



Shepherd's Voice

There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

~Ephesians 4:4-6

A Letter from Pastor Oesch

Summer Journaling: To the Ends of the Earth

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.
~ Acts 1:8

Dear Shepherd of the Hills,

One of the biggest blessings and challenges of my summer was visiting Ray of Hope in Battambang, Cambodia. While travelling with a toddler presented many sleep-related challenges (both during and after the trip!), the blessings far outweighed the burdens. Ray of Hope exists to minister to children in street-living families, giving these children a literal ray of hope from lives of danger and pain. That danger and pain involves hunger, thirst, unsanitary living conditions and clothing, loneliness, social media addiction, mental health struggles, drug addiction, sex trafficking, family medical issues, and more. The government is of no help to these families and children. Sometimes their families are not either. Hope is fickle. So the Church helps. It is our duty to help. From the beginning, the Church has shown mercy to the orphan, the widow, and the needy, creating hospitals and other centers of care, especially when no one else shows up. This is what we do. We reflect Christ's spiritual mercy, and as the gospel flows through us to the world around us, a ray of hope is born.

However, getting to learn from and be invited to work with the Chan family and Ray of Hope staff, building relationships with the RoH children, and learning Khmai culture for a few short days actually gave *me* a ray of hope. Not only was the experience incredibly meaningful, fun, and fulfilling, but I received hope for the global church, for the global reach of Shepherd, and for the Kingdom of God as Jesus' mercy and gospel goes to the ends of the earth. What a joy and ray of light the annual Shepherd mission trip to Cambodia was this summer! Thanks be to God!

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Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church

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Centennial, CO 80122

303-798-0711 ShepherdHillsChurch.org

Member News

Let's Meet Together for Fall Kickoff 2026

Everyone from 2 days-122 years old: Save **Sunday, September 13**, to be TOGETHER as a church family. We'll get TOGETHER **9:30-10:30am** in the Gym for an all-ages program based on our theme. At **12:17pm**, after late worship services, we'll join TOGETHER in the Gym for a potluck lunch. Bring your favorite appetizer, salad/vegetable, or entrée/hot dish (dessert is provided). This will be a wonderful year TOGETHER!



There is one body and one Spirit—
just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—
one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
one God and Father of all,
who is over all and through all and in all.
~Ephesians 4:4-6

TOGETHER, we are Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church and Early Learning Center.
Called into faith, as baptized and beloved children of God, **TOGETHER** we:

- + worship one God: Father, Lord, Spirit
 - + joyfully celebrate our unity
 - + willingly submit to our Creator
 - + lovingly care for one another
 - + seek to serve our community
 - + walk in hope toward heaven
- And all God's people say: AMEN!



Choir Begins ~ Alleluia!

Those of you ages 14-104 are invited to join the Shepherd's Chorale family in the sanctuary choir "loft" Wednesday **September 16, 6:37-8:07pm** as we begin our Fall season! We practice most Wednesdays and sing about once a month in both Traditional services. Questions/Need information? **Gail Black: gblack@sothfamily.org, 303-707-4364.**

Our Next Active Seniors Luncheon

Our next luncheon will be on **Thursday, September 10**, starting at **10:30am** with coffee in the Atrium, followed at **11:15am** by lunch and a program in the Fellowship Hall. This month's program features Lutheran Church Charities K-9 Comfort Dog Ministry. If you need a ride to the event, please contact **Jan Hoener: 303-898-5401.**

Baptism

Zach Andrus

Baptized: 8/30/2026



Breakfast With Baby Serves 14 Families in August

Breakfast with Baby is Shepherd's monthly event serving families with children 2 years and younger and women who are at least 7 months pregnant. On August 8, Breakfast with Baby served 14 families. After breakfast and a devotion, the families were able to shop for diapers, wipes, clothing and other available items. For the **September 12** event, **Size 3 and 4 diapers** as well as **wipes** are needed. Also, we really need more volunteers to assist. Thank you for reflecting God's love through this ministry.



Interested in Going to Cambodia Next Summer???

Could God be calling you to Cambodia in 2027 as a trip member OR as a trip supporter? Come learn about our next mission trip on **Sunday, October 4, at 12:30 pm**. We'll enjoy a meal, share trip details, and answer your questions. Come hungry—and ready to discover how you can be part of this incredible adventure! RSVP to Pastor Ben: at boesch@sothfamily.org.

September Anniversaries

- 9/1 Charley and Mary Powers, 52 years
- 9/5 David and Angela Renner, 11 years
- 9/11 Jim and Nancy Lee, 49 years
- 9/18 Chris and Tina Skirde, 27 years
- 9/28 Michael and Nicole Spiers, 24 years
- 9/29 Paul and Nancy Mueller, 42 years



NOTE: Don't see your anniversary listed? Please contact the front office to have your member information updated!

Member News

If you love music, find your passion!

SHEPHERD of the HILLS MUSIC

Infinite Grace Team

- ♦ vocal and instrumental
- ♦ A/V (sound, lighting, screen/slides)
- ♦ leads the music for Contemporary Divine Services
- ♦ meets Tues @ 6:30p in the gym



Michael Amidei and Infinite Grace love the Lord! They also love:

- using contemporary music settings to enhance the timeless truths of God's Word
- creating an inviting worship space visually and with sound

Contact:

Michael Amidei | 720.229.3114 | mamidei@sothfamily.org

Shepherd's Choral

- ♦ mixed vocal choir, high school age and older
- ♦ meets Weds, Sept. - May, @ 6:37pm in the sanctuary
- ♦ 2 - 4 part singing



Gail wants to overflow the choir "loft" with folks who enjoy being part of a fantastic choral family who love singing to the Lord!

Contact:

Gail Black | 303.903.1008 | gblack@sothfamily.org

Instruments

- ♦ all ages and instruments
- ♦ opportunities for beginners, large and small group, solo



Gail loves including instrument players in worship services—Sunday mornings as well as evening services. She will work with you at your level of playing and comfort to praise the Lord!

Contact:

Gail Black | 303.903.1008 | gblack@sothfamily.org

SOS Choir

SOS stands for "Sing One Sunday." This is a once-in-a-while, show up Sunday at 7:47am, no commitment opportunity to sing. You may sing parts or just melody! Watch for "SOS! Sing One Sunday" announcements throughout the year.

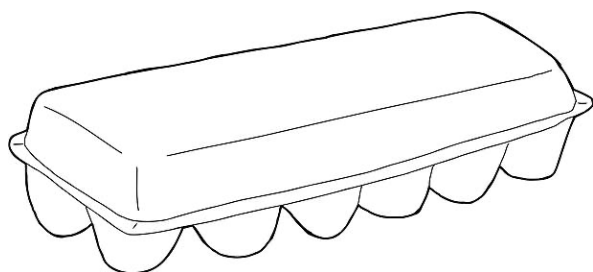


Contact:

Gail Black | 303.903.1008 | gblack@sothfamily.org

Gail Black, Dir. of Parish Music

gblack@sothfamily.org | 303.707.4364 | ShepherdHillsChurch.org



Egg Cartons Needed

Our Food Bank will have an ongoing need for egg cartons. Either paper or styrofoam are fine. Only the dozen size please. Please give to **Sharleen Jespersen** or leave in the church office with a note attached stating they are for the Food Bank. Thank you!

Volunteering for Shepherd's Foodbank

Our food bank has transitioned to Shepherd and been in operation the last two months, staffed by the folks who have run it for years. They are now ready for members of Shepherd to volunteer and share in this important outreach and human care opportunity.

The following are days you are encouraged to volunteer your time and talents:

- **Every other Monday, August 10 and 24** (future dates are listed on the SOTH website calendar)
- 2 shifts: 2-4pm, 4-6pm; you may work one or both shifts
- Activity: food distribution to clients

Please park in the SOUTH parking lot, enter through the main door of the Administration Building, and proceed to the "Great Hall." Directions will be provided.

1. Every Thursday

- 9:30-11:30am
- Activity: organizing food and packing non-perishables for distribution

Please park in the NORTH parking lot and enter the building through the double glass doors to the west of the Gym.

2. Every Friday

- 2:30-4:30pm
- Activity: organizing food and packing non-perishables for distribution

Please park in the NORTH parking lot and enter the building through the double glass doors to the west of the Gym.

****We hope to identify 25 Shepherd folks who want to become involved with our food bank. **What's great about Shepherd's Foodbank is you can be as involved as you like on a variety of days. You may volunteer on all the days, if you desire.**

If you are interested in working with Shepherd's Foodbank, please contact **Sam Scheck**: sam.scheck@comcast.net or **Sharleen Jespersen**: jesper417@yahoo.com.

Copies of the Shepherd's Foodbank volunteer schedule are on the Welcome Center credenza, the information table in the Gym, and the office front desk.

A Big Thank You from Quilts & Kits!

Our LWR Quilts & Kits team would like to thank you for your generous donations to our July school supply drive. It's looking like we'll be able to put together about 90 backpacks for disaster relief.

Grandfriends Brunch Set for November

Join us for this wonderful intergenerational event on November 1 from 9:30-10:30am in the Parish Hall! It's a time to connect with your grandfriend as you eat, talk, and learn about God's Word together. Kids, Xtreme, and SHYP are welcome to join us even if you don't have a grandfriend or your grandfriend is out of town. Questions? Contact **Connie Rosel** at Rosel_connie@yahoo.com, 720-324-9270.



Support Group Meetings
Tuesdays through November 10
6:30-8:30pm in the Atrium

Weekly Topics:
Aug. 18 - Is This Normal?
Aug. 25 - Your Grief Journey

Sept. 8 - Self-Care
Sept. 15 - Fearful & Overwhelmed
Sept. 22 - Anger
Sept. 29 - Regrets

Oct. 6 - Grief & Your Household
Oct. 13 - Grief & Your Friendships
Oct. 20 - Questions for God
Oct. 27 - Stuck in Grief

Nov. 3 - Hope & Resilience
Nov. 10 - What Do I Live for Now?

Attending all 13 weeks is best, but you are welcome to join any time.

Our next groups will begin in January 2027.

Register at GriefShare.org



Receptivity to Care

Most people are much more open to giving care than to receiving it. When a person is giving care, he or she is in a position of strength, stability, and authority. When a person is receiving care, he or she is acknowledging weakness, insecurity, and vulnerability.

As a result, countless people today who could really benefit from a Christian friend who would listen and care for them instead tough it out on their own. They remain the strong, silent type, or wear a smile across a face that is holding in a flood of tears. Society encourages this (particularly for men).

But God did not create us to be independent. We were created to be interdependent. God's Word is clear on this all the way back to Genesis: "It is not good for this man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18). The New Testament underscores this theme with more than 50 verses that contain the words "one another." These verses include admonitions such as "love one another," "encourage one another," "build up one another," and "pray for one another."

These verses say more than we are to love, encourage, build up, and pray for other people. The "one another" wording gives them a reciprocal meaning. It tells us we are to allow other people to love, encourage, build up, and pray for us!

If you find yourself now or in the future facing difficulties in life, don't succumb to society's norm of remaining strong and suffering alone. Talk to our Stephen Leader, **Ron Manuella (303-587-0001)** or **Pastor Stoltenow**.



Member News

Bible Readings for the Month

September 6 – 15th Sunday after Pentecost

Lessons: Psalm 32:1-7; Ezekiel 33:7-9;
Romans 13:1-10; Matthew 18:1-20

September 13 – 16th Sunday after Pentecost: *Fall Kickoff Sunday*

Lessons: Psalm 103:1-12; Genesis 50:15-21;
Romans 14:1-12; Matthew 18:21-35

September 20 – 17th Sunday after Pentecost

Lessons: Psalm 27:1-9; Isaiah 55:6-9;
Philippians 1:12-14, 19-30; Matthew 20:1-16

September 27 – 18th Sunday after Pentecost

Lessons: Psalm 25:1-10; Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32;
Philippians 2:1-18; Matthew 21:23-32



Usher Schedule for the Month

September 6 – 15th Sunday after Pentecost

8 am Sanctuary – Brooklyn Schuchman / Dave Stone
10:45 Sanctuary – Pam & Russ Robbins
10:45 Gym – Sue & Duane Feldmann

September 13 – 16th Sunday after Pentecost; *Fall Kickoff Sunday*

8 am Sanctuary – Heidi Dudley / Chuck Place
10:45 Sanctuary – Sandy & Bill Griffis
10:45 Gym – Wayne Johnson / Milo Samson

September 20 – 17th Sunday after Pentecost

8 am Sanctuary – Ava Havekost / Josh Havekost
10:45 Sanctuary – Joshua Hoener / Lindsey Jarvi
10:45 Gym – Ron Aukamp / Charley Powers

September 27 – 18th Sunday after Pentecost

8 am Sanctuary – Bruce Boggess / Paul Rodeck
10:45 Sanctuary – Tina & Chris Skirde
10:45 Gym – Kathy & Chris Biondolilo



*We're here to
Serve*

Ministry Opportunities

Priscilla Circle serves meals for families after funerals and memorial services. If you are interested in being part of this circle as a helper or to bring food for these occasions, please contact **Sandy Garberding** at RSGarb@comcast.net or **Kay Stolzenbach** at gkstolzenbach@comcast.net.

Loving Meals Ministry

When someone in our Shepherd family has surgery or becomes ill, help with preparing meals may be needed. If you or someone you know could use help with small meals on a short-term basis, please contact the church office at **303-798-0711** and you will be contacted by one of our meal coordinators.

Contemporary Service Altar Setup/Cleanup Team

This setup/cleanup team takes turns preparing the altar for the Contemporary services by filling candles and setting out the altar ware on Sunday mornings. After the service, things get put away. It doesn't take much time and there are no meetings to attend. To be a part of this team, please contact either **Mary Powers** at powersworld@live.com or **Luanne Reimer** at reimer.luanne@gmail.com.

The women of **Altar Circle** prepare the chancel area in the Sanctuary for the traditional services. Communion preparations, changing paraments, filling candles with oil and vacuuming are just a few of the duties performed before services. On Communion Sundays, there is cleanup after the services. We get together for a meeting once a quarter and enjoy fellowship, a devotion and treats! We're always looking for women to help with preparations and Communion cleanup. The work is shared among our members so it isn't a big commitment of time. Even if you don't want to come to the meetings, please consider assisting with Communion cleanup after the services. Contact **Luanne Reimer** through email at reimer.luanne@gmail.com.

Used Eyeglasses and Hearing Aids

Another 25 pair of eyeglasses have been collected. **We are nearing 2000 pair collected since 2010, currently at 1985!** The eyeglasses have been delivered to the Lions Club and will be distributed to those in need throughout the world. Several hearing aids were also collected and given to the Sertoma organization. Place any eyeglasses and hearing aids in the designated basket in the Welcome Center cry room. Your contributions are a blessing to many! Thank you!

Missionary of the Month – September 2026

Rev. Tim and Beth Heiney - West Africa

Pastor Tim and Beth Heiney, LCMS missionaries, serve in West Africa. Pastor Tim provides leadership-training seminars throughout West Africa and his role includes teaching, baptizing adults and children in various villages, and providing support to vicars in those villages. He also visits the hospital every Sunday and prays for the patients there. Tim, other missionaries, and local leaders whom he's trained are working hard to share God's Word through a series of videos and Bible studies. The Heineys see growth, maturity, and leadership among these faithful Guineans.

The Heineys have been involved in foreign missions since 1984, serving in several countries in Africa. Since 2014, they have served with Global Lutheran Outreach and are presently in the country of Guinea.

Please pray for the Heiney's ministry as it is very difficult to preach the gospel when Islam is the major religion and when the government is oppressive and cities are often under siege from Muslim extremists. Also continue to pray for good health for Tim and Beth. Beth is recovering well but had to spend extensive time in the US recently because of a serious accident involving her spine. As Beth stated in a recent newsletter, "The devil isn't taking a break this summer, so we need to keep praying too!"



Pastor's Letter Continued

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Over the years I have had the blessing of being personally involved with over 20 global and national cross-cultural ministries. Many churches respond to the global call of Christians to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19) and to be Jesus' witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). They do that by supporting global missionaries with finances, prayer, and putting boots on the ground. These are all good things. But Cambodia was a unique experience.

Never before have I seen a cross-cultural partnership such as the partnership between Ray of Hope and Shepherd of the Hills. The people of Shepherd have made a profound investment in the ministry to children of street-living families in Battambang, Cambodia, from its very beginning to now. The people of Shepherd founded Ray of Hope and are still largely involved in sustaining the ministry today. We have sent teams of people to Cambodia for over a decade, many of whom have been repeats. Relationships have been built and maintained between us and the children for years. Much of the Board of Directors has been Shepherd members. RoH is consistently in our prayers as a corporate church. And Shepherd's people have given thousands of dollars toward this ministry on a yearly basis.

The children and staff at Ray of Hope consistently pray for us and send us updates. How often is Shepherd of the Hills specifically prayed for by those outside of us? Probably not super often. We need the prayers of God's people. For anyone who goes on the trip, they can tell you firsthand how the people of RoH pour into their lives and sometimes even dramatically change their lives when they come back to the States. I have heard a rumor of a young man's journey to the pastoral ministry being tied to this trip! The partnership is special and the intimacy makes this a particularly potent and powerful ministry, for them and for us. I am so proud. It's a ministry worth our investment.

Want to get involved in this ministry that the Lord has graciously given Shepherd in particular? Even if you are vaguely interested in knowing more, or have a slight tug on your heart (probably that wily Holy Spirit!) and are questioning how you might get more involved, you are invited to attend our Cambodia information event (lunch provided) after church on October 4th. Join us! You might just find yourself going to the ends of the earth.

Peace,

Pastor Ben

Ray of Hope Battambang Organization
អង្គការរស្មីសង្ឃឹមប្រាំបីឆ្នាំ

DINNER OF THE GREENS • 2026

Join the Circle of Hope.

Surround every child with the shared care, trusted people, and dependable ministry they rely on each day.

SERVING THE LORD IN CAMBODIA

BATTAMBANG • 2026

ELC

Please join us for our first event of the year: Parents & Pastries on **Tuesday, September 15** from **7:45-8:30am** in the Parish Hall! This is an amazing opportunity to get to know other ELC families and catch up with families you already know.

This year we are also celebrating our 25th Anniversary here at Shepherd! Please check out the following pages to see what makes the ELC such a blessing to students, teachers, parents, and community.

Youth

Youth Late Night at Slick City

Join us on **Friday, September 4, 7-10:30pm** for an evening of fun at Slick City. Cost is \$10 per person and scholarships are available. *You must register by Wed., Sept. 2.* Payment is due at time of event. We will carpool in the church van. We're also looking for 1-2 other adults to be there while SHYP and Xtreme slip and slide the night away! Available? Contact Sina.

Confirmation Orientation

All 5th–8th grade students and their parents are invited to our Confirmation Orientation on **Sunday, September 14** at **9:30am** in the **Colonnades**! We'll share the vision for this year's program, introduce our mentors, walk through the schedule, and answer any questions. This is the first step in an exciting journey of growing in faith, building community, and exploring what it means to follow Jesus. Whether you're brand new or continuing from last year, please plan to attend since this will set the stage for the year ahead.



September Dates to Remember:

September Youth Events (Xtreme & SHYP)

- **September 4** (Friday) – Slick City event, 7-10:30pm (details above)

Young Adult Events

- **September 3, 10, 17, 24** (Thurs) – **Sports Night, 7-9:30pm**. Contact **Ben Barstad** for more details and to join the Group Me.
- **September 27** (Sun) – Lunch off site, 12:15pm

Sunday School Hour – 9:30-10:30am

5th & 6th Grade – Faith Builders with Sam Scheck in the Kid Zone

7th & 8th Grade – Faith Alive with Pastor Oesch in the Colonnades

9th – 12th Grade – Bible Study with Sina Williams and Bethany Barnthson in the Youth Room

- 9/6 – The Lion King
- 9/13 – Fall Kickoff
- 9/20 & 9/27– Bible Study

Youth Group Notes

Shepherd of the Hills' **Spiritual Formation Plan** encompasses your child's spiritual formation from the womb all the way to when they leave the nest after high school. It is age appropriate and designed to assist your children to mature as Lutheran Christians so they may take a joyful stand for Christ.

For specific information about Shepherd's Confirmation Program, please contact **Pastor Ben Oesch** at boesch@sothfamily.org. For information about junior and senior high youth groups, please contact **Sina Williams** at swilliams@sothfamily.org. For information about Family Ministry, contact **Jodie Stoltzenow** at jstoltzenow@sothfamily.org.



ELC Celebrating 25 Years at Shepherd!

The USA is celebrating 250 years, and Colorado is celebrating 150.

Well, we have a birthday in the Early Learning Center as well! This year marks the 25th anniversary of when our Early Learning Center opened.

We would love to share with you some stories of how our Early Learning Center has made such a meaningful impact on our community. This month, Lauren Ryan shares her family's story of their connection to Shepherd and our ELC. We also thank Shepherd of the Hills congregation for 25 years of support through your prayers, ELC event attendance, ELC Board service, financial support, and let's not forget, making delicious cookies for our programs!

TOGETHER, we make a difference in the lives of the little ones we serve and their families. Thank you for planting the seeds of faith and learning. Here is to 25 more years of growing together!

In His Service,

Kristen Hatton, Early Learning Center Director

Today was the first day of our Early Learning Center's 25th anniversary year, and we have many stories to tell!

- 1st Day Story: The Rockets class read *The Kissing Hand*. The class spoke about feelings. One youngster said he felt brave like David facing the giant, Goliath.

Why it matters: He has been with us for several years and first learned the story of David and Goliath at our ELC, in a chapel service. He connected feelings with feeling brave and with *The Kissing Hand* story.

- 1st Day Story: On Back-to-School night, Ms. Sarah met the younger sister of one of the Busy Bugs. The first words out of this little gal's mouth? She wanted to come to school, too! Sure enough, she enrolled yesterday in our Foxes class and started today with her big brother.

Why it matters: The Au Pair of this family gave notice, so the parents enrolled a second student, and we now have an addition to our roster!

- 1st Day Story: The mother of one of our Foxes students was crying because she was sending her youngest child off to preschool. Ms. Julie came back in and got her daughter so she could give her mom a hug. The mom commented that she really needed a hug.

Why it matters: Relationships with, and support of, our ELC families is important.

- 1st Day Story: A new friend in Little Lemons (the youngest class) saw another friend crying and went to rub his back - super cute!

Why it matters: Empathy is a tough thing to teach!

- 1st Day Story: The Lions class was headed out to the playground. Mrs. Hatton said hello to the class and their teachers, Ms. Lil and Ms. Erika. Ms. Erika said hello back to her. A student asked her, "Is that your mom?"

Why it matters: Kids say the cutest things, and it definitely gave Miss Lil a chuckle!

- 1st Day Story: At BASE Camp today after school, students were quietly eating a snack as Ms. Madison supervised. One young man, out of nowhere, said, "It's such a beautiful day!"

Why it matters: We enjoy talking with children over meals, fostering communication and strong relationships.

The ELC's Impact

Rarely have I been asked to share my story and our journey. A private, reserved person to the core, I feel both humbled and honored to share with you the impact the Early Learning Center at Shepherd has made in our lives. Devastating losses clearly close doors on the life you once knew; however, God uses tragedy to open incredible windows by bringing amazing people into your life, often when you least expect it. This is exactly how my twins were brought to the preschool at Shepherd, how my oldest son was brought to the day school at Shepherd, and how our family was blessed with a new church family at Shepherd.

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Our story begins with overwhelming loss, yet ends with extraordinary blessings. April 18, 2013, began as any other morning did around our household: taking care of three kids under age 6 and all the chaos that comes with that. My husband's inability to catch his breath this morning resulted in his passing away several hours later at our local hospital. Rev. Stork and I were by his bedside. I remember sitting in this room for what seemed an eternity with Rev. Stork, as both of us were in complete shock that Pastor Ryan was here yesterday and gone today. How do I tell my children? What kind of life will we have? Where will we move? Am I imagining what just happened? What will happen to his church? Rev. Stork helped me deliver this news to my children and to the congregation. God placed this incredible person and family friend in this room with me on this day to help me tackle the immediate tasks that honestly would have left me paralyzed.

The kids and I vacated the parsonage, located a house to move into in the Denver area, and moved into the new house on June 18 of that summer, to be near grandparents. My next overwhelming task was to find a kindergarten for my oldest and a preschool for my twins for the upcoming school year. My husband and I always dreamed of having our children receive a Christian education for preschool-12th grade. I was deeply committed to giving this gift to our children, yet I had no idea how a single mom with limited means could accomplish this. Even attending church was emotionally difficult for my children after their dad passed away, and it often resulted in meltdowns on most Sunday mornings. God led us to attend Holy Cross in Highlands Ranch one Sunday in June 2013, as my husband's good friend was a pastor there. We spoke with the pastor after services, and he connected my family with the principal and senior pastor at Shepherd of the Hills. Pastor Skelton mentioned how amazing the people are at Shepherd within the church, preschool, and day school.

The kids and I toured the school several days later. My children received financial aid and scholarships to attend the preschool and day school. I will never forget what Pastor Stolenow said to me during the tour that day: "Let us help you raise your kids." This is exactly what Shepherd has done for my family. The twins thrived in the preschool! They heard about Jesus every day, learning about God's grace and forgiveness from teachers who were nothing short of amazing. The teachers at Shepherd's ELC even helped me

potty train my twins that year. My oldest loved the day school and maintains friendships with many of his peers and teachers even to this very day. My oldest son just graduated from Lutheran High School this past May.

The Early Learning Center at Shepherd blessed my twins with so much; as a parent, it is hard to paint this picture for you. The teachers welcomed my twins not in spite of their tragedy, but because of it. The teachers flooded my children with prayers, love, mentoring, and guidance, not because it was their "job," but because the Holy Spirit led them to. My twins learned kindness, how to serve, and most importantly that Jesus never ever leaves you, no matter what obstacles we face in life. The Early Learning Center and day school quickly transformed and grew into not only our school, but our church. Our church quickly became our family.

I have volunteered in one capacity or another at Shepherd now for 13 years, and I have worked at Shepherd for 8.5 years. My children have not only been event participants but have been volunteers for years at VBS, Fall Family Festival, Chili Cookoffs, Easter Breakfast, and servant events. Volunteering for my children has led to each one of them working here to make a difference in one small way or another.

We are one of many families who have been impacted by the ELC at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church. Our ELC is not just a preschool. It is a community of believers who are deeply committed to spreading the gospel and love of Christ to each and every child. This message radiates to their families, which in turn grows the body of Christ. The ELC fosters lasting friendships and cultivates family.

I encourage each one of you to visit the ELC teachers occasionally, or attend a preschool event from time to time. This mission at our doorstep could not have been more impactful to my family, and it continues to do so for countless others each and every day. Thank you, Shepherd and ELC! My family could not be more blessed!

Here's to another 25 years of making a difference and spreading the Gospel!

Lauren Ryan,
Bookkeeper at Shepherd of the Hills

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