

fostering
futures.

PRESENT

Josiah
white's



SPRING 2023

2 • Noticing God's Presence 3 • Present As Providers 4 • Being Present For Foster Children
6 • Employee And Church Spotlight 7 • Being Present Through One-On-One Time

Noticing God's Presence

Have you ever become so familiar with something that you didn't notice a change? The road to my parent's house has a railroad crossing. I've driven over those tracks all my life, always cautious to look both ways. One day, I noticed something I had never seen before: a STOP sign at the crossing. I thought to myself, "Good, finally the county put a STOP sign there."

When I went into the house and announced my "new" discovery to my parents, they looked at each other and laughed because it had been there for 3 months! I had driven on that road many times in the 3 months since but never noticed it! I guess out of habit and being more focused on looking for trains, I never noticed its presence.

I experience this same type of thing with my faith. Be it distractions, neglect, or even carelessness, I miss things put in place for my direction and protection. The verse that came to mind as I thought about this devotion about God's presence was where Christ says "...remember, I will be with you always, even to the end of the age." I know this verse well and it brings me comfort, yet when I went looking for the reference, I remembered it is actually attached to the great commission in Matthew 28.

It actually is only part of a verse that is referring to the work we are to be doing: making disciples. As we go, make disciples. Christ is with us. He is present. But to actually get the whole picture, we need to back up all the way to verse 18.

"then Jesus came to them (the disciples) and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20)

I am so grateful to our foster families. They receive children into their homes, helping them notice the presence of Christ. Many of the children are like me with the stop sign. They are so focused on the things around them that they have never noticed Christ. Our foster families spend their every moment with these children discipling them and showing them that Christ is always with us. My prayer is that we will all notice the STOP signs and take time to remember He is always there. No matter the road we are on, what crossings lie before us, He will always be there.



present AS PROVIDERS

God's calling to become a foster parent is undeniable. Throughout the Bible, God calls his people to care for orphans. From saying yes to God's calling to become a foster parent, to beginning the licensing process, to accepting your first placement, it is an amazing roller coaster of events and emotions.

Being a foster parent is not an easy calling, so as a staff, being present for our foster parents is so important. It is the heartbeat of Josiah White's staff to support our foster parents throughout the entire journey. Our team shows up for our families by being there when they first think about becoming foster parents, providing the best possible pre-service experience, being present when they are accepting their first placement, supporting foster families through reunification, and walking alongside them when they are taking a much-needed break.

Not everyone is called to be a foster parent, but we can all help out somehow. There are many different ways to be present for our foster parents. In the past year, Foster Care Advocates have been added to each of our regional teams.

Our Advocates provide prayer support and encouragement to our foster parents. Additionally, our Foster Care Advocates share the need for foster parents in local churches and help those churches support the foster parents in their congregations. We are so thankful for the additional layer of support and outreach our Advocates are providing!

As foster parents become certified in the Teaching Family Model, we have had great feedback from foster parents who are grateful for the observations they receive through Service Provider surveys and the Evaluation process. This has made us more aware of the need to share quality feedback regularly with our families. Their investment in the lives of our children is invaluable, and we can enrich their experiences as foster parents through our intentional support, training, and encouragement. Our foster parents pour themselves into the children in their homes, and it is our goal to equip them with the best possible tools for the best possible outcomes. Taking time to acknowledge their great work is important and makes a difference.





BEING PRESENT FOR FOSTER CHILDREN

PAST • PRESENT • FUTURE

Following in the footsteps of both their parents, Mark and Kelsey Speck felt called to support children in foster care. Kelsey's parents were foster parents before and shortly after Kelsey was born, and Mark's mom provided respite care in her home when Mark and his siblings were young.

“Our parents instilled in us a passion by being examples of supporting others in need in various ways and living out the mission to be the hands and feet of Christ,” said Kelsey. “We are trying to instill in our children the same. We can talk all day about helping others, but unless we do something, it doesn't have the same worth.”

The Specks have fostered on and off for about nine years while raising their three biological children. They have watched their children become more aware of the needs in their community and become more compassionate towards others.

Recently, the Specks received a placement of an only child. This young boy was excited to gain friends through his new foster siblings. One of the first challenges they faced with this little boy was that he had not ever slept in his own bed. To help him with being comfortable, Mark and Kelsey bought walkie talkies so that he could communicate with them anytime he needed to during the night. This ingenious idea made a huge difference in helping his transition to his own bed, and he is now able to sleep through the night!

The Specks encourage other foster parents through lessons they have learned throughout their journey such as, “go with the flow, limit expectations, be willing to learn and be open-minded, advocate for kids and lean on Josiah White's and other foster families as a resource, take care of yourself and know when you need a break, don't be afraid to say no to placements – the right one will come along.”

We are so grateful for the Specks and the impact they are making on the next generation through setting an example for their biological children and through the children they are ministering to through foster care!

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

DEB DAWES



Deb Dawes recently retired after 30 years of serving children and families through Josiah White’s foster care ministry. Deb is a social worker by training and a mentor and servant at heart. It takes genuine compassion for others to keep someone coming back each day for 30 years!

Executive Director of Family Services, Kurt Gard reflected, “Three words: Heart of Jesus. I believe it is only through the heart of Jesus that servants like Deb are able to minister to all those involved in the foster care system – to care for each individually and to care for the team as a whole. That is the calling I have seen Deb fulfill.”

Fellow team member, Dawn Hobson shared, “I have watched Deb make such an impact on so many lives throughout all these years. She has planted so many seeds of God’s love. She has been an inspiration to me.”

Josiah White’s foster parent, Sherlyn Rensberger said, “Deb is an encourager. No matter what was happening in our home, Deb was there to support us, helping us to press on, even through the hard stuff. You couldn’t ask for anyone better. What a blessing she has been to us.”

As she retires, Deb will be spending more time working with her family on the farm they operate in Wabash County. While she will be missed at Josiah White’s, we are so thankful for this opportunity and time for her and her family. Congratulations, Deb!

CHURCH SPOTLIGHT

LIFEHOUSE COMMUNITY CHURCH FORT WAYNE

Lifeshouse Community Church has been an important pillar in the Fort Wayne community for many years. They serve as the hands and feet of Jesus by providing necessities to families facing crisis in their community. They have several ministries dedicated to serving members of their community that need food and clothes as well as a walk-in clinic for medical needs.

Recently, Josiah White’s Fort Wayne team had the need for a bigger space to host our In-Service Trainings. Lifeshouse was so gracious in opening up their campus to our ministry. This space allows the Fort Wayne team to have more space to entertain and minister to the children of our foster parents while the parents attend these vital training sessions.

In addition, Lifeshouse has also offered to hold a small food drive at their church to help the Fort Wayne Family Preservation program have some emergency food options on hand for families in need.

We are so thankful for church partners like Lifeshouse Community Church that support our mission and help us serve children and families in our community!



being present through
ONE-ON-ONE TIME

*“God is our refuge and strength,
an ever present help in trouble.”*

- Psalm 46:1 (NIV)

This verse has always been comforting to me in difficult times. In the same way His presence comforts us, the time we spend with our children promotes attachment, resiliency, and healing.

It is not always the right service or combination of services that makes the biggest difference, but rather intentional family time and relationship building. Several examples come to mind when I think about the benefits of one-on-one time.

- CAR TIME – Kids tend to process more during a car ride than when we ask them to sit down at home to talk about their day.
- MORNING AND BEDTIME ROUTINES – How we awaken our children in the morning sets the tone for their day. Talking through any deviations in their day so that they are prepared may prevent a behavior at school. Creating a calm atmosphere in the evening by dimming lights, reading together, and praying can create a safe place to share fears and past experiences and give children the freedom to settle into rest.
- MEAL TIME – Including children in menu planning helps us learn their preferences, include some of their favorite foods, and expose them to new options. Many of the children we serve have food insecurities, so meals are a big deal. Having conversations at dinner to process the day, plan family events, and celebrate successes helps children learn conversation skills, table manners, etc.
- RECREATION – Activity is a great release for extra energy. Helping kids find a hobby or activity to try shows our children we value their unique interests. Going on bike rides and playing board games are great ways to teach skills and build relationships.

Throughout our Teaching Family Model training, we discuss how every minute of the day can be therapeutic with children. The trauma our children experience impacts their brain, and healthy, loving, predictable relationships help heal the brain. As our children leave our home, they will not likely remember a particular therapy appointment, but they will remember their time with you and how you made them feel special!

Josiah white's

5233 South 50 East
Wabash, Indiana 46992
260-563-1158
www.josiahwhites.org
www.compassroseacademy.org

NON-PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 147
MAILED FROM 46580

REGIONAL OFFICES

FORT WAYNE
11809 Lima Road
Fort Wayne, IN 46818

GREENWOOD
39 South Park Boulevard, Building 1
Greenwood, IN 46143

INDIANAPOLIS
9850 Westpoint Drive, Suite 300
Indianapolis, IN 46256

MERRILLVILLE
8915 Broadway
Merrillville, IN 46410

SOUTH BEND
21571 Ireland Road
South Bend, IN 46614

Become a foster parent!

- Call the office nearest you to speak to a Josiah White's representative
- Fill out an inquiry form on our website

UPCOMING TRAININGS •••

For the most current details and schedules, visit: www.josiahwhites.org

Josiah white's
FOSTER CARE

how to SUPPORT

- Become an advocate and spread awareness about the need for foster parents
- Contact your regional office to learn about our foster families' needs in your community
- Like us on Facebook