Lord went ahead of them*—as a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day. When God came to us, incarnated in the person of Jesus, *he went ahead of us* into pain and suffering and eventually death.

God in Christ will always go ahead of us no matter where life might take us. Jesus will never abandon us, he is always "there for us"—*always with us and for us and always beckoning to us to follow him.*

God is always going ahead of us. The resurrection of Jesus is yet another incredible "go ahead" moment in the history of salvation. It was the comfort and assurance the angel gave to the three women—"He is going ahead of you."

Here we are, turning the page on yet another annual calendar. We look back on yet another difficult and confusing year, both in national and international news, as well as the difficulties so many of us who collectively pool our prayers and our resources in this ongoing ministry have encountered personally. Now we face 2020!

2020! It was not easy crossing the bridge from the 20th century to the 21st century. For virtually all of our Friends and Partners in this ministry, born in the 20th century, from the day of our birth up through 1999 the year in which we lived was identified by two numerals following a "19."

Then a new era—the 21st century—dawned. It seems like yesterday, doesn't it? It took me a long time to get used to seeing a "20" instead of a "19." How about you? Now, it's going to take me a few months, or more, to get used to seeing 20 and then another 20. 2020!

What does this New Year have in store for you and me? We don't know all the details and specifics, do we? But as we enter the New Year of 2020 we do know one thing for sure. **He is going ahead of us.**

At the end of the Gospel of Mark the angel assures the three women and asks them to pass on the message that **Jesus was going ahead** to Peter and the rest of the disciples.

At the beginning of the Gospel of Mark we read that Jesus called Simon and his brother Andrew to be his disciples saying, *"Come, follow me..."* (Mark 1:17).

Jesus is going ahead of us (Mark 16:7) into this New Year of 2020 and he looks back, over his shoulder, inviting us....*"come, follow me"* (Mark 1:17).

When the three women arrived at the tomb Jesus was not sitting outside, having a cup of coffee and signing autographs. He was gone! Jesus wasn't waiting for the three women or any of the disciples to receive their congratulations and praise regarding his resurrection. He was gone before they realized it. One might say Jesus is like Willie Nelson—"he's on the road again."

Jesus is on the loose. He is on the move. Jesus is not dead—he is alive, now and forever! **God is always going ahead of us—he's always rolling back stones before we get there.** God will always roll back the stones that seal the tombs of death.

God will always and continually make a way for us as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

Jesus is now and forever our risen Lord, transforming those who embrace him into new men and new women. Jesus is going ahead of us and he invites us to follow him. We are going forward. We have one direction. Forward. We have one "gear"—forward.

There is no reverse, there is no retreat. We are going ahead with him, we follow him and we are going forward—the Jesus Way is ONE WAY!

God's love is ONE WAY. We follow Jesus, we are not expected to do the impossible and blaze the trail. We are not expected to know the way through the wilderness of our lives or to survive in parched and dry places.

Christ-less religion gets it all wrong. God does not "do his best after we have done our best." God does not "help those who first of all help themselves." ***God's love is ONE WAY because we can't find the way without him.***

We don't know the way out of the Egypts of our lives. God showed the children of Israel THE WAY via a pillar of fire and a pillar of cloud.

We are not capable of earning God's love. We are not able to find the way out of death and decay. We don't have what it takes to "bear fruit."

"Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).

When you and I wake up in the morning Jesus does not expect us to get up, go out and earn his love by working hard to produce grapes for his kingdom. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not about self help or pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps. The gospel is not a program based on ten or twenty steps. The gospel does not depend on what we do!

The divine power that we have within us produces the grapes—we abide in the Vine and the Vine abides in us, enabling us to "bear much fruit." ***As branches of the Vine our divine power comes from our connection to the Vine.***

As we go forward into 2020 our job is to keep Jesus in sight. Stay focused on him. Stay behind Jesus—don't try to get ahead of him. Don't audaciously tell him what his plan for your life is—he'll make his plan abundantly clear as you follow him.

In short, his plan is for you to know of his love, embrace his grace and follow Jesus. God's plan for your life and mine is for us to remain in him, stay connected, focus on Jesus and follow him. Remain connected to the Vine—he'll take care of bearing fruit in you.

Grace is the power of God, living within us in the life of our risen Lord, empowering us to do what we cannot do ourselves. The grace of God is given to us without cost—it is the spiritual dynamic by which he works in and through us, so that we become his workmanship—his handiwork—his very own treasured and loved child—an heir of his kingdom.

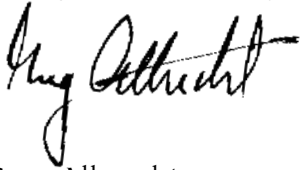
God walks with us in the dry, desert places of our lives. God is with us in our loneliness and our fears. God is with us as our health deteriorates and as our grasp on physical life weakens. God moves in the tides of the ocean storms whose waves toss our little rowboat hither and yon. God is with us in our suffering and in our joy.

Always and forever he is going ahead of us.

It is such an honor, privilege and abiding joy to boldly follow the lead of Jesus as we, together, as Friends and Partners of CWR/PTM move into 2020. We are blessed with our mission, and **the time is now, not tomorrow! *If not now, when? If not you, who?***

We know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God is now and always going ahead of us, blazing the trail, making the way for all of us. We join in our collective efforts to tell as many as we can about the Jesus Way, and comfort them with the truth that God is going ahead of us. Let us re-commit ourselves to this mission, for indeed, *if not now, when? If not you, who?*

Going forward with you, following Jesus,



Greg Albrecht

President, Plain Truth Ministries

P.S. We share this note of thanks from someone in Kentucky who has been blessed by the ministry of CWR/PTM, which you help to provide. Thank you for your continued dedication to sharing the good news of the Jesus Way!

A big “thank you” to Greg and all the staff at PTM for your guidance and teaching. The CWRm and Plain Truth magazines are incredibly helpful, and they have helped me and my wife to trust Jesus. We pray for everyone involved in this ministry. Please keep up the good work!

CWR/PTM Prayer List—January 2020

These requests for prayer represent just a few of the thousands we receive and pray for. We invite you to join us in praying for these and the others that space does not permit us to include here. Thanks for joining with us as a CWR/PTM Prayer Partner.

Please pray for me as I have been recently diagnosed with prostate cancer.—New York

Thank you for everything you do. I pray that God will continue to bless PTM.—Saskatchewan, Canada

My husband (age 93) is blind and deaf without his hearing aids. Pray for him and for me, his caregiver.—Louisiana

Please pray for my mother who has complications from diabetes. Thanks for all your prayers.—Arizona

Please pray for my granddaughter, who is autistic, to be healed.—Alabama

Please pray for my son who will be going to the doctor to find out if he has a stomach ulcer.—Arkansas

Please continue to pray for my wife's remission from lung cancer. God has continued to show mercy and grace in her life. Thank you for all your past prayers.—New York

I started having serious back problems when I was 29. In a few months I will be 79 and I now have stage 3 kidney disease. Both knees are bone on bone which is very painful. Both shoulders are also very painful even with pain meds.—Georgia

Please pray for my many health concerns, which are making me weary and feel very run down.—California

My husband is back in ICU because he had a stroke. Please keep him in your prayers.—Oregon

Please pray for my great-niece. She just lost her six-month-old son who had heart problems.—Ohio

Please pray for my upcoming knee replacement surgery and for my grandchildren who are addicted to drugs.—Kentucky

I need prayers! I am beginning to experience dementia and sometimes forget to take my medications.—Arizona

I need prayers for direction in my life since my wife passed away.—Saskatchewan, Canada

Please pray for my nephew who has been in jail for a year waiting for his trial.—Arkansas

Please pray for my wife who is suffering from an infection of her bladder.—Georgia

God is delivering me from fear, anxiety and confusion in dealing with my family after my mother died.—Oklahoma

I'm having problems with seizures. I recently had a bad one and wrecked my car. Thank God I didn't hit anyone. I still have backaches from the accident. Please pray for me.—Louisiana

Please pray a friend of mine who suffers from complications of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever.—Virginia

Please pray for my brother who has cancer of the prostate which is now spreading into his bones.—Maine

Please pray my friend who had cataract surgery complications. Pray he doesn't go blind in that eye.—Alabama

Pray I'll always set the right example of the love of Jesus to everyone I come in contact with.—West Virginia

Please pray for my niece and nephew that they will adopt the infant they have cared for and love so much.—Tennessee

Please pray for my sister-in-law who had hip bone surgery and is not doing well. She is 80 years old.—Louisiana

Our Father in Heaven: We thank you for your grace, mercy and love. You love each of these individuals, and we thank you in advance for the answers you will provide for each request. With thanksgiving for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, our suffering servant who heals us, in whose name we pray—Amen.