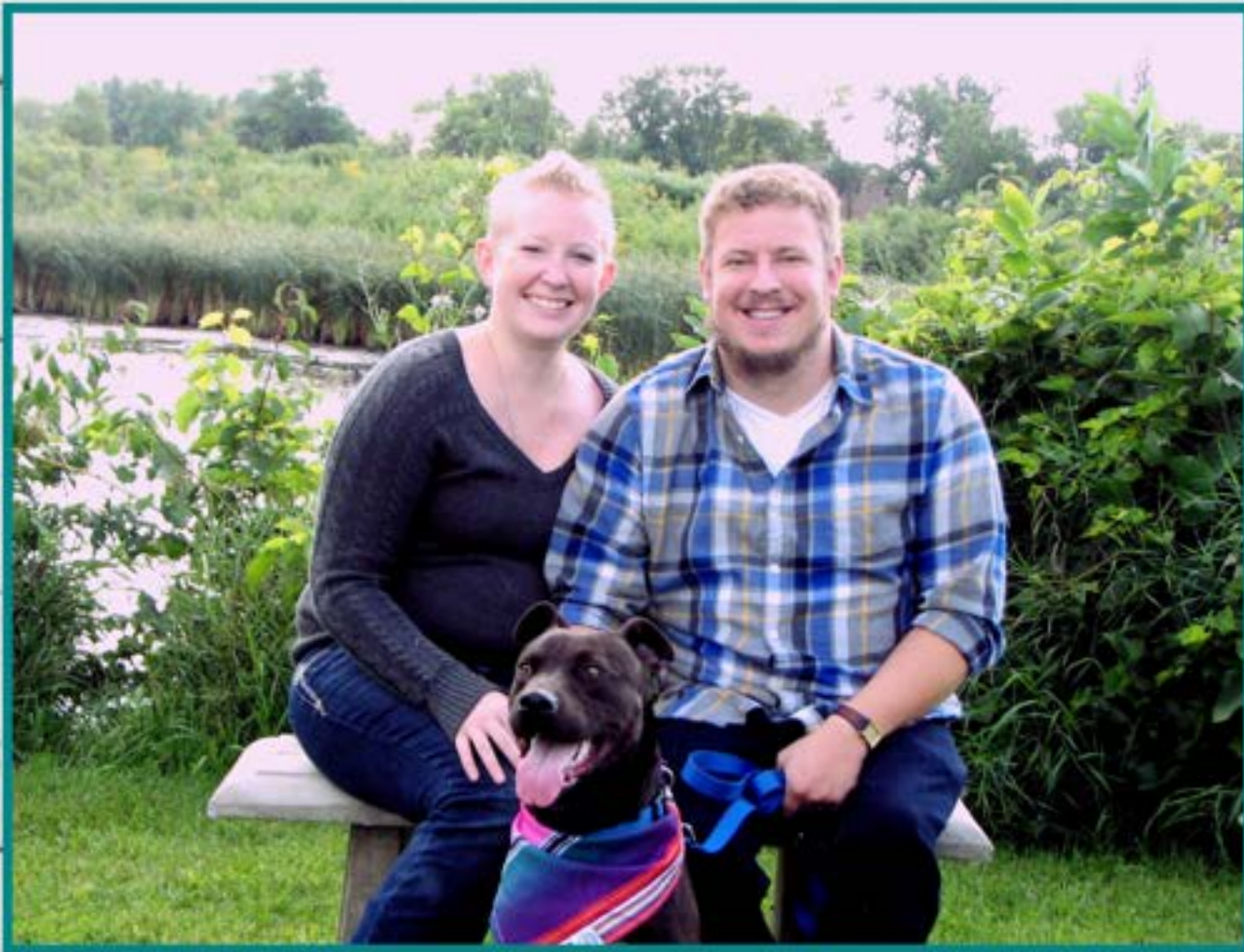


Leslie & Nicholas



With James too...







"Sometimes the fear won't go away, so you'll have to do it afraid."

—Tracy A Malone



A photograph of a man and a woman standing outdoors in a winter setting. The man, on the left, has a beard and is wearing a dark jacket and a dark scarf. The woman, on the right, has blonde hair and is wearing a grey herringbone coat and a grey knit scarf. They are both smiling warmly at the camera. The background shows bare trees and a bright, hazy sky, suggesting a sunny day in winter.

Hello...

We can't imagine what you're going through in making these hard decisions. **We want you to know that we support you already no matter what decisions you make during this process.** We know you love this child so much and we will love them as well.

We hope that you and your baby will become a part of our family and learn how very much and how whole-heartedly we love. We want to get to know you and hope you want to get to know us!

Our son James, the light of our lives, is adopted. His first mom chose a closed adoption. We understand and respect her decision, but long for an open adoption with our second child's family. **We strongly believe that family isn't just blood, but is based on mutually caring relationships and would love to include you among those we call family.**

Nicholas in Leslie's words

Nicholas is a pretty laid back person. He's always my calm presence when I need him to be. He's goofy and has a dry, sarcastic sense of humor that I love. He loves rural living after spending plenty of time at his grandma and grandpas farm growing up. He loves to grill and we often cook together. He is very affectionate and loves to snuggle as a family and makes sure James is always showered with hugs and kisses. He is so compassionate. He's so good at working with his church members when they're going through rough times.



Great viola player



Job: Lutheran pastor



About Spina Bifida

Nicholas was born with Spina bifida, a disorder of the spine, but he's just like any other person. While he uses crutches or a wheelchair to get around, he can do anything that any able-bodied person can, though he may do it differently. He's figured out ways to do everything he needs in order to care for a child. And we teach our children about the beauty of diversity in people's bodies.





Nicholas as a dad

1. He is a wonderfully loving father. He is great at getting James to calm down when he's having a tantrum.
2. He loves being silly with James and reading books with him.
3. He loves taking James outside and playing with him with the dogs. James loves to help throw the ball playing fetch!



Leslie in Nicholas' words

Leslie is a passionate and creative person. She is always coming up with house projects or crafty things to do. She cans fruits and veggies, sews, and gardens, as well as being the handyman worker around the house.

She has great compassion for everyone that she meets, humans and animals alike. Her desire to help those in need is wonderfully paired with her energy and enthusiasm for life. She is very musical, playing piano, and I often find her singing around the house; to our pets, to the plants in the garden, or just to the empty room. She loves to teach and to nurture learning in young minds.

Leslie is currently a stay at home mom. She has worked as a Crime Victim Advocate helping domestic abuse and sexual assault survivors.



She loves painting, sewing and singing



She loves to volunteer at the local animal shelter. This day she was exhausted and fell asleep on the job. The kitties didn't seem to mind.



Her niece is her personality twin!



Leslie as a mom

1. Leslie will spend countless hours reading books with James and looks forward to sharing Harry Potter with him.
2. She loves baking with James and teaching him how to make food.
3. She loves sharing the garden with James and showing him all the different things that live in the dirt.



The elephants on her arm are her adoption tattoo. The three elephants represent the adoption triad: child, adoptive family and birth family.

Our Love Story... by Leslie



After Luther College we both graduated from Wartburg Theological Seminary. Nicholas received a Masters of Divinity and I received my MA.

We met on move-in day at Luther college. **After 2 days, I knew I was going to marry him. Crazy right? Well we were crazy in love.** When it came time to graduate college, Nicholas decided to go to seminary and I decided to move with him. That next December Nicholas popped the question in a bookstore (one of my favorite places) and we were married in the fall. While we've been through a lot in the 11 years we've been together, we like to say that we grew up together. **We're best friends first and our friendship is full of love, laughter, trust and honesty.**

Our Faith/Values



Nicholas got to officiate at our son's baptism

We will raise our children in church, but they'll also know about other religions and be able to choose their religion for themselves. **We don't believe in forcing faith on someone.**

We believe that God loves all of us no matter what we do or who we are. **God made us exactly as we are.** Our faith isn't about trying to be good enough for God to love us, it's about showing God's love by caring for our neighbors. **We love everyone: Black, Native, gay, trans, Muslim, immigrant** and everyone in between and fight for everyone's right to life and happiness.

We value justice, human and animal lives, and the life of this planet. Our religious beliefs push us to show God's love by caring for all of God's creation with our actions.

We go to church because it challenges us to look past ourselves and love the people that our culture tells us aren't

worthy, the ones that may be hard to love, because God shows God's love through other people. And **God's love is infinite, so why can't ours be, too?**



We believe love is love



Bread for communion



Leslie loves doing the children's sermon in church.



Leslie started a church garden so we can grow free food for people in need.





Our Son James

James is a goofy and affectionate little dude that loves trains, trucks and anything with a motor. He loves hugs and snuggles and in between asserting his independence, loves to surprise us with his compassion. He loves his puppies and they are very patient with him, and the cats have their sweet moments, but mostly prefer his affection from afar. James constantly shows us how to see the world with fresh eyes through his awe and delight at small things we don't notice. He loves playing peek a boo with his baby cousin and will make a wonderfully loving big brother some day.



James's adoption finalization day! Look how happy we are!



He LOVES to jump!! This day he jumped so hard he fell asleep, exhausted!



My mom lets me lick the beaters!



Our Pets

We LOVE animals! We have 2 cats and 2 dogs. Merida is our cat that Leslie has had since college. We brought our other cat, Leah, home right before we got married after a visit to the humane society "just to look".

After buying a house, we brought Francis home. Before Covid, Leslie was taking him to the local nursing home as a therapy dog. They both can't wait to go back! Fergus came home soon after and has kept us on our toes, with a few ER vet visits and a week at doggy boot camp.

We have no plans to add any more furbabies to our family, but Leslie does foster kittens who need bottle feeding.



Francis



Fergus



Merida



Leah



Foster Kitty



Both of our dogs love to snuggle



They are very protective nap buddies.



What we do for Fun!

We just recently bought a pop-up camper and are excited to travel, bringing a bit of home with us. Nicholas' parents also own a cabin on a lake in MN that we enjoy visiting. Bonfires are also a regular part of our summers at home and we love spending time in the backyard with the dogs.



Corn
is fun!



We LOVE family sing-a-alongs



We enjoy art projects



Leslie loves to build and make things. James likes to help.

Nothing is more fun than cousins at the lake!



We all LOVE to read (or be read to) in our household! There are books everywhere!

Winter is full of playing in the snow and snuggling under blankets with hot chocolate.



We play a LOT of cards!



We love food and we love to garden!!

Many of our traditions involve food. We try to grow much of our own produce during the few summer months we get in ND and we love to support our local farmers by buying our meat local too. James loves getting to visit the farms, too!



James loves his training chopsticks!

Since James's ethnicity is Nepali (near India), we've started to make Nepali and Indian food at home.

Farmer's Market

Leslie has a Farmers Market booth where she sells herbal remedies. She sells herbal teas with medicinal qualities and herbal rubs for different ailments, like dry skin, sore muscles and headaches as well as extra veggies from her large garden.



Our Holiday Traditions

Christmas is a big deal for us. We go to church, we sing, we bake, we eat a lot of great food, and most importantly, we spend time with family and those that we love. Even though we're not Catholic, we love to play St. Nicholas every December 6th and leave presents on the doorsteps of friends' houses. It's one of the ways we love to give back to those that care for us throughout the year.



James LOVES trains!! Our dog Fergus thinks they are pretty interesting too!



Not so impressed with Santa



Thanksgiving: We go BIG (even this year, when it was just 3 of us.)



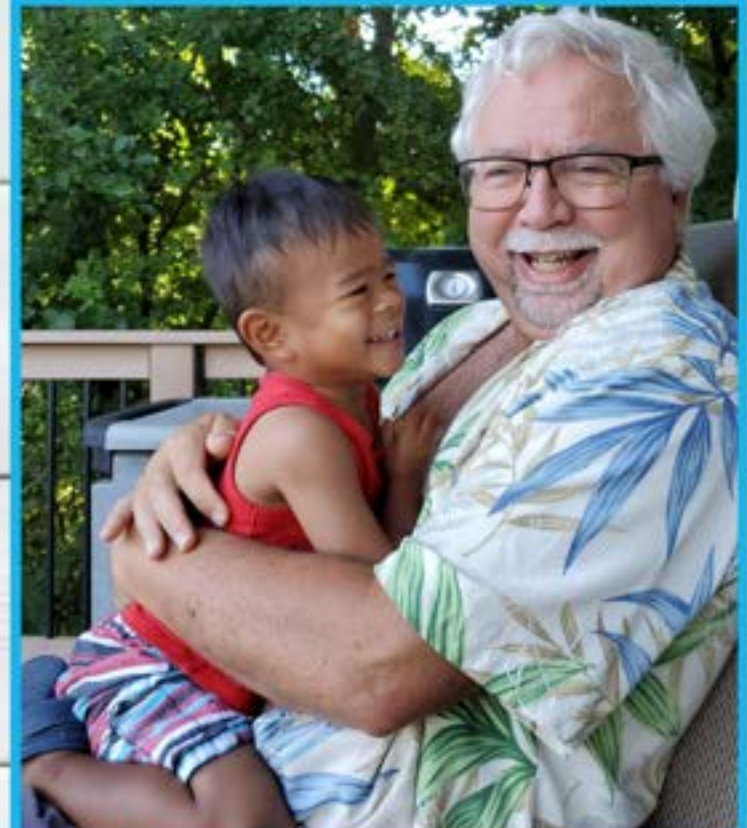
Halloween: Nicholas's mom makes homemade costumes every year!

Nicholas's Family

Nicholas has 2 older brothers who are both married. The oldest brother has 4 kids and his other brother has just one super cute baby. His parents have been married over 35 years and his mother has worked as a dietician at Mayo Clinic for over 20 years. They're a very musical family; Nicholas and his brother all play string instruments and his dad plays piano. Family gatherings are a lot of fun! We especially love visiting them at their cabin!



Nicholas's mom makes James a cake every year!



Nicholas's dad and James have such a sweet relationship. This picture says it all!



Leslie's Family



Leslie has one older brother who's married and has 2 cute little girls. Her parents have been married almost 40 years and her dad is a retired electrical engineer. Family gatherings usually include the whole extended family so they are a load of fun!



Because of COVID we haven't seen Leslie's family in a year. So James studies these family photos on the fridge



Leslie's parents and brother along with his family. Her mom sings in the choir!





Our Promises...

We promise to make a contact plan with you and to follow through on that plan no matter what our lives may bring.

We hope that you'll be a part of our lives and our child's life as they grow.

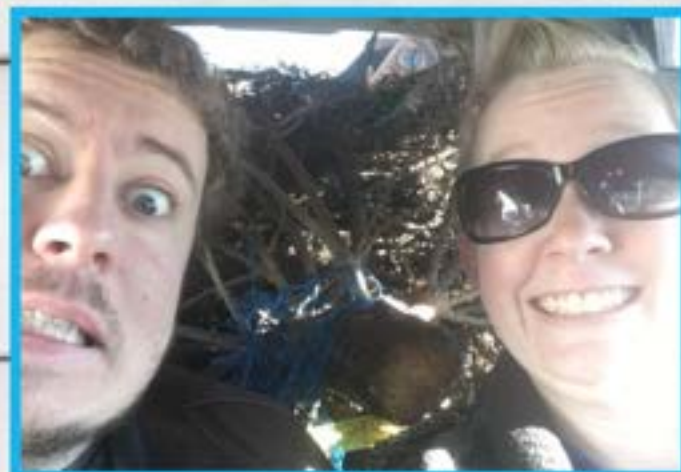
We promise to teach your child all life is worthy of respect. All emotions are valid and good. We will always love them even if they screw up.

We promise to always speak well of you, and to teach your child to honor your culture as well as ours.

We promise to love you no matter what happens or what choices you make.

Nicholas and Leslie

"Courage, dear heart." ~C.S.Lewis



We also promise to not take ourselves too seriously!