

Edina Morningside Community Church
United Church of Christ
Sunday, June 19, 2016
Prophetic Witness by Larry Williams

Good Morning. When Pastor Howard sketched out his idea for a series of brief testaments of prophecy and witness and asked me if I would speak, I had several ideas of a topic to address. I have a natural affinity towards the didactic -- to explore and explain ideas through questioning and analysis. But to examine ideas in a meaningful way and yet remain succinct is a challenge for another occasion; instead I'd like to tell a story of personal witness and prophesy inspired by the day - father's day.

I was and am a witness to the day my son Arch was born, to the day I became a father. And though thinking about the significance of that event in terms like these doesn't always make sense, nonetheless I declare, I bear witness to the truth that it was the single best, the single most profound and meaningful day of my life -- the day on which I experienced the greatest sense of fulfillment, and of meaning than I ever have. Now lest any of you fear that I am following the model of some of the Bible's most important patriarchs and have a favorite child, as Jacob or Abraham did, I assure you that Arch and Ella are both my favorites for they are both delightful, both remarkable, both make me so proud.

But though I was a witness to both of their births, they were different days and impacted me in different ways. For one thing: Ella came second; I had already seen up close the incredible, astounding power of birth. In addition, Ella's birth was over in an instant compared to Arch's; moreover, when Ella was born, purple as a plum, due to the umbilical cord momentarily around her neck, I experienced 5 or 6 seconds of dread and horror -- 5 or 6 seconds that felt like an eternity -- until her blessed "waaaaa" reassured me of how blessed I was.

But when my amazing, creative and powerful wife Jane delivered baby Archie after 20 something hours of intense labor, I bore witness at the most intimate and personal level to the awe-inspiring, life -- giving, divinity that unites us all ... for we have all been born, we have all been plucked from the star dust to which we will return, we have all been delivered into this complicated, breath-taking gift of life.

That night, after tucking mother and child into bed for a well-deserved rest, I returned to our apartment to walk the dog -- Joey, who prepared me for parenthood in ways as numerous as the stars. And late that night I lay down in the grass in a field in Riverside park in New York City, stared up into the wonder of what was up there, and wept in joyous rapture, enveloped in a benevolence, a love, and a purpose that I had never known. And to that miracle I bear witness.