

First Choice QUARTERLY



WINTER 2021

ISSUE 26



First Choice
FOR WOMEN



BOARD CHAIR MESSAGE
Cindy Costerison

We Have Learned

It has been raining for days. I usually prefer sunshine, but this feels like a respite, a cleansing. 2020 has, for sure, been a challenge to many and a season of loss for some families. I continue to hear how bad it's been, and I agree, we have had plenty of trials but...

Let us please remember that 2020 has been a year of learning. We have learned that

- some have so much hatred in their hearts that they feel they have a right to destroy.
- sometimes it looks like evil is winning.
- our medical experts are fallible.
- we can have joy amid adversity.
- some would like us to live in fear.

And we have learned that...

- love wins every time.
- anger is rarely righteous.
- we may disagree with our neighbors but love them anyway.
- humans are not meant for solitude.
- children need structure and responsibility.

More importantly, I pray that we have learned that we can't depend on men to do what only God can do.

As the rain continues, I pray that it is washing away our frustrations and even our grief. I believe, as a country, we need a fresh perspective and a return to faith.

I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint.

—JEREMIAH 31:25

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE

Kailee McKnight

Ready or not, 2021, here we come!

That's how I've chosen to step into this new year. I'm so grateful for what the Lord has brought First Choice for Women in 2020. We impacted our communities in a unique and positive way by practically providing for families in need, making available pregnancy tests and ultrasounds, and mentoring through our ParentCare program that creates a consistent and welcoming place for people to come to learn, share and grow as parents, grandparents or guardians.

Reminiscing on the thriving moments, we added three new staff members and made one staff promotion. We renewed our logo, mission and vision; persevered through COVID, continuing to serve our clients in a safe manner; achieved our best Walk for Life fundraiser in ministry history; received three grants; attended the CareNet conference to enhance our ability to prosper; completed our first virtual banquet; witnessed the first baby box being delivered in Muncie; had our first virtual concert fundraiser; blessed many families with Christmas gifts, thanks to two business networking groups; and continued to build new relationships with the community. Can you believe that?! Praise God for His goodness and mercy overflowing!

On an even more exciting note, WE HAVE A NEW HOME IN ANDERSON! It is located at 6 W 8th Street, and we plan to open in the next few months. In the meantime, we will still be located on Madison Avenue during regular hours of operation. We have prayed, searched, and persevered for a few years and are so excited as we look ahead to the essential impact this will make for the organization and fulfilling our mission and vision.

This year brings many new ventures as we dive into new goals and look strategically at the next three years. Opening our Anderson location for thirty-two hours per week, building our men's ministry, and investing in a mobile unit that seeks to meet practical needs in multiple locations weekly are the top three initiatives we seek to implement over the next three years. In order to see these goals become reality, we need your help to fully fund our operational budget. This is a time for stewardship to take the lead. We are making a long-term investment for life, both current and eternal. Join us on the front lines of this battle to make a difference in the lives we serve and seek to reach in our communities.

This year we will continue to do what we do best - take care of women and babies, take care of families, share in schools how to create positive, healthy relationships, and continue to show the love of Jesus in all that we do.

P.S. Check out the quick updates section for the 2021 event plans we have in store!



CHRISTMAS GIVING DELIVERY



Welcome Bethany!

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS DIRECTOR

Hello! My name is Bethany Jones. I have been married for thirteen years and am Mom to four kids - Noah, 12; Jenna, 11; Hope, 6; and Bennett, 2. I accepted Jesus as my Savior as a very small child and have loved Him as long as I can remember. I have always had a love and passion for kids and youth. I wondered for many years where God would lead me, until my senior year of high school when I felt a distinct call into education. I didn't know how or when, but I knew that, if I just continued to follow God's leadership, He would reveal His plan. Following high school, I attended Hobe Sound Bible College in Florida and majored in secondary education. I felt that junior high and high school kids especially need people in their lives to care about their struggles and help point them to Jesus.

I am so excited that God's plan is coming to fruition through this ministry at First Choice for Women. I spent many years preparing for an opportunity like this. I am looking forward to making a difference in any way I can in the lives and futures of the kids and young people that I will meet through this ministry.



A Steadfast Embrace

BY LESLIE HATCHER

Every young woman who walks into First Choice for Women is unique and has hopes, dreams and challenges exclusive to her. Many come to us heartbroken over an unplanned pregnancy; others are disappointed when the pregnancy test is negative. Although their circumstances are different, one key factor will often make the difference between an abortion decision and a LIFE decision...family support.

Kat,* 21 years old, came to us for a pregnancy test, accompanied by her adoptive mother, Betsy Wright.* Kat was emotionally distraught and explained that she has experienced a lot of trauma and loss in her young life. She has joint custody of a young son, but, other than her child, she has no one. Then she met the Wright family at church. Seeing Kat's need for love and a family, they felt God leading them to adopt her in April, even though she was legally an adult. And now, Betsy was here, sitting beside Kat in the counseling room, holding her hand.

When the pregnancy test was positive, Kat completely broke down. "I can't have this baby. I can't do this again. This can't happen!" Betsy just calmly replied, "We'll figure it out." The staff and volunteers of First Choice also assured Kat of their support and offered her an ultrasound appointment. Kat left the center still very upset but planning to return for the sonogram. When she came back, with Betsy at her side, Kat shared that, with the support of her family, she had decided to continue the pregnancy. Instead of being desperate and frightened, Kat was now glowing and embracing the new life growing inside her.

Had it not been for the steadfast, loving support of this adoptive family, Kat's story might have had a very different ending...one with post-abortion regret to add to her already traumatic past. Please pray for the many clients we see that *do not* have a family like Kat's. Pray for the staff and volunteers of First Choice for Women as we share the hope found in a heavenly Father who will never leave or forsake them.

**Names have been changed to protect privacy.*



Hello and Goodbye

BY SHARYLL MARTIN

Usually, the first newsletter of the year contains statistics, numbers that show what happened during the year just completed. It won't surprise anyone that COVID impacted our outreach in 2020. But even though there was a 50% drop in the numbers, we still had 1,509 participants. Of those 1,509 students, 86% of them chose to be abstinent from sexual activity. As in past years, these students gained 10% more knowledge about healthy relationships, too. Success is not measured in numbers alone, but it is good to remember that the numbers represent people God loves very much.



When I realized we would not be finishing the school year the way we began it, I spent my time at the center doing whatever needed to be done. My tasks included chaperoning for ultrasounds, answering the phone and making appointments, providing options counseling for pregnancy tests, mentoring in parent care, cleaning, reorganizing, changing the message on the sign, learning to ZOOM and then ZOOMing, picking up trash and weeding, AND staying in contact with health teachers to provide e-lessons. When the fall semester started in August, we were ready to either go into the schools or drop off the materials they would need to lead abstinence lessons on their own. We established a rhythm and finished the year better than we started it. Except for one little bump in the road...

...I am leaving – not just my wonderful position at First Choice but leaving Muncie, leaving Indiana, and heading West. Fred and I have spent nearly all our lives here in Blackford and Delaware Counties. But we've decided that now is the time to do something different and see where God leads us. We are excited...nervous and a little sad...but mostly excited!

My years at First Choice have been the best work experience of my life. The stories I can tell would fill a small book. The slang I've learned from students has been eye-opening and fun. My heart has hurt many times when kids have talked about their families, but I've also laughed so hard with them and have enjoyed the time I've spent with them. More than anything, I hope I gave them some of myself and encouraged them to make healthy choices in an unhealthy world. Communicating with teachers about my departure has been so bittersweet! Friendships with First Choice coworkers has been a bonus. We have become a family that loves to serve Jesus in partnership. I have no doubt that the FCFW team will move forward into areas we haven't tackled yet. God has put the right people in the right places for the next season. I am so grateful that I got to be part of what has already been established.

Calling all supporters!

We have officially purchased our new location in Anderson! Our new home will be located downtown at 6 W 8th Street. We look forward to our ribbon cutting and grand opening. More news as it comes.

Making BIG changes with your change!

Baby bottle campaigns aren't just for churches. Small groups, private schools, clubs, office fundraisers - any group of people can do a Baby Bottle Campaign to benefit First Choice for Women. Call us at 765-286-6085 to learn more or find more information online under our Sanctity of Human Life Event tab. Your change can make a BIG change in lives in our community.

Wedding Bells

BY MELISSA SMITH

So here's a story. Brace yourself and grab your tissues.

Let's set the stage. One day, one of our clients, Anastasia, asked me if she and her fiance could have their wedding in our office. At first, I didn't know what to say – we've never done anything like that before! But, God...why not have a wedding in our office? It's the perfect scenario – a couple trying to make their situation better, surrounded by God and volunteers that they consider family. What more could we ask, besides CAKE!!

So I said, "Yes, of course you can!"

The office was buzzing with preparations for the next week, getting ready for the first time that First Choice for Women would ever host a wedding. God is so good!

There was a lot of work to be done. We planned for a volunteer photographer, a cake, punch, flowers, and a gift for the soon-to-be-married couple. We were all concerned about what we were going to wear. Before we knew it, the day arrived, and the office was crackling with excitement.

My volunteers and I teared up when Anastasia walked in, carrying her wedding dress. I let her in to the Parent Care room so she could change and soon went back to check on her. What a beautiful, shy, humbled bride! She was beaming as she stood there, and she said she was ready. But she wasn't... not just yet. I'd gotten her a lovely bouquet to carry, and when I handed it to her, she was so excited and appreciative.

Now to get the groom ready. He was pacing nervously, and everyone teased him about getting cold feet.

Finally, it was time. Anastasia came out of the Parent Care room with her mentor, Bethany, as I played *The Wedding March* on my phone. This wedding was different. There was just something special about it that brought out the emotions of everyone in attendance. The Holy Spirit, and all the volunteers, surrounded the couple. It was a blessed few minutes as we watched Mike and Anastasia commit to each other. Even with their face masks on, we were able to provide them with beautiful pictures of the ceremony that they'll be able to keep forever. At the reception, we were able to hear how they first met, about the many obstacles they have had to face, and how Anastasia has recently found a job.

First Choice for Women was able to provide Anastasia with her dream wedding, a day every little girl dreams of. Giving this couple an hour of complete love, beauty, joy, and praise is what First Choice is all about. We stood there as witnesses to a Spirit-filled union of a man and a woman and were thrilled that, with all the chaos and calamity in the world, especially in our daily fight to save God's perfect creation, this happened! Here were two people who found a love in each other that could move mountains, a love bigger than themselves, a love that knows no bounds, a love that conquers all.

Love for others, no matter what – this is First Choice for Women!



Jessi Lickey

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

For over a year now, Jessi Lickey has shown up to volunteer each week with a smile on her face. The love and compassion she shows to everyone she meets is contagious. She is passionate about her role as a Parent Care mentor and her newfound role as store manager, and she is doing all she can to help with the transition of Client Services directors. There isn't a hat that she hasn't worn since I started here!!! Jessi just does what she feels called to do and what needs to be done at First Choice for Women. She isn't afraid to ask questions or to seek advice when needed. She's a light in the office!



Jessi has been married to Nathan for eighteen years. They have two daughters, Lizzie, 16, and Susie, 15. They currently attend Hope Church in Anderson. Outside of First Choice, Jessi spends most of her time homeschooling her girls and taking them to their various appointments. Her weekends are usually spent doing family game and movie nights. In her limited free time, she loves to read books and drink coffee.

For Jessi, answering the question, *Why do you volunteer at First Choice?* took some thinking. She said, "There are, of course, the usual answers such as I want to help people or I want to do my part in society. But, for Christ followers, choosing to volunteer has a much deeper meaning. We choose to volunteer because of the abundant love of Christ. Christ's love compels us to offer ourselves as 'living sacrifices.' And just as Paul explains in Corinthians, we are one body in Christ, and we each need to be (or do) our part so that the body can be complete. *God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be* (1 Corinthians 12:18). And First Choice for Women in Anderson, Indiana, is where God has placed me."

Thank you, Jessi, for all your passion for and dedication to our ministry. You are an important piece in God's masterpiece here at First Choice.

LOOKING BACK AT 2020



CHURCH SPOTLIGHT

Union Chapel

Our Church Spotlight for this quarter shines on Union Chapel Ministries, located at 4622 N. Broadway Ave. in Muncie. Gregg Parris has served as the lead pastor for forty years and continues to see God's favor.

With a congregation of approximately 1,300, Union Chapel offers three Sunday services at 8:30, 10:00 and 11:30am, as well as a wide variety of ministries and connection points for all ages.

"The church is not defined as a building, but rather by lives committed to loving God and serving people in our community," notes Executive Director Candace Ford.

The mission of Union Chapel is defined as UC3, to "Know, Grow, Go," believing that you get the most out of life by knowing God, growing in relationship with God and others, and going to serve others to make a difference. This mission results in a multifaceted approach to ministry. One of their newest outreach efforts is a men's recovery home. Partnering with Dr. Draper and Urban Light Ministries, they plan to help fill the gap between treatment and full recovery, aiming to meet the needs of men struggling to transition from addiction to new life.

Another program that will make a great impact on the community is BU@UC, a faith-based college extension program, offering fully accredited associate and bachelor level degrees in partnership with Bethel University. At a fraction of the cost of traditional faith-based college tuition, students will receive practical experience in a strong academic environment that promotes spiritual growth.

Union Chapel is known throughout Delaware County for its annual SERVE week event. "For nearly 20 years, SERVE has been a practical way for our congregation to work together to carry out our mission and vision to go and serve in our community," notes Candace. First Choice has benefited from this wonderful outreach program. SERVE teams have worked at First Choice each summer sorting clothes, cleaning, and more. Additionally, leading up to SERVE week, church members have donated more than 75 bags of diapers and other baby supplies for our clients.

First Choice is also blessed to have several UC members as volunteers. Lisa Cochran, RN, is one of our nurse sonographers.

"I'm thankful that my church supports this life affirming ministry. They see the need to walk alongside women who are facing literal life and death decisions. I love serving at First Choice. We meet our clients at the point of their need. Our staff and volunteers greet all with open arms and the grace found in Jesus Christ."

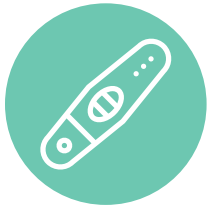
Union Chapel has a heart for people and for sharing the gospel both locally and globally. They support countless mission organizations and families. First Choice for Women is honored to be one of those ministries.

"First Choice for Women has a long-standing partnership with Union Chapel," Candace stated. "We believe First Choice is a vital piece in the community to meet people where they are and show the love of Jesus."

Thank you, Union Chapel Ministries, for your support for First Choice for Women. For more information, visit www.unionchapel.com.



How Your Donation Helps First Choice



\$9

Average cost of pregnancy test



\$50

Average cost of a car seat



\$100

Average cost of a bassinet or pack and play



\$150

Average cost of a crib and mattress



\$250

Average cost of an ultrasound



\$1,200

Average cost to save a life
(From initial engagement to on-site counseling & education)



\$1,400

Average cost to serve one client for a year
(From pregnancy test to ongoing parent care)

Yes, I want to change the world— one life at a time!

If you would like to become a monthly giver, go to [FirstChoiceForWomen.org](https://www.FirstChoiceForWomen.org) and click the “Donate” menu OR complete this form and mail it to [3020 N Oakwood Ave, Muncie, IN 47304](https://www.FirstChoiceForWomen.org).

One-Time Gift

Recurring Monthly Donation

\$25

\$50

\$100

\$500

\$1,000

Other: \$ _____

Check Enclosed

Charge my Credit Card (complete section below)

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First Choice for Women is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit ministry; donations are tax deductible as permissible by law. TIN# 35-1695860



Thank you to our sponsors!



Events to watch out for this year!

As you will see below, we are consolidating our fundraisers to streamline our organization. Though we still plan to have multiple fundraising events, they will look a little different in the coming years.

5k/Walk for Life

Tentatively, we will be hosting our Annual Walk for Life in May. We will be adding a 5k option to that event, so get your running shoes ready! We'll have some fun both virtually and in person. The walk will be similar to the event in 2020, conducted virtually May 20-22, 2021, with an in-person celebration, walk and 5k on Saturday, May 22.

New Golf Fundraiser

We will be partnering with Beneficence Family Scholars to explore the fun of a good ol' golf fundraiser. This will be our very first, and we hope to make it a fantastic first! We will share more details in the coming months. We tentatively plan to hold this event in mid to late summer.

Banquet 2021

Our Annual Banquet is tentatively planned for Thursday, October 7, 2021, at the Horizon Convention Center. More info to come as the date draws closer.

2020 CLIENT ESSENTIALS BASKETS GIVING



3020 N Oakwood Ave
Muncie, IN 47304

1817 N Madison Ave
Anderson, IN 46011

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