

Dear Friends

At this time of the year we remember the Psalmist's confidence in the certainty of God's help: *"But I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble."* (Psalm 59:16). We've sensed times of trouble in the land over the last year, with the ANC recalling President Mbeki six months before the end of his term. This has been followed by resignations, dismissals, and now the formation of a new party. We need to pray that the coming election, seemingly now in March 2009, will be peaceful. At the same time Zimbabwe is sinking deeper into trouble and millions are starving, thousands crossing into S.A., Botswana and Mazambique. These are times of trouble, but God is our refuge. Whatever happens, God is on the throne.

Christmas reminds us that God has done something about the human condition, and the ongoing problems that men and governments create. The coming to earth of Jesus (the incarnation) was a vital and necessary part of God's plan of salvation. Without the incarnation there would have been no atonement. No crib, no cross, no crown, no baby, no Saviour. The one anticipates the other. Yes, there is mystery, and we need to experience something of the mystery and the sheer beauty of the glory of God in the face of Christ. And it is this sense of awe and reverence that will deepen our experience, strengthen our faith, and enrich our worship.

The fact that God has kept His promises, intervened in history, and so made possible our redemption, gives us great confidence that we can trust such a God to help us in times of trouble in our nation and region.

Please support our carol and Christmas services, and above all bring family and friends with you; they are most welcome.

Wishing you a blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Peter