

CHRIS & STEPHANIE

SAM & AUDREY



Hello There!



Thank you for taking the time to get to know us. We hope that these pages help you understand more about us and why we are on this adoption journey. We recognize this must be a challenging time for you and we pray that getting to know our family would give you the peace and assurance needed in the days ahead.

About Us



We love coffee. After visiting Italy in 2016, we knew we wanted cappuccino everyday. Chris did research to find an espresso machine to match our budget and Stephanie went to a half-day class in Brooklyn to learn the art of espresso. She came home and taught Chris everything she learned including how to make a latte heart! We might never go back to Italy, but we treasure our mornings together making and drinking homemade cappuccino in our living room.



We love to flip things - especially antique finds that others are disposing of on garbage day! Chris has stopped being surprised when Stephanie stops the car to pick up things from people's curbs. To this day, we have a side table in our bedroom that we rescued when a neighbor at our first apartment was about to throw it out. We refinished the side table with Chris's dad using his tools and discount Home Depot paint samples and eight years later we are still using the table. Growing up your child will be encouraged to find beauty and value in the small things.



We love hosting. On most mornings, our son, Sam, eagerly asks, "Who's coming over today?" Sometimes, we don't even know until the day gets rolling. On Memorial Day, we were expecting Chris's mom and grandma for burgers and a relaxing afternoon in the backyard. However, as word spread, the guest list quickly grew to include Chris's grandpa, his two sisters, and three nephews! It was a bit of a surprise, but Sam was thrilled to play with his cousins on his swingset and in the sandbox. We enjoyed a crowded deck as Chris kept the grill going while chatting with his grandpa and Stephanie set up dessert and coffee with Chris's mom.

STEPHANIE

written by Chris



Stephanie enjoys **shaping the nooks and crannies of our front yard**. She's built stone borders for mulch flower beds out of rocks in our yard, planted a mini herb garden, and lined the front of our house with daffodils and tulips. Last spring, when Stephanie was removing an out-of-control azalea, I wasn't available to help. She managed to dig, pry, and pull hard enough to get it out by the roots, only to realize it was too heavy for her to move! Luckily, Sam's scooter was nearby and Stephanie cleverly solved the problem by shifting the uprooted bush onto the scooter to roll it easily to our yard waste pile. When I saw the entire bush uprooted and laying with the yard waste, I was speechless! I enjoy being surprised by Stephanie's determination and do-it-herself spirit.

Stephanie has **the gift of hospitality**. She is always looking for ways to get together with other moms who have little ones. While some of these play dates are planned in advance, I've seen Stephanie's openness towards a neighbor coming over last minute with her grandkids and her excitement when another mom from the library with a son also named Sam was eager to make a new mom friend. Recently Stephanie hosted her friend Lauren from church and her little girl Eleanor. Stephanie made the play date special by setting out homemade pumpkin bread for snacking and made roasted chicken thighs and a salad for lunch. Growing up your child will experience the joy of making new friends and building relationships with others.

Stephanie **takes joy in offering new life to used items**. In the last year, she's picked up kitchen chairs, counter stools, and a toddler bed. And when she's not revitalizing a well-worn piece for our own use (or for a friend), she'll list it on Marketplace or eBay. I think the most fun example was when she saw a stroller on someone's curb on trash day during a walk with Sam and Audrey. After pausing to have a closer look, she determined that the stroller had plenty of life left and decided to take it. So there we were, wheeling a stroller with two kids and an empty stroller through our neighborhood back to our house! When we got home, she blew away any dust with compressed air, carefully scrubbed a few stains with powdered laundry detergent, sprayed it down with a hose and let it dry in the sun. It quickly found a new home via Facebook Marketplace with a sweet Grandma from the next town over who needed a stroller when her grandson would visit.

CHRIS

written by Stephanie



Chris **loves to grow food for us**. He learned to grow plants during visits to his grandfather in upstate New York. Chris's Grandpa Tony taught him how to grow hot peppers, tomatoes, squash, green beans, and basil in small pots, transplant them to the garden, manage them through the summer, and save seeds in the fall to start the cycle again next year. Before we owned our own home, Chris kept a garden at his parents' house, which we would enjoy with his parents. For the last four years, Chris has planted a small garden at our home and is passing his knowledge along to Sam and Audrey. This spring, Chris and Sam sprinkled lettuce, spinach, and arugula seeds in six rows in our garden. It was exciting to check back each day to see new sprouts coming up, knowing that in a few weeks we'd be enjoying salads from our backyard! Your child will discover the amazement of growing their own food from seed and enjoy picking their own vegetables when the summer arrives.



Chris **is a creative woodworker**. Chris's dad practiced woodworking as a hobby and side-job for almost fifty years, and as a child Chris would help him in the garage. When Chris's dad passed away, his mom told him to take his tools from the garage and put them to good use. Chris's first project was to make a ladder for Sam's playhouse. He wanted to have it finished before Sam's cousins came over for Easter so they could all climb and ride the slide on their own. Even though Chris didn't have a workbench yet, he spent two weeks designing and building this first project on an old kitchen table in the garage, completing it just in time to carry it to the back yard and install it an hour before our guests arrived. Sam and his cousins spent almost the whole afternoon playing on it. Chris is currently working on a bookshelf for Sam and Audrey.



I love seeing how Chris **takes a genuine interest in other people**. He is always available to listen and offer advice to family members, friends, and coworkers - whether it's advice on an upcoming job interview or some encouragement to a new dad at our church. Last summer, Chris's friend Jim needed help refinishing and staining his deck, and Chris was giving him some pointers and texting him Home Depot links to the products he would need. Eventually Chris decided to take a day off to spend time with his friend and help him through the entire process. I went with him, and spent time visiting with Jim's wife and kids. We ended the evening enjoying dinner with our friends. It was a large deck, so Chris wasn't sure the job could be done in one day, but Chris and Jim made a great team and worked fast. It was so satisfying for Chris to finally sit down to dinner knowing that the entire deck had been sanded.

OUR STORY



We met when Stephanie's family was looking for a church, and they visited the church where Chris's family had been attending for five years. That Sunday morning, Chris was actually one of the first speakers at the podium, as he had been assigned to read the weekly announcements! Stephanie quickly became friends with his younger sister Sue, and Chris became friends with her brothers. Over the next year, Stephanie spent a lot of time around Chris and his family, and realized how kind and genuine he was and began to see him as more than a friend. However, Stephanie didn't know how he felt about her, so she didn't share this with anyone yet... except her journal. When Stephanie was seventeen, she even wrote down his name in code as the person she thought she would marry. We continued to spend a lot of time together, but it would be another four years before Chris made his move.



When we started dating, **it took our families some time to adjust to our new relationship.** During a visit to Stephanie's family, when her uncle was taking everyone else on a tour of the house, Stephanie's Aunt Michele cornered Chris in the kitchen, looked him in the eye, and asked, "What exactly are your intentions with my niece?" Fast forward to now - Aunt Michele always says she wishes that Chris had a brother for her daughter! Even Chris's dad thought he was rushing into the relationship (though we had known each other for 5 years!) and told Chris, "I'm going to keep asking you if you're sure about this." Both sides of the family had their concerns due to our young age, however, they both adjusted soon enough, and a few months into our engagement, Chris's dad told Stephanie, "When you marry my son, I know I'll be getting another daughter."



Early in our marriage, we suffered multiple miscarriages. Eventually, we were blessed to have Sam and Audrey through IVF. Even though our IVF journey is over, we still want to grow our family. Adoption is something we've talked and prayed about since before we were married. Growing up, Chris's best friends were adopted, and he saw that adoption was a beautiful way to grow a family. Today, **we have many friends in church whose lives have been touched by adoption** - parents and their adopted children, as well as moms who have placed their children for adoption. Growing up your child will be loved and treasured as a member of our family. We are looking forward to joining you on your adoption journey and are praying for you as you take these next steps.

MEET SAM & AUDREY

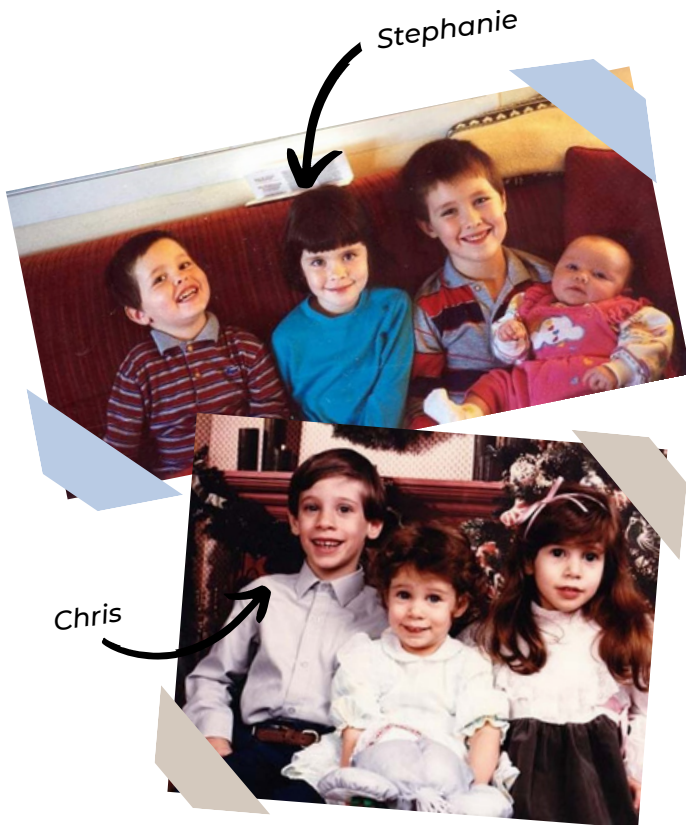


Sam is our sweet and adventurous five-year-old boy. Over the years we've introduced Sam to biking, basketball, gymnastics, and music, but **what has really captured his interest is art.** He's gravitated towards painting and drawing, and will sit for hours meticulously working with his colored pencils or watercolors. His favorites right now are drawings based on the *Lord of the Rings* and famous historical figures. One of our favorite ways to encourage him in his love of art is to print out new coloring pages and to show him examples of how they were painted by famous artists. We are looking forward to understanding your child's interests and potential, giving them opportunities to try different activities, and encouraging them to pursue the ones that bring them joy.



Audrey is our affectionate and happy two-year-old girl. **She loves little babies and animals.** Whether we're at the park or swim lessons, she is always quick to let me know that she sees a baby nearby. Recently, she was urgently trying to ask Stephanie for something, and eventually Stephanie figured out that Audrey wanted us to FaceTime with our friends so she could see their baby girl Kiera! We had a really fun FaceTime play date since Kiera hadn't gone to bed yet.

We both loved growing up in families with multiple siblings. It was fun to always have a friend around and we love remembering the adventures we had with our brothers and sisters!



FROM STEPHANIE:

Growing up in a large family, I always knew I wanted a large family of my own someday. Since I'm one of five kids, there was always someone willing to play monopoly, race each other on Mario Kart, or go on a backyard adventure. As we outgrew those backyard adventures, my brother Steven and I would take our bikes on a 6 mile round trip to get McFlurries at McDonalds - when our parents thought we were just biking around the block. Only recently did my mom find out that we used to do this! And we all had a good laugh about it!

FROM CHRIS:

My family always made a big deal out of birthdays. My sister Jess's birthday is two days after mine, so each year there was usually one big party for both of us. When she was turning 10 and I was turning 12, we decided that we were old enough to decorate on our own... but we didn't tell our parents. For a week before the party, we made giant "happy birthday" posters for each other and built decorations out of construction paper and streamers, and hid them under our beds. The morning of the party, we got up extra early and proudly decorated the living room with our creations! Our parents thought it was hilarious and didn't bother to add to our gaudy display. It was so much fun to be "in on something" with a sibling!

Our Faith



We love our church especially for the role it plays in our children's lives. We look forward to attending services every Sunday as a family. Our church welcomes children and sees them as a blessing. We seek to cultivate the same high regard that Jesus had for children when he told his disciples, "let the little children come to me." When Sam was old enough to start attending the children's Sunday School class, he was nervous to start something new, but the teacher welcomed him sweetly and told him there would be crafts, stories, and a game. Today, going to Sunday school with his friends is one of Sam's favorite parts of church. Your child will grow up surrounded by people who can get down on a child's level and welcome them with joy.



Stephanie has been serving as a middle school youth group leader for the past eight years. After taking a break when Audrey was born - she returned to her role as a leader and the kids were so excited to have her back. Stephanie is famous for planning hilarious and competitive games which the kids love. During a recent youth group, the kids loved her balloon game. The group was split into two teams and each team had to stick as many balloons with masking tape as possible to one person in their group. They loved this game so much that they all gave her an unexpected round of applause!



Grounded in our Faith

Ultimately, **our parenting is grounded in our faith**, meaning we teach our children to love God and love their neighbors. This means recognizing that we are all created in God's image and deserve respect, being thankful for what we have, treating others the way we want to be treated, and being quick to forgive one another and to ask for forgiveness when we fall short. We believe this needs to be taught not only with words, but with actions as well. For Sam and Audrey, this has meant bringing them to help re-stock the food pantry at church, taking them to visit an elderly neighbor recovering from a heart attack, and helping us cook meals for people in crisis.

Some of Our Favorite Things



We love to work out and right now what works for us is simple cardio and free weights in our living room to a workout video. The kids play along, and wanted to copy everything we do including lifting weights! **We ordered them plastic play weights, so they can enjoy copying our moves.** Recently Audrey saw Stephanie working out with weights and ran to grab her little pink weights and jumped right in! Growing up your child will be encouraged to have fun staying active.



We have been cooking together since before we were married, and are always excited to try new recipes. **When our favorite Afghan restaurant closed, we were sad to say goodbye to one of their specialties:** an orange-spiced version of Kabuli pilaf (a rice pilaf with lamb), **so we were determined to recreate it for ourselves.** We found a base recipe online for an Afghan pilaf, but it didn't include all the distinct flavor elements we had come to love. One by one, we tested successive versions of the dish together until we found a combination that worked: steeping thin strips of orange peel in sugar syrup and rose water! We still try to make it once a year. If you have a favorite family recipe that you are willing to share, we will gladly add it to our recipes so that your child will grow up enjoying it.



We love decorating our home with meaningful finds from thrift shops and used book stores. It started early in our marriage when Chris found a print featuring different types of red and orange peppers at a secondhand shop. Chris loves it because it reminds him of the first plants he grew with his grandfather in upstate New York. Recently we started exploring antique shops on vacation and **we were thrilled to find a vintage coffee grinder.** It's now displayed in a little nook in our kitchen that was previously empty!

OUR HOME & NEIGHBORHOOD



We landed in a great neighborhood when we moved into our first house four years ago. Our neighbors up and down the street are friendly, bring their kids over to play, invite us to bbq parties, and give of their time to serve others. Even though Chris works from home almost every day, he happened to be in the office the day we got a snowstorm in March. While Stephanie was inside with Sam and Audrey - **she looked out our front window to see our neighbor Bill and his grandson, shoveling our entire walkway** so Stephanie could easily leave our home if she needed to. Bill even invited us over to his and Debbie's house so Sam and Audrey could play in the snow with their grandkids. Stephanie was so touched by their sweet act of kindness.



The living room is where all the action happens in our home. It's been a versatile space for us - everything from a room to play hide and seek, enjoy coffee, read, make projects, or exercise. The back half of the room is great for children: there are books in a small shelf at their level and lots of space to play independently. Recently, we've encouraged Sam to have some quiet reading time during Audrey's naps, and we were able to make it special for him by creating a "reading nook" in one corner of the living room by draping a curtain over a chair and taping some of his artwork to the wall. Sam loves having a reading nook and will ask us for one whenever he has quiet time. Your child will grow up in a home where they have a sense of freedom to explore and use the space around them and make it their own.

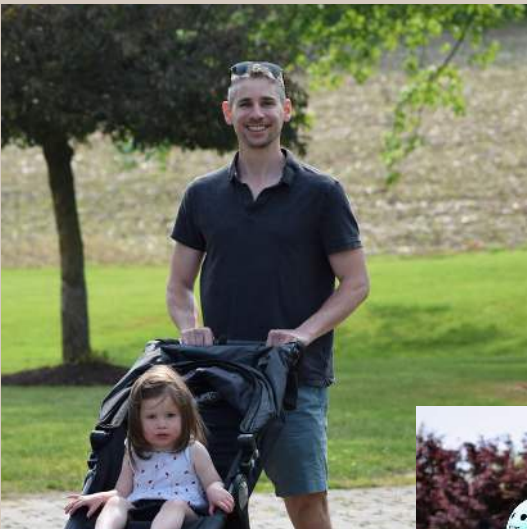


When the weather is nice we love to go walking to the local playground behind our town's firehouse. Our walk to the playground is not complete without **snacks, collecting pine cones, and plucking wildflowers** to bring home later. We usually take out the double stroller but recently Sam was able to make the entire two mile round trip all on his own - we treated different spots on our walk as milestones for Sam to earn marshmallows to encourage him along the way. He couldn't wait to get the next marshmallow at each milestone.

Our Community



Every year our local park blooms with the most beautiful display of pink cherry blossom trees. We go every year to take pictures together as a family and to enjoy the beautiful blossoms that only last for a few days. Recently we learned from Sara, a sweet older lady at church, that **a childhood friend of hers planted those trees with her family over 80 years ago!** It was moving to learn that our enjoyment of the trees were because of a young girl and her family who considered the future generations who would walk through this park.



One of our favorite places to visit is **our local lake**. We love taking walks as a family there, with Audrey in the stroller and Sam on his bike. Sam often makes little biker friends when we take walks as a family. Recently Sam learned how to ride his bike with pedals and no training wheels. He rode so fast Chris and I had to take turns running to keep up with him. We definitely got our work out in that day! Growing up your child will be encouraged to enjoy the outdoors and to make friends wherever they go.



No trip to our local lake is complete without heading over to our favorite coffee shop. We love their handcrafted cappuccinos. There is such a great community feel at the coffee shop and everyone is friendly and welcoming. One time Stephanie ended up seeing a mom and her son at the coffee shop that she had met earlier that day at a nearby playground. **They had an impromptu coffee date** and enjoyed some time together **before it was nap time** for the little ones.

FAMILY

*Our family will accept any excuse for a celebration. If you choose us, your child will grow up with lots of family nearby, including 2 grandparents, 3 great grandparents, 7 aunts and uncles, and **14 cousins** too!*



Our family is close by. Both our moms live nearby and we enjoy visits with them often! When we were sick with a virus this past winter, Chris's mom dropped off homemade chicken noodle soup and my mom picked up the groceries that we needed. We felt so loved and cared for during a time we were not able to do much for ourselves! Growing up your child will have family that lives close enough to help each other when in need.



Sam and Audrey love being able to **play and run around with their cousins during family get-togethers.** Whenever we are invited for a graduation or birthday party there always something fun for our kids to do. This summer we attended cousin Summer's one year old birthday party where Sam and Audrey were able to ride a pony for the first time. Audrey was fearless but Sam was worried and a little scared. Chris and a few other cousins did an amazing job understanding Sam's concerns and encouraging him to conquer his fears.



Our family loves animals. Stephanie's sister Amy recently moved back to New Jersey from California. We love having Stephanie's sister nearby and its been great for our family to spend time with her goldendoodle Harley. She's a sweet and affectionate dog with lots of energy for running around the backyard. Even though we don't have pets its been a great way for our family to enjoy playing with a dog on a regular basis. Audrey loves Harley so much that we bought her a little stuffed goldendoodle for Christmas! Growing up your child will enjoy sweet time with aunts, uncles, and furry friends.

Traditions



One of our most treasured traditions is to spend our vacations at a renovated farmhouse on 75 acres in Pennsylvania. **Each year, we spend a week enjoying farm tours, hayrides,** and visiting with Stephanie's college roommate who lives in the area for years and has 4 children of her own. Sam and Audrey love exploring the cornfields with us and feeding the sheep on the property and the owners are very accommodating to them. A few years ago, our visit coincided with the corn harvest, and the owner asked if Sam would like to ride along in a massive combine. Chris climbed up with Sam into the passenger seat, sat him on his lap, and watched out the windows as the farmer drove through acres of corn, told us about the machinery, and what it's like running the farm. It was an experience neither Sam or Chris will ever forget!



When winter arrived this past December, we came up with a list of things we could do to help the colder months pass by. One item on our list was to make homemade pasta - and Chris took the lead on this one. Chris kneaded by hand a homemade egg semolina dough and hand cut the pasta into fettuccine. Chris remembered his dad making homemade pasta and covered in flour when he was a kid and it meant so much to him to recreate the memory in our home. We enjoyed it so much that **it is now a Sunday dinner tradition** that we all look forward to! He even makes his own tomato sauce!



When we started hosting Christmas, it was a major change for Chris's extended family, since the tradition had always been to gather at his parents' house for holidays. **Our first time hosting,** there were 25 guests and Chris had two roasts in the oven. The family was skeptical, Chris had never cooked a roast; his sister was worried it would be too rare, and his mom made fun of the meat thermometer Chris had set up. When the food was almost ready, some fat dripped off the roast into the oven, and **the smoke set off our fire alarms** and everyone rushed to the kitchen. Chris's uncle, a retired FDNY firefighter, held them back and simply said, "He's got it under control," buying Chris enough time to finish up and carve the roasts. Everyone loved the dinner, and now they all look forward to the new tradition of celebrating Christmas in our home. We look forward to learning your favorite traditions to include in our gatherings for your child.

Weekdays



Stephanie has a **flexible part-time job** where she **works from home** as an administrative assistant for our church. Once or twice a week Sam and Audrey spend an afternoon with our babysitter, Hannah, while Stephanie gets some work done in her home office. Because of her job's flexibility Stephanie's main role is as a **stay-at-home mom** for Sam and Audrey. During an unusually warm day this winter, Stephanie had the freedom to take Sam and Audrey hiking at a famous Revolutionary War site without worrying about work.



Chris **works from home** full-time managing health care insights projects for a health care data company. He's been at the company for over ten years and has enjoyed great work-life balance over the years. He is usually done with his day by 5:30pm in time to have dinner as a family. His company also has a generous **paternity leave** policy. When Audrey was born, Chris took 14 weeks off to bond with her, support Stephanie, and help Sam adjust to this life change.



We enjoy eating **dinner together as a family every night**, and we use this as an opportunity to engage one another and share about our day. Every night, Stephanie asks us, “what was your favorite part of today?” At first, Sam had trouble understanding the difference between things that happened “yesterday” and things that happened “today,” but as we shared each night with him our favorite - he now looks forward to sharing his favorite. One night he asked all of us, “what was your favorite part of the day?” He also asked the same of Audrey, even though she doesn't quite know what to say! Growing up your child will enjoy home cooked meals and good conversation around the table each night.

Thank You

Thank you for spending the time to get to know our family. We are looking forward to the day when we will grow our family with another precious little one. We will love your child unconditionally and we know Sam and Audrey will too. We are praying for you each day and hope you feel supported during this challenging time. **We are dedicated to maintaining conversations and contact with you at your comfort level so you can see how your child is growing and thriving through the years.** We pray getting to know us has given you the assurance that your child will be loved and adored through the gift of adoption and that your story will always be honored in our home.



