

Miriam's Promise Report

J. Dietz Osborne, M.S., President & CEO and Joe Bass, Chair Board of Directors

Since 1985, Miriam's Promise has offered hope and healing to thousands of Middle Tennessee expectant parents, birth parents, children, and adoptive families coping with issues of grief, loss, and transition. We are excited to celebrate our 38th year of ministry within the TWK Annual Conference. The heart of our mission is to ensure the well-being of the child by nurturing individuals and families. Miriam's Promise continues to meet this mission by offering the following programs:

- Non-directive, option-based pregnancy counseling at no charge to the expectant parent
- Holistic parenting coaching which includes attachment work
- International and domestic adoption services including home studies and adoption training and education
- Post-adoption counseling, support, and education

Miriam's Promise is a licensed child-placing agency serving Middle Tennessee, and is Hague Accredited by the Intercountry Adoption Accreditation and Maintenance Entity (IAAME) and a member of the National Council for Adoption. Miriam's Promise offers services without regard to race, creed, gender, color, national origin, religion, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity/expression.

In 2023, Miriam's Promise worked in some capacity with 18 expectant parents. We walked with 105 families on their adoption journey. We placed 11 children with their forever families and helped facilitate 13 adoption finalizations. We offered 10 educational webinars featuring adoption-related topics including "The Journey to Transracial Adoption," "Parenting When Your Child Comes Out," "Openness in Adoption," and "A Birth Mother's Journey." The staff and the board of directors continue to evaluate our programming in order to meet the expressed needs of the Middle Tennessee community. Priorities identified include parenting classes, comprehensive post birth services for clients who choose to place a child for adoption or to parent the child, Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) attachment therapy, and specific child counseling for adoptive children.

Miriam's Promise is working to understand the ramifications of the SCOTUS decision regarding women's reproductive health in *Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health*. Our counselors are being trained in different counseling methods in order to meet the needs of the clients in this new environment. In addition, we are expanding the infrastructure and capacity needed to work with an expanded number of clients who find themselves in the midst of an unplanned pregnancy.

As an affiliated agency started by the United Methodist Church, we continue to be a vital part of ministry within the TWK Annual Conference. Miriam's Promise is an avenue for the local congregations of the TWK Annual Conference to uphold the social principles of the UMC on adoption:

Adoption

"Children are a gift from God to be welcomed and received. We lament that some instances, birth parents are unable or unwilling to fulfill their caregiving obligations. Under these circumstances, we applaud the willingness of extended families and foster and adoptive parents to step in as primary nurturers. Even in these situations, however, we recognize the trauma that may be caused by separating children from their families of origin and urge that such actions be handled justly, sensitively, and compassionately. Where appropriate and possible, we encourage open adoption so that children may know all information relevant to them, both medically and relationally (Social Principles, 2020. Page 21, paragraph A)."

The relationships with the Tennessee Western Kentucky Annual Conference and local churches are vital elements of the agency's mission and outreach. We have seen when the Conference and Miriam's Promise work together to share the story more expectant parents find hope, more children find homes, and more families are grown. We are grateful for the support and engagement of the TWK Annual Conference.