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## In Their Own Words

### An adoptive couple speaks about their adoption journey and foster care

Six years of hope, waiting, and disappointment were finally about to come to an end. We were swept up in an emotional tidal wave: shock, bliss, anticipation, followed by a feeling like there was still so much to do. A new incredible chapter in our lives was about to begin.

Just 13 days earlier, a young woman contacted us. Hope (not her real name) had discovered she was pregnant in the third trimester and after some soul-searching decided to pursue adoption.

She saw our profile on the Canada Adopts website and texted us. We exchanged several communications in the next week and encouraged her to contact Beginnings. They connected Hope with one of their birth parent counsellors to discuss the process and her options; in their meeting, Hope affirmed that she wanted us to be the parents. And while the baby wasn't due for another month, Hope went into labour the next day and gave birth to Abigail.

*Above: Abigail*

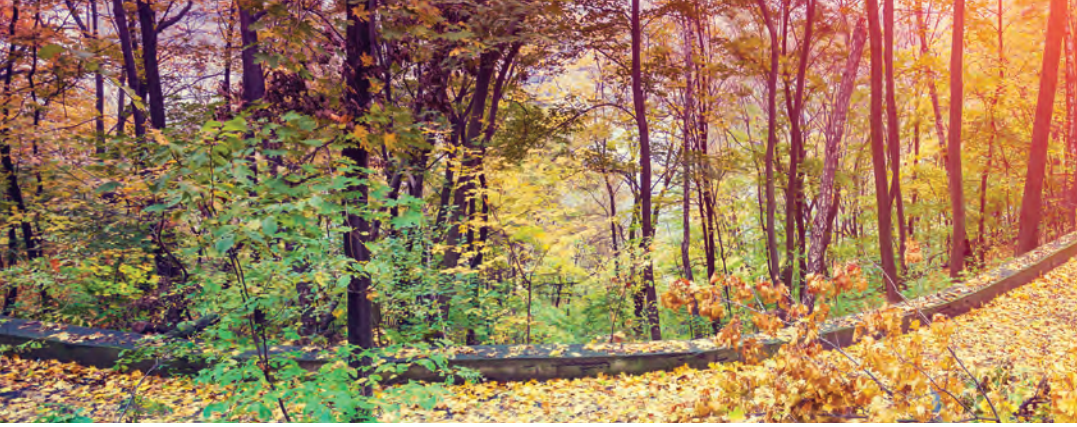
*At right: Brad, Kristen & Abigail*



On a beautiful weekend at our family cottage Kristen received the call. She ran to the dock for better reception, thinking Hope might disclose the baby's gender. Instead: *"The baby has arrived!"*

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## A Message *from the* Executive Director Amanda Baigent

*In every crisis, doubt or confusion, take the higher path - the path of compassion, courage, understanding and love. - Amit Ray*

Given this bewildering time of COVID-19 it is difficult to fathom what others might be going through, with an additional crisis, other than just the pandemic. At Beginnings Family Services we are at the receiving end of those who find themselves in crisis, with unplanned pregnancies, often lacking support, challenging finances and uncertainty as to which way to turn.

Between January and June 2020, Beginnings has received 57 inquiries from expectant parents, seeking options counselling and support in making a decision for their unborn babies. It seems that the pandemic has augmented the stress level for many women who feel uncertain about their futures and their abilities.

This is where our generous donors come in. Those that give to Beginnings, whether it is individually, through your church, or a business. We also often raise funds through events, but due to COVID-19 this year all our events, including the Mother's Day

Tea have had to be canceled. Therefore your support is appreciated now more than ever in this time of crisis! And as the above quote mentions, the mission of our agency, through the support of our pregnancy counsellors is to provide compassionate care, support to empower these women and encouragement through understanding and love.

Sometimes women connect with Beginnings because they know that they want to make an adoption plan for their unborn babies, then the steps in the process are explained and we work through them together. The cost of any services that proceed to adoption are paid through our adoption fee for service. Other times, adoption is considered, but not chosen. There may be a need for baby to come into foster care temporarily, while support and counselling are provided, assistance is given to reach out to the extended family, supportive services are put into place and baby items such as a crib, car

seat, diapers, formula, baby clothes, bottles, etc. are compiled.

These situations are the crux of our charity work, and those for which we fundraise in the community. The year 2020 has brought much uncertainty to all of us, and many plans for these little ones touched by Beginnings have shifted. Not including our adoption work and counselling, we have provided over 87 hours of counselling to families who need our assistance. Those hours are provided to clients free of charge, at all times of the day or night, weekday or weekend, as needed. Our counsellors are there, to listen, to reframe, to explore options, to uplift and encourage, to be realistic and to inspire. To help build strong families...

With compassion, courage, love and understanding,

*Amanda*





# A Life of Service – An Interview with Arie

From Beginnings' conception, Rev. Arie Van Eek and his family have been an integral piece of the puzzle. From his early days in the Netherlands, to moving to Canada and later training as a minister for the Christian Reformed Church, Arie and his family have dedicated themselves to the service of children, families, and God.

According to Kerry Vandergrift, former executive director, *"there is no other single person who has dedicated so much time to the work of Beginnings."* Even though now, at 88, some of this work may be more behind the scenes, Arie continues his devotion to Beginnings – even going so far as to calling the agency his 'sixth child.'

## *How did the idea of Beginnings Family Services come about?*

During my time as a Pastor I saw the need for services to young mothers who found themselves pregnant and did not have the means or resources to parent. I have been blessed with five children, fifteen grandchildren, five great-grandchildren. I had a wonderful marriage of 64 years to my wife Ellen. We fostered 6 or 7 children and could see the importance of strong, loving, relationships.

## *When you think of Beginnings – what comes to mind?*

Beginnings is a community of people celebrating life as a gift of God! It's about families, building relationships, people coming together to care for one another, and stewardship through the giving of time, talents, and financial support.

## *Over the past 35 years, what would you say were Beginnings' greatest accomplishments?*

Building strong families and instilling faith and values for the next generation through our work with adoptive families, birth parents, and within the community. The Embryo Donation program has also been a wonderful accomplishment these last ten years.

## *What would you like to see Beginnings accomplish in the future?*

I think it would be wonderful for Beginnings to collaborate with other adoption agencies throughout Canada. It would also be great to open care centres in other communities

*"I was born in a Christian family with 7 children with very caring parents. Stewardship has been taught and modeled as it often doesn't come naturally. I've seen lots of suffering in my lifetime but I've also experienced lots of joy. My giving is motivated by gratitude for my Saviour's work on my behalf and for making me one of His own. It's out of deep gratitude and a thankful heart that I am compelled to give back."*

– Rev. Arie Van Eek



Above: Arie and Ellen

Below: The Van Eek Family

where there may not be that many resources.

## *You recently made a significant donation to Beginnings, can you tell me how this donation came about?*

After the sale of my house I consulted with my financial advisor and my children and decided to make a partial donation of what I had planned to give to Beginnings through my Will. I'd rather give from a warm hand than a cold hand and see the donation at work.

## *I've heard you say that Beginnings is your 6th child, can you explain?*

When Ellen and I planned our Will we decided to include a 6th child which involves 5 charities - including Beginnings. We consulted with our children and let them know the 6th child would only reduce their inheritance by 4% and they unanimously agreed in this spirit of giving!

## *Many charitable organizations have been challenged financially due to the recent pandemic, why is it so important to give to Beginnings now more than ever?*

When I made this donation, it was not with the pandemic in mind, but God knew the money was needed now to support women and families that come to Beginnings.

Arie, his late wife Ellen, and the Van Eek family have dedicated their lives to the service of others. Their faith and their unending gratitude for all they have been blessed with allowing them to hear the call to help care for those around them. Thanks to the Van Eeks, Beginnings has been able to benefit from this strong desire to serve, and we are eternally grateful for the support we have received since our agency opened its doors in 1985.





# When Foster Care is Needed

(continued from page 1)

When Hope had first contacted us we were essentially "Adopt Ready". But since Hope had only met with Beginnings the day before she gave birth, there were still many things that had to happen before we could bring Abigail home. The adoption application for the Ministry was itself still in its infancy. Unbeknownst to any of us, it would be 25 days before Abby could come home.

We were informed that Abigail would be placed in foster care in the interim. Our initial reaction was not a positive one. At that time our exposure to foster care was mainly through sad stories in movies, TV shows, and the news. Imagine our surprise when we drove into a beautiful country home to meet

Abigail for the first time. Beginnings had set up a meeting for Hope, Hope's mother, the new baby, the birth parent counsellor (Bonnie), Beginning's Executive Director (Amanda), the foster family (the Vander Meulens), and us at the Vander Meulen's home. After the meeting, the foster

*“Our journey to adoption was a long one but as soon as we connected with Beginnings we felt that we were in very professional and supportive hands. We cannot thank Beginnings enough for their quick and reassuring responses to our questions, dispatching a supportive birth parent counselor to prospective birth mothers, lining up the best foster families we could imagine and their compassionate support throughout the whole process.”*

parents, Benj and Grace invited us to stay at their home a little longer to spend time with Abby. The apprehension we had about Abigail in foster care quickly melted away. Firstly, the Vander Meulens were friendly, empathetic, and welcoming. They had raised six children and Abigail was the eighth baby they had fostered; they only fostered one baby at a time and worked exclusively for Beginnings. They were totally equipped and ready for Abby, from two cribs on different floors to a collection of nice clothes and blankets. They purchased the same formula Abby was given at the hospital to be consistent and kept a regular feeding and sleeping schedule.

Over the next three weeks, we spent a lot of time at the Vander Meulens; some days we'd spend 7 or 8 hours with Abigail in a private space off their living room. They even invited us along to their Sunday church service. Abigail was well-loved and taken care of while she was in care; we felt welcome and were able to experience our daughter's first couple of weeks and develop our bond. We often reflect that we received a master-class in parenting; we learned how to change diapers, prepare and deliver bottles, properly swaddle, and give a bath. Another silver lining was that we had time to collect all of the things we needed to bring Abigail home: a car seat, bassinet, stroller,



Above: Abigail

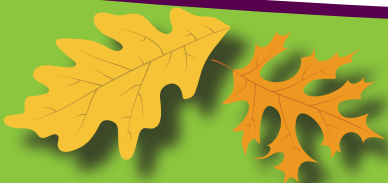
carrier, diapers, bottles, formula, etc.

The prospect of leaving your baby in foster care while you wait for everything to get sorted is agonizing. You've likely waited a long time and been through so much to get to this point. A temporary foster care scenario is not what you wanted. But, if your baby has to be in care for a little while, it seems Beginnings has assembled an all-star roster of families. If the Vander Meulen's are any indication, your baby will be in experienced, capable, and loving hands until your approval comes through and you are able to bring your baby home.

*Brad & Kristen*



Above: With foster parents Grace and Benj



**beginnings**  
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Woodstock 519-421-2127

# Beginnings Info

## Executive Director:

Amanda Baigent, MSW, RSW

## Director of Education:

Tonya Noble, MA

## Director of Administration:

Megan Dunlop-Elms, BA

## Director of Finance:

Aideen Hennessy, CPA, CGA

## Embryo Donation Coordinator:

Mary Howlett-Nero, MSW, RSW

## Clinical Assistant:

Kim Wachta, BA, MLS

## Administrative Assistants:

Julia Milmine, MScEd, OCT

Madeline Slump, BA

## Birth Parent Counsellors:

Bonnie Archer, BSc, RN

Connie Barrett, BASoc, SSW

Lynn Gouin, MSW, RSW

Bethany Vidican, BSW

## Board of Directors

Clarence Bick

Ann Stocker

Lisa Gonnering

Heather Kuipers

Sue Hellinga

Bryan Herecuk

Diane Vanderwoude

Meghan Boonstra

## Our Mission

In the conviction that life is a gift from God, Beginnings provides services related to pregnancy, parenting and adoption.

*But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."*

*Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

- 2 Corinthians 12:9

## Monthly Donor

Please consider becoming a monthly donor in providing pregnancy support and counselling for young moms via our website [www.beginnings.ca](http://www.beginnings.ca) or by contacting us at **905-528-6665**

## On Social Media?

We love keeping in touch, so please make sure to 'Like' **Beginnings Family Services** and **Beginnings Family Services Embryo Donation** on Facebook and to 'Follow' us on Twitter and Instagram!



## I want to help Beginnings build strong families!

### Your Name & address (if different than on reverse):

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

### Yes, I can donate monthly:

☐ \$100/mo ☐ \$50/mo ☐ \$25/mo \$ \_\_\_\_\_/mo

Please supply your credit card or provide a void cheque.  
A void cheque is preferred to reduce service fees.

### I would like to make the following donation:

☐ \$1,000 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I have remembered Beginnings Family Services in my will.

☐ I would like more information on how to include Beginnings in my will.

Please complete for credit card payment:

☐ VISA ☐ Mastercard Expiry \_\_\_\_\_ 3 Digit CVV Code \_\_\_\_\_

Card # \_\_\_\_\_

Please make cheques payable to Beginnings Family Services. Gifts of \$20 or more will be receipted.  
CCRA Charitable Reg. No. 11880 2388 RR0001



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Thank you!

To donate online, visit [www.beginnings.ca](http://www.beginnings.ca) and select Donate

## DIVERSITY

- Understanding that each of us is unique, and recognizing and celebrating our individual differences.