



Dear Friends

We enter this Advent season during a year that continues to give us reason to pause and reflect. I wonder if there is a person on planet Earth who has not had their life disrupted in some way as we have learnt to live with the reality of a global pandemic and other world events that have shaken our foundations. As I wrote last year's Christmas letter, I could not have imagined what the new year would bring for the world. And yet, here we are, each with our own story to tell. I hope yours includes moments where God has come close and reminded you of His love and faithfulness.

There is a beautiful 'pause and reflect' verse recorded by Luke in his narrative of events surrounding the birth of Jesus - **'But Mary stored up all these things and pondered them in her heart.'** Luke 2:19 (NIV)

From Gabriel's announcement that she would give birth to the Saviour of the world, to his arrival in a cave and all the life changing events in between, we can imagine that there was much to ponder. The shepherds had just visited and were now on their way to spread the amazing news that the Messiah was born and here we find Mary thinking carefully, reflecting on, mulling over, trying to understand – pondering.

Why would Luke slip this verse in amongst the excitement of this world changing night? Perhaps to remind us that, although Mary had given birth to an extra-ordinary child, in her heart she knew she was simply an ordinary, humble, obedient servant of God. She recognised her need for regular moments in His presence to praise and give thanks for miracles and to find peace when life didn't quite make sense.

We are no different from Mary – ordinary, humble servants of the Lord whose hearts hold many things that need to be regularly brought before Him in worship and surrender. As the Christmas of this year of the unexpected approaches let us remember that nothing about us or our circumstances is unknown to the One who created us. Jesus, the son born to Mary – her Saviour and ours – holds us together and we can trust Him completely. Ponder that!

Commissioner Rosalie and I pray for the Lord's loving presence to surround you wherever you are this Christmas and invite you to receive this prayer for yourself:

**Breath of heaven hold me together
Be forever near me
Breath of heaven
Breath of heaven lighten my darkness
Pour over me your holiness
For you are holy
Breath of heaven
(Amy Grant)**

Yours in Christian Love

Commissioner Bronwyn Buckingham
World Secretary for Women's Ministries



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