



Lutheran
Family Service

For Nothing is Impossible with God

THE *Good News* LETTER

www.lutheranfamilyservice.org

Spring 2023

"God's Plan Was Awesome:" Vinny's Adoption Story



Baby Vinny Wilson

Baby Vinny had been residing at the hospital with no visitors for over a month; his mom and dad had not made contact in the 40 days since his birth in February 2022. A University of Iowa hospital social worker knew Vinny needed a loving family and knew who to call to find him one – Lutheran Family Service.

Born prematurely at 33 weeks and weighing three pounds 10 ounces, Vinny's medical needs required a move to a larger hospital, which was not local to his mother. Because of her circumstances – she already had other children and could not even go visit Vinny, let alone care for him properly – Vinny's birth mother decided to place him for adoption.

Lutheran Family Service contacted potential adoptive families, not sugarcoating the difficulty of Vinny's uncertain prognosis: *The biggest thing for you to consider is this – Would you be willing to adopt this baby boy knowing that he may never walk, and he will likely be unable to care for himself independently as an adult?*

Two out of five families responded affirmatively – not knowing exactly what the future would bring, but that they wanted to follow God's plan for their lives. Taking into

account a variety of factors, Lutheran Family Service determined that Thomas and Lisa Wilson were the most suitable placement.

Thomas is a Director of Christian Education at Zion Lutheran Church in Humboldt who has also served elsewhere in Iowa, and Lisa is active in the LWML. Countless prayers were offered across the Iowa Lutheran community during the 896 days that this widely-known couple waited for a child.

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From left to right: Tiffany Bergman (Lutheran Family Service adoption caseworker) holding Baby Vinny; Lisa and Thomas Wilson (adoptive parents) attend the adoption finalization court hearing.

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While Vinny would remain in the hospital for several more weeks after meeting his new parents in late April, his days of no visitors were over!

As Thomas recounts, "A year ago it was just the two of us. We did not know what God had planned for us. However, God's plan was awesome! It took some time, but our hearts have been full with love for such a sweet gift from God. Vinny is our true blessing from God."

Lutheran Family Service is blessed to have been God's instrument in bringing Vinny to his forever family and the waters of Holy Baptism. Such a role was possible because of the relationships we are developing with OB/GYN offices and hospital social workers throughout our service areas. Because when those key healthcare personnel witness firsthand the compassion and skills of LFS staff, it solidifies who they call the next time they have a mother or child in need. ♡



Contact the LFS Administrative Office at (515) 573-3138 if you would like to distribute Many Hearts posters in your area.

www.many-hearts.com

GROWING GOD'S GIFTS



Welcome to a new recurring feature we're launching in the GoodNews Letter where we delve into Biblical stewardship and how best to steward the talents God has entrusted to us.

Do you wish your financial gifts could be multiplied? Have you ever wished you could donate more to the charities of your choice? Well, maybe both desires of your heart are possible!

Ask yourself this question - Does my employer have a matching gift program of any kind?



Many companies have matching gift programs. Some even match volunteer hours with monetary donations to the non-profit where you served.

Not all companies that have matching gift programs are large operations. A company of any size can

offer matching gift programs. If you are not sure if your employer has a matching gift program, now is the time to ask. If you discover your employer does not have one, maybe you could help start one!

God has called us to share the gifts He has bestowed on us. Now is the time to multiply those gifts and increase the reach of our Lord and Savior! ♡

"...for God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7

Anne Meyer-Schmitz, a mother of three Crusaders for Christ and a wife to her high school sweetheart, is a Donor Engagement Specialist at Lutheran Family Service who also has a passion for Christian education and served Valley Lutheran School in Cedar Falls, Iowa, for 10 years.

Meet the team!

Ruth Barz

tLMHC
Mental Health Therapist



For therapist Ruth Barz, tLMHC, working in the mental health field is all about relationships. Relying on her relationship with God, using the therapeutic relationship with her clients to lead to healing in their lives and relationships, and learning from those she works with are just a few examples of how this plays out.

“God is a God who’s in relationship. Even before He created us, He’s in relationship with Himself as the Triune God, and He created us to be relational beings. I really, really believe that people are often hurt in relationship somewhere along the way, but that healing also has to come through relationship.”

In fact, it was relationships in Ruth’s life – particularly in her church family – that brought her to the Lutheran Family Service team. When asked how she made the choice to work with LFS, she shared “I didn’t really choose it! I feel like God chose me. It wasn’t even on my radar. Through a series of conversations that my pastor and others had, [LFS] became one of the options that I didn’t even think was possible!”

In talking with Ruth, it doesn’t take long to notice that her passion for quality mental health counseling with a solid Biblical foundation is both authentic and contagious. “Mental health counseling that is centered on God’s principles helps people to thrive in the best way, that’s not self-centered or doesn’t ask them to find hope within

themselves or muster up their own kind of ‘just dig a little deeper into you and you’ll be able to find the best self of you that there is,’” she said. “I love that phrase that all truth is God’s truth. And so, there are truths in secular psychology that are really God’s truths about the best way for people to thrive. It’s really awesome to be able to combine the two together. You feel like you’re really giving people true hope.”

Ruth works with clients as they walk through depression, anxiety, and in times of transition. She is also available for marriage counseling and situations in life where support and the opportunity to process both familiar and unfamiliar emotions is needed. She sees clients three days a week at Lutheran Family Service’s new Dubuque, Iowa office; two days a week at the Bettendorf office; and throughout the state of Iowa via telehealth.

“I pray that the way that I live out my faith will be in how I treat the people that come into my office, how I am present with them, how I hear them and that that therapeutic relationship would be through the eyes of how Christ loves them.” ▼



New LFS Office Dubuque, Iowa

563-359-0696

info@lutheranfamilyservice.org
lutheranfamilyservice.org/contact

In January 2023, Lutheran Family Service opened a new office in Dubuque, further expanding counseling services in eastern Iowa.

On February 3, 2023, Rev. Jonathan Crawford, pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Dubuque, led a blessing of the new office, praying that God will use it, and those who serve through it, to bring about healing and refreshment in the lives of those experiencing the effects of life in

a fallen world. Pastor Crawford noted that the opening of the LFS office is much needed and will be a blessing to the local community. “I am grateful we now have a place where we can refer clients with full confidence that they will receive top-notch therapy from a solid, Christ-centered perspective. I look forward to seeing how God will work through LFS in this city.”

Therapist Ruth Barz is accepting new clients in Dubuque and throughout Iowa via telehealth.

Iowa Prayer Rally for Life Celebrates and Prepares for Jubilant Future



The Iowa State Capitol was filled with prayer and faithful Iowans on Monday, February 6, as citizens, clergy, and government workers gathered together in support of LIFE! Speakers, including Governor Kim Reynolds, reported on the progress made thus far, and recognized the journey still to come.

Rev. Dr. Jim Lamb, Life Advocate for Lutheran Family Service, was a featured speaker declaring 2023 a “Year of Jubilee.” The fiftieth year was a grand year for God’s people Israel. It was a year of jubilee, and trumpets heralded liberty from various debts. January 2023 marked the 50th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision. Thanks be to God the Supreme Court overturned that ruling in June of 2022.

The annual Prayer Rally for Life is organized by the Iowa Coalition of Pro-Life Leaders, of which Lutheran Family Service is a founding member. The goal? To work together to make Iowa a state where life in all ages, stages, abilities, and conditions is valued and protected. This happens both through prayer and countless hours spent advocating to stop the killing of children before they are born and to halt the legalization of physicians assisting people in killing themselves before natural death.

To all who were able to gather in person for the prayer rally – we are grateful. Your presence made an impact. To those that gathered in prayer from afar – we thank you. Keep your prayers coming. It was encouraging to hear that so many attendees are connected with and supporting pro-life pregnancy resource centers, Christian adoption agencies, and unplanned pregnancy outreach efforts. Helping women facing unplanned pregnancy is something we must continue to make a priority.

What can you do to be a voice for LIFE?

- Download and print our Many Hearts Unplanned Pregnancy Support tear-away poster (tinyurl.com/pregnancyposter). Hang it around the community in restrooms and high-traffic public places.
- Find out where your closest Pregnancy Resource Center is located and get involved.
- Vote for life-affirming legislators to be our elected officials, and pray for life-affirming action in our legislature.
- Contact those who represent you, and let them know your views on killing children before they are born.
- Have Lutheran Family Service come and help educate your congregation on God’s truth around life issues. Call 515-573-3138.
- Support the Life Advocacy work of Lutheran Family Service so that we may continue to equip others and stand up to defend the value of life through countless hours and efforts at the Iowa State Capitol.

We at Lutheran Family Service; together with you, the Church, and pro-life citizens of Iowa; must continue to speak up, show up, and pray up. Because that little girl in her mother’s womb has no voice. She is more than a “choice.” She’s a baby! ♡



From left to right: Rev. Dr. Jim Lamb and Kim Laube, Lutheran Family Service; Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds

Meet the team!

Emma Squire

Pregnancy and Adoption
Caseworker



How do you live out the mission of Lutheran Family Service in your daily work? How does faith play an important role in your career?

Lutheran Family Service's mission is, "We walk with people who are experiencing hard times and are there for them just as God has been there for us." I'm looking forward to meeting and working with people from all walks in life, sharing in their struggles and pointing

them to Christ. As a pregnancy counselor and adoption caseworker, I have the honor of sitting with women during difficult times that may not seem to have the possibility of a hopeful ending. By providing support for their parenting journey or helping them form an adoption plan, I get to share in their hope for the future. For families struggling with infertility or looking to open their homes to a child in need, I get to walk with them on their journey through the painful and joyful process of adoption.

What is your background?

I received my master's degree in social work while working as a research coordinator in a neuropsychology lab and interning in the St. Louis Veterans Affairs' short-term rehab program. After having three children, I stayed at home with them for several years and ran a community clothing closet out of our church. Now as my 5 children grow up, I'm blessed to be working with Lutheran Family Service in a new, complementary vocation outside the home.

Why did you choose to join the Lutheran Family Service ministry team?

Being able to work in a faith-filled organization with women, children, and families has been a blessing as I'm able to share Christ's love with some of the most vulnerable in our communities.

What do you enjoy most about the people you've worked with so far at Lutheran Family Service?

A bonus to this all is that my coworkers in the pregnancy and adoption program are amazing, faithful women that I'm thankful to learn from and work alongside. ♥



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If you or someone you know is in need of Christ-centered mental health or marriage counseling, reach out to us today.

Call: 515-573-3138

Email: info@lutheranfamilyservice.org

Web Form: lutheranfamilyservice.org/contact

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My Nieces and Nephews

given by Douglas Meyer