

# From the Heart

By Holly Wilson

It was two years ago at Christmas time that my husband Rick and I received the devastating news that our unborn baby required heart surgery. Painfully, we were also warned that there was a chance the baby's condition could result in a miscarriage. Needless to say, we did not celebrate Christmas that year. Instead, we retreated from the world. Many nights, as we lay together staring at the soft lights of the Christmas tree, our tears mingled and we wondered: Would our baby live?



Five months later, on a bright day in May, our beautiful daughter Hope Arden was born. Thankfully, she did not require surgery immediately and after a week in hospital, we were able to bring our precious baby home. For the next five months, we tried to not let worry dominate our lives. One of Hope's greatest gifts to us is her contagious smile and good nature. She is such a sweet soul full of all the goodness that humanity has to offer. How can something so good be seen as anything less than a blessing?

On Oct. 24, 2006, Hope had open-heart surgery. That day, we waited for what seemed like an eternity for Hope's surgeon to return to tell us how everything had gone. Amazingly, everything did go well and after six days in hospital – and all that it entails – we were once again able to bring our baby home.

When Christmas rolled around two months later you might think that we would be on top of the world. Baby's first Christmas – a time to visit relatives and gifts galore! But our Christmas was a quiet one. Fear of infection was a harsh reality for us so we protectively stayed close to home. On Christmas Eve, we bundled Hope up and took her for a long walk in her buggy, and then, on Christmas day we spent time enjoying our gifts and later had a small turkey dinner. Besides a brief visit from one of my sisters, it was just the three of us savoring our first Christmas as a family.

It has been a year now since Hope's heart surgery and we are very grateful that she has so briefly recovered from this terrible ordeal. However, sometimes, like when she climbs up the jungle gym smiling in delight at the other children, I can't help but feel a tinge of sadness. Why did this have to happen to our baby girl?

But one can drown in questions such as these. The truth is that there are no comforting answers. Only the Creator knows and we are not privy to these mysteries of life. In the meantime, our hope, faith and the prayers of loved ones have sustained us through the darkest times.

Although the fear of all that we have been through has been slow to recede, as each month passes, I see us opening up once more to all that life has to offer. It is impossible to resist Hope's enthusiasm and love of life, and I expect that this Christmas we will most enjoy Hope's delight in all the wonders this magical season has to offer.