

Our journey to Abiding Christ Lutheran Church began in the heavy, confusing ache of a crisis—not a crisis of faith in God, but a crisis of trust in people. As a school counselor, I've seen remarkable resilience and growth in kids, but I've also seen firsthand their deepest wounds. One month before I reached out to Pastor June, I watched a student's safety net collapse: parents who failed them, relatives and systems that should have protected them who didn't. It shook me to my core.

That experience increased my cynicism toward the world and, as a result, made me deeply question how I was raising my children in it. I didn't want them to grow up in a world that appeared indifferent to human suffering. I wanted them to experience love, joy, and hope—both within themselves and through their interactions with the world. I hadn't been raised in a church, and at first, I thought community groups and activities could give my children what they needed. But a persistent, quiet conviction kept rising inside me: no—our family needed a church.

My wonderful, patient husband supported me through the whole search, even when I felt overwhelmed. I dove into research and quickly hit analysis paralysis—churches seemed unfamiliar, many didn't feel right, and the thought of walking into one of them felt intimidating. Then my husband mentioned something I needed to hear: he loved growing up in a church near home because it let him form lifelong friendships with other kids from church. That image—roots, neighbors, friendships—stayed with me. I said, "What about that one on Dayton–Yellowsprings Road? You know, the one with the marquee, they always have something going on." I clicked on their website to learn more. On the front page was a photo of Pastor June celebrating a baby's baptism with the family. The image radiated exactly what I wanted my children to see: love, joy, and hope.

I emailed Pastor June that day to ask about next steps. Her reply surprised me in the best way: "I know this might sound a little out there, but would you like to come to a pancake dinner and talent show this Tuesday?" That invitation—warm, casual, and full of life—was the doorway we needed. From the Shrove Tuesday Talent Show, where we were welcomed like neighbors we'd known for years (thanks to Antonia), to every smile, hug, prayer, and kind word since then, Abiding Christ showed us what a church can be: a place where faith is lived through generosity, connection, and action. Whether for church, Sunday School (special thanks to Mr. Edward and Ms. Sara), special events, volunteering opportunities, or for our son James, the source of all marine animals (special thanks to the ever patient Sara, Kyla, and Ms. Heather), Abiding Christ Lutheran Church has become the place where our children can grow up seeing the world as we want them to—full of love, joy, and hope.