

## One of 120 billion

Beloved person,

Of the approximately 120 billion people who have ever been born, you are one. It is remarkable that something we have all experienced is so unique and vulnerable. We were totally dependent on love and attention, which hopefully were there. In the Christmas story - as told in the 1952 Dedication - it says: *The shepherds laid their shepherd's staves beside them, knelt down, and bowed their heads before the child lying in the wooden manger. Then, in soft voices, the shepherds told Mary and Joseph the message they had received that night regarding the birth of the child, a birth that brought joy to all people. And beside the manger lay Mary, so still and so thoughtful. She pondered what the shepherds had told her about this child. Did she understand it all? Mary could only marvel in gratitude and reverence.*

The defenceless child in the manger can connect us with our own birth and our shared origin. How can we understand this miracle? The miracle that we exist and that we can be meaningful. How often have you not heard that...?

The Christmas story gives us the opportunity to reflect on who we have become, on what we have received, and on what we can offer the world. Perhaps that is the attainable and hopeful perspective we are looking for in these times. The story shows that it does not depend on grand gestures or perfect circumstances. It also tells us: give the world who you are. In all simplicity. Go on, try it.

### Stars and Magi

*people required  
willing to seek the child,  
exiled or missing,  
or wrapped in cloths*

*people required  
who dare to  
change old systems  
and break chains of power*

*people required  
who, like shepherds and magi,  
listen to angels  
and who travel by stars*

*people required  
who keep wishing to share  
their dream that the world  
will one day be healed*

*people required  
who shine the light  
whose fiery longing  
never disappears*

*people required  
who with that story  
want to remain true  
to their ideal<sup>1</sup>*

With our-heartfelt greeting, wishing you beautiful Christmas days,

Brother Marten van der Wal and sister Nanda Ziere



<sup>1</sup> Poem: Eveline Swinkels-Braaksma,(freely translated) Christmas dedication 2020, [www.apgen.nl/toeleven-naar-kerst/sterren-en-wijzen](http://www.apgen.nl/toeleven-naar-kerst/sterren-en-wijzen)  
(Christmas Dedication 2020 The light of life)