



# Shepherd's Watch

Fall 2021



## Adoption Story:

### Many Hearts, One Family

Matt and Lauren are a couple who can tell you what it's like when God's plan becomes a reality.

The first time it happened for them was when they were introduced by friends while juniors at Rockhurst University. Within a few days, they had an hours-long conversation about what they wanted in a relationship and a family.

After getting married in 2012, God's plan became reality twice more when they welcomed Claire in 2016 and Benjamin in 2019 through adoption. This is their story.

#### Why did you choose to grow your family through adoption?

Before we were even engaged, we discussed how we both wanted children. It didn't happen for us the traditional way, and we didn't think we wanted to dive into the world of IVF. We discussed adoption for a long time. We prayed about it together, and we were both ready to move forward at the same time.

**Tell us about what it was like to become first-time parents with Claire.** I think we started with blind optimism. All we knew about adoption was what we saw in movies and on TV, and that's not an accurate representation. We met with our adoption specialist at Good Shepherd, and she taught us a lot – including the parts of adoption that can be difficult.

We finished our intake packet and home study thinking it would take at least a year. Three weeks later we received a call that there was a birth mother who hadn't made an adoption plan but wanted to meet us. It all happened very fast; I don't think we had time to process the "this is happening" moment until we came home from the hospital with Claire.



#### How were things different with Ben?

We did our home study and were asked if we would be willing to have our profile shown to an expectant mother in Kansas City. It felt like a special connection because we had gone to school there. We got the call that the mother had selected us in October, went to meet her and her parents in November, and kept our bags packed to be ready to go at any time in December. Ben was born in early January.

We were in Kansas City for a few days working out the legal side of things and then drove him home in a major snow storm!

**What are your relationships like with Claire's and Ben's birth families?** The relationship with Claire's birth mom is a closed adoption and is managed through Good Shepherd. We send pictures and updates to the team that they can share with her. Claire has a photo on her nightstand of her with her birth mom and we talk to her about the selfless decision that made her a part of our family.

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We have an open adoption with Ben's birth mom and it's kind of amazing how our families combined. We text with her regularly: She tells us about her life, and we send her photos and videos of Ben. She's come to stay with us and visit. As he gets older, he can have whatever relationship he wants with her. We're all aligned in that we just want him to know how much he is loved.

**What was a tough lesson you learned as part of this process?** We've learned a lot about the importance of working with an agency like Good Shepherd, which is invested in ethical support of birth parents. We experienced a change of heart situation between adopting Claire and Ben. We worked with a different provider, travelled out of state, witnessed a birth, spent 36 hours with a baby, and were then told to go home without the child. Good Shepherd built a trust with us by showing us they are there for birth families, making sure they get the counseling they need.

**How will Good Shepherd continue to be a part of your lives?** The team has helped us understand the grief and loss that can be felt by adoptees and birth parents. We reach out to them whenever we have questions and they show us what to expect as the kids get older. Family counseling is something they can connect us with.

**What are some of the best things you've discovered about adoption?** We learned to trust in God's plan for our lives no matter how hard it can be and no matter if it feels like it doesn't make sense. There is a plan, and it is beautiful.

We've had that experience of a lightning bolt feeling when a baby is placed in your arms the first time. You can't believe someone will trust you with this child, and you're overcome with a profound sense of responsibility. The appreciation we have has made us better parents.



*With your support, Good Shepherd is able to help make amazing adoption stories a reality. Thank you for your commitment to being a part of connecting children with families and keeping families connected.*

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**- Matt & Lauren**

### **The Good Shepherd Mission**

*In response to the call of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, to help those in need, we connect children with families and keep families connected.*

**Adoption • Foster Care • Treatment Foster Care • Pregnancy & Parenting Support • Maternity Shelter**

