

The Gift of Life

by Rev. Dr. Robin Hawley Gorsline

The joy of Advent/Christmas for me this year, like most, maybe all, of us, is competing in my life with the tragedies of Covid-19 and all its harms, even death, to so many, as well as by other pandemics of White supremacy, the climate crisis, and severe threats to our democracy, among others.

It's hard to know at times whether the joy or the trials is the more powerful. Clearly, like so many, my heart and my mind, my soul, are living on several levels, nothing new about that except that the potency of the competition is unusual in my life. But, I have been here before.

This struggle takes me back to an earlier time in my life, Advent/Christmas of 1982. In September I had come out to my wife, the wonderful and beautiful Judy, and we began the painful journey into eventual separation and divorce. I was in my second year of seminary and the Dean helped us find just the right couple's counselor at no charge to us.

But this involved not only Judy and me, but our two young daughters, Emily and Meg, ages four and two, and yet one more on the way, the daughter who became Robin Irene Gorsline on December 28. She was not literally a Christmas baby, but she was the incredible gift that got us to pause, gave us hope, in the midst of our angst, our fear, about our present and future realities.



The season was complicated by the fact that Judy's elderly mother had come to stay with us in preparation for Robin's birth, and to provide support afterwards. But we had not yet told her, or any of our family, about the changes we were dealing with so Judy and I had to talk in code, pretty much confining our heart sharing for the evening in a bedroom that had become a very different place than before I came out.

So, we were eager for this new life to arrive, even as we navigated the minefield of keeping the secret from family and church while many in the seminary community had begun to learn about it.

Then, came December 28 at Brigham & Women's Hospital in Boston and the beautiful, quick, uncomplicated arrival of Robin. We were thrilled. What a gift she was (and is)! I was present at the delivery, holding Judy's hand, offering

words of love, and we cried together in joy and in sadness. We assured each other that no matter what happened we were blessed and somehow we'd make it through to better times.

So, I can say, as I have said many times before, thank you God for showing me that you always have more for us, more love, more hope, more truth, more life. The year ending in a couple of weeks has been a challenge to say the least, but I am reminded it is not the end, that you have more for us. What a gift!