

# Message from our Founder

The initial seeds for this ministry were planted back in 1982 when two separate events occurred that God would use to bring about this ministry. First, in Southern India, a little girl named Nemili would be adopted into a family from rural Wyoming and eventually move to Athens, GA. Second, a little girl would be born to Lisa and I who would grow up, attend a Steven Curtis Chapman concert, and pray that Lisa and I would adopt. Through the adoption of our own daughter and son in the years that followed, God continued planting seeds for this ministry. In 2009 these seeds continued to grow as Lisa and Christie, another founding member and adoptive mom, met Nemili. A year later, a small group of couples began meeting in our living room to discuss and address the need for resources and support for adoptive parents in our community. Since that time, these many seeds have grown into a full-fledged tree with the ministry becoming incorporated and receiving 501c3 status in 2012.



As you read through this report, you will see that the seeds God planted many years ago have grown into a tree which is now producing much fruit for His glory. Thank you for being a part of that growth. We hope you are encouraged to see all that was accomplished for the Kingdom in 2017 and excited to see where He is growing us in the future.

-In His Grace,

Bryan Miller Founder and Chairman, Chosen for Life Ministries

### You Give So Families Can Grow



Chosen for Life Ministries strives to help churches and communities understand and respond to this need: there are children in our community and throughout the world who either don't have parents to make memories with or who aren't living in an environment where memories are made in safety and love.

What is the answer? **To help families grow**—whether for a season while fostering or for a lifetime through adoption. In this growth, we expect to see vulnerable children and orphans experience the tangible love of Jesus. We believe there is a role each person can play to help make more family moments a reality for orphaned and vulnerable children, and we work to help community members find their unique role in caring for these families.

#### The Orphan Care Need

There are an estimated 150 million orphans worldwide and 500,000 children in foster care in America (1). Closer to home, there are an estimated 12,000 children in foster care in Georgia, and over 425 of those children are from Athens-Clarke, Oconee, and Walton Counties (2). Together as a community, we can show these children the love of Christ as we equip churches to step into this crisis and serve.

- 1 Christian Alliance for Orphans, cafo.org/ovc/statistics
- 2 Data received from local DFCS leadership

# HOW WILL **YOU** HELP US GROW FAMILIES?



#### PREPARE THE SOIL

\$15/month • \$180/year
Just \$15 a month can help us support and encourage our volunteers and local caseworkers.



#### **PLANT THE SEED**

\$25/month • \$300/year

Pledge \$25 a month and help us remind foster children of their worth with gifts like a My Name Matters gift set.



#### WATER THE SEED

\$50/month • \$600/year

Give \$50 a month and help with needs like training new Care Teams to serve local foster families through our Foster Care Initiative.



#### **NOURISH THE SEED**

\$75/month • \$900/year

Give \$75 a month and help us provide encouragement and education to local foster and adoptive families through our annual Choosing to Care Conference and Learning to Care Workshops.



#### WATCH US GROW

\$150/month • \$1800/year
Pledge \$150 a month and help us continue expanding our
programs throughout DFCS Region 5, our 12-county region.

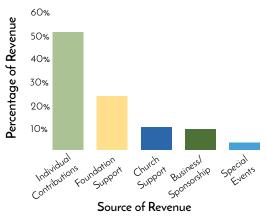
# Revenue and Expense Snap Shot

Chosen for Life Ministries is fully funded by donations from churches, foundations, businesses, and individuals. Through the generosity of our community, adoptive and foster families receive support from our programs free of charge.

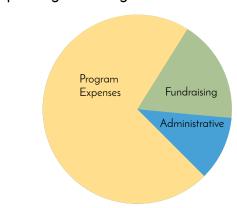
#### Revenue Sources

In 2017 we raised

\$452,440 in donations and income.



#### Spending Percentages



More than 83% of gifts went directly to programs benefiting adoptive and foster families.

#### Net Revenue from Special Events



Choosing to Care Banquet \$206,233



Both Hands Project \$102,000



Run Home 5k \$4.083



First Annual Fine Art Show \$5,578

"As treasurer for Chosen for Life, I see the efforts of our staff and directors to be true stewards of the resources that God has entrusted to this organization. Most importantly, it is a blessing to give so generously to those who wish to further God's kingdom through adoption and foster care."

- Eddie Patat, Board Treasurer

### What Your Gift Funds

#### Education & Awareness

Our awareness efforts enable churches and communities to understand the gospel of adoption, become aware of the needs that must be met, and become equipped to answer God's command to care for the orphan. We also provide educational opportunities to our community, and specifically to foster and adoptive families, that equip them to care well for the children in their homes and neighborhoods. (See pages 5-6 to learn more)

### **Adoption Financial Support**

We provide financial assistance to Christian couples in Georgia who are pursuing adoption. Our Adoption Assistance Grants help reduce the financial barriers to adoption. This grant is funded through our annual Both Hands project. Grants are awarded through an application process and determined by applicants' financial need. Through a generous 2017 sponsorship, each grant recipient also received Canyon Road: A Book of Prayer by Kari Kristina Reeves and a free mini photography session from Blume Photography once their child arrived home! (See pages 7-8 to learn more)

### Foster Care Support

Through a partnership with Promise686, we create Care Teams to support local foster families and the children they are caring for—financially, emotionally, and spiritually. Our Clothes Closet and various supply drives help provide local foster parents with support needed for their placements. Additionally, My Name Matters sets are made for and given to children who are entering the foster care system. (See pages 9-12 to learn more)

### Programs by the Numbers



- Education & Awareness + Financial Support + Clothes Closet programs are available to all 159 counties in Georgia
- Foster Care Teams currently serve in three counties: Clarke, Oconee, and Walton counties.
- Future expansion of Foster Care Teams to the nine additional counties in DFCS Region 5

In 2017, we served families from 34 different counties in Georgia. Our Foster Care Teams served foster families within Oconee, Athens-Clarke, and Walton counties.

- 24 individuals were trained to lead foster care and adoption ministries within their church.
- 27 churches supported families in their community through Care Teams and service projects.
- 50 foster families were served by a
   Care Team that surrounded them with
   tangible support, encouragement,
   and prayer as they fostered children
   through the child welfare system of
   Georgia.
- 46 children were welcomed into their forever families with the help of our Adoption Assistance Grants.

# Choosing to Care Conference

"The conference sessions addressed any fears going into considering adoption, and it put into perspective how this process may not go as expected but will be so worth the cost in the end"

—Choosing to Care Conference Attendee



### 2017 Choosing to Care Conference

235 attendees

Provided 1,064 hours of continuing education credits

FREE childcare for 145 children

#### History of CFLM:

1982 Seeds planted for the future

2009 Founding members met

2010 Chosen for Life formed

2011 First Choosing to Care Conference

2012 Incorporated as a 501c3 nonprofit

2014 Foster Care Initiative began in Clarke and Oconee Counties First part-time staff hired

2015 My Name Matters program began

2016 First Executive Director hired
Part-time Director of Development
hired
Full-time Ministry Assistant hired
Clothes Closet opened

2017 Foster Care Initiative Expansion into Walton County

Chosen for Life Ministries began in 2010 as a resource to local families interested in adoption. By 2014, we were supporting families interested in adoption, foster care, and general orphan care. Our Annual Choosing to Care Conference began in 2011 and is an Adoption, Foster, and Orphan Care Conference that provides information to potential and current adoptive or foster families, as well as resources for local orphan care information. Foster families foster parents are required to earn 15 credits annually to remain certified. Attendants of the Choosing to Care Conference can earn up to 7 hours. In 2017, we offered our 6th annual conference to 235 attendees. Our keynote speaker, Jason Johnson, offered encouraging messages of hope and inspiration to us all by sharing about the Gospel of Orphan Care.

# Learning to Care Workshops

Since many foster and adoptive families need support year-round, Chosen for Life Ministries began providing consistent educational workshops in 2016. These free weeknight workshops occur five times per year, are led by experts in their fields, offer free childcare, and give families the opportunity to earn two continuing education credits.

#### Topics taught in 2017 included:

Opting Out of the Drama Cycle: Understanding the Drama Triangle A relational science tool that models dysfunctional social interactions - and how to opt out of this cycle

Empowered to Connect: Connecting with Children from Hard Places Methods to help equip families, churches, and professionals to better serve children impacted by adoption and foster care.

What About You: A look at Self Care, Adult Attachment Styles, & Personal Growth How our own emotional and relational health can greatly influence our families

**Communication Development** Ways to support communication development from infancy through adolescence

**Trust-Based Relational Intervention** Provides a greater understanding of the adopted and foster child as seen through the Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®) approach.

### 2017 Learning to Care Workshops

304 attendees at 9 workshops

Provided 590 hours of continuing education credits

FREE childcare for 280 children



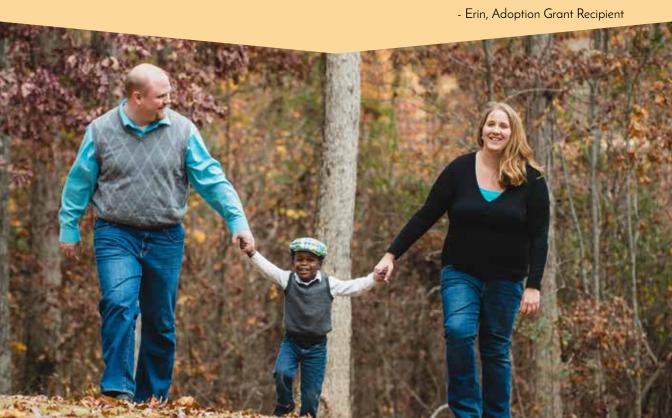
"Hearing others speak that have dealt with similar issues that we have dealt with is immeasurable. You can relate to each other and there is no judgment. Everyone there knows why and how foster care is so difficult, so there is no illusion of perfect parenting the way interactions sometimes are with other parents."

-Learning to Care Workshop Attendee

# Adoption Assistance Grants

We awarded more than \$102,570 in financial assistance to help welcome approximately 46 children into their forever families in 2017. We offer financial assistance to couples living in Georgia who gre pursuing the adoption process. Grant consideration is given to families who have completed their home study through a licensed agency, have invested their time and financially into the adoption process, and who may not otherwise be able to afford to adopt. We are thankful for 2017 donors who enable us to also provide families gifts of encouragement through Canyon Road: A Book of Prayer and Blume Photography mini photography sessions.

> "...instead of just being given a check, we were given a community of support. We were circled around and championed on. We were given resources and avenues of advice and counseling. The financial help was very much needed, but the non-tangible offerings were priceless."



# Both Hands Project

Our Annual Both Hands Project provides volunteers with the opportunity to live out our calling in James 1:27 "to look after orphans and widows in their distress" — with one hand serving the widow, and the other hand serving the orphan. Together teams serve local widows while raising money to fund our Adoption Assistance Grants that help bring orphans home to their forever families. Learn more about the ministry that manages our project at bothhands.org.



"I have had armies of people that have lifted me up and carried me forward. Chosen for Life Ministries and all of the volunteers are part of that army. It lets me know that God has not left me and proof that He is with me. He is carrying me every day."

—Alisa, widow served in Both Hands Project

### 2017 Both Hands Project

Over 150 volunteers

Raised \$100,000

5 widows served

### Foster Care Initiative

Chosen for Life's Foster Care Initiative is a collaborative strategy between local churches, CFLM, and Promise686 (another independent 501c3 organization) that mobilizes and equips churches and families to serve orphans and children in foster care. Our Foster Care Initiative helps people find a tangible role to serve these children.

"There are many ups and downs when you foster and having a Care Team that you can rely on is invaluable"

- Jennifer, Foster Parent



### Foster Care Initiative: Care Teams

#### **Proven Results**

National average shows 80% of foster families stop fostering in less than 2 years. Of the families we have served with Care Teams, less than 10% have stopped fostering within the first 2 years; 90% are fostering beyond 2 years!

When we began our initiative, there were only 20 approved foster homes in Athens-Clarke and Oconee County. Today, there are more than 60! This growth has been the result of a wonderful collaboration of like-minded agencies and organizations working together for the good of the children in this community. Through CFLM's specific role, it is evident to us that by equipping the church to find their role in serving these families, local foster families have been better supported through tangible service and prayer, helping to build families' capacity to continue fostering.

Care Team support given to the children and family includes:

### Tangible Support

Care Team members work together to bring a meal to the family each week and provide consistent babysitting and child mentoring. Each member is trained by our staff and undergoes a background check if volunteering to babysit or mentor.

### Prayer

The Care Team leader connects with the foster family each week to listen to prayer requests and shares them with the team. Together they pray for children place in homes, upcoming court dates, challenges during the fostering process, and specific needs for the family.

### Encouragement

Many Care Teams are creative in how they encourage the foster family. Oftentimes teams come together to purchase Christmas gifts, host birthday parties and celebrations, put together care packages when sickness hits, and many other forms of encouragement to help the family foster throughout their placement.

### Since Beginning in 2014

53 advocates have been trained to oversee Care Teams in their church

93 Care Teams have been formed 700 volunteers have been trained to serve on Care Teams 75 foster families have been served by Care Teams

# Foster Care Initiative: My Name Matters & Clothes Closet

Often, children entering foster care come into a stranger's home with no belongings of their own. Through our My Name Matters program, we gift these children with a Jesus Storybook Bible, duffle bag, towel, and pillowcase all personalized with their name to remind them that they, and their names, matter. We have given 77 children this gift in 2017 and 180 since beginning this project.

"Our foster son kept saying, 'Why did they do this for us?' I had him read the inscription in the book ["God places the lonely in families. - Psalm. 68:6." We want to let you know that you are loved! You are special! We believe in you and are praying for you daily!] and he started to tear up. They may just be bags, but they mean so much more."

- Foster Family Gift Set Recipient



Our free Foster Family Clothes Closet opened in September 2016. We have assisted nearly 200 shoppers since opening! Our Clothes Closet is a resource for foster families to visit and pick up quality clothing for these children free of charge. Seeking to follow Christ's example to love our neighbor as ourselves, the Chosen for Life Ministries Clothes Closet is a tangible way that people in our community can share their resources with others who will be greatly blessed by them.

"I am constantly overwhelmed at the support and generosity of other Christians and churches. The Church should be the leading force in orphan and foster care, and I witness it first-hand at places like the CFLM Clothes Closet."

### Plans for Growth

In DFCS Region 5, there are 1,118 children in foster care (as of October 1, 2017). For those children, there are only 384 foster homes. This significant deficit of homes means that children are often moved far away from their community and school to other parts of the state and sibling groups are split up. As a ministry, we hope to help churches throughout DFCS Region 5 see this crisis and step in to care for these children. We are one of 10 community partners within 'Home in 5', a private-public partnership in DFCS Region 5 working to create support for foster families with the goal of recruiting more foster homes in a sustainable way. Along with this collaboration, we also work with Promise 686, a ministry based in Gwinnett County, as a model for growing our Foster Care Initiative.

## Our Vision to Expand

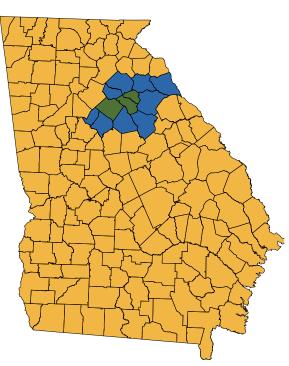
Chosen for Life Ministries currently provides Education & Awareness and Adoption Financial Support throughout the state of Georgia. In addition, our free Clothes Closet is available to any foster parent. Currently, we help churches facilitate Care Teams in three of the twelve counties in Region 5. Our vision is to expand this Foster Care Support throughout Region 5.

#### What we currently provide:

- Education/Awareness + Financial Support + Clothes Closet provided throughout the state of Georgia
- Foster Care Teams throughout Clarke. Oconee, and Walton Counties

#### What we plan to provide:

Future expansion of Foster Care Teams throughout DFCS Region 5



### Thank You to Our Donors

We thank our many donors and corporate sponsors for allowing us to serve our community. It is because of your support that we can continue to equip individuals and families for the roles they have found in serving vulnerable children - whether that be as foster or adoptive parents or in the support systems caring for them.

#### Thank You to Our 2017 Corporate Sponsors:

Advance Finance & Tax Service

Athens Eye Doctors and Surgeons

Athens Micro

Athens Ministries Inc

Athens Orthopedic Clinic

Baker & Slider, LLC

Behavioral Safety Products

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Lakewood Baptist Church

Life Church of Athens

Millstone Homes, Inc

Morris Publishing Group, LLC

Newell Orthodontics

Nightlight Christian Adoptions

Northeast Georgia Gutters and

Garage Doors

Oconee State Bank

Outdoor Specialty

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Pallas Landscape Supply

Powell Home Builders, Inc.

Prime Lending

Prince Avenue Baptist Church

Women's Ministry

Princeton United Methodist Church

Redeemer Presbyterian Church

Roll Off Systems

Ruppert Landscape

Scout Construction LLC

Sidney Middlebrooks Photography

Southern Land Exchange

St. Joseph Catholic Parish

The Holt-Kassay Fund at the Athens

Area Community Foundation

The Key Foundation

Triad Real Estate Group of Keller

Williams Greater Athens

Turner & Patat

University Tire

Wallace & Shirley Miller Foundation

Walton Electric Trust, Inc.

Watkinsville First Baptist Church

Webber Coleman Woodworks

Webber Development & Construction

WMSI 889 FM

Woodall Realty Group

Zaxby's

### Board of Directors

"The process and act of adopting called me into a lifetime of caring for orphans. I can't adopt or foster all of the children in need. Chosen for Life Ministries provides a tangible way for me to care for these children and to link arms with these families."

- Amanda, Adoption Grant Recipient and current

Foster Care Initiative Advocate



Bryan Miller, Chairman of the Board Vice President of Quality and Food Safety, Wayne Farms LLC; adoptive parent

Lisa Miller, Vice Chairwoman of the Board Homemaker; adoptive parent

Eddie Patat, Treasurer CPA. Turner & Patat

Jenny Brown, Secretary

Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Special Education, University of Georgia; foster/adoptive parent

Christie Cook

Teacher, Faith Mother's Morning Out; adoptive parent

Jordan Downs

Vice President-Operations, Central Garden and Pet; foster/adoptive parent

Doug McFarland

Engineer, Boise Cascade; adoptive parent

Danny Stevens

Coordinator, Family Dependency Treatment Court Retired Faculty, University of Georgia

Juli Wisotsky

Adoption Attorney, Athens Adoption Lawyer

Nemili Johnson, Advisory Board Member Breakout Session Coordinator, Together for Adoption





#### A Message from our Board:

The CFLM Board of Directors would like to thank every single member of our Chosen for Life family for helping us meet the needs of vulnerable children. It is our joy to witness this community respond in so many different ways to God's command to care - whether by adopting or fostering, giving financially, or finding a unique role to play in supporting families who open their homes to these children! There is no role too small, and we see the fruit of your efforts every day! Thank you!



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