

## Two mothers

I am a midwife. My words, thoughts and actions have been formed over a period of time and a unique set of experiences: the world into which I was born; the mother who bore me; family that nurtured me; the wide open land and its people.

Midwifery belongs to women. The midwife is *with woman*, a companion for a distinct and definable childbearing event, in a special partnership.

Being a midwife within the community applies in a very special way within the church fellowship. From time to time I have had the special joy of being *with woman* for friends with whom we worship each week.

Some time ago there were two young mothers in our Church who became pregnant at about the same time. One had been previously in my care, and the other had had her other children in another State. These two women were good friends who shared a great deal in their walks of faith. They both asked me to be their midwife.

About a month before her baby was due, one came to my office for a check early one morning. Her face was tense as she greeted me. I had expected her and the two boys, tumbling in, chatting, squabbling, reminding her to hurry. Instead, her husband was with her.

Her baby was still. The usual waking-up movements had not happened this morning.

I palpated her abdomen. It was soft, unresponsive. The child within had lost her tone. I tried, unsuccessfully, to find a heartbeat. I wanted to be wrong, as I moved the Doppler about, waiting for the reassuring throb. Nothing. A deep and heart-wrenching cry escaped the mother's throat.

There was no reason found for this loss. After months of growth, the quickening and other reassurances of life had suddenly ended. No one is ever prepared for this. As midwife I accompanied the grieving parents, and the mother birthed her baby girl. We wept together as she cradled the lifeless form. We prayed together and shared comfort from God's word.

Not long afterwards, the other mother also gave birth. I was packing up afterwards, and I commented that the birth was "uneventful". That word stuck in my mind, and I wrote this in my journal:

I called it an uneventful birth.

There was no time of fear or doubt, no place for concern. Progress was swift as you opened and gave up your treasure into my hands.

Uneventful?

How could I call it that?

When heaven opened a little and a sunbeam in the night showed an angel the way to your home;

When your beautiful pink babe was ushered into your arms;

When heaven's host watched on in awe, and a little cherub said "ah-ah-ah!"

When your heart swelled to pour out its love

As mother and father, and the whole circle of family and dear ones greeted and welcomed the newest member.

And you and your loved ones watched an unfolding miracle.

Uneventful?

The rush of waters. The surges of power from within, urging the little one forward. The need to be ready, as fullness and heaviness preceded her arrival. The moment between times - still within, and yet without, and a small cry before the release.

Warm, wet, and glistening in my hands, held over the welcoming mat.

Could this be called uneventful?

Arms stretch wide, and air fills the little lungs for the very first time. The baby heart undergoes the miracle of changing from the placental circulation to its own supply. The baby skin feels warmth at the mother's breast. And the baby lips search for sweet warm milk. The mother's arms encircle her soft baby child. Senses are fully alert, as sight, touch, smell and sound imprint on the memory. Others are reverently quiet, unwilling to interrupt this falling in love.

And her womb gives up the afterbirth.

What great mysteries we have witnessed!

A child has been born. Events too momentous for description.

The early light of dawn can be seen above the hills to the East as a family settles down to rest before the new day begins.

Uneventful - yet extraordinary.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

That second child now runs around on stubby toddler legs, and delights us all. The mother who lost her child lifts up the little one and gives her a big hug. She is finding new ways of service in the community that would not have been possible under the previous plan. The deep pain of heart and breast and womb has eased, with scars and treasured memories remaining. Her little girl awaits her in heaven.

I hold these memories with special reverence. I have been privileged to be *with woman* in an intimate and precious time.

Joy Johnston 2004