



December 2022

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.—John 1:1-4

When we think of the birth of Jesus, and then of his subsequent life and teaching here on earth, we often forget **the many things that happened at night**. We don't know for certain, but Jesus may have been born at night—if so his first meal at the breast of Mary was at night. He had his last meal at night. A man named Nicodemus wanted to be taught by Jesus, but he only felt comfortable coming to see him at night—lest any of his fellow religious professionals see him doing so. Not everyone felt comfortable hanging out with Jesus, for fear of what others might think.

Jesus was betrayed at night. When he was on his cross the next day, the sun stopped shining as if Someone had pulled a black-out curtain all around Jerusalem. The rays of sun were first starting to illuminate his darkened tomb when he was resurrected.

After his resurrection, his disciples were huddled together, behind closed doors, in fear that they too would be tortured and crucified. He appeared to them at night.

After some of his disciples went back to Galilee, to return to their former profession of fishing, and after they had fished all night without any luck, in the pre-dawn darkness the fishermen could only see “somebody” standing on the shore. As the sun rose, they could identify their Friend, the risen Son of God, preparing breakfast for them.

Here's how one of my favorite authors and preachers, Barbara Brown Taylor, puts it in her book *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, “new life starts in the dark—a seed in the ground, a baby in the womb or Jesus in the tomb, it starts in the dark.”

Darkness is often associated, in the Bible and in our daily lives, with nefarious deeds and behavior. The darkness of Genesis is overcome by God speaking “Let there be light.” The Latin **Fiat Lux** (let there be light) is the title of a book of photographs by Ansel Adams, one of the great photographers of our time. In this context **Fiat Lux** concerns the way a photographer must work with light in order to create his or her masterpieces.

We really have no idea what it must have been like for God to descend, from out of the light and purity and cleanliness of eternity into the darkness and corruption and filth of the world inhabited by imperfect humans, like you and me. But he came. **Fiat Lux**.

The first ones to show up at his birth were dirty, unkempt, “smelling-to-high-heaven” shepherds who spent all their time around farm animals. *God could have* chosen to arrive in the person of Jesus as a fully grown adult. *He could have* chosen to arrive here on earth as a wealthy and privileged land

owner. *He could have* arrived in strength and all of the independence that a human can possess, but he arrived as a helpless, dependent and vulnerable baby.

He came out of eternity into mortality, out of brilliant and dazzling light into the darkness of evil and depravity. He came to “tabernacle” with us—to pitch his tent right next to ours, to be next to us, close to us and with us. He came into our darkness and pain to lead us out into his glorious light. *Fiat Lux.*

We are assured that the Lord our Shepherd is with us even though *we walk through the darkest valley* (Psalm 23:4). Poverty, hunger, homelessness, warfare, corruption, lust, abuse, greed, addictions, bigotry and hatred are among many dark valleys we humans experience.

Darkness for many people is struggling with a debilitating and perhaps terminal illness—it includes the aches and pains and memories and regrets of old age. Darkness descends on us when we lose a loved one.

In a beautiful prophecy of the birth of Jesus, the arrival of God in the flesh, Isaiah poetically wrote: *The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned* (Isaiah 9:2). *Fiat Lux.*

Jesus’ presence brings light, just as surely as the headlights of a car illuminate a dark road ahead. God was a fire by night to the Israelites in the wilderness, as they traversed a dark and desolate and dangerous path to the Promised Land.

God’s presence in our lives brings hope in times of hopelessness—he brings a calming assurance in times of fear and frustration. As the Lord our Shepherd he refreshes our souls, he guides and leads us and prepares a table for us, even in the presence of enemies.

Jesus, the Light of the world, calmed the seas, created food, healed the sick, resurrected the dead. **God will always make a way out of darkness and pain for ALL his children—he will do whatever it takes to save and restore and rescue us.** Whatever it takes! *Fiat Lux.*

John tells us that Jesus, the Word of God, is *the light of ALL mankind* (John 1:4, my emphasis). Even though Jesus is the Light of THE WORLD (John 8:12, my emphasis) and though he brought and brings illumination, healing and restoration, sometimes people prefer the darkness all around them.

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil (John 3:19).

Jesus is the Light who exposes dark corners of life that some might prefer to keep hidden. **The Light of Jesus** demonstrates that not all is in order, or as neat and tidy as some might like to delude themselves into thinking. **The Light of Jesus** illuminates dirt and caked on muck that needs to be cleansed, washed and restored.

The Light of Jesus comes into the world at large, and to our world specifically, not to condemn us but to restore us (John 3:17). He doesn’t come to shame us because of dirt and filth but to ask us to join him in cleaning it up. We can see clearly what needs to be cleansed and how it can be restored because of Jesus, **the Light of the world.** Jesus is the real, the authentic, the self-giving, life-giving, self-sacrificing **Light of the world**, who embodies:

- The love and forgiveness of God.
- The hope that we can move forward, following him, out of darkness into the light.

- The courage, strength and encouragement who lives in and through and within us, enabling us to move away from the shadows into his glorious light.
- The restoration, reconciliation and peace that we all yearn for, that we might be united in and with him.

As we give thanks for all that Jesus was, is and forever will be, here's an eloquent poem I have recently been reading and pondering again, titled "First Coming" by Madeleine L'Engle:

*He did not wait till the world was ready,
till men and nations were at peace.
He came when the Heavens were unsteady,
and prisoners cried out for release.*

*He did not wait for the perfect time.
He came when the need was deep and great.
He dined with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine.*

*He did not wait until hearts were pure.
In joy he came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt,
To a world like ours, of anguished shame
he came, and his Light would not go out.*

*He came to a world which did not mesh,
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh
the Maker of the stars was born.*

*We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!*

—The Ordering of Love: The New and Collected Poems of Madeleine L'Engle

The Light of this world never changes. The Light of this world will never be diminished or put out. The Light of this world brings hope, grace, forgiveness and mercy to the dark valleys of bitterness, hatred, lust and greed. ***Joy to the world, the Lord is come!***

Merry Christmas one and all, my dear friends and my brothers and sisters in Christ. ***Fiat Lux!***

Gathering around his crib and cradle, with you, to worship him,



Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

CWR/PTM Prayer List—December 2022

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 remember my sister-in-law in your prayers. She has liver cancer. Please pray that she lives long enough to see her first grandchild, who is expected to be born soon.—North Carolina

Please pray for me, as I'm having nerve and heart problems and I'm struggling with depression again.—Louisiana

We thank you for all the love that you show us. It does make such a difference in our lives. We pray for continued blessings for everyone involved with PTM.—Puerto Rico

Please pray for my brother-in-law who is having trouble with seizures. He and my sister have had to move out of their assisted living and find a place that will take him. They found a place, but it is much more expensive. Thank you in advance for your prayers and concern.—North Dakota

Please pray for my sister whose kidneys are bad. She may need to have a transplant.—Ohio

I'm still grieving the loss of my husband from two years ago. I need your prayers for comfort.—Virginia

Please pray for my healing. I'm dealing with carpal tunnel and acid reflux.—Wisconsin

PTM/CWR has helped my husband and I for many years in learning about the gospel of Jesus. My husband died a year ago, and I'm doing well at this point. Thanks for your prayers!—Alberta, Canada

Thank you very much for revealing to us God's mercy and love. We are starting to recuperate after spending 35 years in a legalistic church. Thank you for helping us see that Jesus is our Lord now and always.—Washington

Please pray for my son's everyday struggle with his alcoholism. He is seeking counseling.—Arizona

Please pray for total relief for my wife's chronic back pain. Thank you for your continued prayers.—Florida

Please pray for peace around the world, especially for an end to the war in Ukraine.—North Carolina

Please continue to pray for my son who has cancer and is still on chemo. I now have two leaking valves in my heart. Thank you for all your prayers for us.—Georgia

Thank you for your prayers for me. There are still evil people in my apartment building trying to pick my locks. I'm a 65-year-old woman and live alone, but I trust in God's protection.—New York

Our 51-year-old son needs deliverance from alcohol. He can't get over the suicide of his oldest brother in 1988. He's been in and out of rehab at least ten times. Only God can deliver him.—Indiana

I have lost the hearing in my right ear if I take out my hearing aid. This is difficult. I'm totally deaf in my left ear. Also, I'm going to have thyroid surgery to remove the growth that's on it. Please pray for the surgery to be successful and also pray that God will take away the pain that I have all over my body 24-7.—Alabama

Please pray for my niece who has a heart problem and may need to have open heart surgery.—South Carolina

I have only one sister and she's in poor health. She is recovering from COVID and is very weak. She has heart problems and other many health issues. Please pray for her.—Virginia

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.