

# The Loving Shepherd

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## Journey of faith ends with new son

Jarrold Gerber had started crying.

In fact, he was sobbing, he said, sobbing with joy in front of his customers as they checked out at the Gerbers' business.

Just weeks ago, these same customers were asking him for news about his and his wife's pending adoption.

Now the customers had their answer, though they might not have translated it through the tears.

Jarrold's wife, Amy, was crying too, though she was in another room when the social worker called and told them to prepare to travel to pick up their son.

The two had taken a step in faith in the Fall of 2002 when they decided to adopt internationally.

When they received the phone call at their business, their faith was rewarded, and on Wednesday, Aug. 3, their faith became sight when in the city of Seoul, South Korea, they held their son, Isaac SukHwan Gerber.

"It's easier to look back and say, 'Wow, that was the perfect plan for us,'" Amy said.

Since Saturday, Aug. 6, the Gerbers' home has reverberated not only with the sounds of dogs barking, but of baby squeaks and squeals.

Their study, once home



Amy, Isaac and Jarrod Gerber sit comfortably in their study, now complete with baby toys and blankets. Amy and Jarrod adopted Isaac from a Korean foster home in August.

to a computer, is now speckled with a multicolored baby blanket on the floor, a small swing in the corner and more.

"You just have to trust that the timing will be perfect," she said.

The couple decided to pursue adoption in 2002, but they didn't know how to start.

However, Doug Isch, Loving Shepherd's business and financial manager, knew

they were contemplating adoption, so he invited them to partake of Loving Shepherd's no-cost assistance.

Loving Shepherd met with the hopeful couple and created a personalized adoption profile, which included what adoption options they could pursue. The Gerbers still have the profile.

With that profile, Loving Shepherd saved the Gerbers time investigating countries that wouldn't accept

them, such as China, which requires adoptive parents to be older than Jarrod and Amy were at the time.

Loving Shepherd also directed them to Bethany Christian Services, the adoption agency that ultimately put Isaac into their arms.

"It's because of Loving Shepherd that we went through Bethany," Jarrod said.

See "Faith" on pg. 3

### Who We Are

Loving Shepherd Ministries is a Christian, not-for-profit organization providing objective, no-cost advocacy, resources and direction to the faith community for the direct benefit of children and families who find themselves at risk or in need.

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# Loving Shepherd expanding

## New program heralds another ministry and a new name

For almost three years, Loving Shepherd International has helped build healthy families via adoption.

Now, Loving Shepherd wants to help repair the ailing ones.

Loving Shepherd is now operating as Loving Shepherd Ministries and expanding its mission through a new, national program called "Finding Their Voice."

"Finding Their Voice" is designed to encourage Christian churches nationwide to help children suffering from abuse and neglect as well as work with families at risk of abusing their children.

Specifically, Loving Shepherd will encourage Christians to develop programs that include foster parenting, foster-to-adopt parenting, mentoring.

"The 'Finding Their Voice' program provides an excellent opportunity for the Christian faith community to help children at risk here in the United States," said Ed Schwartz, president of Loving Shepherd. "We are excited to see God bring this program to reality."

While doing this, Loving Shepherd will continue to assist families looking to adopt through the Adoption Services Program.

However, Loving Shepherd can no longer focus solely on these families, as cases of abuse and neglect continue to rise.

Within Wells County in Indiana, reports of sexual

and physical abuse and neglect have increased about 71 percent — from 211 reports in 2001 to 359 reports in 2004. In 2004, two Wells County children died from neglect.

Statewide, 57 children died because of abuse or neglect in 2004.

Meanwhile, in that same year, the state spent more than \$5,600 for each child in the welfare system.

But money has not solved the problem. Reports of abuse or neglect (and sometimes both) in the state reached 69,257 in 2004 — a near-record level.

Though the government can spend, it can't introduce children and families to Jesus, but Christians have a lot to share with the hurting and neglected. The gospel message of salvation, along with love, provide answers to a society in trouble.

Part of this answer lies in exposing Christians to these children's plights, then educating them on how to help.

"Finding Their Voice" educates through several resources: a packet of information that includes phone numbers for local officials and child-serving organizations, a DVD and links to Web sites people can use to learn more about helping children.

Loving Shepherd is also developing an online network that will connect Christian congregations so they can share ideas and suc-



Indiana's Lt. Governor, Becky Skillman, thanks those attending the Finding Their Voice launch. Skillman said the state needs more people dedicated to helping Hoosier children.

cess stories.

### State Support

Loving Shepherd officially launched "Finding Their Voice" in Wells County on Aug. 23.

Indiana Lt. Governor Becky Skillman; Karen Glaser, chief of staff for the Indiana Department of Child Services; and Paula Parker-Sawyers, the executive director of Indiana's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, attended.

"The Christian community could make no greater contribution to their fellow Hoosiers ... than to help save and help build the lives of our youths," Becky Skillman said.

"Government will never be able to solve all of the problems alone."

About 50 Wells County pastors and church representatives attended the launch.

Along with the pastors, representatives from about nine Christian organizations — such as Gateway Woods, a private child-care institution — attended.

Karen Glaser encouraged all those attending to capitalize on this movement to help Indiana's youth.

"The state can only do so much. The state hasn't done that good of a job," she said.

"I encourage you to do whatever you can, however you can, no matter how large, no matter how small.

"I applaud you; I thank you all."

All had a chance to experience the "Finding Their Voice" presentation.

Afterwards, Becky Skillman called the presentation "very powerful."

"If every community put forth this kind of effort, the state would be in great shape," she said.



Isaac SukHwan Gerber enjoys the comforts of his new home in Wells County in Indiana. Isaac lived in Korea for five months before Jarrod and Amy Gerber adopted him.

## Faith: Gerbers originally didn't intend to adopt from South Korea

"They (Loving Shepherd) were really helpful, I think more than they realize.

"They were the beginning of the product, and here is the product," he said, referring to Isaac.

"They have a lot to be proud of."

During the three-year period between contacting Loving Shepherd and playing with Isaac, the Gerbers learned to have more faith in God and the process.

For instance, they initially didn't plan to adopt from Korea because, at the time, agencies were not placing Korean children in Indiana because of availability.

Jarrold and Amy were working toward a Colombian adoption when they received a "last-minute" phone call from Bethany. A representative told them to submit their

paperwork immediately because the agency might be able to get them in the Korea program.

Amy had just a short time to get their paperwork mailed.

And then the wait began.

Occasionally, Amy would talk online with other Bethany clients who received their child's referral at the same time as the Gerbers. These clients were discussing travel preparations, while Jarrold and Amy didn't even have a travel date.

They kept waiting in faith, however, until they got that call.

"It worked out," Jarrold said. Then, he turns to his son, and with a silly voice, makes the same comment.

Isaac responds with a squeal and a smile.

## From the Word - By Ed Schwartz

Recently I ran across a Bible verse that prompted some thoughts. Eccles. 9:11 says, "...the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong..." Many times we hear people say about foster parenting, "I could never do that." Unfortunately in life we distance ourselves from God's blessings by minimizing His strength. Foster par-

ents are not superheroes, super models or spiritual giants. Foster parents are average people with average skills, resources and talents.

When those average skills, resources and talents are coupled with His Spirit, love, gifts and grace, average people make all the difference in the world – one child at a time.

# Loving Shepherd still helping families

Though Loving Shepherd is expanding its ministry, it will continue to provide no-cost, objective information to families seeking assistance with domestic and international adoption.

**Texas** — I want to thank Loving Shepherd so much for the wonderful work you are doing!! It is very overwhelming trying to sort through all of the information and get the questions answered. It is such a blessing to me that I found you!

**Louisiana** — God must have sent me to your Web site! We are so confused as to which agency to work with.

**Indiana** — We are confused, scared and overwhelmed with trying to decide which option is best for our family. Thank you for your information and wonderful program!

**Virginia** — We are looking at all of our options

right now but would really like to help a young child with mild to moderate special needs. Can you help direct us to an agency?

**Georgia** — We are just beginning our adoption research and are having a difficult time sorting through all the information and making decisions.

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"God must have sent me to your Web site!"

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**California** — I am interested in starting the adoption process. I have never adopted before and do not know where to begin. Please help.

**Oklahoma** — I want to promote adoption both internationally and domestically. I would really appreciate some information to present to my church group in a few weeks.

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### Mission Statement

The mission of *Loving Shepherd Ministries* is to bring honor to God by providing objective, no-cost advocacy, resources, and direction to the faith community for the direct benefit of children and families who find themselves at risk or in need.

This is accomplished by following the example of Jesus Christ as the loving shepherd in [Isaiah 40:11](#) - "*He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arms, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.*"

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