



Alexandra's House

For Terminally Ill Unborn, Newborn, and Abandoned Babies

www.alexandrashouse.com



January 26. One night I went alone to see her in the Neonatal ICU, where she stayed throughout her hospitalization. She was so tiny and the multiple IV and monitoring lines blanketed her and made it difficult to lift her from her crib. A kind nurse came to help me. It took both of us to get the equipment and her situated so I could hold and rock her. The staff assessed signs of stress in a baby by an increase in their CO2 level. This little bit of activity made hers rise. Once I could finally hold Alexandra, the nurse watched the monitor until her level came down. She then left me alone in the quiet and dimly lit room, to simply hold and bond with her.

Another Holy Night

Beloveds,

This is a very special edition of our newsletter as it is wholly a birthday gift for our Jesus. Typically, we write about our activities, albeit meaningful ones, related to this most extraordinary apostolate, but the truly important stories central to our work are the powerful yet hidden lives of our babies, as the biggest part of their journeys are in the womb, for their births nearly assure imminent death. This issue contains a sampling of their personal stories, each written by their devoted parents, whom we cherish as well.

Alexandra was born in 1994 on December 12 and died the following

A few minutes passed and both of us finally relaxed as we got into a comfortable rocking rhythm. It is a moment I will always remember, as it was wonderful to hold her and bond with her.



I then began looking out the window, though it was dark, and thought that Christmas would be coming soon. I knew it would be a Christmas unlike any other we had ever experienced, never knowing day to day if she would live or die and if Christmas would be with or without her. It was then that I heard a voice inside me say: "This is the closest you will come, on Earth, to holding the Infant Jesus." This revelation was extraordinary and caused me to love and revere her even more and each Christmas since, I recall this sacred experience.

Many other moments like this occurred throughout her life but the symbolism of the sacrifice of a lamb became one of the prominent themes. Interestingly, the food Alexandra was fed throughout her whole life, via a plastic tube, was lamb's meal.

The Lord used many things to prepare my heart for this work, though I had no idea at the time what He was doing. But the spark that started through Alex's life inflamed my desire to care for other babies like her, who were born to die, and their families. I also came to know that among humanity, these suffering babies most closely resemble Jesus. Our passion to serve is because we see Him in their faces, their innocence, their docility, their woundedness, and their dying.

This past September I went on a silent directed retreat. Every day the priest would give me a short scripture to read and then meditate upon.

I would meet with him the following morning and we would discuss what

transpired during my prayer. One of the last assignments he gave me was to read and meditate upon the Nativity of Jesus. Before I left his office he told me to be sure to hold the newborn Jesus.

In this type of retreat you are to read and reread Gospel stories and then while meditating, you place yourself in the story. Part of this requires use of your imagination but the Holy Spirit also occupies a great role, enlivening the Word.

During this process, I very much sensed being in Bethlehem. I found myself in the presence of Mary and Joseph right after Jesus was born. I had thought Mary would hand Him to me but actually it was St. Joseph. I held Jesus close to me too, and walked with Him outside. I showed Him the sky and moon and stars and cows and all the other animals. I told Him that His Father made every one of these things. This portion was very much of my imagination.



But then I turned around to go back inside, and this was different. I was overwhelmed by what I saw and stunned by the poverty and humility of His birthplace. This Child, Whose Father is Creator of all above, on, in and under the Earth, with its immense power and grandeur, was born in this falling-down, dismal stable. This



mystified me. Later I realized that Jesus wasn't born in a palace as King, but in a stable as the Lamb.

We are pleased to introduce some of our babies - beloved lambs of Christ. With each new birth, we see in their reflection, the newborn Jesus. May they help you to see this Christmas season and every one after in an even more meaningful way. I pray that your hearts will experience Christ's saving love as never before and the peace that only He can give.

Thank you for the many ways in which you have advanced the work of Alexandra's House and thank you for your friendship. Have a very blessed and peaceful Christmas and may this New Year; though times seem uncertain, give glory to the Lamb.

Your Grateful Patti

Shannon and Sara's Story

*"As you do not know the path of the wind
or how a baby is formed in the mother's
womb, so you cannot
understand the work of God
the maker of all things."*

On June 5, 2007, I was told something that I never thought I would hear in my lifetime: "Your baby will not live". A mother of four healthy kids, expecting her fifth child, a baby girl whom I decided to name after my mother "Sara" Mackenzie. The news devastated me. After sonograms and other pre-natal tests, an amniocentesis showed that the fetus had Trisomy 18, a chromosomal disorder that is almost always fatal. This meant nothing to me. Just tell me what to expect with my baby! My worst fear was that she would be severely disabled or mentally challenged throughout her life but never did I think she would not live.

I was ready to end the pregnancy right then and there. In the first trimester that decision may have been easy for me to make but not at seven months. Sara was already a little person. After much soul searching and the guidance of my doctor, who finally showed me she had a soul, I was given a pamphlet about Alexandra's House. I called them, left a message, and then went to a place where I could just sit, think and cry. I thought about what did I do wrong to have this happen. I thought about jumping off the Broadway Bridge so I wouldn't have to face what was to come and I thought of my other children. I thought how I had to tell Sara's father, who resided in another state, and how alone in this I was.

My cell phone rang and an angel's voice said to come right over. Meeting Patti for the first time explained what an angel really would be like. Her golden curly blond hair, those warm blue eyes and her soft comforting voice saying, "Hello, I just want you to know I love you." In sitting on the front porch at Alexandra's House for three hours with Patti and just talking about my options, and about what I was feeling, she saved my life that day, and however short it may be, she saved the life of my baby.

After attending my first meeting at Alexandra's House and meeting two wonderful other women who were experiencing the same, I knew I was no longer alone. Once I accepted the probabilities, I prepared for what needed to be done. I pre-planned her cremation, picked out her urn and also a heart necklace in which some of her ashes would be placed, that I could wear forever around my neck and close to my heart. We visited the hospital to schedule her birth and finally went for a 4-D sonogram so I could see her alive and moving.

The day I went to the hospital everything went like clockwork. My best friend had flowers waiting in my room. The nearby hotel gave me a great rate for the kids to be close by. Her father, my mother, my sisters and Patti were there to help see me through this difficult time.

Sara Mackenzie was born and died on August 9, 2007 at 1:51a.m. Sara was so beautiful and complete.



Sara and her mother, Shannon

She had ten fingers and ten toes. It's funny how that's one of the first things you look for. During this time for me, I watched and waited for her to take a breath.... it never came. I cried, accepted her death, and tried not to lose my faith and tried to understand that this was God's plan.

I especially thank Kathy Disney (volunteer photographer) for giving of herself, her time and the most precious memories she captured on film that will be treasured forever.

One year has passed. I remember that moment like it was yesterday and somehow I manage to get up every morning and go to sleep every night. Life was not going to stop and wait for me. I will never forget Sara, my angel in heaven, and this world she introduced to me.



Shannon's family one year later

I would give to others, from Baby Jesus, the gift of strength and the courage to accept the things we cannot change.

Shannon Johnson

Baby Andrew Hart

On May 30, 2007, we were asked to share in the passion of Christ.

It was on this day, we were given the disturbing and unthinkable news. Our little unborn child of 20 weeks had just been diagnosed with a chromosomal anomaly, the likelihood of which would render this little gift either mentally and physically disabled or having a brief lifespan - which could play out in a variety of scenarios. The news was devastating, and all we could feel in those moments were deep pain and sadness. Our hearts and minds were seeking answers as to why God was allowing this to happen.

We immediately turned to prayer for both comfort and a miracle. We didn't know how God's plan would play out; all we knew was we had to trust in Him and His Divine Will. This was very difficult, as it took every ounce of energy, at times, to carry out the normal duties of parenting our other two sons Luke (5), and William (3). Our thoughts were endlessly consumed trying to play out the many possible outcomes for this new child.

The time leading up to the final diagnosis was a work in progress - namely, our acceptance of why this was permitted to happen; why God hand picked us to share in His bitter passion. All the prayers which were offered by family and friends (and those we did not know), brought much comfort and grace. These prayers allowed us to embrace His cross in sorrow, yet rejoice in the thought of finally meeting this little person.

This emotional rollercoaster continued with subsequent doctor visits until our biggest fear was confirmed. At 38 weeks, the final diagnosis was Trisomy 13, a lethal chromosome disorder with a very high mortality rate. Our sweet baby would most likely not be with us for longer than a few minutes after birth.



Andrew Michael Hart was born on October 3, 2007. He weighed 6 lbs., 4oz. and was remarkably striking for a Trisomy 13 baby. He hung on for just a few minutes – long enough to be baptized; hear our voices; feel our touches; and, of course, experience "true" unconditional love which only a parent (and God) can give.

Baby Andrew Hart

We were asked to accept the fact that Andrew's mission here on earth would be brief. We were asked to give back to the creator, very quickly, the child He created for us.

Suffering can be viewed as a "gift" or a "curse" – we chose "gift." We consider ourselves privileged to have been hand picked by Christ, to have experienced a bit of the passion He experienced for us as He hung on the cross.

As the Blessed Mother said "yes" to the angel Gabriel, we too said "yes" to God and a 'hello' to Andrew.

Our job as parents is to get our kids to heaven. We're happy to say, "We've got one in heaven." As we approach the Christmas season, we reflect on the birth of Christ as our Savior. We also reflect on that birth day of our son – St. Andrew. St. Andrew, pray for us!

With Love and Thanksgiving to
Alexandra's House,

Johnny and Susan Hart

Caden's Story

We learned we were expecting our third child in early December of 2007. We were excited and filled with anticipation. On March 30, 2008 at our 20-week routine sonogram, we were told that our baby didn't have any fluid around him. This meant that when he was born, he would likely only live for a few minutes to a few hours, if he lived at all, because his lungs would be unable to form due to the lack of fluid in the womb.

We were devastated.

We searched everywhere for answers, cures...

any way to help, as we would learn later, our son.

There were no answers.

We were told that most families in our situation choose to terminate. After a great deal of prayers and soul-searching, we decided to continue our pregnancy

despite our baby's terminal diagnosis.

The next months were the most difficult of our lives. We explained to our two older children that their baby brother wasn't going to get to come home with us. Our family and church rallied around us, supporting us in a way that we were totally overwhelmed and blessed by. Patti called and checked in, serving as a source of constant encouragement for us.

Through Alexandra's House, we met other families who were also carrying babies that were not expected to live.



Spending time with them was so helpful and it was comforting to know we were not alone in our pain as we carried a child we knew we would not be able to hold for long.

Caden Adair Carlson was born on June 30, 2008 at 4:40 am. We were shocked and extremely saddened to find out that we would not get to see our son with his eyes open, or hear his first cry. Caden was stillborn. In the hours that followed his birth, we surrounded Caden with love...his grandparents, aunt, uncle, friends...his big brother and sister....all held him, kissed him, and marveled at how beautiful he was. My husband Brandon and I held his small, lifeless body in between the two of us on the hospital bed. We inspected his tiny hands and feet, caressed his soft face and hair, and cried tears of pain from the deepest part of our souls. He was perfect and beautiful. We miss Caden each and every day, but find comfort in knowing that he sits at the feet of Jesus. What would I give as a Christmas gift to the baby Jesus? A heavenly playdate with our precious Caden.

Brandon, Lindsey, Connor, and Kylee Carlson



Caden Adair Carlson



Laila-Grayce

On September 14, 2007 my husband and I found out that we were expecting our first baby. We were both incredibly happy, as was our family. My first trimester went like any other. I felt sick and moody but still remained happy through it all. My husband and I had wanted a baby for years but decided to wait until I graduated from nursing school. I finally completed my R.N. program in December of 2006, so we felt that the time was right.

As I approached my second trimester, my OB-GYN wanted to do more blood work, all of which came back normal. She informed me that I was getting to the point in my pregnancy where she wanted to check my Alpha-Feto protein level (AFP). She explained that this was not a perfect test and that any number of things could cause a false positive. My husband and I decided to do the test regardless of its imperfection because it would tell us if there was a neural tube defect. Two weeks went by and I had heard nothing from my doctor's office so I assumed everything was fine. I could not have been more wrong.

On December 16, 2007 the doctor's office called to inform me that my AFP came back high but not to worry. This test is not a perfect test and my gestational age may be wrong or I could be carrying twins. The nurse stated that I would need to have a Level 2 ultrasound done to rule out any neural tube defects. So on December 17, we went to have the ultrasound done not thinking there would be any problems. As soon as the sonographer placed the wand on my belly I stated that my baby doesn't look right! She immediately turned the monitor so I could no longer see. I asked her if there was anything wrong with my baby. She explained that she could not answer that and would have the doctor come in and talk with us.



Laila-Grayce's toes

We waited an hour and half to speak with a doctor we had never met. She came in and began looking at the pictures and whispering to the sonographer. Being a nurse I knew this was an ominous sign. Finally, I had enough and screamed "Is there something wrong with my baby!!!!" The doctor said, "Yes there is. It is a condition called anencephaly." She went on to say this condition is not compatible with life and suggested that I terminate my pregnancy. We were completely mortified. Our life as we knew it was forever changed and the dream of having a baby was completely shattered. We were then told to leave and we were offered no counseling or the pictures they had taken of our baby.

The next day I went to my OB-GYN for a second opinion and to discuss my options, if there were any. The diagnosis was the same and we found out that I was carrying a girl, which is what we were praying for. She gave us the pictures from the ultrasound she had taken. She informed us that we could indeed terminate the pregnancy or we could carry her to term. Whatever our decision was, she was very supportive and behind us 100%.

My husband and I discussed it for a few days and decided that we should give her the best chance possible. We carried our baby girl to term despite how hard it was emotionally. There were times in my pregnancy that I wanted it to all be over but I continued on. I did not realize then how much I would treasure the time I had with her. Feeling her move and grow inside me was absolutely the highlight of my pregnancy.

On April 30, 2008 I went into the hospital to begin my induction. Little did I know this would take four grueling days!!!! I could not dilate because I had nothing hard pushing on my cervix because she lacked a skull. Finally on May 3, 2008, after much anticipation Laila-Grayce was still-born. Her face was incredibly bruised because that was her presenting part. This is what finally caused me to dilate. Despite all the bruising on her face she was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. Her body was perfect in every way.

We chose not to see her head because we didn't want to remember our little girl as anything but perfect. We wanted to donate her organs so that another baby could live but none of the transplant centers in our area would accept her because of her condition. My husband and I were in total disbelief because our OB-GYN told us her organs were in great shape and would be a candidate for organ donation. Since we could not help out another baby we had a service for her and had her buried in our family plot.

I would not change the fact that I carried her to term; as a matter of fact, it was the highlight of my life. I felt lucky that God chose me to carry one of his Angels. We chose her name due to its meaning. "Laila" means the angel who guides spirits after birth. I could not think of a more fitting name for her.

After having my little angel I view life differently. I no longer take anything for granted and cherish each day I have. On June 9, 2008 I lost my Mom, who was my best friend. This absolutely crushed me. I felt like I had lost it all, my baby, my mom and my best friend. This has been a rough year for us but I hope that things will begin to look up. My husband and I are going to begin trying to have another baby in August. My obstetrician put me on folic acid and I have been taking it consistently every day for the past 2 months. She informed us that the chance of this happening again is 1% with the folic acid therapy. My chances of having another baby with a neural tube defect is significantly higher than that of someone who has not had a baby with a neural tube defect.

We feel very optimistic that our next little one will be healthy.

Scott and Misty LeClaire

Gabriella's Story

When we found out that Gabriella had Trisomy 18 we had a choice to make. We were told we could terminate the pregnancy. We both looked at each other and the same thought entered our mind. That is not our choice to make. We will continue and leave it in God's hands. The first thing we did was gather as much information as we could about Trisomy 18. We, as well as many of you, had no clue what Trisomy 18 was. What will she look like, how long will she live, what can be done to help her, what can we do? Millions of questions popped into our heads. There were no answers to any of the questions.

Baby Gabriella



We received a lot of help along the way. Alexandra's House was the first place that helped us. Patti from Alexandra's house steered us in the right direction. At first I was offended by some of the things she said. The

statement that stands out the most is "God chose you for this child for a reason." What does she mean by that? Why does God choose to punish us, why does he want to put us through this? What did we do so wrong to be punished like this? Now I fully understand what she meant with that statement. God knew where he was sending this girl. God knew we would do the best we could. Gabriella was here to teach us and to teach others. We knew from the start that the path we chose to follow was not the easy path, but we knew it was the right path. Looking back on the whole experience I still believe it was the right path. We definitely could not have done this alone. We found the Caring Bridge Web site and started it up. Wow. We first thought this would be a good site to keep people informed to the goings on with Gabriella, Mom and the rest of us. We had no idea what it would turn into.

Gabriella was born on July 5 at 10:26 in the morning. We knew the odds were stacked against her. We hoped she would be born alive and we could see her, if only for a moment. We never made any plans to take her home. We had no crib, no clothes, nothing for a baby at home. The Caring Bridge web site started out as my way of expressing



myself, and to keep everyone informed about Gabriella. It was a way of letting me open up my normally suppressed feelings. When Gabriella was born, we had 500 visits to the site. I mentioned that we were coming home after two days in the hospital and needed a few things. Immediately people were jumping at the opportunity to help us. Within several hours of coming home we had everything we would need for Gabriella's stay at home.

Apnea (breathing stops) started. We were told that Gabriella is trying to let go, trying to move on. We almost gave up on her. Apparently Gabriella had other intentions. Several days later the apnea was gone. She was nearly two weeks old. She got to be as small as 2.98 lbs. before she decided that her mission was not complete. She started gaining weight, looking good. She got a double chin and fat cheeks. We are back up on top of a hill on this roller coaster. We continued to update her website daily, not knowing the impact Gabriella is having on the world around her. We would update the web site and read all of the guest book entries. It was amazing how many people were signing on daily, how many prayers were being lifted for her. Many prayed for a miracle. *We knew that the day she was born was a miracle, the next day was a miracle, every day was a miracle. We had 55 days of miracles.*

On August 29 at 4:10 in the morning, I was sleeping soundly in my bed when Susie woke me up. Gabriella had been having apnea episodes about every 40 minutes. We didn't panic because she had gone through hundreds of these. This one was different. It never ended.

She stopped breathing like normal. Her heart slowed as usual. This time it slowed and it stopped. She never came back. I could do nothing but stare at her. I couldn't help her, I couldn't bring her back. I couldn't think of anything to say and do, I just sat there in silence.

We knew this day would come and always told ourselves it would. We just always thought it would be tomorrow and not today. Tomorrow showed up and now it's three days ago. That morning I thought to myself I don't remember what it was like before she arrived. I don't remember what it was like not holding her and feeding her and waiting for her apnea to stop and fearing her next episode. Now I can't remember what it was like to hold her. We loved her as best we could, and we watched her do God's work without a word. We are proud to say she was and will always be our precious angel Gabriella.

Where do you begin to thank all of the people who helped us along the journey? I can't express the gratitude with words for what everyone has done for us along the way. I know everyone here was impacted by her short life. What a great job she did. What a great mission she accomplished in just 55 days--47,000 visits to the website. I know with each visit a smile was had or a tear was shed. The statement that says it best is "don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened."

*Daddy Royce Duffet's
Eulogy for Gabriella*

Miriam- A Short Encounter With God's Miracle

On July 26, 2000 we took our first prenatal look at Miriam Ann as we had a routine ultrasound. She was 16 weeks. I remember being nervous even though I had no real evidence that anything was wrong. The technician said she wanted to bring something to our attention. She did not say exactly what was wrong other than the amount of fluid in the baby's abdomen was abnormal. She sent us to the doctor's office where the doctor confirmed that it was a worrisome situation and immediately sent us to a group of perinatal specialists for more conclusive work.

On the first visit there, the doctor said that we should do an amniocentesis to check the chromosomes and relieve fluid pressure. My husband John and I were unsure what to do. After considering the procedure for a few minutes alone between us, we decided to consent in the hope that it would help her. Initially, they thought that she was a boy due to the nature of the findings.

During one of our early visits, one of the doctors stated that we should just terminate the pregnancy. We told her that we decided earlier that this was not going to be an option. She stated that we could call back if we changed our minds, and that we are just "emotional" now. This appalled us. For days we tried to process the news. Someone at my old church recommended we contact a doctor who was deeply interested in preserving fetal life. Dr. Gene Pearce was so

encouraging and allowed us to discuss the situation with him in order to confirm all that we knew. He recommended that I call Alexandra's House, a completely new type of hospice organization that specializes in pregnancies like ours.

I was up late one night around 11:00 and decided to call and expected to talk to a message machine. To my surprise, Patti Lewis, the home's founder and housemother answered the phone and was so amazing and comforting to talk with. No one until then could really relate to me on such a personal level over such a shocking situation. I just remember hanging up the phone and feeling an exceptional peace that really helped soothe my deeply wounded heart. Someone heard me.

We had to make some fast decisions. How would we treat this pregnancy? Should we intervene and how far do we take our endeavors? How do we respect God and honor Him? Do we continue seeking out medical treatments until we exhaust the list of available doctors?

We met with Pastor Lee Hovel who knew our family well, to explore these and other questions that quickly needed answers. We called other local perinatal specialists to find a second opinion. We collectively decided that we should try to help our baby until the risks outweigh the benefits. Pastor Lee suggested going through all the open doors until none are left.

We went back to the specialist group several times in order to recheck the situation, do more procedures, and in time, find out that our baby was a girl. We also considered a risky experimental surgery, but found later that it could not have helped.

All at once, everything came to a halt. Her problems remained grave, she was not compatible with life, and it was likely that she would not survive until she was born. That truth was so hard to accept! In our minds, we had a tremendous faith in God, but we did not understand His will or His purpose. We realized from her condition that she would arrive and then leave us quickly, but no one could reveal how long we would have to wait. We could see that she was not improving and that her lungs were extremely small. Her body was under stress that endangered her life each day. She would not be able to breathe or cry on her own, and all of these problems made everything seem so impossible. We waited for a miracle.



Baby Miriam

During this time, we sought the guidance of Dr. Barbara Thompson, a Christian counselor, in the hope that our marriage would be spared a complete upheaval. In moments of reflection, I knew that God created her for us for a reason. One day we will know exactly what that was, but for now we would have to do whatever work lies in front of us.

My labor started and we entered the hospital. The surroundings were chaotic but at this point, I longed to meet her. I wanted the waiting to be over. I desperately wanted her to be a part of my outer senses. As God said no to a miracle of healing, He answered all four of my specific prayers completely: she was born alive; she was born early so she would be less aware of her difficulties; she did not suffer for a long time; and she was not born by c-section which would allow a quicker physical recovery for me.



Miriam and Mom

Miriam was four pounds seven ounces. She tried to breathe in, but could not, and her struggle was brief. She seemed to quickly relax and did not make a sound. Finally, after staying with us for 46 minutes, she gave in to all of her complications. John took pictures of her and baptized her with his tears. He went out to our family and cried out about how everything had happened.



The neonatal nurses bathed and dressed her. Even though she was no longer alive, she looked wonderful. We put some of her hair in her baby book. The nurses made tiny hand and footprints and plaster molds. They carried out all our wishes and all of our family members took turns holding her and we photographed it all.

Journeying away from that time is more than seven years. I am transformed. Everything about the experience defines who I am and continues to serve as a reminder of who God wants me to be. I find hope in knowing that I will one day be reunited with my daughter, and that I will once again delight in the gift that God allowed me to experience here on earth. I know that she has touched many lives and continues to link people to God's perfect will.

T.J. and John Kuhn

Payton's Story

This Christmas would have been Miss Payton's third Christmas. (She lived with us and was loved by us for eight treasured months before she died. She had Trisomy 18.) She is with Jesus and the angels now on Christmas. We all miss her so very much. My son Dylan still asks us about Miss Payton. We tell him that she went to Heaven to be with the other angels because that is what she is to us - a sweet little angel.

I just lost my Grandpa to lung cancer this year. But one part of me is happy knowing that my Grandpa is with Miss Payton. I know he is always holding her. So, I might be sad that Miss Payton and my Grandpa can't be here with us on Christmas but she will always be in our hearts. Our family is still a family of four and I tell everyone that. Still to this day, Miss Payton touches people who ask how many kids I have.



Miss Payton Titus

Miss Payton was a gift that God let us keep for a short time in our lives. I want Jesus to have the greatest gift of all, little Miss Precious Payton with Him on Christmas day. Miss Payton has a website called:

<http://rememberderedbyus.com/paytontitus>.

You can go on there and light a candle in her memory. Just click on the link.

Thank you and Merry Christmas to all, and may God bless you.

Amber and Andrew Titus

Gracie Anne Eudaly



Gloria's Rose blooms every year

Our little girl Gracie Anne was diagnosed with cystic hygroma and fetal hydrops at 22 weeks (of pregnancy). At 24 weeks, on April 19, 2008, she was delivered stillborn. We later got confirmation that she had Turner's syndrome.

Through some research on the Internet we got in contact with Alexandra's House. Patti Lewis gave me a lot more information than any of the medical community as far as what to expect. I thank God for her heart of compassion and comfort that she so freely gives to those of us in so much pain, grief and shock. She told us that most of the time these babies pass at 23 to 24 weeks at the latest and usually before that. She helped us, blessed us, prayed for us, and Alexandra's House even bought the little casket for our precious little one to be buried in.

It has now been five months and I have good days and bad ones. I am comforted to know that I will be with Gracie in eternity and this time apart is so short. I am looking forward to the day that I get to see Gracie's face as God created it. I know I will never be the same. My little girl took a part of my heart and I feel her absence every day. What I can hope is that

this experience will make me a better, stronger person. That is what Gracie would have wanted. Though she lived a very short time, she taught me life's greatest lesson. The last realization that I had was this: we have to choose to love. In all situations, we must choose to love ourselves, love others, love and know that we are loved. If we love, we don't fear, hate, become bitter, or have self-pity, anger, or envy. The by-products of love are joy and peace! I realized that I needed to love. It is my choice to love. I did love Gracie and I still do. It is beautiful that God gave me that. If we love in all situations, only good will come of it. Nothing evil ever came out of love.

When I start to have the negative emotions, I am not choosing to walk in love. Then I remember that I love(ed) Gracie. Just love! This was the verse that I used at our wedding. It means so much more to me now. "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love never ends."

I hope this is healing to all who read it. It has been good for me to write this all down.

Much love
in our
Father's
name,

*Rachael
Eudaly*



Gracie Anne's parents

Mallory Fordham's Story

If you had asked me to write this last year, I am quite sure it would have been quite different. After one daughter and years of infertility and health problems, my husband Byron and I were so happy to finally be pregnant in May of 2007. Everything was going fine, until the 20th week ultrasound in September. It is never a good sign when the tech is quiet and won't answer your questions. The doctor came in and said, "It doesn't look right. I want you to see a specialist right away." We ended up traveling to Kansas City (from near Topeka) to St. Luke's Hospital. I cannot say enough wonderful things about them or the doctors or counselors. They were a bright light in a dark time. We had test after test, and they finally admitted there was a fatal issue, and they did not know what it was, but they were leaning towards some type of dwarfism. Both of us being healthy, and having no known family history, we were in shock.

In October, it appeared she was doing better. We found out she was a girl whom we named Mallory Grace. We were optimistic, until the Tuesday after Thanksgiving when we found out she was in heart and kidney failure. I cannot describe the emotions. As close as I can come, it is like having your heart ripped from your chest. I have never felt pain like it, and I hope to all above I never have to again.

We went to the doctor on December 5, and Mallory had passed. She was born on December 6, 2007 at 7:54 PM. She was 1 pound 13 ounces, and was 13.75 inches long. She was gestationally 32 weeks but was the size of a 23-week-old fetus. We never did find out what she had.

I am pregnant again now, and it has been a very long 7 months. I am due 3 days after Mallory's birthday, on December 9, 2008. So far, all is well.

Kathy asked what we would give Jesus for Christmas? Last year, I would have said things that I would be ashamed of today. I would have yelled and screamed, and said, "Why me??"

I would have given God my anger and hatred and pain and sorrow. I would have given Him all the wondering: Why Us? Why not let her be born alive to be baptized? WHY? We tried so hard to have her, not for it to end up like this!



Mallory's Perfect Feet

This year, I will give Him the soul of our new girl, who we have named Noelle. I will ask Him to protect her, and love her and watch over her. I will give Him my gratitude for allowing us to have another chance, and for everything working out this time, and our prayers being answered. We will give Him our love and commitment. One thing that helped us get over this was our Faith. I don't know where we would be today without it. I realized that God and the Blessed Mother know exactly what it is like to have a Child, love it so much, and have it taken away from you. They gave the ultimate sacrifice, in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. I felt comfort eventually in praying to them knowing that. It is not something you will ever get over, but the pain does lessen over time. I have found comfort in educating others about this, and helping friends who have had this happen to them. All things happen for a reason, and although it has almost been a year, I am finding out more every day why this happened to us. I also want to thank Patti and Kathy and Alexandra's House for all the comfort, prayers and help before, during, and after. They are wonderful.

Amy, Byron, and Megan Fordham

P.S. Noelle Grace Robyn Fordham was born on Friday, November 28, 2008 and is doing great! Congratulations, Fordham family!!



Gianna Marie Schmidt

Gianna's Story

Our daughter, Gianna Marie Schmidt, will always be a treasure to our family. She was a beautiful, 7.5 lb. baby with a head full of dark hair. Although our time with Gianna was far too short, we feel amazingly blessed to have known her. She is forever a part of our family... forever a part of our hearts belong to her. Jacob and John Paul will never forget the cuddles, kisses and tickles they showered upon their baby sister.

Our family's gift to the Christ Child is the same pure love and adoration granted to Gianna by her adoring big brothers. They have the child-like love and faith that adults strive to offer to the Baby Jesus.

Merry Christmas to All Alexandra's House Volunteers and the Beautiful Families they serve!

Warmly,
*Jennifer, John, Jacob
and John Paul Schmidt*



Gracie Jo Reynolds

Gracie Jo Reynolds

We would like to share our story about our daughter, Gracie Reynolds. We had struggled with infertility for four years when we found out we were finally pregnant. Our joy quickly turned to sorrow when, during an ultrasound at 10 weeks gestation, we found out that our baby had anencephaly. Anencephaly is a fatal birth defect. It meant that our daughter's brain would not develop and that she could live as long as she was in my womb but would die either during or soon after birth. Even though we were strongly pro-life, it took a couple of days to decide to carry her to term. The pain of years of infertility and then to deliver a child that would die seemed too much to bear. Also, due to the infertility, the doctors advised me that the sooner I could try to get pregnant again, the better. If I carried the baby to term, it would be almost a year before I could try to get pregnant again, versus a few months. We realized that God had to have a reason in all of this so we followed God's will and decided to carry our baby. God will always reward those who are obedient to Him.

At about 18 weeks gestation, a friend showed us an article about Alexandra's House. We met Patti Lewis shortly afterwards. God sent her directly to us and worked through her to help us. Without her help, the mental and emotional strain on us would have been much more difficult to bear. Gracie died in the womb when I was 28 weeks along. I was induced and, after 42 hours of labor, I delivered her on March 4th, 2002. Since she came early, we did not have funeral arrangements made yet. Patti helped us with all of that. By carrying her as far as we could, we were rewarded by being able to hold our beloved daughter, have family pictures taken with her, give her a beautiful service and lay her to rest with the respect and dignity that she deserved. We now have a place to remember her and visit her. The Lord also rewarded us by giving us the strength to bear hardships and not run from them, thus increasing our faith. We now are in a position to help others going through the same thing. God still heard our prayers about wanting children. Our son Matthew is 5 years old and our daughter, Sarah, is 2 years old. God even has a sense of humor by surprising us with another yet unborn baby daughter. Matthew and Sarah are gorgeous and healthy kids and our daughter on the way is expected to be healthy.

God has blessed us to overflowing, just as His Word promises. Our gift back to the Baby Jesus would be to offer our children back to Him and raise them to know, love, and serve Him by doing our best to know, love, and serve Him ourselves and lead by example. We will need much more help from Him to

accomplish this but I think that it's one of Jesus' most favorite things to do. We also want to be there for all others the Lord puts in our path going through the same thing to let God work through us to help them, too. Thanks be to God and Alexandra's House for helping us reach this stage in our lives.

Tim and Amy Reynolds

P.S. Lydia Jo Reynolds was born on November 25, 2008. She is beautiful and completely healthy. Congratulations to the Reynolds family!



The Reynolds Family

So, with one voice and one heart we say:

HAPPY BIRTHDAY JESUS

Thank you for granting us the awesome gift of experiencing again and again the wonder of Your Nativity each time one of our special babies is born. What a privilege it is to see them and hold them and to know that, through them, it is the closest we can come, on Earth, to behold Your lovely face and to offer You our sweet embrace. Could we be like the angels and sing an everlasting hymn of adoration, it would not seem sufficient, for such a glorious gift as You.

And to all our friends, again

**THANK YOU and MAY OUR BABIES
INSPIRE YOU TO HAVE A CHRISTMAS
MORE BLESSED THAN ANY ONE BEFORE**



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