

Conceived in incest, Created by God

By Cheryl Hemmer

Southern Illinois District Advocates for Life Team

Kristi Hofferber has a message when she speaks to conferences and organizations across the United States. The message is that every life is valuable, despite how it was conceived.

And she is living proof.

When she was 30 years old, Hofferber, who knew she had been adopted as a newborn, learned that she was conceived through rape and incest. She learned that her biological father was her birth mother's own father and he had abused her mother for 20 years. She learned that she had five biological siblings. And she learned that four of them had been aborted and one was miscarried.

Hofferber was the second of those six children. Her mother had miscarried the first baby. She hid her pregnancy with her second child as long as she could. When she realized the baby would not be her way out of her abusive situation, she agreed to place the baby girl up for adoption. She was forced by her father to abort the other four babies.

When Hofferber speaks about the value of the life of the unborn, she wants her audience to see her and to know that she, too, would have been aborted if her biological father had anything to say about it.

"I was conceived in incest, but created by God," Hofferber says. "When I hear someone say they are opposed to abortion except in the case of rape and incest, I think 'Well, then you think I should have been aborted.' I am still made in the image of God, no matter how I was conceived. God still has a plan for each one of us.

"Why should the punishment for rape and incest be placed on a completely innocent child? That, in essence, only

serves to protect the person who committed the crime."

Hofferber had always known she was adopted. She had been given up for adoption in May 1978 when she was three days old. Her adoptive parents were unable to have children of their own.

"God placed me in the arms of two very loving people who took me in and provided me with unconditional love, support and opportunities that shaped the foundation of the person that I am today," Hofferber says.

"My adoptive parents have always been open with me about being adopted for as long as I can remember. But I didn't know the whole story. I had always wondered — always had a restlessness of needing to know more about where I came from.

"I was hesitant to ask my parents for more information. I was grateful for the life they had given me. But I had reached a point in my life when I knew I needed to learn more."

Hofferber's adoption was closed, but her parents received a paper from their attorney shortly after she was adopted that had the names of her biological

Continued on next page



The Hofferber family: Rev. Mark and Kristi with their children.



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mother and her parents on it. She didn't know any more than the name until an article appeared in the local newspaper 13 years later. A woman whose name matched Hofferber's birth mother was pressing charges against her father for 20 years of sexual abuse.

"I was speechless! This had never in a million years crossed my mind," says Hofferber. "I went from having about a dozen questions in my mind to having hundreds.

"I knew this was all God's timing. I could not have handled this at a younger age. But at 30, I was more grounded in my faith and I knew God wanted me to learn this then."

It didn't take long for Hofferber to locate her biological mother on social media.

A week later, she was making plans to drive two states away to meet her birth mother and half sister. She describes it as a wonderful and emotional visit. Hofferber, however, is not currently in a relationship with her biological family.

"There are lots of differences between

us and lots of dysfunction in that family. I need to protect my own family from that," says Hofferber. "But I am glad for the opportunity to thank my biological mother for choosing life for me. Despite all of the struggles she had growing up, she chose life for me."

“By sharing my story, I hope to help other women facing a difficult pregnancy see the value of the life they are carrying.”

Hofferber says it's difficult to describe the emotions she has from knowing she is the result of rape and incest.

"I feel terrible for what happened to my birth mother over a 20-year span, but I am grateful I am here because of it," she says.

Hofferber never met her father. He served 18 months in prison. By the time she learned about him, he had another life and another family. While he was still alive when she reconnected with her birth mother, he has

since passed. She knows that he did ask forgiveness from his daughter for the abuse.

After learning the circumstances of her conception, meeting her birth mother and other biological family members, and working through the emotions that followed, Hofferber says she realized

her calling was not in the banking industry where she had been working for 10 years.

She went back to school to pursue a degree in social work. She says her calling is to help mothers and babies.

"By sharing my story, I hope to help other women facing a difficult pregnancy see the value of the life they are carrying," she says. "There are options for them, including adoption."

Hofferber's adoption story doesn't end with her. Her husband, Rev. Mark Hofferber, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Hoffman, was also adopted. He was not adopted at birth and knows little about his biological parents except that they asked that he be placed with a Lutheran family.

The Hofferbers also have two children, both adopted. Their son is 15 and was adopted from Korea, and their daughter is four and was adopted from Kristi's biological family.

"Our children know they are adopted and we will tell them about their biological family when they are ready," Hofferber says. "We will tell them about our stories, and we will tell them that the four of us are here today because our mothers chose life."

MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

erful and living. It reveals the thoughts and intentions of every human heart. It kills and makes alive. One of our hymns says it well. "God's Word is all sufficient, It makes divinely sure; and trusting in its wisdom, my faith shall rest secure" (*LSB* #587:1).

Martin Luther reminds us that God is rich in His mercy and grace. The Lord gives us counsel and aid in a variety of ways. Luther writes:

God is superabundantly generous in His grace: First, through the spoken Word, by which the forgiveness of sins is preached in the whole world (Luke 24:45-47). This is the particular

office of the Gospel. Second, through Baptism. Third, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar. Fourth, through the Power of the Keys. Also through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren, "Where two or three are gathered" (Matt. 18:20) and other such verses (especially Rom. 1:12). — **Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article IV**

There have been long periods of time when the Sacrament of the Altar was not available. Many Soviet Lutherans endured a long captivity without a pastor to administer the Sacrament to them. How they rejoiced when they were able to receive the Supper after the collapse of the Soviet Union! We

pray such sacramental droughts may never come to Americans or Christians again!

Upon the birth of John the Baptizer, the tongue of Zechariah was loosed. He immediately launched into a hymn of praise to the Lord for keeping His Word and bringing salvation to His people. John's arrival as the forerunner of Jesus the Messiah was God's salvation drawing near. The Christ was coming to fulfill "the oath that He swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him, without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days" (Luke 1:73-75).