



*Our history is full of wonderful stories!*

During one of Rev. Dr. Jim Lamb's recent "LFS Sunday" visits to Faith Lutheran Church in Waterloo, Iowa, he ran into Bev Johnson. Bev and her husband, Gene, adopted two sons from Lutheran Family Service 54 and 56 years

ago! To think how many lives in the last half-century have been touched and changed by those two adoptions. With your support, LFS continues to provide biblically-based adoptions to Christian couples like Bev and Gene. ♡



Lutheran Family Service  
409 Kenyon Rd, Ste. C  
Fort Dodge, IA 50501

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# THE *Good News* LETTER

Spring 2024

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[www.lutheranfamilyservice.org](http://www.lutheranfamilyservice.org)

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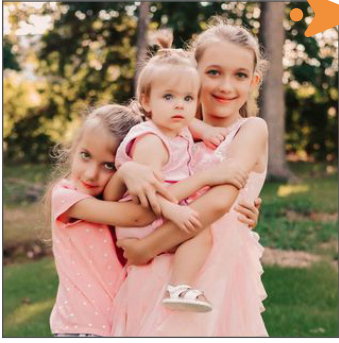
If you or someone you know is in need of Christ-centered mental health counseling, marriage and family counseling, or unplanned pregnancy support, reach out to us today.

Call: 515-573-3138 • Email: [info@lutheranfamilyservice.org](mailto:info@lutheranfamilyservice.org)  
Scan the QR code on the right to visit our web form



Sign up for our CrossWalk monthly eNewsletter at [lutheranfamilyservice.org/news](http://lutheranfamilyservice.org/news)

# Adoption Spotlights

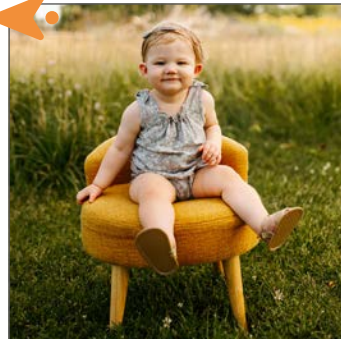


Luna is overwhelmingly loved by her adoptive parents and siblings. Luna's older sisters, Emma and Ellie, waited for three long years for their sister to join their little girl gang and now that she is there, they love to spoil her! Her birth family and the adoptive family have a wonderful, ongoing relationship which has only enlarged Luna's circle of love and support.



Miriam's biological mother reached out to LFS knowing she needed to place her unborn baby for adoption. She was drawn to Ben and Lauren through their profile book and they were overjoyed when they were chosen. Ben and Lauren chose the name Miriam because it means "wished-for child" in Hebrew. Miriam was the answer to prayers for both the birthmother and Ben and Lauren.

"Blair is the answer to our prayers. She is fearfully and wonderfully made. We are grateful to God that He brought her into our life," say the adoptive parents, and big brother, Reece. They were able to meet Blair shortly after birth and have been enamored with her ever since. Blair is even anxiously awaiting a future placement of a cousin through Lutheran Family Service.



Halen is a curly-haired beauty, endlessly loved by her adoptive parents and big sister. Her adoptive family got the privilege to be present for her birth and didn't leave her side until they took her home from the hospital ten days later. Today, Halen is thriving in her new family. This family had such a great experience, they have asked to join our adoption program again.



## Offering Christ's comfort after Perry, Iowa, school shooting

The following excerpts were taken from an article written by Cheryl Magness, managing editor of Reporter, official newspaper of the LCMS.

On the morning of January 4th, a student at Perry High School entered a hallway at the school and shot eight people before killing himself. Two of the victims would later succumb to their injuries: a sixth-grade student and the school principal. In the devastating wake of the shooting, many in the community came together to care for those affected, and to provide Gospel hope and healing to the suffering. Among them was Lutheran Family Service.

Christian counselors from Lutheran Family Service were deployed to Perry, Iowa, within hours after the shooting to help parents, students, and others process the day's trauma and be reminded of Christ's love. LFS, along with Perry Lutheran Homes and two nearby LCMS congregations, led prayer services. Rev. Max Phillips, Executive Director of LFS, said the services were a way to "bring the peace of Christ into a chaotic and deadly day" — one in which "God's Word and comfort were urgently needed."

Mollie Clark, LFS Marketing Director said, "While it may no longer be in the headlines, the heart-breaking reality remains in everyone's hearts and minds. We want to convey our continued love and support to the families, students and staff, as well as the heroes who responded. We continue to hold them all close in our prayers."

Ned Menke, principal of Perry Middle School, thanked all of the supportive Lutheran groups for being "a source of refuge for many of our students and staff the morning of the shooting." ▼

LFS counselor, Toni Larson, continues to provide ongoing, weekly mental health support to survivors and family members of the tragedy.



# GET TO KNOW YOUR CHURCH WORKER WELLNESS TEAM

REV. DAVE GUNDERSON



ANGELA KOLLBAUM



LINDY HINCKLEY



DR. MARK VANDE BRAAK

TONI LARSON



Lutheran Family Service knows the importance of proactive wellness, and we encourage all church workers to prioritize mental health as much as physical health. These counselors and therapists have decades of experience serving Lutheran congregations and schools. Rather than a sign of weakness, seeking help enables workers to continue in their vocation. Keep your favorite church worker healthy and happy. Send them our way! [www.lutheranfamilyservice.org/contact](http://www.lutheranfamilyservice.org/contact)

## GROWING GOD'S GIFTS



***"It's my money and I need it now!"***

Do you remember those commercials? In the early 2000s, a certain financial services company released a bunch of TV ads in which various people yell the phrase "It's my money and I need it now!" out of their windows. I'm taking the quote a little out of context, but it honestly pops in my head whenever I think about giving away money. "It's my money and I need it now!"

One of the hardest things for me to do is give up my money. It's a symbol of my time, my energy, and my strengths. I earned it. It's mine! Yet I know that the truth is that it's not mine. Its value is out of my control and I can't take it with me when I die. Scripture teaches that we need to be stewards of what we earn, to use it to serve God and bring Him glory. My time belongs to God. So does my energy and my talents. And therefore, so does my money. As Christians, we are not only called to tithe, but to go above and beyond as an indication of our thankfulness for God's gifts in our lives.

On Giving Tuesday in 2023 I donated to Lutheran Family Service for the first time. I also selected LFS as the recipient of my Thrivent Choice Dollars.

I did it because I believe in their ministry. I want to see more Christian adoptions and healthy church workers. I've seen the LFS organization from the inside out, and I know the great work being done by mission-minded people. I also see the work yet to be done. I'm confident that what I gave will be used to make the world better and bring people to Jesus.

So instead of yelling, "It's my money and I need it now!" out of my living room window, I pray: ***"God, give me a generous heart that willingly gives back to You all that is rightfully Yours."*** ♥



Andy Wyss  
Graphic Designer,  
Donor Development & Marketing  
Lutheran Family Service

# WHERE IN THE WORLD IS Lutheran Family Service ?

Sioux Falls, SD



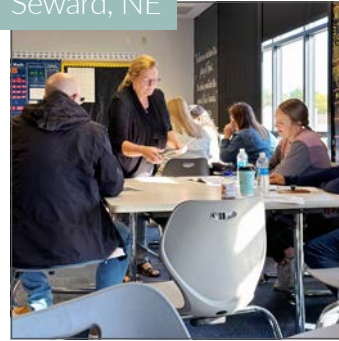
9/23/23 In a sea of purple, four of our LFS team members attended and presented at the Fall LWML Sioux Falls Zone Rally in South Dakota.

Fort Dodge, IA



10/12/23 Our Many Hearts staff was on hand for the unveiling of Iowa's first "Safe Haven Baby Box" at the Fort Dodge Fire Department.

Seward, NE



10/14/23 Angela Kollbaum presented at the Great Plains Lutheran Educators Conference at Concordia University on the importance of self-care.

Bismarck, ND



10/15/23 Dr. Mark Vande Braak spoke on trauma and grief in North Dakota at St. Andrew in West Fargo, and Shepherd Of The Valley and Zion in Bismarck.

Des Moines, IA



11/18/23 Kari Smith helped lead a weekend retreat at Hope Lutheran Church for Jr. and Sr. High youth with the theme "Rooted In Love."

Bettendorf, IA



11/14/23 Our Quad Cities counselors hosted a fantastic group of pastors for their Iowa District East Winkel meeting in preparation for Advent.

Wittenberg, Germany



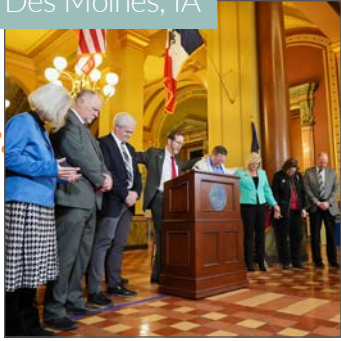
11/6/23 We weren't really in Germany, but we did treat over 150 guests to an old-world, German-inspired "Thanksgiving with the Luthers" at our Ministry Center.

West Des Moines, IA



10/19/23 It was fun to be part of the Iowa Lutheran Teachers Conference to talk to teachers about handling classroom stress and trauma.

Des Moines, IA



1/22/24 Lutheran Family Service was proud to sponsor the annual Prayer Rally For Life in the Iowa State Capitol to promote pro-life legislative action.

Phoenix, AZ



2/16/24 Angela Kollbaum presented at the annual Best Practices For Ministry Conference, delivering to a standing-room-only audience.

Sac City, IA



2/17/24 Wanda Pritzel hosted a Valentine's marriage retreat at St. Paul's Lutheran Church focused on the fruit of the spirit in Christ-centered marriages.

Brookings, SD



2/23/24 We had a great time with the South Dakota State University Lutheran Student Fellowship & Campus Ministry learning about mental health.

# Our Journey To An Open Adoption

*Written by Mitch & Angela Carey, an adoptive couple sharing the personal account of their open adoption experience through Lutheran Family Service.*

Since we first met and knew we wanted to spend our lives together, we had always hoped to raise a family and be parents. We had been open to accepting a child into our home, no matter the circumstances. We reached out to Lutheran Family Service, and in July of 2020 we were ready to begin our home study.

Initially, we were hesitant to have open communication with expectant parents. It seemed scary, uncomfortable, and potentially awkward. LFS provided us with support and education on many aspects of adoption, including the benefits of an open adoption, but it still seemed so far away.

We were overjoyed when our profile was chosen in June of 2022. This is when it really set in: while adoption would change our lives forever, it wasn't just us who would have a life-altering change. It becomes very easy to focus on your own journey and all the emotions you feel when becoming a parent. But becoming a parent isn't about you – it's about the child.

Closed adoptions were very common for many years – they were assumed to be the best option at the time. Now it's 2024. Times have changed. Adoption is a complicated, beautiful, emotional, and heavy process. A closed adoption does not benefit a child – it takes from them; it leaves room for doubt, guesses, and fear. The NACAC (The North American Council on Adoptable Children) recommends having a connection and access to information about a child's birth family, ethnic and cultural heritage, and open connections to relatives who can provide a child with age-appropriate answers.



***“The majority of research and personal feedback all agree – there is stronger and more positive emotional health for adoptees and birthparents when the adoption is open.”***

Our son was born in August of 2022 and our adoption was finalized in March of 2023. Initially, all communication was through his birthmother's social worker. We sent many photos and updates about our son's milestones and life with our family. We are committed to keeping the door open and including the birthmother in our family, however she might want to fit in. Is it as easy as it sounds? No. There are lots of emotional layers for us, still levels of 'awkwardness', and some communication/cultural differences that will always be there. Our son is still very young and is still unable to understand that we adopted him. But it is our dream that through his open adoption, he will be able to navigate the world as 'adopted' with all the answers he needs to feel confident, loved, and authentically himself.

***“We thank God everyday for the chance to love our son – it is the greatest gift we could ever receive. We were naïve when we began our adoption journey, but God has given us great support and guidance and we know that an open adoption is what our son deserves.”*** ♡



Contact the LFS Administrative Office at  
(515) 573-3138 if you would like to  
distribute resources related to adoption or  
pregnancy counseling in your area.

# Gifts given in *Memory of Loved Ones*

**Craig Albertson**

given by Doug & Sally Wendel

**Mark Arends**

given by Joan Arnold  
given by Lance & Paula Olson

**Hugo Armbrecht**

given by Kenneth Armbrecht  
given by Michael Armbrecht  
given by Paul & Marlene Armbrecht  
given by Jim & Lori Asmus  
given by Jane Butler  
given by Curtis & Marla Edler  
given by Marvin & Joyce Flanscha  
given by John Gerken  
given by Peggy Gray  
given by Lisa Groth  
given by Barb Hilleman  
given by Ryan & Kate McKinney  
given by Lynne Pfantz  
given by James & Bonnie Riese  
given by Elaine Robins  
given by Doug & Diana Sampson  
given by David & Kay Schmidt  
given by Julie Schreitmueller  
given by Trudy Taylor  
given by The Riese Family  
given by Consumers Energy

**Charlottel Blunck**

given by Wayne Blunck

**Herb Bockman**

given by Betty Bockman

**Melva Brock**

given by Duane & Karen Ploeger

**Jerry Edwards**

given by Brent & Debbie Pladna

**Brian Fredrichsen**

given by Dale & Ruth Bruhn

**Bernice Gade**

given by Larry Gade  
given by Joel & Cindy Jaeger  
given by Wesley & Gina Kaufman  
given by Philip & Cherilyn Ruger  
given by Chris Weinert

**Byron How**

given by Doris Gillespie

**Kathy Hoyer**

given by Joe & Mary Holmberg

**Nancy Jacobson**

given by Joe & Mary Holmberg

**Gerald "Jo" Johansen**

given by Joe & Mary Holmberg

**Duane & Doris Johnson**

given by Mark & Judy Wehrspann

**Karl Johnson**

given by Walter & Sandra Githens  
given by Janell Johnson

**Janet Kinne**

given by Joe & Mary Holmberg  
given by Robert Kinne  
given by Charlene Lee

**Peter Koenck**

given by Joel & Cindy Jaeger

**Michael Kruse**

given by Dale & Ruth Bruhn

**Byron Loving**

given by Duane & Karen Ploeger

**Tony Luft**

given by Bruce & Linda Gunderson

**Gene Mandernach**

given by Duane & Karen Ploeger

**Merle Martens**

given by Arlet Martens

**Marjean Meyer**

given by Sandra Rhodes

**Norm Niemeyer**

given by Joe & Mary Holmberg

**Roberta Reents**

given by Beth Bowman

**Doris Rubsam**

given by Ron & Carolyn Rubsam

**Bernice Segebart**

given by Joel & Cindy Jaeger

**Glennys Smith**

given by Scott & Nancy Franck

**Ronnie Smith**

given by Doug & Sally Wendel

**Sandy Van Nostrand**

given by Dan & Dawn Parle

**Harvey Weiss**

given by Terry & Joleen Allers  
given by Keith Heitshusen  
given by Dennis & Sheryl Owen

**Ferdonna Zimmerman**

given by Jim & Lori Asmus

## Gifts given in *Honor*

**Allan & Annmarie Voss**

given by Keith & Vera Voss

If you would like to give a gift in memory or honor of someone special, please visit [lutheranfamilyservice.org](http://lutheranfamilyservice.org) and click "Donate" at the top of the screen.