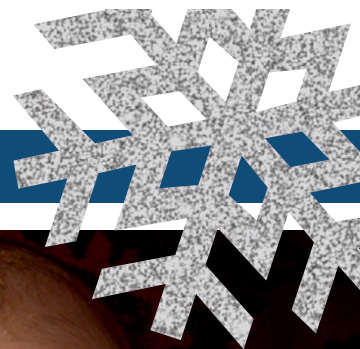


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WINTER 2012 NEWSLETTER

SHARED HEARTS*

Every adoption experience is unique, and God orchestrated a wonderful story for us that we want to share. The journey felt long with several disappointments along the way, but we now clearly see the reason: our beautiful son, Andrew. We had the honor of welcoming him into our hearts and family when he was two days old. Ray Godwin and his office staff were always friendly and helpful, taking the time to talk through things and encourage us.

We are blessed to have a six-year-old daughter, and she is over the moon to have a baby brother! After many complications during my pregnancy with her (some life threatening), we chose the adoption route in order to grow our family. When we started the process, we were hoping to welcome a baby to our family within a year. But we were reminded of the simple truth that you cannot put a time limit on God, and His timing is always perfect. Andrew was worth every minute of the two-and-a-half-year wait!

Life can change in an instant! It was an April day when we got the call that we had been chosen and that the birth mother wanted to meet. She was about eight weeks from her due date. The meeting with her and the biological grandmother went well, but understandably this was a difficult decision for them, one that was still uncertain. We appreciated their openness and honesty. Even though those next weeks passed slowly, it was a time God used to teach us the importance of becoming content with His will and not our own. While we were very hopeful that we would be-



come parents to a new baby, we were also guarding our hearts for the possibility of disappointment. Our son arrived on his due date (the little guy seemed to know that being on time is important to our family!). The plan was to meet at the hospital two days after his birth. I vividly remember praying over the nursery before we left home that Saturday morning, uncertain of whether or not we would return home with a baby. Hoping and praying that it would be so.

The day we welcomed our son was every bit as miraculous as the day our daughter was born. It was surreal as we walked down the hall of the hospital, passing nurses who were calling out their "congratulations" to us. God's presence was felt as we knocked on the door and it was opened by Andrew's birth grandmother who had tears in her eyes as she told us, "Come and meet your son." Those precious moments are forever etched in our minds and hearts as we walked in and were introduced to our beautiful son. Instant, unconditional love. Though we had met her only one other time, it was if we had known Andrew's birth mother for years. We were bonded together by our love for this beautiful child. We not only wanted to grow our family but also wanted to be the answer to someone's prayers. We prayed for our child's birth mother long before we knew her. How special that she later told us we are an answer to her prayers, and she is at peace with her decision.

One of the birth mother's main requests was an open relationship. To be honest, the idea of openness was intimidating to us when we first began the adoption process. I particularly feared what an open relationship would be like; therefore, we were considering more of a semi-open adoption. Well, God has completely taken the fear and uncertainty away. Our open relationship with Andrew's birth mother is a blessing. She and his biological grandmother are amazing, lovely people. *(continued on back)*



The visits we have had thus far are just a small way we can thank the birth mother for the priceless gift she has given to us. We have enjoyed the time spent with her and the biological grandmother. It gives us great joy to reassure them that Andrew is happy and well adjusted. It is amazing how comfortable we are with the way things turned out. While I think openness is an intimidating thought to many adoptive parents, we would encourage them to consider the possibility. Andrew's birth mother has fully acknowledged that we are his parents and is very respectful of our comfort level for any kind of communication. We mainly communicate via texting, email, and sharing pictures through the mail. She is so respectful of our family as a whole and has shown interest in our daughter, even including her when sending gifts. This experience is new to all of us, and we are taking things a step at a time. Our confidence in their consideration of Andrew's well-being gives us assurance that the openness is going to remain a positive experience. How amazing to think that the idea of an open adoption presented concerns for us in the beginning. Not only do we have our beautiful son, but we also have two more people in our lives whom we admire and respect. What a blessing!

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God took my apprehension and turned it into a blessing not only for us, but for our child. Andrew will never have to doubt his birth mother's and biological grandmother's love for him, which I can only describe as the most self-sacrificial kind of love. As we witnessed the courage and faith of their choice to place Andrew's future in our hands, an assurance grew that they were thinking of Andrew first and foremost. This young woman and her mother are the most courageous women we know, and we are forever grateful to them. We also are proud to share with Andrew the special meaning behind his full name, which we chose along with the birth mother. His name is a reflection of the ones who love him the most.

An encouraging friend of mine once told me during those times of waiting that God had already written our adoption story, it was just the commas that were so hard. How very true this is. The adoption process, though not easy, is so very rewarding in the end. The waiting, the wondering how it's all going to turn out—it's all for a reason. We are reminded of that every time we hold our beautiful son in our arms. God's hand is evident every step of the way. He has filled our hearts and answered our prayers in a tremendous way. Our family is complete, and we are blessed beyond what we asked for or imagined! ❖

**Disclaimer pursuant to Rule 7.1 South Carolina Rules of Professional Conduct: This is a testimonial by a former client of Raymond W. Godwin, Attorney at Law, P.C. The result achieved on behalf of one client does not necessarily indicate similar results can be obtained for other clients.*

