

Elly

The little girl walked up to the front of the church where her daddy stood. Everybody wondered what she was going to do. Before her dad, the pastor, could say anything, the girl turned to the congregation and flashed a big smile. “Good morning everyone,” she said, waving to the people. “I’m so glad you’re here!” Suddenly, everyone in the church was smiling and feeling very welcome. This is Elly. God has given her the gift of hospitality and encouragement. He has also given her an extra chromosome, a condition called Trisomy 21 or Down syndrome.

When parents get a prenatal diagnosis that their unborn baby has Down syndrome, they often are really scared. Most parents don’t have any idea what having a child with Down syndrome means, and they are afraid of the worst. In the U.S., 67% of babies with a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome are aborted, so doctors and nurses make an assumption that parents will want to terminate a Down syndrome pregnancy (Wakeman). However, the medical community needs to give parents with a prenatal Down syndrome diagnosis a chance to see the possibility of their child’s life and not just a diagnosis.



Our family friend Elly has Down syndrome. She is the most energetic, exciting young lady I have ever been around. Her presence fills the room up with pure joy. She is faced with many difficulties in life, like finding friends, speaking, and hearing, but nothing stops her from being a one-of-a-kind young Christian lady. It is Elly’s mission to greet everyone she knows—even strangers—at church and school. She waves to people on her way back from the children’s sermon or from communion and stops to give hugs to people. Sometimes she sits down by someone who is alone, and she kisses the hands of the people in wheelchairs. On Good Friday, Elly cries in church because she is so sad that Jesus had to suffer and die. Her loving heart and her complete faith make Elly a special girl.

If Elly’s parents had listened to the doctors and “professionals” around them, Elly would not have gotten the same chance to live life like everyone else in the world. Luckily for Elly, and for us, her parents believe that God is the giver of life and that she had **“been borne by [God] from before [her] birth, carried from the womb”** (Isaiah 43:3b). He had called her by name while she was still in her mother’s womb (Psalm 139). Her parents were surrounded by Christian

people and studied God’s Word, and their decisions became more clear. They were terrified of what they didn’t know, but they trusted God to carry them.

Elly’s parents did the right thing, and she has impacted so many hearts with that pretty smile of hers that lights up the room when you see it shine. We walk every year at the Buddy Walk to raise awareness for Down syndrome, and we see hundreds of very special children just like Elly who are bringing joy to life. Parents who receive a prenatal diagnosis that their child has Down syndrome should be introduced to young people like Elly so that they can see that a child with Down syndrome is so much more than just a diagnosis.

“Elly” was written by Jacob Pallas from Mayer Lutheran High School in Mayer, Minnesota, and adapted for this brochure. Jacob was the 2018 Lutherans For Life Essay Contest winner of the Grades 9-12 category.

(Works cited: Wakeman, Jessica. “The debate over terminating Down Syndrome Pregnancies” healthline.com, August 29, 2017; www.healthline.com/health-news/the-debate-over-terminating-down-syndrome-pregnancies#1, accessed February 12, 2018)



Lutherans For Life

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Jesus Loves Me



*and those with
Down syndrome!*

Lutherans For Life celebrates each unique human being as a precious blessing created, redeemed, and called by our Lord.

On March 21, 2017, World Down Syndrome Day, we at Lutherans For Life shared that while some global government officials boast of abortion rates approaching 100% for Down syndrome pregnancies, Lutherans For Life celebrates each unique human being as a precious blessing created, redeemed, and called by our Lord. We recognize, receive, and respect them and their families as our brothers and sisters, and we enthusiastically commit to sharing with them the sorrows and joys that accompany every life. We thank our Heavenly Father for enriching our lives through the individuals we remember on **World Down Syndrome Day**.

Two stories shared by national LFL team members highlight the value of these precious brothers and sisters.

“Normally, picking up items I have had mended at a local sewing shop is not an emotional experience—but today

was otherwise. The owner ... asked about my parents, which led to more family talk. She then mentioned how she has a 44-year-old brother with Down syndrome and then shared her frustration with people, including her other siblings, who forget that her brother has feelings too, and how ignored he often is. Then the phone rang, which ended the discussion, but it was obvious how much [she] cares for her brother.”

Lowell Highby



Susie

Responding to this story, Virginia Flo wrote:

“Thanks for sharing. Tuesday, I attended a funeral for Susie, who had Down syndrome. She was 52 but a child at heart with a love for Jesus. I think it was the largest funeral in my church in many years. The theme for the day was ‘Jesus Loves Me’ which Susie sang as a solo with my adult and children’s choir in the background a few years ago. When anyone has a childlike faith, that is what Jesus wants.

Susie was a special Olympian when she could still do it. There were more medals on display than Carter has pills. Her family was devoted to her. What a blessing she was to our congregation—and, obviously, the community as well ... God does not make mistakes ... Too bad everyone doesn’t recognize that ... Susie’s parents are just

wonderful, caring, loving Christians who did everything they could to help her lead a life knowing the Lord. She was baptized and confirmed with full knowledge of Jesus. She had a wonderful life as a special Olympian ... becoming the female athlete of the year a number of years ago.”



Susie was featured a few years ago in a wonderful video Virginia produced for her church: www.lutheransforlife.org/article/jesus-loves-me-and-those-with-down-syndrome.