

I want to thank you all for your prayers and support these past 15 months. It's hard to believe i've been katie's mom for that long. As i tried to put my thoughts into words i realized that our journey has been a journey of faith as well. I was raised in the church of the transfiguration in Cranston, and that experience shaped who i am, and how i view the world. As an adult i lived in many different places and went to many different churches, but i never found another spiritual home. It didn't bother me because i always felt my faith and my religion were two different things. i always remembered " this is gods alter not mans alter and all are welcome here, so i felt free to find god in all his forms... i knew when i had a family it would be back to church on sundays, but until then i felt secure in my faith. Waiting for katie almost did me in, i was so sad after josh left, and everyday i called to see if there was a baby for me...for 2 weeks the answer was no. i was sad and impatient, and not happy waiting for the higher plan... but if a baby had come sooner it would not have been katie. sometimes it is good that you don't get what you ask for, but instead what you need. Finally they said actually there is an 8 week old baby girl at FACTs house that needs a family...but there are some concerns... i said when can i pick her up...as they tried to tell me about her potential health problems i said again when can i pick her up...for you see as a new nurse i worked at children's national in washington dc with babies and toddlers with AIDS

who never had a chance... to me Laniah was a miracle...a child born to an hiv positive mom who had a good chance of being negative...the glass half full. All those years of heartbreak, and the result of those times and the contributions those kids made meant that this kid will grow up and live a long and healthy life. I called all my nurse friends from that time and we celebrated this life... a full circle moment.

After she came home it was smooth sailing for the first 3 months until visits with her mom started. To say the visits were hard was an understatement. She came back with strange rashes and infections... and these visits were supervised. i was always so careful with her, and to relinquish her made me crazy...thank goodness for the wonderful social workers who supervised those visits. However, i was raised in the church " to do unto others:" so the night before the visits i would gather pictures we had taken during the week, and would write to mom in a journal all about laniah's week and what she was up to. i tried to honor grace as her mom, and yet reassure her that the baby was loved and cherished in her absence. It was hard to imagine how awful it must be to not know who was caring for your child, or where she was sleeping at night. in the event laniah went back i wanted her to have proof that she was always loved.This seemed so natural to me, but apparently it is a rare experience for the birth moms of children in foster care. in the end i believe it was one of the reasons grace was comfortable with me raising

laniah.. For over a year i had always treated her with respect. i'm not sure she realized how nervous she made me. it is an awesome responsibility to care for someone else's child.

Another example of god in this journey was when the baby had a sedated test. my parents came even though they had to stay in the waiting room. they just wanted to be there for me and the baby... grace was amazed..no one had ever done that for her. She was able to see how much my parents loved the baby and how much she loved them... they also treated grace with respect. i'm sure you've all heard my dad's famous line.. she's the most beautiful.. grace thought that was great, and she thought my mom had beautiful kind eyes... it was later that day as we watched the baby fully sedated have test after test that grace asked if i would be ok with an open adoption. it was an amazing moment. she could have kept fighting for years, the law is on her side reunification is the goal and every avenue to make that happen must be exhausted... that is one of the reasons so many kids linger in foster care. instead she loved this baby so much that she said she wanted her to have a better life filled with love and support. what an incredible act of love. through lots of tears i told her i was honored and that i truly wished someone had given her that chance because she was also raised in foster care. i promised to do my best for laniah and maybe now the cycle would be broken for both of them. all of this because grace saw incredible what i

have taken for granted the power of love a family has for each other.

i have see this same love every sunday in this church...from the oldest member to the youngest. i have watched the young members witness about their experiences and have longed for her to grow up here. for her and samantha to grow up here together became my secret wish. both of them shining examples of gods love. then in the same week that sam made her incredible recovery the baby's adoption date was set... tears of joy and thanks.

so thank you for your examples of gods love... the way every week deacon ricky would say "you've still got her!" when she stopped saying that is when i began to believe maybe she was staying. father craig's blessing every sunday made me believe that yes, god would keep her even if i could not, and that gave me comfort. The beauty and calm of the service and fellowship has sustained me in the most difficult weeks.

and your love of this child has made me smile. so now as we stand before you officially mother and daughter i want to thank you for loving us on this journey... and god help me because i think now the hard work

begins!