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Dear Prayer Warriors and Financial Partners:

I know it has been a while since you have heard from us. I would like to express our sincere apologies for not communicating with you in almost two years. 2020, to say the least, was a very strange year. Through it all, God has been working in our lives, we see Him clearly in the turmoil, in the praises, in the loss and in the miracles. Hindsight demonstrates God's personal interest in all of our lives, in every circumstance, good or bad.

Establishing Roots. In early February 2020, Rich and I successfully completed our application and training for entry into the Florida state prison system as volunteers. We received Statewide Clearance for all Florida prisons! Our faithful volunteers in Virginia know full well what a blessing this is! Each individual prison in Virginia has a separate training and application process! During our first six months here in Orlando, God showed us why we moved to Orlando. He supernaturally connected us to a realtor (Christine) through our friends Ralph & Susan at Acts Foundation Global (actsfoundation.com). While Ralph and Susan have significant connections in Florida, we found out later that they had only met this couple once at a revival meeting, less than a month before we moved . . . because Ralph and Susan knew we were moving to Florida, they just gave us Christine's e-mail address! Turns out Christine's husband, Rocco is involved in leading a prison ministry here in Central Florida! We were new FL transplants, out of our element, directionally challenged in a traffic-clogged city with only two or three people we knew in the entire State! So, within 4-6 months of making our move to Florida, we were on the schedule for more than six speaking/preaching events at four different institutions in Central Florida during March and April of 2020! This also included additional connections through our church (Faith Assembly of God Orlando) and through Mark Mason with Life on the Verge Ministries. Of course, we were praising God for bringing us to Orlando and for opening the doors so quickly. We were excited about diving right in!

Our Home. In early December of 2019, Christine helped us find the perfect home here in Florida on our first day looking! Based on the way the Florida real estate market has been escalating in the last year this was a miracle in and of itself! I could not imagine trying to purchase a house (virtually) in the early stages of the pandemic or even now as houses are being snapped up with cash offers that exceed the asking price! God has put it on our hearts that our home is to be a place of hospitality and healing! We are looking at starting a small group gathering in our home to reach out with study, fellowship, and fun to others in our church and community. This has already begun on an informal basis since we have again been able to start inviting folks into our home. We hope that our home will provide a warm, safe, and inviting place where folks can be genuine, and they can be heard, without fear of reprisal or judgment. A place where relationships can flourish and people can experience joy, hope and healing through Jesus Christ.

Lock Down. In the beginning of the lockdowns, prayer was our focus. It seems that difficult times have a way of driving us to our knees. Rich had just found a part time job substitute teaching in Orlando at the Christian school affiliated with our church, and then schools shut down tight. In March, at my job, I got a mandatory week furlough and a month of reduced hours working from home. Prison visitation of any kind ground to a halt Statewide. The planned Emmaus Ministries newsletter got put on hold. Scheduled trips to visit family were cancelled. At that juncture, we shifted into survival and prayer

mode. We struggled with fear . . . fear of finances, fear of the pandemic, fear of what the future held. We couldn't go to church... where are you God? ... I know you are in control! Scripture tells us that God has not given us a Spirit of Fear, but of Love, and of Power, and of a Sound Mind! (2 Tim. 1:7) We held on to this hope. Then, more discouraging news came. It really tested our faith.

Grief and Frustration. As some of you know, our dear friend and ministry partner, Beulah Prestipino passed away in May of 2020. The official diagnosis was not the virus, but I am certain that the prohibition of family visits was a contributing factor. In any event the Lord called her home. We believe she is now much better off in the arms of her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and we know we will see her again! To add to our grief, Rich's mother (Evelyn) passed away on Dec. 7th. Evelyn had severe arthritis. We believe God called her to Him to relieve her suffering, as He did with Beulah. Both were 93 years old. We cannot explain, deflect blame, or even fully comprehend our own personal tragedies, much less the tragedies that are occurring worldwide every single day. At this juncture, Rich and I again chose to focus on prayer, God's Word and His Faithfulness. This is a remedy that everyone can access. When grief and frustration, anxiety, or even despair rear their ugly head and try to get a grip on us, we can choose to respond with prayer and thankfulness, and turn our focus toward God and choose to trust Him no matter how unjust things seem on the surface. He promises us that He is working and will continue to work for us. He promises in His Word that He is working all things together for good for those that love God (Romans 8:28). Notice that this Scripture does not say that He is working all **good** things together for good. He is working ALL things (the good, the bad and the ugly) together for our good.) All in accordance with His divine plan for our lives. God has a Plan for all of us, a plan for good and not for evil ... with an expected end! (Jeremiah 29:11). I trust His expected end for us, no matter how things appear.

God Still Heals Today! *Cindy's Family.* Just weeks after Evelyn's passing, we learned that my (Cindy's) father, stepmother and stepbrother had all tested positive for Covid19! Our immediate response was on our knees crying out to God, saying ... "We can't do this again!" We reached out to everyone to pray – my Dad is 82, had significant heart complications in the past and most definitely landed in the most vulnerable category... But **PRAISE GOD!** ... Everyone recovered! **TRULY A MIRACLE!** God intervened! He still Heals Today!

Elliot. While all this was going on, we were praying for a 5-month-old baby ("Elliot") to be healed of RSV. While, not the same contagion as Covid19, it is a serious respiratory virus, especially in very young children. Elliot's mother was a co-worker of mine. We prayed for weeks and there were conflicting prognoses, but Elliot has recovered and is doing well! **PRAISE GOD!** I am very thankful that many other daily prayers for provision, safety, healing, and wisdom in decision-making have been answered. As we all continue to persevere through our own individual, disproportional, personal, and national health and economic crises during this unprecedented time, we want to remind you to never stop praying. It's always our first line of defense in times of crisis.

Back in the Prisons. In early Spring 2021, the Florida Department of Corrections re-opened its prisons to visitors and volunteers. Almost a year to the day after the shutdown, we were finally going back into the Florida prisons and minister. Currently, Rich and I are ministering every third Saturday at Polk Correctional Institution and Rich is ministering at Polk every first Wednesday and at Central Florida Reception Unit (CFRC) every fifth Wednesday.

Inmate Testimony. At Polk we ran across an inmate we will call "LR" who shared his testimony with us. He had been incarcerated since 1983. He left a wife and two children behind. He prayed for many years to a God he did not know to let him see his children. God's answer was divorce papers from his wife. Much later, his mother provided this advice: "LR, I love you. Do not worry about your wife and children. Get right with God first and He will make everything else right." Not long after, in the Summer of 2002, LR heeded his mother's advice and attended chapel services at Polk. He writes: "*The preacher*

was standing right in front of me, looking straight into my eyes saying aren't you tired? Come. I thought to myself 'he must be talking with someone behind me.' I faked blowing my nose and wiped away my tears as I looked behind me and saw no one was sitting there. That night I believed accepted and confessed Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Later, when I read the Scripture in Matthew 6:33 that says seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added to you, I thought of my mother's words and prayed that one day I would see my children again." Eight years later God answered his prayer and he was reunited with an in person visit from his two children after no contact for almost 25 years. This testimony truly exhibits that God has His hand on us and listens to our prayers.

What God Wants from Us. In such a time as this, what does God want from us? Many evangelical leaders promote a revival for our land. I agree. But how does one start revival? Just by holding church meetings and maybe getting a charismatic speaker and a great worship leader? We can do that, but I think there is more to it than that. I did some research on the word "revive" and "reviving" in Scripture. The best place I found that describes what God wants for revival is found in Isaiah 57 starting at verse 14. "Prepare the way, take the stumbling block out of the way of my people . . . for thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy. I dwell in the High and Holy Place with him who has a contrite and humble spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. A note to consider from the first part of that passage. Are you a stumbling block that people might trip over trying to seek God? Or are you a light that draws people to Him?"

Revival of the Heart. God says he dwells with those who have a humble spirit and a contrite heart. What does contrite mean? The Hebrew word that it is derived from means "crushed" . . . I'm sure that is not what you wanted to hear, however, let me propose this dynamic. Suppose God wants revival to start in your heart and mine. Perhaps God is looking for some people who are willing to let God crush their bad habits, crush their critical and judgmental attitudes and crush their pre-conceived notions of who God is! Let Him revive our hearts and revive our Spirits to be in line with His plan and purpose. I don't know about you, but that's what Rich and I want! We want that for you too. Perhaps God wants to get us to a place where instead of relying on our own methods of operating – we start listening to what God wants. Instead of relying on our own strength and knowledge, let us get on our knees and ask God for His strength and wisdom!

There is a great prayer in Psalm 139:23-24 that talks about this exactly and I think it would be a good place for all of us to start. Search me oh God and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts (this word gets translated anxieties); and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Another one is found in Psalm 19:14: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight . . . Oh God, my strength and my redeemer. We can all start there and sit back and watch God answer those prayers and begin to use us to start a revival in our hearts that can spread to the hearts of others. If we want revival – the path to get there starts with letting revival begin in your own heart and spirit. Let God break you of your pride and any lofty attitudes about yourself or even others around you --- Let Him crush you and break you so that he can mold you and set you on the path that leads to His purpose for your life. This is how we can see revival break out!

Praises Reports and Prayer Requests:

- Praise God for getting us back into the Florida prisons after over a year on lock-down.
- Praise God for helping us get connected to a church and friends here in Orlando, and for finding us a great home here!
- Praise God for healing for Mike, Shiela, David, Elliot, and many others!
- Praise God for the storms that lead us to our knees.
- Pray for anointing to preach the Gospel to the men at CFRC and Polk, and wherever else God leads us.

- Pray that we are able to start a small group fellowship in our home.
- Pray for revival in our hearts and in our spirit!
- Pray for wisdom and revelation knowledge from above (Ephesians 1:17).
- Pray for spiritual and financial guidance for the future of Emmaus Ministries.

Future Plans – Financial Challenges: Rich has officially retired since the pandemic. Currently, he has been devoting significantly more time to prayer and bible study for preaching in the prisons since they opened back up early this year (3 ministry preaching events monthly). Because of the impacts of COVID, combined with our lack of communication, we have received less than a handful of contributions during 2020 and 2021. If I may be completely transparent, every time we sat down to write we just didn't know what to say. We are currently in the process of trying to establish a budget for 2022 that would cover some of our costs and expenses, along with perhaps a stipend for Rich. Gas has skyrocketed and we travel an hour each way at least twice a month to Polk (CFRC is closer). Our website domain, banking fees, annual corporate maintenance and the post office box rental together run close to \$1,000 a year combined. Because we have been covering it mostly from our own funds the last two years (our choice), we have decided there is a need to evaluate whether to continue maintaining our 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. We hope to maintain it, if for nothing else but to continue to leave the future of Emmaus Ministries in God's hands, should He so choose to expand our outreach and ministry influence. Perhaps we could reach more prisons, organize local outreach events (there are still many folks in need as a result of the pandemic here in Orlando), as well as develop the vision God planted in our hearts for foreign mission trips and small groups ministry. Our mission is simple: "To Walk with Jesus, recognizing Him for who He is, and to tell others the Good News that He has indeed Risen! We want to continue towards this mission, but we need your help. Pray about partnering with us monthly during 2022 so we might reach inmates in prison and endeavor to provide spiritual and practical support upon their release. We have faith that Emmaus Ministries can have an impact locally, nationally, and globally for Christ in the future. In Luke 10, Jesus sends his disciples out to minister. In verse 2, Jesus says "the harvest truly is great but the laborers are few, pray ye therefore to the Lord of the harvest that he would send for laborers into his harvest. He then talks about the disciples entering houses to minister and tell them "remain in that house, eating and drinking such things as they give , for the laborer is worthy of his wage." Pray for God's wisdom for how you might be able to help us in our laboring for God's end-time harvest.

We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your prayers and support!

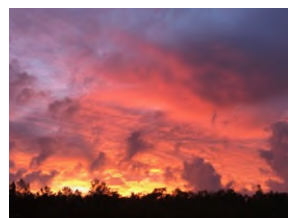
Blessings to all,

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Rich and Cindy Hamilton, Directors

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Remember God's Creative Power (Genesis 1:16):