

# Christmas 2023

*His life is the light that shines through the darkness  
—and the darkness can never extinguish it.*

John 1:5 TLB

Dear family & friends –

In early January I felt the Lord calling me to write another book. I didn't know how I'd find time, so I asked Him to wake me up early each morning. He did, but always earlier than I asked as if to test that I was really serious about writing *Write and Live His Answer NOW – Encouragement to Impact Our Culture*. By mid-February, I had 12 chapters written, but then I needed to set it aside to begin planning the May Colorado Christian Writers Conference and August Greater Philly virtual conference. When I told my team I was going to direct the Colorado conference from my back porch, they insisted we again go virtual. We did, combining both conferences into one. I'm so glad I listened to their wise counsel.

This year's virtual Write His Answer Conference was the most faith-stretching of the close to 70 conferences I've directed, but it also was the most powerful. Two weeks before the conference our registrations were down, and it looked like I would need to borrow money to cover the expenses. But God is faithful. He sent an additional 100 conferees. Despite huge technical challenges, over 3.5 days 60 faculty presented live (no pre-records), 7 keynotes, 9 labs, 9 continuing sessions, 60 workshops, 27 critique groups, 6 panels, 8 interest groups, and 54 round tables. I thank God for conferees from 5 countries and 33 states and for my incredible staff who managed over 20 laptops in our virtual studio. Amazing stats! (My 3 grandkids are center bottom.)



In April we got a goldendoodle puppy. Pumpkin and Emmy (our labradoodle) get along wonderfully and entertain us playing tug-o-war. Best of all, they help Paul be more alert. His dementia has not gotten worse, but he needs to be much more active. "If he doesn't use it, he will lose it," our doctor says. Paul has arthritis, but he is able to move around our home better than I can. My knees are bone on bone, but surgery makes no sense since the bulging discs in my back and arthritis in my neck/shoulders are far more painful. I'm praying the pain management doctor I see December 29 will be able to help.

It's been a year of joy and struggles, but I thank God I am able to sit in my recliner and work. I published Angie Bass Williams' powerful nonfiction book, *Joy in Adversity*, and edited Jo Hardesty's 645-page novel, *Some Trust in Horses*, that I believe will bring many to the Lord. And yes, I'm back to work on *Write and Live His Answer NOW*. I've finished all 20 chapters plus have added 27 chapters from friends. I believe it is the most important book I will ever publish. I'm working to have it in print by the beginning of the new year.



I thank God for Zoom that makes it possible for me to lead critique groups, the Write His Answer Monday Night Fellowship, and a monthly Hour of Encouragement. Plans are underway for the May 15-18 Colorado Christian Writers Conference live at the YMCA of the Rockies. Greater Philly will be virtual in the summer. Although I turn 79 in January, I'm not retiring. As the world grows darker, more than ever I am committed to encouraging and equipping Christians to "write His answer." Have a blessed Christmas because He came and is coming again.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marlene".

# Darkness and Light

Cascading icicle lights,  
super brite bulbs—  
Neighborhoods have been transformed  
into Christmas wonderlands.  
The lights seem brighter than ever this year,  
yet so many walk in darkness.

The uncertainty  
of what lies ahead in the new year  
casts long shadows of fear.  
We look for reassurance  
that all will be well—  
for light in the growing darkness.

Violence on our streets,  
the expanding war in the Middle East,  
the increasing threat of terrorism...  
Are we living in the End Times?  
Is there no way  
to push back the darkness?

Rejoice!  
“The people who walk in darkness  
shall see a great Light.”<sup>1</sup>  
“There shall be no more death,  
nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain.”<sup>2</sup>  
Jesus, our Savior, has come,<sup>3</sup>  
and He is coming again.<sup>4</sup>  
“His life is the light  
that shines through the darkness—  
and the darkness can never extinguish it.”<sup>5</sup>

Marlene Bagnull  
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