

A CHRISTMAS MIRACLE

By Lindsay Alder

His heart beats still. Not as well as it did before the heart attack. But it beats still.



My heart feels warm tonight. Broken, bruised, torn, certainly. But beautifully warm. I feel intense gratitude—gratitude so deep and encompassing that it seems a new hole has opened in my soul to make room, gratitude so filling and so personal that it won't stop coursing down my cheeks in silent tears. My husband is breathing. I can hear it, deep and soft.

Just a couple of hours ago, I climbed into his hospital bed, ignoring the gentle kicks from our soon-to-arrive baby,

and found a spot among all the wires hooked to his chest where I could rest my head. Listening to his heartbeat in my ear was an experience that will be burned into my memory forever.

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The warm lights from the Christmas strands strung across the room make me feel cozy tonight in more than one way. Their soft glow creates a comforting atmosphere, but the real

coziness comes from knowing that true friends were willing to drop their own Christmas Eve plans to come decorate when Brian moved from the intensive care unit. The three-foot (1 m) Christmas tree stands in the window as a symbol of their love.

How can I thank our friends? Will they ever know how much I needed them and how grateful I am? While my thoughts were turned to nothing but my husband, they were loving my children, scrubbing my house, restocking my fridge, doing my laundry, wrapping our Christmas presents, and bringing love to me through hugs, dinners, gift cards, cash, phone calls, texts, emails, messages, bags of cinnamon-scented pine cones, and a suitcase full of decorations. They cried with me and prayed and fasted. And in doing all of this, they gave me the most precious gift they could have given: their time. How I love them all!

I think I will sleep well tonight, for I am wrapped in a seemingly endless field of gratitude for all of them.

But mostly I feel gratitude to the Lord for my husband's life—his deep breathing, his heart pumping blood, his living body and soul. His life is my Christmas miracle. ■

The author lives in North Carolina, USA.