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Dear Beloved Sister Joyce,

With each passing year of living with Jesus I have become more and more aware of the precious inheritance we all have in the Body of Christ. Chris and I belong to a wonderful Baptist church right around the corner. It has been here since 1789 and the cemetery outside is filled with the familiar names of local families, and now, one of ours lies there too. We sing in the choir, and because the choir loft sits behind the pulpit, we get to look out at all the beautiful people with whom we share our lives and our faith. They are a mixed lot. We have teachers, farmers, university professors, lumber jacks, doctors, firemen, telephone workers, wives and mothers, some computer professionals – but when we all come to the communion table we are part of one family. I sit there week after week and am profoundly grateful for them. But they are just the immediate part of the great community of faith from which we benefit – all those who have loved us, sacrificed for us, and in ways large and small, brought us closer to Jesus.

As did you. I am profoundly grateful for you. I am grateful for your place in our lives and hearts, for our shared years, for the lasting impact it has had on our faith, our knowledge of God, and the wisdom it brought to our family and countless others whose lives we have touched as you touched ours. Your spirit is stamped indelibly into the lives our children and will roll down the ages as they become parents who love, disciple, and persevere in the faith.

These are the things I know you did:

- a. You taught us to invest in miracles
- b. You actually walked in the truth of “casting all upon the Lord”
- c. You lived the example of a faithful and submitted wife acknowledging the headship of your husband over your life, but trusting in the headship of Jesus over your heart.
- d. You loved without judgment, disciplined with authority, and covered many sins.
- e. You taught organization. We still practice many things you did 35 years ago in Milton.
- f. You taught us to have confidence in the word of God spoken to us.
- g. You taught us servant-hood.
- h. You persevered.
- i. You changed our lives.

I wish I could be with you now to tell you these things in person. Berry wrote about seeing you in Glory, so young and beautiful, without pain and the cares of this life. As I write this, I am picturing you as I imagine you look now: 20-odd years older than the last time we saw you, but even more beautiful than I remember, much as Chris has grown more beautiful to me over the years. I see you with grey hair (like mine!), very thin because of your illness, but with the beauty of a woman whose face and eyes express the fullness of her heart. I imagine your glad greeting: “Hello, Allan! Hello, Chris!” and your smile. I think about holding your hand and the joy of being reunited with someone we love. I think about seeing Judah, all grown up, and Berry, and knowing that you can rejoice in having loved all of us, having changed all of us, countless men, women, and especially children you have touched over these many years. For all of us, for my children, for me: Thank you.

With eternal love and affection,

Allan