



BCHFS: In this issue...

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Everything we have comes from God. He created the heavens and the earth. He made us and breathed life into our lungs. He gave each of us a mortal body to use here on earth, and He will bless whatever we dedicate to Him.

The devil, however, does not want you to experience a blessed life. In fact, John 10:10 tells us that the devil comes to steal, kill, and destroy. He will try to do whatever he can to keep you from using your life first and foremost for God. But Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." If you and I truly want to live blessed lives, the devil cannot stop us!

Acknowledging the fact that God is meant to be first in every aspect of your life allows us to live a more abundant life than we could ever imagine.

From the moment we draw our first breath, we act and think like the universe revolves around us. The reality is nothing could be further from the truth. God is the center of everything. Before anything

or anyone else existed - He was there. God was first. During the COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020, unanswered questions, confusion, and distractions rule our day-to-day life. In such times as this, we must put God first in our family, our ministry and our lives.

As an organization and more importantly a ministry, Baptist Children's Home and Family Services has faced challenges over the last year that we never imagined we would have to face. At times, it became difficult to see God's plan for us. However, in spite of adversity, stress and hardships both locally and nationally, we have spent time in prayer and focused our sights on He who can do all things. We have placed God first. "In the beginning God..." He was first, is first and always will be first at BCHFS. Because of that, we have not only survived but thrived during one of the most difficult times our country has faced in the last half century.

Recently, a few members of the BCHFS leadership

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Answering the Call : A letter from the Executive Director



*Denny Hydrick, BCHFS
Executive Director*

Not being the athletically gifted person, I was never the first one chosen in elementary school playground games. I was a bit frustrated as a kid to not hear my name called until there was no one else to choose from.

We seem to have something innate in us that desires to

be first; to put ourselves out as the best or the most gifted or talented. However, as I have grown in my faith, I have realized that being first or rather being in front is not my rightful place.

Recently, I was having a conversation with another believer who is assisting as a consultant for our ministry. During a conversation, he asked to pray for the ministry. In his prayer he prayed this, "LORD, help us to not get in front of you, but also help us to not lag behind."

Wow, I thought, that was exactly the right prayer at the right time. In our service to the LORD, He is to be first. Likewise, our responsibility is in our obedience and to not lag behind. There are so many uncertainties and so many challenges that sometimes we jump ahead of God because we think our way is better or we give in to fear and begin to just lag behind. Yet, in keeping Him first, we cannot overlook that God doesn't need us, but HE chooses to use us. We therefore must put in the effort He requires to not lag behind, while not jumping ahead of His work and His direction.

This year has been full of uncertainties, yet through it, we have seen residents at both Baptist Children's Home and Angels' Cove come to know Jesus as their LORD and Savior. We have seen new Christ-centered families "born" through the Faith Adoption Ministry of BCHFS - more this year than in many previous years. Our Pathways Counseling ministry has expanded its reach through the use of technology to be able to serve families and individuals outside our Southern and Central

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National Adoption Month is a Time of Reflection for Faith Adoption Ministry

By: Regina Thompson - Program Manager, Faith Adoption Ministry



During the last 12 months our country has experienced extreme changes, challenges and controversy. What I love most about this time is our God, who remains on the throne, full of grace and mercy, gives us what we need to endure. Thank you, Jesus!!! During the last 12 months Faith Adoption

Ministry has been able to complete four adoption placements. Even through the COVID-19 pandemic, birth mothers were contacting our agency in need of choosing an adoption plan.

As I reflect on the last 12 months, I recall a birth mother who had been through several years of addiction and loss. She had dealt with the losses of a husband, children, and friends. This birth mother knew about God but had not experienced a daily walk with Him. As she was experiencing an unplanned pregnancy she wanted to give her preborn baby a good life. She contacted our agency and made an adoption plan. She was able to meet the adoptive family, see her baby (who is very healthy) and has since the placement of the baby seen the adoptive parents on three different occasions to celebrate the life of her child. This birth mother who has lost much put the

needs of her child above her own and made an adoption plan even though she was experiencing much turmoil. I can say I have been able to see Jesus work in the life of this woman. She allows me to pray with her, she has been clean of drugs for over a year, she has been reunited with her older children and family, she has a job, a beautiful home, and a fiancé. I see God at work in the lives of our families. What a blessing to watch Him heal those who have been broken through life. Thank you for supporting our ministry and allowing me to see our God perform miracles.

November of each year is honored and recognized as National Adoption Month.



COUNSELOR'S CORNER

Christ First; A Counseling Adventure

Mark McCormick, MS, LCPC - Director of Clinical Services



1 Peter 5:10

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered for a little while will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

When our clients arrive for counseling on their first visit, along with paperwork and formal guidelines, they must answer two critical questions: A. "Why are you here?" B. "If Counseling is helpful, how will things be different?" In answering these two fundamental questions, the client creates a baseline in answering question A. This is where they are now: struggles, losses, and unrealized potential. The answer to question B. reveals where they would like their journey to take them; clearly identifying their goals for counseling. Therefore, the process is counselor and client working together to build a bridge between questions A. and B.; the bridge between where they are and where they want to be. This bridge is the dynamic adventure of counseling: slippery inclines, crumbling footholds, and the rocky road

home. This journey is often as long as it is difficult, and if successful, equal parts: pain and growth. On this perilous and exhilarating bridge, our unhealthy patterns and past meanderings are revealed.

If you google the word "adventure," you will see that it is more complicated than the contemporary use of the term might suggest. Adventure contains two stories: adversity and venture. It is a journey with both the great possibility of reward and serious risk of injury.

In 2010, I ran my first (and last) 26.2-mile marathon on an unusually hot April morning in St. Louis, along with 10,000 other runners. Along the way, I learned a lot about myself and prayed for God to be in charge and guide me through. I think I learned more about God that day than I did about myself. He has promised us that following him will be an adventure, making it clear that the narrow path leading us to him is often dangerous and unpredictable. I finished the marathon and was immediately sped by ambulance to the hospital ER due to dehydration and a failing body. Gratefully, I was quickly revived and back on my way again.

Christ is already first in guiding us from point A. to point B., from where we are, to where we want to be. After all, it is Christ's adventure; He has invited us to join! How would it change our daily walk to fully accept that Christ is the journey?

PATHWAYS COUNSELING • (618) 382-4164

CHURCH Spotlight

As the ministry of BCHFS grows, we become more reliant on the churches and people that share our vision.

Although each person and church make a difference in the lives of the people and children we serve, we feel led to shine a light a few that truly stand out.



Since we could not host our annual Fall Festival this year, our friends at Marion First Baptist in Marion, IL hosted a Dunk Tank Fundraiser. Madison Presswood bravely sat in the tank and came out soaking wet as the group exceeded their goal of raising \$5,000 for BCHFS! Thank you Marion First for your support!



During a time when paper towels were scarce and bathroom tissue was hard to find, the amazing people from Olive Branch Baptist Church in Martinsville, IL helped us out in a huge way. They donated a car full of paper products that stocked shelves and eased the minds of our houseparents. Sometimes it's the smallest notions that make the biggest differences. Thank you Olive Branch Baptist Church!



The Value of One

By: Regina Thompson - Program Manager, Faith Adoption Ministry

Genesis 1:27 -

*“So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.”*

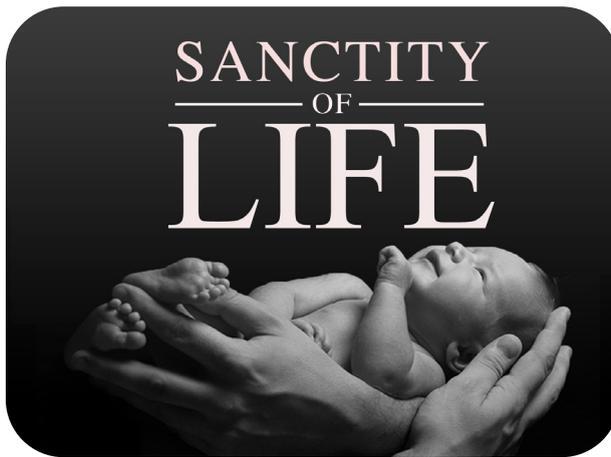
Genesis 9:6 -

*“Whoever sheds human blood,
by humans shall their blood be shed;
for in the image of God
has God made mankind.”*

Because humans are created in God's image, the sanctity of human life must be honored. Image describes a resemblance such as a child who is the image of a parent. We reflect the divine image within our humanity. If we believe we are a reflection of God, then what should we do to protect the unborn children who are made in His image?

We can pray for the thousands of preborn children in our world.

We can pray for the parents of the preborn, many of whom will be making decisions today about whether to keep or abort the preborn child.



We can pray for those we know with lifestyles contrary to God's Word, and pray for a spiritual turnaround in those lives.

We can pray for our President, Senators and Congress, that they may be more sensitive to God's Word and the sanctity of human life.

We can pray for the Supreme Court of the United States to recognize the seriousness of previous Supreme Court decisions about abortion.

We must recognize that sexual promiscuity

(forbidden by God's Word) is the cause of most abortions. We should encourage those we know to keep themselves morally and sexually pure by having sexual intercourse with one's spouse only.

We can consider a project or donation within our church to support the Baptist Children's Home and Family Services who strives to minister to single mothers, pregnant women, youth who have been abandoned, adoptive families longing for a child, and counseling services to those in need of direction and encouragement. These services are a depiction of the Value of One and the value of life for all ages.

We have the best example regarding the sanctity of human life:

In John 10:11, Jesus speaks about giving His life for His sheep. As He ministered, He saw people one at a time, and placed great value on each individual. Jesus was willing to endure the cross for one lost person (which indicates He values each life the same) so we can have eternal life with Him.

Sanctity of Life Sunday is January 17th

The Purse Auction and How I Became a Woman of Compassion

By: Paula Joy - Development Officer, BCHFS

It was around my 41st birthday that I decided that I wanted to raise money for the Baptist Children's Home and Family Services. The idea was given to me to have a purse auction. I invited about 40 women to my home and asked them to bring either a new or gently used purse to be auctioned off. I also encouraged the women that if they wanted to enhance the sale of their purse that they could put some additional items in them such as lotions, perfume, hair care, etc. I asked one my most fun and outgoing friends to be the auctioneer. The auction started off a little slow but began to pick up as there is always that one person that likes to bid up the items. Get a couple of those people and the auction takes off! We had laughter, fun and of course food. I had special cake made in the shape of a purse. Would you believe with 40 women at the auction, most are everyday working-class ladies, that this little group raised just under \$1,000? One of the attendees, Carla Donoho, who had recently been working in fundraising for BCHFS, said to me that if I raised one thousand dollars I could be a member of Women of Compassion. (That was the membership fee at the time.) I didn't even know what Women of Compassion was, but of course I wanted to be one. Thanks to my Mother-in-law and her sister who agreed to pitch in the final dollars to bring our total raised at the auction to \$1,000, I

was now a Woman of Compassion. I hosted the purse auction a total of three years, increasing the number of invitations mailed, and by moving the purse auction to a bigger location. The funds raised through the purse auction increased by a thousand dollars each year. All it took was faith, a good idea and lots of good help. Almost ten years later, I am still honored to be a member of the Women of Compassion.

I believe God has given women the gift of compassion. It is through that compassion for others that we find drive, ingenuity, perseverance and the ability to make things happen.

I want to encourage you that if God is speaking to you about becoming a Woman of Compassion, don't let five hundred dollars keep you from it. If you don't have the money, ask God to give you an idea and enable you to use your gifts and talents to raise the money or if you are able, make smaller payments throughout the year rather than one lump sum, that option is available to you as well. If you do not feel God leading you to be a part of Women of Compassion but you still have a heart for the work and ministry of BCHFS, remember your gift of any size is most appreciated. I hope you will consider attending the next Women of Compassion event and experience for yourself how your gift can impact lives for an eternity. There is no obligation to join. Come see for yourself what the Women of Compassion are doing and how their gifts are benefiting the ministry of BCHFS and those we serve.



Women of Compassion is hosting its annual event on Saturday, March 6th at Logan Street Baptist Church in Mt. Vernon beginning at 10:00 am. Register to attend by calling Nancy @ 618-382-4164 ext. 1101



BCHFS MEMORIAL GIFTS: July 2020 - October 2020

MEMORIAL GIFTS FROM JUNE - OCTOBER 2020

Martha Albert

Ed and Anita Whipple

Eugene Allen

Lowell and Jill Huffstutler
Roger and Glenna Thompson

Marjorie Beck

Wilma Guy
Donald and Pam Keene
William Keene
Paula Wright

Ray Belcher

Patricia Reed

Ella Mae Bellinger

Harold Bellinger

Jean Bradfield

First Baptist Church, Columbia

Alice Bryans

Sue A. Smith

Vivian Bynum

Pontoon Baptist Church, Granite City

Elton and Jeanette Carlile

Jack and Lois Knepper

Stephen D. Chamness

Juanita Chamness

Edith Chancey

Mary Ann Morris

Mike and Minnie Croghan

Mike and Becky Croghan

Velma Clarida

First Baptist Church, Galatia

Scott Collins

Larry and Nigel Collins

J. Frank Cornille

Jack and Lottie Brown
First Baptist Church, Elk Grove
Petra Siprain

Mary Ruth Craddock

Roger and Glenna Thompson,
and John and Kelly

Connie Crawford

Pleasant Dale Baptist Church,
Girard
Dale and Joyce Hunt

John Currie

Fran Currie
Tom and Jo Ann Currie
Deborah Beal
Jason and Julie Bionson
Glen and Becky Cherry

Willard and Carol Goff
Gary and Judy Himes
Mary Jones
Chad, Amy, and Jackson Mullins
Carol Seeley

Gladys and Don Cutrell

Lois Peck

Owen Davis

Pontoon Baptist Church, Granite City

Leona Dempsey

Shari and Thomas Stone

Lila Etheridge

Kenneth Etheridge

Gary Evans

Jane Absher
Campbell Energy, LLC, Carmi
Allen and Ginger Kemp
Sherry Stocke

Larry Dean Fleming

Bruce and Marilyn Prosis

Leota Foiles

Glasgow Baptist Church

Gene Coffman, Kendall Coffman and Peggy Coffman Ford

Floy Coffman

Inez Jane Fryer

Carole Zeidler

Jo Glenn

Roger and Glenn Thompson

Judy Kay Golyzniak

Jack and Lottie Brown

Linda Hahn

Wes Hahn
Penny Kugler
John T. Frey
Jim and Virginia Worstell
Jerry Fye
Mike and Jane Lefler
Julie Childers
Dan and Sue Fritchley
Bryon P. Burris
Connie Adams
Jana Adams
Steve and Anita Zachary

Lucille Harding

Dale and Joyce Hunt

Karen Hartstirn

Ross and Carole Zeidler

Sandy Hawk

Bluffs Baptist Church

Danny Wayne Hileman

Berniece and Kevin Hileman

Brenda and Randall Smith

Ralph and Marguerite Hill

Sandra K. Jent

Wilma Huston

Calvary Baptist Church,
Montgomery
Rich and Dina Messenger

Tom Johnson

Jimmy and Mickie Collard

Freida Chilton Jones

Morris R. and Nola J. Jones

Tom Jones

First Baptist Church, Albion

Mary Lahr

Terry Lahr

Debbie Lardner

First Baptist Church, Salem

Lorene Lawler

Ruth Ann Lawler

Edward D. Lewis

Lynn Byrd
Rex Goodman
Steven Lovan
JSM Livestock
Jane and Dennis Glancy
Donnie and Jolene Morris
Gene Ping
Carl Payne
Seekers Sunday School Class
of First Baptist Church, Eldorado

Elsie Lingle

Scott and Cheryl Miller
Carolyn and James Newell
Edward and Sharon Shafer
David and Laura Stringer

Ellene Lisanby

Janice Obleness

Dorcas Lynn

Tim and Bobbi Oxford

Jan Matta

Carol Lovely

Gerald Mayberry

Charlene Sanders

Shirley McCaherty

Bill and Trudie Lemon

Merle McKinney

First Baptist Church, Salem

Jerry Meacham

Melissa Prewett

Alberta Meyer

First Baptist Church, Salem

Tom Mikolasek

Gary and Julee Satterlee

Brenda K. Mills

Michael and Margaret Borries
James and Jean Marshall
Kimberly Marshall
Michael and Roxanne Rogers
God's Warriors Community
Group, Bethel Baptist Church,
Troy

Ruth M. Mitchell

Roger and Glenna Thompson
John and Kelly Thompson

Herman Adkerson, Russell and Harriett Davidson and Edgar and Callie Modglin

R.C. and Joan Davidson

Oma Montgomery

Joyce Dunavan

David A. Moran

First Baptist Church, Salem

Declan Nelson

Paulett Oliver

Esther O'Dell

First Baptist Church, Salem

Katoka Kundent and Carl Dean Pearce

Pearl Mitchell

Shirley Pilgrim

First Baptist Church, Columbia

Marie Pinney

Leonard Pinney

Latrice Ragain

Mrs. Alma Henley Harris

Imalee Robbins

Alan Robbins
Jimmy and Mickie Collard

Rev. Dean Ruyle

Wanda Ruyle

Phillip Scarlett

Jimmy and Mickie Collard

Truman (Bud) Searles

Jana Searles

Mina Menne, Margarete Meisenheimer and Chuck Seeley

Carole Seeley

Russ Short

Jimmy and Mickie Collard

Ray L. Storey

Allen and Delores Claytor

BCHFS MEMORIAL GIFTS: Cont.

Loma Talley
Leon Talley

Terry Talley

Jessica Talley
David and Vickey Anderson
Julie Beck
David and Amy Broster
Donald Coale
Beth and Scott Conner
Philip and Rose Davis
Doug and Connie Devore
First Baptist Church, Grayville
Judy Greer
Charles and Mary Hale
Mrs. Corene Mavigliano
Daryl and Joy McClard
Tom and Lavada Meeks
Robert and Yolanda Myers
Brenda Smith
Katherine and Anthony Turi
Maleah Vaughan

John Tyler Tennison

David and Shirley Tennison

Dean Turman

Doris Turman

Jim Upchurch

Earnest Jones

Marie E. Walden

Richard and Linda Walden
William Walden
Gayle Hardy
Don and Joyce Hunt
Ronald and Debra Johnson

Chester and Janie Jones

Ida Mae Leach
Alan and Valerie Miller
Geniece Miller
Nadine Miller
Keith Miller
Steven and Lorraine Mozley
Mike and Denise Neff

Mr. and Mrs. Neil Norheim
Plaza Truck Service, Inc.
Carlinville
John and Susan Swearingen
Rowena Vail
Linda Worlow, Agent State Farm

Adelene Warren

Lowell and Jill Huffstutler
Tim and Bobbi Oxford

Max Warren

Lowell and Jill Huffstutler

Marilyn White

Minerva Mitchel

George Whitehead

Pontoon Baptist Church,
Granite City

Lauretta Williams

Jack and Lottie Brown

Hazel Hankins-Winter

Guy Abbey

Joe Wise

County Line Baptist Church,
Simpson
Leda Kerley

**Virginia Elgi, David Fisher,
Lincoln Siebert and Herbert
Wodtke**

Marilyn Miles

Florence Ann Wooters

First Baptist Church, Columbia

Mary York

Glenn and Victoria York
Craig and Liz Masterson
Ruby Marks
Mr. and Mrs. Tom Marks
Sheila Kinney
Linda Morris
Benjamin and Helen Morris
Cindy and Chris Ragan
Ron and Linda Webb
Jason and Evana Sandusky
Barbara Baker
Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Bunnage
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Mason
Roger and Glenn Thompson
Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l,
Delta Local Executive Counsel
44

**Lucille Mildred Georg,
Marion J. Reeve and Gerald
J. Young**

First Baptist Church, Columbia

JC Rister and Edwin Zachary

Shiloh Baptist Church,
Bridgeport

Note: Memorial Names are in BOLD.

HONOR GIFTS:

Jun-Oct 2020

HONOR GIFTS FROM
JUNE - OCTOBER 2020

Pastor Larry Busch

ESIC Baptist Church, Edwardsville

J.W. Gwillim

Rev. Ray and Kay Robinson

Patti Murphy

Mrs. Mary Weaver

June Neisler

Donald Neisler

Mickey Williams

William Williams

Note: Honor Names are in BOLD.

Memorials and Honors are a wonderful way to pay tribute to those who are or were special to us.

If you would like to make a donation in the form of a memorial or honor, please contact us today.

*Baptist Children's Home and Family Services
949 County Rd. 1300 N.
Carmi, IL 62821*

www.BCHFS.com

(618) 382-4164

It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like CHRISTMAS!

Jesus. Messiah. Name Above All Names. Blessed Redeemer. Emmanuel. Christmas is the time to celebrate the birth of our one and only Savior. Joy to the world! We are so happy to celebrate this wonderful time of year and what better way than by helping you share the season's greetings with those closest to your heart through our annual Christmas Card Program.

Each year, we encourage our residents to participate in our annual Christmas Card Contest. The children work hard to design, draw, color or put together a card that shows what Christmas means to them. Every single card is special but only one is chosen to be the winner.

If you would like to participate in our Christmas card program, simply send us a monetary gift of your choice along with the name and address of the Christmas card recipient. Upon receipt of your gift and instructions, we will send the winning card to the person you designate with the inscription that a gift has been given by you in their honor. You may view this year's card and/or submit your information online through our website, www.bchfs.com. To ensure your card arrives in a timely manner, please have orders submitted no later than December 4th.

The BCHFS Christmas card program provides a perfect opportunity to honor your loved ones and at the same time share the hope and joy of Christmas with the struggling children and families we serve!

Merry Christmas to you and yours from all of us at Baptist Children's Home and Family Services!



Answering the Call cont.

(continued from page 1)

Illinois area. Despite a pandemic, we have seen our ministry expand with the opening of GraceHaven: A Pregnancy Resource Clinic – a ministry which will have a generational impact on life and will be a way to demonstrate tangibly the value of life.

Though it may seem counterintuitive to say, how wonderful this year has been because God has chosen to continue His work despite restrictions and a pandemic! I see His work and blessings in 2020 despite the chaos of which has defined 2020.

Being first is no longer a goal of mine. Being faithful to fulfill the call God has given me has become my goal. I do not want to “lag behind” in my effort to lead your ministry. I am here to serve you. God has placed me here to not only lead your ministry, but to be available to you and your family, your church, and your community. This ministry doesn't exist only for people in certain regions or certain communities, we are here to serve anyone that needs to be shown the love of Christ and to receive help and support that comes from living “real” life.

As we close out this year, will you commit to a 2021 year of putting God first in your life? Will you let Him be in front, while you work to not lag too far behind? Will you respond to His call for you – whatever that might be and no matter how hard it might seem? If anything, 2020 has shown us that we can handle challenges that arise. How much more can we do, if we rely not on our self, but rely on the strength and will of our heavenly Father?

Thank you for your partnership and support of the ministry that is the Baptist Children's Home and Family Services. Your prayers and support do not make us first in the eyes of the world, but it allows us to put God first while being available to those that God intends for us to serve.

First Things First

By: Paula Joy - Development Officer, BCHFS

I got saved! Realizing my need for a savior was the starting point in my walk with the Lord, and it is a sustaining theme in my life and will be to the end.

I can't say that by the age of 10, I had experienced much of what the world considers sin. Still, according to Old Testament Law described in the Ten Commandments, it is now evident that I was a sinner. My life would have quickly taken a turn for the worse without a savior.

Although the Lord had been preparing me for this very day, it wasn't until attending church camp at Lake Sallateeska that I felt a strange overwhelming sensation of energy and nerves come across my body during an evening worship service. I had the urge to go forward during the invitation at the end of the worship service. In my years growing up, I was taught how to behave in a church; we were to be quiet, not make a scene, not go to the restroom during the service, and remain still until the end of each service. If any of you know me well, you know I failed at most of these. What seemed to be rigid rules and big expectations for a child at the time, I now understand them to be a reverence for a time of worship and response. So, for me, this urge to go forward during the invitation at the end of the service was not something to take lightly.

I remember leaning back to my older sister, sitting just a few rows behind me and asking her if I should go forward. Through her compassionate sisterly love, she said, "I don't know!" I remember being concerned that my parents would be upset with me. I now know that these distracting thoughts were the lies of Satan.

I humbly took the first step out of the row of seats I was sitting in. The next thing I knew, I was all the way to the front of the room, in a small group of kids with an adult leader who shared with me how Jesus loved me and how I could choose right then to follow Him



Paula Joy visiting Lake Sallateeska where she was saved as a child

and be saved. It was as if it was just me, the adult leader, and Jesus. I prayed and asked Jesus to forgive me of my sin and come into my life. I remember floods of tears rolling down my face and often think of Him just washing my sins away. I got saved!

Since that day, it has been Jesus and me. You may ask, "Why Jesus and not God?" I now know that Jesus is the only bridge between eternal life and eternal death. It was Jesus who took on all of my sins from birth until death, and believe me, that is a lot of sin. Jesus carried it all on the cross as He suffered the punishment of sin and death for me, for

all. As a small child, I didn't comprehend all of that, but I believed it. The Lord has continued to teach me through Bible study and prayer, as well as the examples of other believers. Yet, I am only beginning to grasp the fullness of His glory and all that He has saved me from. Jesus saved me from a life of sin that leads to destruction and eventually death on this earth and eternal death in hell apart from Him. He saved me! Scripture says, for the wage of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Jesus paid for all of my sins by giving His life on the cross. A debt that only He can bear.

Just like me, after 40 years of living a life with Jesus as my Savior, you, too, have the opportunity to be saved. This is the first step in walking with the Lord. It is your starting point. Scripture tells us that if anyone is in Christ, we are a new creation; old things have passed away, and all things become new 2 Corinthians 5:17. Isn't it so inviting to know that we don't have to live a life of sin? We can have a new life! No matter where you are in life, your leadership role, position, age, or current circumstances, today is the day for you to receive new life in Christ. You may be asking, "What must I do to be saved?" Turn to Jesus, and believe in Him. The rest is up to Him. For continued growth in your new walk with Jesus, you will want to surround yourself with Bible teaching, study, prayer, and other believers who will walk alongside you (this is often referred to as the church). Most importantly, remember to share with others what Jesus has done in your life.

Our need for a Savior is real. It is a need we will never outgrow - His name is Jesus.

First, cont.

(continued from page 1)

team came together to create a devotional that focuses on the task of putting God first. 'First' takes the reader through four days of passages and thoughts intended to inspire. At the back of the devotional booklet is a place to journal and record your reflections.

'First' is free to anyone who would like a copy. To pick up a copy, stop by Angels' Cove in Mt. Vernon or the Devore Administration Building in Carmi.

To request a copy, give us a call at (618) 382-4164. "First" is also available for download on our website at www.bchfs.com/publications.

Providing Christ-centered services that protect, heal and restore.



2020 BCHFS Quilt Auction a Success

The Baptist Children's Home and Family Services' Annual Quilt Auction took on a new look this year in the form of an online auction. For most of us here and a few of you out there it was a brand new frontier with unknown obstacles and challenges no one expected. Instead of endless racks of quilts hanging in the BCHFS gymnasium, each quilt was hung, photographed, measured, given a description and uploaded to the internet for the entire world to see. Thanks to the help of dedicated volunteers from across the entire state, we were able to accomplish our goal and raise money for the men, women and children who find hope in BCHFS.

Our final tally contained over 100 items that were donated to be auctioned off. We saw viewers from across the country tuning in to watch, bid and buy beautiful, high quality quilts from churches and individuals who hold this ministry dear to their heart. Overall, we were able to raise just under \$15,000. A team of staff and volunteers packaged and shipped quilts, jewelry, barn quilts and antique quilting patterns to five different states.

Leading into the auction, it is safe to say that many had doubts on the successfulness of it all. We have so many people who love coming to campus, sitting under the big tent and raising a number in the air to take home a BCHFS quilt. COVID-19 had other plans and forced us to cancel our Fall Festival and quilt auction but it didn't stop us from trusting in Him.

So from the bottom of our hearts, we want to say THANK YOU to each and every person that logged on, bid, shared, volunteered time, donated and prayed for us during this time. We could not have done it without you!



My Story; God's Plan

By: Sarah Usery - Director of Operations



Sarah Usery, Director of Operations

For a couple of months, I have been asked to write an article for our newsletter. I struggled with a topic, waiting for God to inspire me. The only thing I could come up with was “my story”, but I resisted that because I felt a little uncomfortable making the article about me. A few weeks ago, while reflecting on the process of opening GraceHaven, it hit me that this IS what I have to share.... my story. I hope in telling this, you hear my heart and see Him working even before I was born to present day. All the glory is God's.

In January, forty-something years ago, there was a baby born to a 13-year-old, young lady. A few months prior, she had left her family in Alabama and went to stay at a maternity and adoption center in New Orleans, Louisiana. Only a short time before this move, she had found out she was pregnant when her mom took her to the doctor after she became concerned when her cheerleading uniform no longer fit. Her parents had left the plan up to her in regards to what they were going to do with the baby. She chose to place the baby for adoption. Shortly after this, she went home to her family to resume life. This baby was not a surprise to God.

Meanwhile, there was a couple in Mt. Vernon, Illinois, who had been married for some time and really wanted to start their family, but had been unable to do so. Years later, they decided to pursue adoption. Illinois Baptist Children's Home & Family Services did their homestudy. They received their approval letter two weeks before I was born and they were placed on the waiting list at the maternity and adoption center in New Orleans. I was born January 23rd. They received a phone call from the maternity center on February 28th informing them they had a baby girl for them. They very quickly made travel arrangements. On March 2nd, they met their five-week-old daughter for the first time. Later that year, the adoption was finalized by Judge Blessing on his last day on the bench before retiring.

People ask me all the time when I found out I was adopted. I respond by saying, “I have always known.” Very naturally and comfortably my parents would bring it up when looking through pictures, when celebrating

my other “birthday”, My “Gotcha Day”(the day they “got me”) on March 2nd every year, a special look between my mom and I when people ask me where I got my green eyes. Because they were comfortable with the topic, I was comfortable. It was also something special in my home. We all believe strongly that this was the way God created our family and there was no doubt that His plan was to take a crisis situation and turn it into something beautiful. Five years after I was born, my parents had my sister, Rachel, who completed our family. Because of my firsthand experience with adoption, I have grown up believing, wholeheartedly, that God has a plan

Several years into our marriage, we decided it was time to start a family. Many years into this process we had been unsuccessful, despite many doctors' visits, test and medications. I have always been a planner, but at this point, I had no choice but to surrender this process to God, to embrace whatever plan He had for my life as His best. On March 2nd (My “Gotcha Day”), after 4 years of trying to get pregnant, I woke up with a start, sat straight up in bed and could almost hear God say “Gotcha!” I knew I was pregnant. And sure enough, I was. God's timing is perfect. My amazing daughter, Grace, turns 13 in a week.



Sarah Usery holding twin girls at our Angels' Cove facility

for the lives He creates.

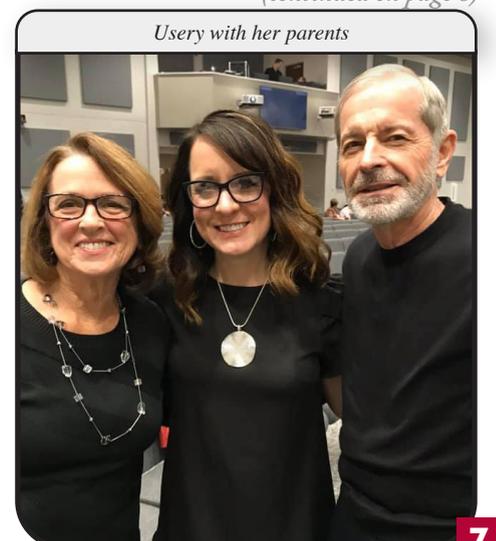
Fast-forward many years to my junior year of college. I struggled with deciding what I wanted to do for a career. But when my social work professor stated that she felt Jesus was the first social worker, as He spent time with and valued people whom society devalued, I knew that was my calling. My interest in adoption was also a large factor in choosing this profession. I moved home my senior year of college to complete my undergraduate internship at Angels' Cove in Mt. Vernon. I will say I moved home with the attitude of a martyr. I hoped God noticed the sacrifice I was making since I was giving up college life with lots of great Christian guys. This surely meant I would never get married! Though it was through this internship that I met the very handsome and wonderful, Chicago-land Director for the Baptist Children's Home & Family Services, Bryan Usery. Several months later, he surprised me at Angels' Cove and asked me to marry him. God is all knowing.

My career has taken me all over the place and into the furthest you can get from my first love of adoption. God has guided me from one job to the next, meeting so many wonderful people, learning so many tough lessons, growing me, preparing me for what He had in store for me. In 2016, Carla Donoho began having lunch with me occasionally, telling me that when she retired, she really felt I was supposed to fill her position. While flattered, I continually told her I was happy where I was working. As Carla was about to retire, I felt God calling me to BCHFS. I was not necessarily happy about it. I did not understand it. I worried I would not be challenged enough (boy was I wrong!). In July 2018, I began working for BCHFS. Shortly after beginning with this new ministry, I very clearly saw that God had a plan. And again, His way was perfect. I have a sign in my office that loosely quotes Esther 4:14, “Perhaps this is the moment for which you were created.” This is exactly how I feel, now, about being at BCHFS.

In March of 2019, a staff member invited Denny and I to a fundraising banquet for a pregnancy clinic in Salem. At the time I was just going because she asked. I had no idea what a pregnancy clinic was or what exactly I was attending. It was around this time that there was a lot going on in our nation and specifically Illinois in regard to abortion. At the time, I was feeling very helpless and lost in how to express my “Pro Life” belief in a way that was not a political stance, but rather in a way that really mattered. Once the banquet began, I heard stories of women who had unplanned pregnancies and intended to get an abortion but who's minds were changed when they were given support, information about other options and prayed for. It was as if an actual light bulb was turned on over my head and I thought, “This is IT! This is how I can express my pro-life beliefs in a Christ-like way!” Thankfully, God was revealing this to Denny as well. And so began our journey to open a pregnancy clinic through BCHFS.

I have opened/started many new programs throughout my career. This has been the hardest thing I have ever been a part of. As we toured several other pregnancy centers and spoke to other center directors, we were often told to prepare for the spiritual warfare. Initially, I did not really pay attention to their warnings, feeling confident in my past experiences to navigate this journey. My opinion had been that “spiritual warfare” and “being under attack” is overused, or used when there was any little bump in the road. My opinion is changing. There have been so many unexpected bumps in the road on this journey, so many setbacks, so much stress, emotional challenges, times I have questioned my calling, and sickness and hard times for the staff we have hired for the center. I am convinced now that our biggest need for the center is to be covered in prayer. What I do know is that the enemy does not like what we are going to be doing at the pregnancy clinic. I know that division, conflict, frustration, discouragement, and overwhelm are all useful in getting us off track and our eyes focused on ourselves and our circumstances. I refuse to let him have victory. Victory is the Lord's.

The process of naming the center
(continued on page 8)



Usery with her parents

My Story; God's Plan cont. (continued from page 7)

took hours. Naming things is a big deal. It's pretty permanent, it elicits a response from people, without getting a chance to explain further, people make assumptions about what happens at the place and the "feel" at the facility. We tried to be careful not to name it something that would potentially scare off abortion-minded women, but yet we could not get away from the fact that this was inspired and driven by our love for Christ, our thankfulness for His redemption and our desire for others to experience His love and forgiveness. Eventually we settled on GraceHaven. Grace is a word within and outside the Christian community. It can mean "courteous goodwill," but to those of us who are believers, it means, "the love and mercy given to us by God, not based on anything we have done." The word "haven" means "a place of safety or refuge. A retreat, shelter or sanctuary." We desire both of these things for every person who enters the doors of the clinic.

After naming the ministry, it needed a logo. Again, there were lots of ideas and discussion, not feeling settled about anything that was being mentioned. One morning I woke up and just "knew" the logo was supposed to be a magnolia flower. I had no idea what it meant, but I immediately looked it up to find it meant "dignity, perseverance and love of nature/all God created." How perfect!

In preparation for opening, we have done a lot of staff training and sharing of the purpose, vision and "feel" of the clinic. We have shared with the staff the importance of each client experiencing God's love both through words and our actions. We want clients to know they are valued, that their life was created by God, for a purpose. We want them to know of God's plan for redemption and that they, too, can experience forgiveness and be restored. One morning, after a devotional and prayer time with the staff, one of them said that she felt strongly that GraceHaven was going to be a place where women find their voice. I pray this is true. We know from our research that many of the women coming into other centers feel pressured into getting an abortion. They may

be told "they have no business having a baby." We will have the opportunity to confirm their positive pregnancy test with a limited obstetric ultrasound and show her that there is a life inside her. We will also give her the truth about all of her options.

When I first began learning about the pregnancy clinic world, some of my first words were, "We are not going to use the "a-word" (abortion) at GraceHaven!" I have learned so much from other center directors, with so much left to learn, I'm sure. I have learned that our responsibility is to give clients the truth about their options, all three of them. The reality is women know that there are three responses to a pregnancy: parenting, abortion and adoption. What they may not know is the truth about each of those options. 40% of women going into an abortion clinic are hoping to hear about other options. They do not. They will at GraceHaven. We know that our responsibility is to plant the seeds of Truth and leave the rest to God. We pray we save many babies from abortion. We know we will not save them all. We are hopeful that even if a woman has chosen to abort her baby and is experiencing issues as a result of the abortion, she can come back to GraceHaven. We will offer post-abortion support groups to help women work through their grief and experience healing.

A big difference between GraceHaven and the other services I have opened is that all the others were in response to receiving at least a portion or all of the funding to do so. GraceHaven has certainly been a "labor of love" and a big step out in faith and test in obedience, but we know and trust that God will provide. We pray that God will stir in people's hearts a response, whether that be committed prayer partners, volunteers and/or financial supporters. Pregnancy clinics are the Christ-like response to all that is happening within our culture. I pray God's people will respond, share about the ministry, pray for us, and financially support us.

Anyone interested in receiving more information or coming for a tour of the facility, please feel free to contact us at (618) 816-7526.

BCHFS: IN-THE-NEWS

Upcoming Events

• **November 17: 12PM-6PM**
Faith Adoption Ministry Open House

BCHFS has had an adoption ministry for many years, so the ministry is not new, but the name-Faith Adoption Ministry-is. We want to ensure anyone seeking adoption services will recognize our ministry as an independent service from those offered through Angels' Cove, so we decided to give our ministry a new name. As we know, adoption requires much Faith. It takes a lot of Faith for a birth mother to make an adoption plan and trust a couple to raise her child. It takes much Faith for an adoptive couple to pursue adoption as the wait for a child can take many years. It takes a lot of Faith for an adoptee as they grow to know they were chosen, loved and cherished by Our God, the birth family and adoptive family. We are so thankful for the Faith that comes through believing Jesus is our Messiah.

• **January 28: 9AM-1PM**
Faith Adoption Ministry Adoption Training

Training will be held in Mt. Vernon, Illinois. This training is one of the requirements for those pursuing an adopt-only home study in Illinois. The training will be held at Angels' Cove, 4243 Lincolnshire Drive, Mt. Vernon, IL 62864, and you must register to ensure proper seating. The training will discuss domestic and international home study processes, attachment in adoption, fees associated with the home study process and post-placement supervision, openness in adoption, adopting children who may have come from traumatic environments and the grief process associated with adoption.

YES, I want to help protect, heal & restore the families of BCHFS!

I want to make a:

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- \$5,000 \$2,500 \$1,000 \$500
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- Check payable to BCHFS is enclosed.
- Credit card:
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- I wish for my gift to remain anonymous.
 I wish for my gift to be a tribute gift.
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THANK YOU!

All contributions are tax deductible.

BCHFS is a 501(c)(3)
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Thank you
for your
support!



**Baptist Children's Home
and Family Services**

Baptist Children's Home and Family Services

Administration Office
949 County Rd. 1300 N.
Carmi, IL 62821
(618) 382-4164
email: bchfs@bchfs.com
BCHFS.com

Baptist Children's Home (BCH)

Residential Care
949 County Rd. 1300 N.
Carmi, IL 62821
(618) 382-4164
email: bch@bchfs.com

Angels' Cove

Pregnancy & Family Care
4243 Lincolnshire Drive
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864
(618) 382-4164
email: angelscove@bchfs.com

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Christian Counseling Services
Pathways Locations:
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Effingham • Salem • Vandalia
• Carmi • Harrisburg • Mt.
Vernon • McLeansboro • Swansea •
Edwardsville • Wood River

Scheduling Number:
(618) 382-4164
email: pathways@bchfs.com

Faith Adoption Ministry

Adoption & Home Study Services
4243 Lincolnshire Dr.
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864
(618) 382-4164
email: adoptioninfo@bchfs.com

GraceHaven: A Pregnancy Resource Clinic

4227 Lincolnshire Dr.
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864
(618) 816-7526(PLAN)
email: gracehaven@bchfs.com
GraceHavenPRC.com



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