



“Offering a real option – Life!”

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Jeff Adams, President

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Emma Maternity House Society

emmahouse.ca

Jeff Adams – President:

Are there any fans of Bill Hybels out there? I'm talking about Pastor Bill Hybels of Willow Creek Church in Illinois, the same Bill Hybels who also leads the annual Willow Creek Leadership Summits that are simulcast across North America and overseas each year.

Bill has written several wonderful books including one called "Holy Discontent: Fueling the Fire that Ignites Personal Vision."

In the book, Bill asks each reader: "What really sets you off? What are the things in life that really get your blood boiling?"

Bill describes "holy discontent" as a sort of God-given righteous indignation, and he urges each of us to find ours. He says when we identify our holy discontent, and channel our passion and energy into addressing it, we can change the world.

That's exactly what happened to two Calgary police officers about 20 years ago.

Jim Amsing and Dave Petty had been assigned to security duties at the abortion clinic in northwest Calgary. Many of you probably know it – a nondescript building in the Kensington area, right next to a car wash and the traffic along Crowchild Trail.

Jim and Dave were assigned to ensuring women could enter and leave the abortion clinic without having to talk to pro-life advocates outside.

This job – to which Jim and Dave were assigned several times – was very offensive to them because they were deeply opposed to abortion, just as you and I are. But the job also eventually gave them a very

special opportunity to talk to some of the abortion clinic's clients as they entered and left the building.

Through these conversations back in the early 90s, Jim and Dave learned that one of the key reasons Calgary women were considering an abortion, or going through with one, was a lack of housing. After they became pregnant, they were thrown out of wherever they were living by angry and embarrassed mothers and fathers or boyfriends.

Most of the women didn't want to abort their babies. But if they had no home, and couldn't care for themselves, how could they possibly care for a newborn baby too?

This is when Jim's and Dave's "holy discontent" began. They were appalled that something as basic as housing could serve an excuse to end a human life.

Jim and Dave approached the Calgary Pregnancy Care Centre, and people there quickly confirmed what the two police officers had heard – namely, that many abortions were occurring because pregnant women were homeless and desperate.

That was true then, and still is today. Anywhere from one-quarter to one-third of the pregnancy care centre clients express concern about housing.

Armed with this knowledge back in 1991, Jim and Dave began sharing it with others. Within a short time, they recruited a few like-minded people, including my wife Helen, and formed a committee to establish a Christian organization that would provide housing and spiritual, emotional, and practical support to homeless pregnant women.

That's how the Emma Maternity House Society – or Emma House, as it has come to be known by most people – began back in 1992.

A board was formed and it obtained federal charitable status. It drafted bylaws and procedures. Most importantly, it secured a home in which to house its first homeless and pregnant clients.

Jim approached his church – Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church in southwest Calgary – and asked the leadership to begin renting to him and his Emma House group the parsonage, which wasn't needed at the time. The church leadership agreed to begin renting it to Emma House at very low cost.

The Emma House board and several of its society members – most of them from Emmanuel church and other Christian Reformed churches in Calgary – filled the home with donated furniture, bedding, kitchen items, etc.

Because the home in which Emma House was housed was in a typical suburban neighborhood, it had to operate within existing City of Calgary bylaws. That meant a maximum of only three pregnant women living there at a time. Any more than that, and the city would classify the home as a rooming house, which was not allowed in that type of neighborhood.

This restriction ensured Emma House would remain small – only three residents at a time. We've sometimes wanted to be larger so we could accommodate more women. But our size has also been an amazing blessing. Our smallness has enabled Emma House to establish and maintain an atmosphere and setting very much like a typical family.

The Emma House board recruited a young couple with small children to serve as live-in staff. They were known as “houseparents” – parents to their own young children, but also to the older children. By that, I mean the homeless pregnant women, many of whom were in desperate need of good parenting, and of good role models to show them how to behave as adults, as parents, and in loving relationships.

When Emma House hired its first houseparents, and all of our houseparents since then, it actually hired only the woman. She was in charge of ensuring the home functioned properly – that meals were made, dishes and laundry done, chores completed, curfews and other rules abided by, doctors’ appointments kept, and visits made to the Calgary Pregnancy Care Centre for counseling and training in caring for themselves and their babies.

The male houseparent wasn’t – and isn’t – a paid staff member. However, he was – and is – an essential part of the equation. The male houseparent models what a good husband is – offering his wife love and affection, emotional and spiritual support, practical help with household chores, maintenance work, etc. He also backs her up when she must exercise authority over the residents, or pregnant women in the home.

From the earliest days of Emma House, we realized that if the husband or male houseparent wasn’t buying into what Emma House is all about, his wife had no hope of fulfilling her houseparenting role on her own. They must be a team – with each blessing and supporting the other.

Fortunately, we’ve been blessed with some wonderful houseparents over the years. We call them Residence Directors nowadays, although *parenting* the residents in the home remains a big part of their jobs.

What are some of the changes Emma House has experienced during the past 19 years? There are many, but I'll focus today on three:

- 1) The type of resident or client we assist.
- 2) Our facilities.
- 3) Our support base and partnerships

Let's start with the type of resident or client we assist. In the 1990s, during Emma House's first decade, the typical resident was a teenage girl who had been:

- Ordered out of her house by angry and embarrassed parents AND/OR
- Sent to Emma House so her pregnancy could be kept a secret from her community AND/OR
- At least temporarily estranged or apart from her parents before she became pregnant – often living with her boyfriend – who threw her out of their home after learning a baby was on the way. She also might've been a student, living away from her family, when she became pregnant.

For these young residents, Emma House offered a few months of sanctuary and support while they rebuilt damaged relationships with their parents and then moved back home after their babies were born.

Sometimes, the young mothers kept their babies. Many other times, they placed them for adoption. After leaving Emma House, they often continued with their educations, became married, had more children, and lived relatively conventional lives.

Today's Emma House residents, however, are much different and more challenging for our staff and board.

Rather than being mostly teenagers, most are in their 20s or 30s. We even had one resident about five years ago who was 41. A significant number are victims of past sexual and physical abuse, of alcoholism or drug addictions, of mental health issues, and of other health issues.

We've housed residents who shared with us that they had AIDS, and we've housed residents who probably had AIDS but didn't disclose it to us. And so the home always functions with a greater level of health and hygiene precautions than you would find in a normal household.

Some Emma House residents in recent years have never experienced stable home environments, never known a loving mother or father, and never known how to *receive* real love or *express* real love. Some have lived on the streets for years.

In short, they come to Emma House with a lot of pain, of defeat, and other emotional baggage.

Our staff and volunteers – with assistance from the Calgary Pregnancy Care Centre and other support agencies – help residents work through some of this pain and other baggage. Together, we offer the women a comprehensive program – not just housing.

Achieving a lasting impact is challenging when the people you are trying to help stay with you for only a few months, as they do at Emma House.

During its early years, Emma House housed single pregnant women only until they gave birth to their babies. By then, with our encouragement, they were to have arranged other housing.

But in the past decade, Calgary housing costs have gone up so much, and vacancy rates have gone down so much, that many of our residents have struggled to find affordable housing by the time they left us.

This was especially true for residents who moved into Emma House when they were already pregnant for several months. It left them with very little time to find long-term housing.

In response to this reality, the Emma House board decided about 2 ½ years ago to begin inviting residents to remain in the home for as long as six months after their babies are born, assuming they've decided to continue caring for them rather than placing them for adoption.

This extra six months in our home has been a blessing for the residents in that they have an extra half year to arrange other housing, but it has also been a blessing for us in that it gives us much more time during which we can have a potentially lifelong impact on the women in terms of how they live and what they value.

We offer them a place to live, but we also offer much more through our programming and our partnership with the Calgary Pregnancy Care Centre. I'll leave it to Judy, our houseparent or "Residence Director," to focus on our programming.

One thing we always offer to every woman who lives with us is the opportunity to know the everlasting love of Jesus Christ. He is behind everything we do. In helping the helpless, we are responding to His call.

Our residents participate in Christian devotions in the home. They normally attend church with our Residence Director, and sometimes participate Bible studies or other church activities. We do not insist on church attendance, but we strongly encourage it.

Let me also talk about our facilities. Emma House continues to operate out of single-family home in southwest Calgary. However, it's no longer in the home that used to be a church parsonage. We left that home within a few years after Emma House was established because the church needed to sell the property to help finance a major renovation of their worship facilities.

We were fortunate to begin renting a nearby home from one of the congregation members. He offered it to us at a substantial discount from market rates, and we'll always be grateful for that.

That rental arrangement still presented two major problems for us:

- 1) The home wasn't our own, and we always risked having to find a new place to operate.
- 2) The home had no separate living quarters for our live-in staff.

Although we wanted our own home, saving up a down payment in Calgary's aggressive housing market was a constant challenge for us. Housing prices kept rising much faster than our bank account!

Meanwhile, our original houseparents had resigned after having a couple of more children and deciding to get their own place. We hired replacements, and they continued in the role for a couple of years. We hired more, and they lasted about two years too.

We identified a pattern, after hearing the same message during each exit interview. Our houseparents loved the ministry, and loved the residents. But the lack of personal privacy was burning them out after two or three years.

Imagine the situation they were in! Their jobs began the minute they stepped out of their bedroom! In fact, it often began before that, because a resident might be banging on their bedroom door!

The need might be urgent – like a plea for a ride to the hospital – or it might be trivial – complaining that another resident had eaten the last bowl of breakfast cereal.

The Emma House board focused on this staff privacy issue during a special strategic-planning and vision-setting meeting about five or six years ago. We carefully considered several options, including:

- 1) Abandoning the single-family home and instead renting a series of apartments – one for each resident and one for our staff.
- 2) Abandoning the single-family home and instead renting a duplex – with all the residents living in one half and our staff on the other.
- 3) Operating out of a very large home, with six or eight bedrooms. This would've been too many residents for our houseparents to

oversee on a 24-hour basis, and so we would've instead hired staff who worked eight-hour shifts and lived off site.

In the end, we decided a single-family home with a live-in married couple was the best option because it is so effective in achieving the family-like model and atmosphere we believe is so essential for our residents.

However, we decided to seek out a single-family home that included separate living quarters for the Residence Director – not only a bedroom, but a separate bathroom, living room, and even possibly a small kitchen. It would have to align with no bylaws. We had no interest in an illegal suite.

The idea was for the Residence Director and her spouse to spend their daytime and early evening hours *upstairs* with the female residents, but be able to retire to their basement quarters later in the evening. They would also be able to remain there on their scheduled days off or on their vacations when we had recruited hired or volunteer relief help in the main area of the house.

After reaching this conclusion, we now had long-term goals in terms of our facilities, but how were we to reach them?

Saving enough money to buy a single-family home in Calgary was already challenging enough; now we were seeking something even more expensive than that – a home with essentially another suite in it.

We continued to save money – but we also prayed to God – asking Him to point the way.

Then one day I received a phone call that I'll remember for the rest of my life.

The caller was an older woman who, with her husband, had been faithful members of Emma Maternity House Society since Day One. Her husband had died a few months earlier. She was calling to tell us that she and her husband had agreed before his death to donate their home to Emma House. It was a well-kept little bungalow only a few blocks from where we were already renting.

It was truly, truly an answer to our board's prayers.

We bought the home – independently evaluated then at \$435,000 – for one dollar. Then we began an extensive renovation and expansion that included rebuilding the kitchen and bathroom, adding a large main-level family room, and completely gutting and rebuilding the basement as separate living quarters for our Residence Director and her husband.

We hired a general contractor who believed in Emma House's vision. He worked for us at a discounted rate, and recruited trades people who were willing to do the same thing. He also helped keep costs down by making use of volunteer labor. We supplied lots of volunteer hours!

In the end, a renovation and expansion that was supposed to cost \$202,000 cost us about \$165,000. In preparation for the construction phase, we conducted a capital campaign among our existing donors. I was initially hoping for about \$60,000 in cash and gifts in kind – including construction materials. We raised more than \$100,000.

God is good. God is very good.

Emma House moved into its own home about three years ago. The new facilities have been everything that we hoped and prayed for.

The last area of major change that we have undergone that I want to mention today relates to our support base and partnerships.

In our earliest days, in addition to a few dozen families who paid \$50 a year for a membership in the Emma Maternity House Society, we had two major partners:

- 1) Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church, which was renting us their parsonage at very low cost, and also holding periodic collections to help meet our operating costs.

- 2) The Calgary Pregnancy Care Centre that was referring potential residents to us, and helping us to screen applicants. The centre was also providing counseling (including to help the residents determine whether they wanted to keep their babies or place them for adoption), providing maternal health and child-care training, and providing other forms of training for our staff.

Nineteen years later, we continue to cherish and maintain those original partnerships, but we have also established others:

- Several more churches in southern Alberta – most from the Christian Reformed denomination, but also others like Calgary's Rockpointe Church – that provide regular financial support and volunteers.
- Louise Dean School where many Emma House residents are able to continue their educations.

- All of Calgary's major homeless shelters – plus other organizations like Sonshine Centre – that refer single pregnant women to us.
- Ambrose University College, which has begun to provide practicum students to us, and which is organizing a special Christmas banquet in December for our present and some of our past residents, plus our staff and eight-member board.

These strategic partnerships are an amazing blessing for us. Please consider how you or your organization might partner with us.

What's next for Emma House? We'll continue to maintain a residential facility with a married couple living on-site. The family atmosphere that flows from that arrangement meets such a basic need for most of our residents.

But we're also exploring ways to expand our services after residents or clients depart from Emma House. We want to offer them more ongoing support and encouragement.

An example is our upcoming Christmas banquet to which we've invited several past as well as current Emma House residents and their spouses or boyfriends. We want to provide networking and support opportunities to past residents, and to have some of the past residents serve as examples of hope and success to our current residents.

We established this networking and support goal last February, during another of our special strategic-planning and vision-setting meetings.

At that meeting, we also decided we want to serve as a clearinghouse for information and resources to help organizations like Emma House become established in other Canadian cities. This conference can help us achieve that. It gives me the opportunity to make an offer to you.

Maybe establishing something like Emma House has been weighing on your heart. Maybe you've been feeling some of that "holy discontent" that Bill Hybels writes about. Maybe you know there are almost certainly women in your community who are aborting their babies because they have no home in which to care for them.

If so, then let us help you respond. We'd love to share our experience and knowledge to get you started.

A place like Emma House is a very rewarding thing in which to be involved. We get to honor and protect life. We get to shelter and comfort the vulnerable. After all, what could be more vulnerable than a homeless pregnant woman, or a homeless mom and her infant baby?

Just before I close, and give Judy a chance to talk, I want to highlight two more things:

- 1) We've housed and helped about 160 women and babies so far – not just from southern Alberta, but from as far east as Toronto, as far west as Vancouver, and as far north as Yellowknife.
- 2) Not every resident at Emma House has been an instant success story:
 - We've had to ask women to leave after they fell back into illegal drug use or other self-destructive behaviors. We couldn't risk the danger this posed for the other residents and their babies, and also for our staff and volunteers.
 - Once, we had to call police to deal with an out-of-control resident who blockaded herself in her bedroom.

- We've also shared the pain of two residents recently – and others in the past – whose babies were taken from them shortly after birth by Alberta Social Services. Based on their behavior before arriving at Emma House, the women were not deemed to be fit parents. We still hurt for these women and, in one case, we are trying to help her regain custody of her child. Judy will talk more about this.

Fortunately, we can also point to many success stories over the years:

- Women who have become responsible and loving parents
- Women who have completed their educations and landed good jobs.
- Women who have overcome addictions and mental illness.
- Women who restored broken relationships with family and friends – and sometimes with their older children.
- Women who have come to know and depend on Jesus, just as we at Emma House do.

Let me read a letter from one of those success stories – a woman who stayed with us about two years ago:

In early June, just before my school exams, I found myself getting nauseated in the mornings. I had all the pregnancy symptoms possible.

With all these symptoms, there was no way I could focus on my studies. I rushed to the closest clinic I could find. Unfortunately I couldn't get any results until the next day. I couldn't sleep that night. The next day, I couldn't wait to hear what the doctor had to

say. When she told me I was pregnant I froze for a couple seconds, not thinking or breathing, not saying a word. The doctor asked me "Are you okay?"

I shook my head without saying a word. Within seconds a river of tears was running down my cheeks. The doctor comforted me until I could speak again. She told me it was going to be okay. She told me Calgary was a great city and that I wouldn't be alone. That day I left the doctor's office empty, depressed, and lonely. Words can't describe how bad I felt. I was afraid of everything, I was afraid of being judged by others.

I wracked my brain, thinking how my boyfriend was going to react to such news. I told him the next day, he was as shocked as I was. He was going crazy.

The next day while I was on the C-train, I saw an ad saying, "Are you pregnant and scared?" I said in my mind: "Of course I'm scared! What do you think?" I phoned as soon as I finished reading the ad and was referred to the Calgary Pregnancy Care Centre. Through the centre, I was referred to Emma House. I remember asking, "What does 'Emma' mean?" They told me "healing." I said, "Great, because at this point, healing, comfort and love are what I really need."

Two days later, I moved into the 'healing' home. My first day there, to be completely honest, the healing began! Day by day, God and the Emma House staff have continued to heal me. I smile now and I *really mean* that smile. I have prayed and prayed and thanked the Lord for this great transition He has made in my life during these past months.

At Emma House I felt right at home. We ate and prayed together everyday like a big family. Everyday after work, I was always thrilled to come home. When I was scared or needed someone to talk to the Emma House staff were there.

What Emma House has done for me I don't think I will ever have enough words to explain to them how much I appreciate their unconditional love, kindness and courage.

I'm very glad to report that the woman who wrote this letter to us has a place of her own now, with her baby, and they are both continuing to stay in touch with Emma House.

It has been an honor and pleasure to serve on the Emma House board for the past 10 years, including the last nine as President, and it is an honor and pleasure to represent the organization here today. Thank you, and now I give you Judy Osborne, our much-valued and much-loved Residence Director.

Judy Osborne – Residence Director:

I want to begin by sharing the story of one of our young women – our residents. Names and some details have been changed, but her story is true.

Jesse came to Emma House directly from an addiction treatment centre, she was a beautiful young woman, and she immediately captured my heart. Jesse's life was scarred by many years of violence, addictions and abuse.

At one point in her life when everything seemed to be out of control, including her cocaine addiction, she made the call and turned herself

into Alberta's Child and Family Service's Department. Jesse's three children were taken into custody immediately.

The struggle with drugs continued – not that Jesse didn't try to quit, she was in and out of detox centres many times, but the pull of the cocaine always seemed to have the final say, and she was never able to regain custody of her children.

Two years later, Jesse was again pregnant, the battle with cocaine and alcohol more intense than ever. She delivered her baby girl but within hours, her baby was apprehended by authorities.

Jesse's downward spiral continued. Sorrow, guilt and emptiness engulfed her after leaving the hospital. She handled it the only way she knew how – more drugs, more alcohol – whatever it took to numb the ravaging pain that tormented her day and night.

Four years later, Jesse was pregnant again. Desperation drove Jesse to again check herself into a detox centre. When she was able to think clearly, Jesse knew she had to break clear of her past, and all the relationships tied to it, if she would ever have any hope of a better life for herself and the baby she was carrying.

Jesse left it all behind, moved to Calgary, and checked herself into an addictions treatment centre. This was the beginning of our journey with her. After her treatment, she moved into Emma House.

Jesse was shy and quiet at first, but we loved and accepted her, and it didn't take long for her to feel at home in Emma House. As the baby's due date drew closer, so did Jesse's excitement and worry.

She knew that there was a high risk of her baby being apprehended due to her past addictions, but she tried to think positively, work on her recovery program, see her counselors regularly and stay as busy as she could.

The time for her baby's arrival came, and we took Jesse to the hospital. A few hours later, her baby girl arrived. She was so excited to have another chance, and this time things were going to be different.

Only hours later, however, and Jesse was again stricken with grief when her baby girl was apprehended. When Jesse's social worker brought her back to Emma House from the hospital, she was a sight – her eyes swollen almost shut from crying, she ran to her bedroom and shut herself in.

I checked on her every few hours. Jesse cried and sobbed, clinging to the last piece of clothing that was taken off her baby before she was taken.

I tried to comfort her, but really, there was nothing I could do except just be there with her. We walked with Jesse through this incredible emotional roller-coaster ride. She would have good days and then she would have really bad days. We encouraged her, listened to her, but most importantly, just loved her.

Jesse was determined to meet the requirements that Child and Family Services had laid out in order to have her baby back. We assisted and supported her as she proceeded to check off each and every requirement.

When she got her own apartment, we helped her move in and continued to be there for her whenever possible, encouraging her and

being available if she needed someone to talk to. Jesse's visits with her baby progressed from weekly office visits to in-home visits five days a week. We rejoiced with Jesse and celebrated this victory in her life.

Jesse now has unsupervised visits, and she is fairly confident that full custody of her baby will be granted to her before Christmas. We have celebrated and rejoiced with her. What an incredible victory for this young woman!

But this good-news story doesn't end there. As of February 2012, Jesse will have been sober for one year and she can begin court proceedings to gain full custody of her other four children from Family and Child Services. Jesse's success story is what I long to see repeated that over and over and over again!

Tuesday, November 1, will mark the beginning of our third year serving as Residence Directors of Emma Maternity House. I say "our" because my husband Al and I are a team that cannot be separated. To give you an idea of how we work as a team I will tell the story of another young woman. Again the names and some details have been changed but her story is true.

Tracy came to us when she was just a few weeks pregnant. She had lived on the streets for 13 years, as far back as she can remember, anyways. Tracy had used any drug she could get her hands on, but remembers doing crystal meth the most.

Tracy came close to death twice that she can remember. One time, she believes that she must have gotten sick from eating out of the garbage dumpsters. Tracy told me that she would wait and hide in the alley until

the A&W would close because they sometimes threw out warm hamburgers at closing time.

The second time that Tracy almost died was when she set herself on fire. She had been strung out on drugs – for how long she didn't know. In her confused state, she started cleaning the bath tub with butane. Prior to this, Tracy had lit some candles and set them on the edge of the tub.

In her confused state, she remembers that the butane seemed to be doing a wonderful job of cleaning the tub when all of a sudden there was an explosion and Tracy was engulfed in a ball of fire. She doesn't remember much of the experience after that but she does remember waking up in the hospital and the incredible pain she was in.

We never did get much family background from Tracy as she didn't remember a lot and what she did share with us had a lot of missing pieces.

One of the stories she remembered was being at a party when she was about 12. Tracy drank so much alcohol at this party that she remembers not being able to move. She felt paralyzed. She was sexually molested that night. She doesn't know how many times or how many men.

Tracy told me there were many times as a little girl she remembers her mom being drunk, passing out, and Tracy trying to help her get undressed and into bed. Tracy never thought that she could get pregnant. She had had some type of laser surgery done on her cervix, and the doctor had told her she would never have children.

When Tracy discovered that she was pregnant, she stopped using drugs immediately and went to the Calgary Pregnancy Care Centre looking for a safe place to live. She came to Emma House and remained with us for several months.

Because of the years of drug addiction, this young woman had many mental and emotional challenges. She suffered from severe paranoia which caused extremely obsessive compulsive behaviors and actions in every area of her life.

Her cognitive abilities were very limited, and she would need to have things explained to her over and over and over again. Her social skills were almost non-existent which caused incredible conflicts with the other residents.

Each day, there were new challenges and repeated challenges. Many times I would find myself thinking, “there is no possible way that Tracy will ever be able to take care of a baby and be a responsible mother and parent.”

Each day, great grace and unconditional love was necessary. We patiently prayed, believed, and kept firm and loving boundaries.

Every little thing was a huge issue to Tracy. She was excessively paranoid about her baby being healthy. We were in the hospital emergency ward more times together than I care to remember.

If Tracy got an ache or a pain somewhere, she was searching the Internet frantically looking for her symptoms and diagnosing herself with some off-the-chart disease. I finally restricted her computer and Internet time, which resulted in a major confrontation.

During Tracy's months with us, her behavior was so unpredictable that many times I would give Al "the look." Then he would go downstairs and pray. I knew that we were taking a risk keeping Tracy with us, but I also felt that if she didn't make it at Emma House, she just might not make it at all.

Al and I had a system: when Tracy would flip out, Al would go downstairs and pray hard. He would remain downstairs praying unless I signaled him by stomping on the floor three times. That was his cue to phone 911. You might think we just went a little too far, but the truth is, Al never had to make that call.

The struggle with Tracy was long, and much of the time intense, but we continued through it all to love her and keep the firm loving boundaries. There were times when Tracy's obsessive compulsive behavior had us all on the edge.

We eventually had to restrict the bathroom cleaner because she would use a whole bottle ever two to three days. I got so that I would write it on the calendar when I gave her a new bottle and she would have to make it last for at least two weeks.

One of the funniest things that she ever asked me – well it's funny now, but at the time I had to turn around and count to 10 before I could answer her. Tracy was checking the toiletries that had been donated to the girls from a church group, she picked up a bar of soap and very seriously asked me, "Judy does soap expire?"

I can stand here today and tell you that the goodness and mercy of God has been displayed in this lovely woman's life. Tracy is a proud, loving, and responsible mother of an adorable baby boy. Yes, Tracy still

struggles with mental and emotional issues and challenges. But what once seemed impossible, God has made a reality.

I believe this little baby boy has been the miracle in Tracy's life that has given her a reason to live, and a purpose for a better life.

In the two years I've been at Emma House, we have had 11 women come through our doors, and we have had nine babies safely delivered into the world. Currently, we have a 17-year-old moving out and an 18-year-old to be interviewed as a possible new resident, along with two current residents, age 26 and 28.

In this short period of time as Residence Director, five of the 11 women that stayed with us have had their babies apprehended; some before leaving the hospital and others after leaving Emma House. One of these women was a resident twice with two different pregnancies and both of her children are in Child and Family Services' custody. Several of the women have previous children who are in permanent CFS custody.

The women that are coming to us are broken, abused and rejected. Out of their need for love they are having babies, with no personal grid of what is required to nurture, love, and parent a child. Out of the 11 women who've stayed with Al and I at Emma House, nine were foster children themselves.

Of these nine, some were in foster care off and on during their childhood and adolescent years, and others were in foster care for their entire childhood and adolescence. It is a cycle that doesn't seem to have any means to an end.

I feel privileged having the opportunity to serve as Residence Director of Emma Maternity House. I do believe we are making a difference in

the women's lives that come to us. However, I also see young mothers who really do love their children but do not have the skills, support, or mentoring to be successful, so they fall into the CFS cycle.

I wonder – if Jesse hadn't had someone to walk with her through her pain, to encourage and support her, if she didn't have someone who would listen to her and celebrate her victories, would she have a story of success, or would she have returned to the familiar way of addiction?

As a person who believes in the preservation of life, I ask the bigger question: "What are we saving babies for?" To say that I am "pro-life" means I must be willing to take on the responsibility of the young mothers who are caught in the Child and Family Services cycle, who will continue to give birth to babies, and whose babies will continue to end up in the foster care system.

Emma Maternity House is providing a safe haven for pregnant women and their babies for a short period of time and we are doing that well. The need, however, is far greater than what is being done.

Thank you.