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The birth of a child.

My wife Wendy and I have three children. Those of you who have had children born to you can probably relate to the happy anticipation and high anxiety of that *first* birth. Our first child was Martina. We entered the hospital in the morning. I remember, after Wendy had been in labor for a day and a night, a heart monitor suddenly indicated that Martina was in danger. So, there was a quick, emergency cesarean performed. I can recall being told that if I wanted to be in the room when the surgery was performed, I had better quickly jump out of my clothes and into a pair of scrubs that a nurse was handing me. I changed in the hallway.

Well, Martina was born just fine, but she was extremely low on blood sugar and she was very cold. So, a nurse quickly handed me Martina – I felt like I was being passed a football by the quarterback – and I was

told to follow the nurse down the hall. We half ran. I ended up feeding Martina a bottle of sugar water while holding her, standing under a powerful heat lamp – which melted my hair.

I spent much of the next 24 hours with Martina because Wendy needed medical help herself after the protracted labor and lightning cesarean. It was great to bond with my child that way. When I finally left the hospital, after spending two days and two nights there, I walked out of the sliding glass doors only to discover that the sunny weather we had been having had given way to an icy cold, heavy snowstorm. I was wearing cotton pants and a tee shirt as I dug my car out.

But I wasn't cold. I wasn't angry. I was gloriously joyous. That's what having a child is all about.

The following is from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 1. It describes an angel telling Zechariah, the husband of Elizabeth, that after so many long years of trying to have a child, they would have one. That child would be John the Baptist, who would usher in Jesus' ministry and personally baptize Jesus:

While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. ¹² Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him. ¹³ But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son,

and you are to name him John. ¹⁴ You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord.

We're here today to celebrate the birth of another child: Jesus. I'd like to personally welcome all of you to First United Methodist of Pierce, and to our celebration. May all of you have a safe and joyous Christmas. No matter how big our how small our immediate family is, whether we are surrounded by loved ones on Christmas morning or whether we find ourselves with no other people around us, we are never alone. Because there is one child who was born into all of our immediate families. Jesus came to this world to be with each and every one of us – and he will never leave our side.

God bless all of you.