



*A refuge for unborn-newborn babies and little children who will die and those who love them*

**NEWSLETTER**

**SPRING 2021**

## **EDITORIAL**

Dear Friends of Alexandra's House,

Spring is here again, and it is hard not to be hopeful when we see, all around us, signs of growth and life. Nature as well as faith speaks to us of Resurrection. For all of those of you who have lost loved ones this year, we extend our deepest sympathies. We hope that this year brings to all greater hope, and in our hard knowledge of the fragility of life, a greater joy in its very precious moments. As the poet, G. M. Hopkins says so beautifully 'Let Him easter in us, be a dayspring to the dimness of us, be a crimson-cressed east'.

This spring, we hear from Janna Sorensen, whose little boy, Lincoln, was misdiagnosed in utero, and who is today a healthy 2 year old. Going through this arduous and unusual journey prompted her to create a Maternity Devotional App, which is available on the App store.

We also hear from Lauren Jungen who has joined the staff at Alexandra's House as Office Manager. Welcome Lauren. We are privileged to have your presence and your contribution to all our families.

Patti Lewis and Hilary Stroh

## **MEET NEW OFFICE MANAGER, LAUREN JUNGEN**



My name is Lauren Jungen, and I am honored to join the staff of Alexandra's House as Office Manager. Having recently become a mother, I have profound reverence for the unique circumstances surrounding each pregnancy and birth. Alexandra's House has opened my eyes to the precious gift of life, and it is a privilege to assist in its mission.

My husband and I have been married for three wonderful years. I am a mother to a 2 year old daughter and 6 month old son. My previous work has included administrative assistant at Our Lady of Good Counsel, middle school math teacher at Our Lady of the Presentation, and Catholic missionary with FOCUS at the University of Wisconsin - Madison.

My first encounter with the work of Alexandra's House occurred while attending Mass with my newborn daughter. Ms. Patti noticed me and immediately consoled my anxiousness about disturbing others with a crying baby. Her affirmation of a mother's sublime calling has been a beautiful message that I keep close to my mind and heart in troubling times. I have already experienced firsthand the immense generosity of Alexandra's House benefactors and volunteers, and I look forward to imparting this same generosity and selflessness to all those whom we will serve.

Thank you for allowing me to introduce myself. I look forward to when we can meet in person or by mail (your messages are welcome: [ljungen@alexandrashouse.com](mailto:ljungen@alexandrashouse.com))!

*Sometimes, prenatal diagnostics can get it really wrong. Janna and Brandon were expecting baby Lincoln when they were told - wrongly as it turned out - that he had Trisomy 13. Janna shares their story here, and also the pathway this opened up to her to create a biblical app for expectant mothers, whatever journey they are walking in their pregnancy.*

### **PART 1: LINCOLN**

***I know you've got a little boy called Lincoln, and are expecting another baby boy in May (congratulations). Can you share with us a little about Lincoln's story?***

With my interest in science, medicine, and having all the facts, we decided to have a genetic screening done at our 12-week prenatal visit. Those results came back showing a 50% chance of Lincoln having Trisomy 13. Scared and devastated, we met with a genetic counselor who offered further testing to confirm the diagnosis or termination. We made it clear that termination wasn't an option we would entertain, but we pursued the testing which came back positive for Mosaic T 13. The picture of his chromosomes separated into pairs, with a third 13th chromosome was such foundation-shaking visual proof that our lives were going to be different than how we envisioned.

***So you began to research what the future might be like.***

I read every medical journal article published on T13. The research is so limited, due to the condition's rarity, that it all fit into a 1.5 inch binder. Many medical resources recommended palliative care but when treatment was offered and successful, the child could live for years. We were prepared to fight for our Lincoln, should we need to.

***What was the rest of the pregnancy like, living this uncertainty?***

Although Lincoln kept growing and passing all of his tests, we were repeatedly reminded that it

was still unlikely he would make it to birth; if he did, he would probably die before his first birthday. We eventually switched to a different team of physicians that were less negative about his prognosis. We also met with Patti at Alexandra's House: her understanding soul was a bright spot in the midst of our den of anticipatory grief. Our pastor helped us plan Lincoln's funeral, and we tried to make the most of our pregnancy knowing he could pass any day.

***And then Lincoln was born, perfectly healthy.***

Lincoln came out having a normal appearance, so the neonatologist took a blood sample to retest Mosaic T 13. He had a blood draw, echocardiogram, brain ultrasound, and baptism all within hours of birth. The next day, the preliminary results came back showing no evidence of an extra 13th chromosome in his blood. Later the full results confirmed this.



***How did they get it so wrong?***

Our geneticist informed us that there are two ways this could have happened. The first way was that just my placenta had trisomic cells and Lincoln didn't. Alternatively Lincoln may still have some trisomic cells somewhere in his body, but they don't show up on the bloodwork. Either way, we feel we have been blessed with a miracle. Lincoln is now a very bright two year old who keeps us on our toes: we love him so very much!

*(cont'd.)*

***Extraordinary. Meanwhile, your deep journey with Lincoln made you search for 'devotional apps'. What did you find, and why was it not enough?***

Romans 12:12 says, "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer." This was my mantra for Lincoln's pregnancy. I was always praying for God's will to be done, for Lincoln to have the mildest form of T 13. But I didn't know what to pray for beyond that. I searched the App Store for a devotional app: there were only two options, and neither had new topics and prayers daily.

***PART 2: CREATING AN APP FOR EXPECTANT MOMS***

***So after Lincoln was born, you found time (amazing!) to make your own Maternity Devotional app. Tell me about this project.***

I started by finding timelines for fetal development to figure out when each part of a baby's body develops, and timelines for when a pregnant mom would experience certain milestones (feeling of first kicks, in-office tests and screenings, etc.). I also tried to think of topics to include relating to a baby's future, such as future friends, spouses, and governmental leaders. Next, I found Bible verses to correspond to those topics, and then I wrote out prayers. We're two and a half years into this project and it's nearly complete: Brandon has made the technological side of it possible.

***How can we access it?***

Its name is **Maternity Devotional: Prayers for Pregnancy** and it is now available for purchase in the App Store for both iPhones and iPads. We haven't made an Android option yet.

***How do you envisage it will be helpful to mothers in their pregnancies?***

Our goal was to ease mothers' minds that they were fully covering their babies in prayer, and on some days, remind them that they need to pray for

themselves during pregnancy, too. I wanted to provide topics to pray about that were specifically meaningful during each day of pregnancy to help the mother/baby bond start early in pregnancy. We made it customizable for the due date and the baby's gender (if known), and provided the ability to enter a nickname for the baby so that each prayer is special for Mom and Baby.

***What's your favorite Bible verse to correspond with a pregnancy milestone?***

On Day 66 of pregnancy, a baby begins to have a startle reflex. Joshua 1:9 says, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." This verse applies to so many things in life, especially those of us who are/were in the midst of a challenging pregnancy, but I particularly like how it can be used to pray for strength for a child when he or she is faced with scary and startling situations throughout his or her life.

Although not related to a milestone mentioned in the app, there was another verse I thought about a lot during both of my pregnancies: Matthew 18:20 says, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." When pregnant, the baby is your constant companion, and at all moments of the day, you and the baby are gathered together in God's name. How special is that!

***What was the rest of the pregnancy like, living this uncertainty?***

Although Lincoln kept growing and passing all of his tests, we were repeatedly reminded that it was still unlikely he would make it to birth; if he did, he would probably die before his first birthday. We eventually switched to a different team of physicians that were less negative about his prognosis. We also met with Patti at Alexandra's House: her understanding soul was a bright spot in the midst of our den of anticipatory grief. Our pastor helped us plan Lincoln's funeral, and we tried to make the most of our pregnancy knowing he could pass any day.

## *June Fun Run Invitation*

St. Michael the Archangel's Catholic Church in Leawood is planning their summer Vacation Bible School for young children. Alexandra's House has been chosen as their 2021 Mission Project. This week-long program culminates in a FUN RUN on **June 18**, beginning at 11:15 am on the South Field of St. Michael's campus at 142<sup>nd</sup> and Nall. Each child and all participants are encouraged to run in honor of a special Alexandra's House baby. If anyone would like to participate in the Fun Run, please email us at [care@alexandrashouse.com](mailto:care@alexandrashouse.com) no later than June 3<sup>rd</sup>.



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