



JOANNA



hello!

it's nice to "meet" you

I want to thank you for taking the time to get to know me. I can only imagine you must be experiencing so many emotions in this season and I recognize that trying to decide what is best for you and your child is likely one of the hardest decisions you have ever had to make. I respect your decision to find what is best for you and your child and do not take it lightly that you are making an impossible choice for the sake of your child. **I am praying that as you seek what is best for you and your child, you find the answers and direction you need and are hoping for.**

Please know that if you choose me to raise your sweet baby, I promise to love your child completely and treasure them as the gift he/she is. They will be embraced and loved by my family and community with open hearts. **It is my dream that your child will live a life filled with joy, fun, and adventure and that they will know how much he/she is loved by God, you, me, my family, and those I do life with.**



Joanna



becoming a mom

and my heart for adoption

Being a mom has been a dream of mine for as long as I can remember. From a young age, I planned to get married and start a family. However, this plan didn't work out the way I thought it would. In my early 20's I knew I wanted to adopt, but always thought it would be something I did once I got married. Then a little later in life, I made the decision that I could adopt and be a good mother even if I was still single. For many years I have known I wanted to adopt, but was waiting for the perfect timing. After talking with different friends about adoption, I recognized that things don't have to be what I consider "perfect" for me to make the decision to adopt. I am in a really good place to pursue adoption now. I am financially stable and I have a job that will allow me to spend as much time as I want with my child while still working. I have a great support system with my family as well as those I do life with on a daily basis. I'm so glad to have started the process to make my dream of having a child come true!

I'm so excited about adopting a child! I am looking forward to all the aspects of being a mom. I am looking forward to the everyday routines like snuggling, playing with, feeding, and bathing my child. I am also looking forward to the special moments of introducing my baby to family and friends, watching them explore the world, watching them learn new things, and celebrating holidays and special occasions with him/her.

My prayer is that my child will grow up to love God, love others, and love life!



a little about

me

Friends describe me as **caring, relational, and thoughtful**. Relationships are important to me and I strive to be trustworthy and a person of integrity. I also love cheering others on and seeing them succeed.

I love traveling to new and exciting places. I enjoy traveling with my sisters & with friends and am always up for a new adventure. **I also love to stay active and try new things.** I enjoy hiking, stand-up paddle boarding, playing pickle ball, exploring new places, and trying new foods. I am **a foodie at heart** and love trying new recipes and planning trips around delicious foods and great ice cream. I also enjoy hanging out with friends in my home or theirs. I have fun **playing strategy games** like Ticket to Ride and Seven Wonders and love being able to prepare a meal to share with friends. I am an **avid sports fan** and enjoy spending my free time cheering my favorite teams (the Braves, Broncos, and Longhorns) on.



"Joanna is the kind of sister/friend you can rely on and is always there to help you when needed. She is an honest, strong, and moral person and would make a wonderful mother. Joanna possesses all the qualities that would make an excellent mother. She is gentle but firm, patient, organized, caring, nurturing, loving, and secure. All five of my children enjoy spending time with Joanna and look forward to seeing her. If for some reason my children had to live with her, I know they would be so well taken care of and loved. Thus, I can say that Joanna has amazing parenting skills and loves children with all her heart. "

- Danna (Joanna's Sister)



my life in

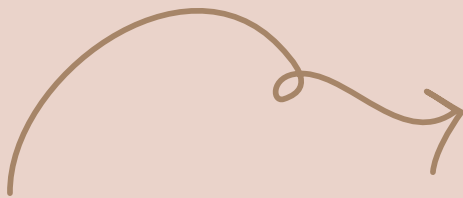
west africa



I am a missionary living in West Africa partnering in ministry with locals as well as working with those who come out to serve with us short term.

I love my job. I get to serve with an organization that focuses on developing and discipling people. In my location, this is done through hosting short-term teams and interns who come to serve with us in West Africa. I get to help in hosting those who come and introducing them to ministry opportunities in our community. These ministries include hosting eye clinics in local neighborhoods, working with an English Center, and partnering with a child rescue center. One of the best parts about my job is the flexibility and the opportunities I have to travel. **I have had the privilege of traveling to some fun places and look forward to when I have a child join me on these adventures.**

I will be able to take extra time off for the adoption but also will be working mostly from home once I am back at work. **This will allow me to stay home with my child even once I am back at work.** When I need to leave the house for work, I will be able to take the child with me if I choose and if needed, have a friend or nanny watch them.



I return to the US at least every 20 months and stay for 4 months. During that time I stay with my parents in West Virginia and get to see my sister, Danna, and her family regularly, as they live not too far.



a little about my family

My parents are Dan and Debra - my dad is a retired pastor and my mom is a retired teacher. **I have two sisters: Leah and Danna.** Leah is single and a missionary living in Jamaica teaching at a deaf school. Danna is married to Trey and they have five children - Nola (21), Korah (18), Thomas (16), Ella (16), and Charis (14). Danna is a stay-at-home mom and Trey is a pastor. Danna's first husband died when my niece, Charis, was only 3. Danna raised Charis as a single mom while teaching for ten years. Then in 2021, Danna married a widower with four children, increasing the size of our family quite a bit. We all love having larger family gatherings now and everyone is excited about adding another member to the family.

My family is very close. My sisters are my best friends and I love any time I get with my extended family. Because one of my sisters and I both live overseas, our family doesn't get to see each other as often as we like. Even though I don't live close to my extended family, we are very close and stay in touch regularly. **My family cannot wait for me to adopt a child** and they have been a huge support for me as I go through the adoption process. Everyone is excitedly anticipating the day I get to bring a baby home and have already started buying things to prepare for the arrival of a new family member.



“

Besides being a wise counselor and a trustworthy secret keeper, she is also an organized neat freak and a fabulous cook. She is a woman of integrity who lives by what she believes, even when it's hard.

”

- Leah (Joanna's sister)



growing up

through the years

I had a great childhood. My family has always been close, although my sisters and I argued a lot when we were younger! **We attended church together, ate dinner together, and often had breakfast and devotions before school each morning. Both my parents were very involved in my life.** When I was very young, my mom stayed home while my father worked. As we grew up, there were years when my mom was at home with us and other years when she was teaching. During the years my mother taught, it was my dad who stayed with us when we were sick or went on school field trips. My parents shared all the household responsibilities and were equally involved in taking care of us. Some of my favorite memories are regular dinners together around the table, family vacations, and celebrating special occasions and holidays together.

My parents and my upbringing have had a significant impact on who I am today. My parents have always shown me unconditional love and have encouraged and supported me in the good seasons as well as the difficult seasons. **They taught me not to quit, to try my hardest, and to treat others well. My family was not perfect, but we were quick to apologize and quick to offer grace and forgiveness.** My parents taught me to love God and to love people - they lived this out and much of who I am today is because of who my parents are and what they taught me over the years. We moved around quite a bit as I was growing up and though that was tough at times, it taught me how to be flexible and adaptable, as well as gave me a love for travel and adventure.

After graduating from high school, I went to university and received a BS in religion. Several years later I received my **Masters in special education**. After university, I moved to Georgia and worked for several non-profits in the social work field. After living in Georgia for 8 years, **I moved to West Africa and have lived here since January 2011.**







family traditions

I have the unique and fun opportunity to celebrate holidays in two separate locations!

Every other Thanksgiving and Christmas I celebrate with my extended family away from my home and every other Thanksgiving and Christmas I celebrate at home, but away from my extended family.

When I am with my extended family, we choose a day around **Thanksgiving** when everyone can come over and we have our traditional Thanksgiving dinner of turkey and all our favorite sides. For **Christmas**, we have a few different celebrations. We choose a day when my older sister, Danna, and her family can come over to my parents. On that day, we divide into teams (the same ones every time) and **play Christmas-themed “minute-to-win-it” games**. We then have a meal together and open gifts. On Christmas Eve we have **our family’s traditional Christmas dinner: steak, shrimp, and crab legs** with all our favorite sides and **attend a Christmas Eve service**. Christmas morning we enjoy a **big breakfast together and exchange gifts**. On Christmas afternoon all of us go to Danna’s house to join all of their extended family for a big Christmas gathering and enjoy a large charcuterie board with other finger foods.



My sisters and I dressed up for Halloween!



& celebrations

When I am at home away from my extended family, I join friends and colleagues for a Thanksgiving meal. This looks different every year, but my friends and colleagues have become family to me and we always have fun **sharing time and meals together**. When I celebrate Christmas at home in Africa, I love to **decorate my home** and do some **Christmas baking**. I also have some traditions with my friends and the community where I live. I make cookies to take to a local child rescue center and spend some time hanging out with the children there when I deliver the cookies. On Christmas Eve I help **host a brunch** for other missionaries in the community. Then on Christmas morning, I have breakfast and celebrate Christmas with my neighbors and later do **dinner together and games**.

Being single and living overseas, celebrating other holidays and birthdays always looks different. **Birthdays** could be an evening out or a party at someone's house. The **4th of July** usually finds a group of Americans gathering together to share a meal and play games. For **Easter**, I usually attend a local church service and then do something to celebrate with colleagues and friends. Even though holidays and celebrations look different when I am celebrating overseas, we always make sure to have fun and eat good food together!

it takes a

village

I am very close to my parents and sisters and they will be very involved in my baby's life even if they don't live close. Living far from my family has not kept us from continuing to have a close relationship and making the most of the times we have together.

I have some great friends that I do life with on a regular (and even daily basis). These people will be a huge support for me as I bring my baby home.

Joel and Amanda (and their daughters Maddie and Sophia), live in the apartment below me and we do life together on a daily basis. I have known them for over seven years and have been working with them for close to six years. They are excited for me to add a child to my family and will be there as a support in many ways.





Arnie and Cheryl are a couple I do life with on a regular basis. I have known them and worked with them for several years. They are protective and like to make sure I am taken care of. I know they will be a big support and encouragement for me when I bring my child home.



LaShawna and Doug are a couple I get to work with and do life with. I have known them for a couple of years and enjoy spending time with their family. They will be a great support, especially since they are raising young children in the same environment where I will be raising a child.

Chad and Nicki are a family I have worked with and done life with for just over two years. They will be another couple who will be a great support and encouragement as I bring a child home.



All of these are families I love spending time with and are people who I know will accept and love any baby I bring home. I know they will be there to support, help and encourage me in many ways.



home

and community

I live in an apartment building. There are only three apartments and my organization rents the entire building. When we moved in, these apartments were new and we had fun making some changes and adding to the apartments to make them feel like home. We use the bottom apartment to host teams and interns. My friends and colleagues, Joel and Amanda, live on the second floor and I live on the top floor. My apartment has three bedrooms and three bathrooms with a small extra room and a large living/dining room. **The apartment building is gated and we have a small gym in our garage, as well as a good size yard.** I spend lots of time with my neighbors and we have lots of fun in our homes. I love hosting people in my home and we enjoy sharing meals, playing games, having fun, and laughing with each other and others in our community.



One fun thing we enjoy doing together is “**Adventure Challenges.**” We have a book that has secret adventures. We are able to see how much time we need, if we will need any money, if the activity is outdoors/indoors, and those types of things. We choose an adventure based on that information and then are committed to finishing it. Once we choose an adventure, we scratch off the covering like you would on a lottery ticket and read about what our next adventure will be. These adventures keep us laughing and having good times together.

I live in the capital city of a West African country. However, it doesn't have the feel of a big city. I live in a small neighborhood surrounded by local people. **Living overseas provides the unique opportunity of learning about and doing life with people from different cultures. It gives opportunities to learn how others live, attend local events, eat different foods, learn different languages, and connect with people who are different from you.**

There are several different school options in the city where I live. My child will have the option of attending a French school, an English-speaking school, a co-op connected to a Christian Academy in a neighboring country, or being homeschooled. I'm eager to discover what the best fit will be as I learn about my child's unique personality and needs.

I live about 15 minutes away from a space my mission organization owns where there is a **playground, swimming pool, tennis/pickle ball court, and a basketball court.** It's also possible to take a day (or multi-day) trip to an island or travel outside the city to hike, camp, or explore other parts of the country.



my values

to pass on to my child

faith

One of the most important things in my life is my Christian faith and relationship with God. I desire to pass this faith on to my child and want them to know how deeply loved they are.

adventure

I plan to continue traveling, being active, and going on new adventures with my child. I look forward to sharing adventures with my child and introducing them to my friends around the world.

loving others

I value people - I love my family and friends and value spending time and investing in them. I try to value all people and to treat others the way I want to be treated no matter who they are, what they have done, where they come from, or how they treat me.

thank you

before you go...

I want to thank you again for getting to know me!

I know there are no easy answers or decisions as you consider the future and I pray you find peace in making the decision that is best for you and your child. **I can promise you that your child would be loved completely and unconditionally by me, my family, and those I do life with.**

I want you to know your child would always know of your love for them. I would love continued communication with you so you can remain a part of your child's life if that's something you desire. Either way, **you will always be spoken of with love, honor, and respect in our home.**

Joanna



