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Let’s start with the big news: we have a son! Abraham Joel was born on September 23 at 9:35 AM. He weighed 7 pounds, 3 ounces and was about 20 inches long. Abe was born with a diaphragmatic hernia (diagnosed at our 20-week ultrasound). His diaphragm didn’t form correctly so his stomach, intestines, and spleen were in his chest cavity. This limited the development of his lungs, especially the left lung, and shifted his heart to the right. Abe spent six weeks in the Avera NICU in Sioux Falls and had surgery when he was 18 days old to put his organs in place and patch his diaphragm. His treatments included ventilators, blood tests, IV nutrition, a tube that kept his stomach suctioned, narcotics, oxygen, and chest tubes. We are so thankful to the many faithful prayer warriors who were lifting up Abe to our Heavenly Father, and to all who loved, supported, and encouraged us along the way. We praise the LORD for healing Abe through the doctors, nurses, and medical technology. It wasn’t the path we would’ve chosen for ourselves, but we trust that God was glorified through it all. A few milestones: We first held him when he was 12 days old, and he first breathed on his own (and cried) when he was 24 days old. We all came home on November 4, the day after my birthday. Joel & I lived in the NICU at the hospital so we could stay close to Abe, even though it meant sharing a twin bed. The cafeteria’s monster cookies made up for it. We love having Abe at home with us – he is such a blessing! He’s doing great. He’s cooing and smiling and all the other adorable things that babies do. He has a few more follow-up appointments to make sure everything is going well and that he keeps gaining weight. Periodic updates from our journey as well as photos and videos can be found at our website.

Before Abe came along, I enjoyed a girls’ weekend in MN with college friends in February. In March, both of us traveled to Dallas, TX to visit friends. We went to the Ft. Worth Zoo and Stockyards, drove by the new Cowboys Stadium, walked around downtown Dallas, and went through the JFK Museum. My parents and brother Hunter came to Madison for Easter – the first holiday we’ve hosted. My sister Lexi graduated from MN State University Moorhead (my alma mater) in May. In June, Joel & I took a vacation to the East Coast. We visited friends in Waxhaw, NC for two days followed by five days in Washington, DC. Some of our highlights from DC included visiting the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, the Library of Congress, touring the Capitol, and experiencing Rita’s Italian Ice. The Heringer side of the family bombarded Crystal Springs Camp in ND for a reunion in mid-June, which was a fabulous time of connecting with (and meeting) cousins, aunts, and uncles. It was also a special time as our whole family prayed for our baby on the way.

We spent the Independence Day weekend in Hendricks with Joel’s parents and his brother Dave’s family from San Diego. The following weekend was bittersweet as we mourned the passing and celebrated the life of Joel’s Grandma Lucille at her funeral during a Simonson family reunion in Faribault, MN. It was a great time for me to meet many of Joel’s relatives and for him to reconnect. That weekend we also celebrated Joel’s parents’ 40th anniversary! In August we went to family camp at Inspiration Point in MN with Joel’s family and celebrated our 2nd anniversary by getting away for a night and going to our first drive-in movie. A single-man crew built us a new two-stall garage with garage door openers (I’m really excited about that part) in about 2 weeks. Our garage now matches our house! Abe slept the whole time on his first big car trip to Beulah for Thanksgiving where he was the life of the party! Our next trip is a short one: Hendricks for Christmas with Joel’s family.

We remain active in our church. I help make prayer quilts, do PowerPoint for church services, and participate in women’s events. Joel serves on the Leadership Council, as a high school youth leader and does sound. We’re both on the Missions Team, too. We enjoy attending community events such as plays and concerts. I met with an international student from Dakota State University once a week this spring as a conversation partner for him to practice English. Much of our time not spent going to doctor’s appointments involved transforming our office into a nursery. We also made time for date nights and spending time with friends. Joel loves going to work every day at Bulldog Media Group where he’s the Web Production Manager. I’m excited to stay home with Abe and do speech therapy work in nursing homes in the area on a fill-in basis.

We’re so thankful for our precious son Abraham and the awesome privilege and responsibility of being his parents. In our role as parents we have a new perspective of what it meant for God to send his only Son to this earth as a baby boy knowing that He, Jesus, would pay the price for our sins at the cross. What an incredible gift we celebrate this Christmas season – the birth of our Savior!

With love in Christ Jesus,