

# Lauren & Ben





# Dear Birthparent(s),

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We are Ben and Lauren, and we want to start this letter by letting you know how incredibly grateful we both are for a number of reasons. We are grateful to each other for being caring partners. We are grateful to our family and friends for their loving support. Most of all, we are grateful to you for considering us as potential adoptive parents for your child. Because of our gratitude, through this letter, we hope to bring you peace by giving you a sense of who we are, along with how we will love, teach, and guide your child throughout their life if you select us as their adoptive parents.

We grew up in different parts of the country but met while living and working in Boston after college. After dating for four years, we bought a home in a suburb northwest of the city. We chose a house with space for our future together: a bedroom for us, a bedroom for our future child, and a bedroom for family members to stay in when they visit. One year later, we got married.

From the beginning of our relationship, we were open about our individual wishes to become parents in the future, and we discussed adopting rather than trying to have a biological child. We are excited that the future we always talked about together is here now and that we have selected adoption as our first choice for how we will create our family.

We both work hard in our jobs, which means we have been able to create a stable and comfortable life together. We are fortunate to work for employers that offer generous maternity/paternity leaves, plus the flexibility to work from home one day a week after these leaves. Growing up in homes where family-time was prioritized has shaped our views of what it means to be great parents. Because of this, we plan to take full advantage of our work benefits so that we can spend as much time as possible with our adoptive child when they are placed with us and throughout their childhood.

In addition to knowing we will always be there for them, our future adoptive child will grow up knowing that they became part of our family through the beautiful process of adoption. We will also help them understand that our decision to adopt and your decision to place them for adoption, should you select us as your child's adoptive parents, were made with love. We are committed to maintaining contact with you to whatever extent you feel comfortable. We also want you to know that, on an everyday basis, we will emphasize your importance in helping us create our family. Thank you for giving us the chance to share our story with you.



In our garden





Beach day!

## Our Relationship

Food has been a part of our love story since our first date—the night Lauren wound up eating two dinners. See, Lauren thought we were just meeting for a drink, so she ate a quick dinner upon getting home from work. When we met at the bar/restaurant later that night, one of the first things Ben said was how excited he was about the menu. With all of her first-date nerves, Lauren didn't want to confess that she'd already eaten, so she ate a second dinner!

Five years after that summer night, we were married in Virginia, in the same church where Ben's parents were married almost 40 years before. For our wedding reception, we chose a taco restaurant that we both love. The food was absolutely delicious, and we couldn't have asked for a more perfect place to celebrate our love with those who are closest to us.

Since the beginning of our relationship, we've loved cooking and savoring meals together. In our marriage now, we share this responsibility, like so many others (cleaning, yard work, grocery shopping, financial planning). Whatever the task at hand, we practice the core values of our marriage: listening, patience, learning, and enjoying the simplicity of everyday things (especially good food). We will share these values with our adoptive child, in the kitchen and in every part of our lives.





In our backyard



Married!



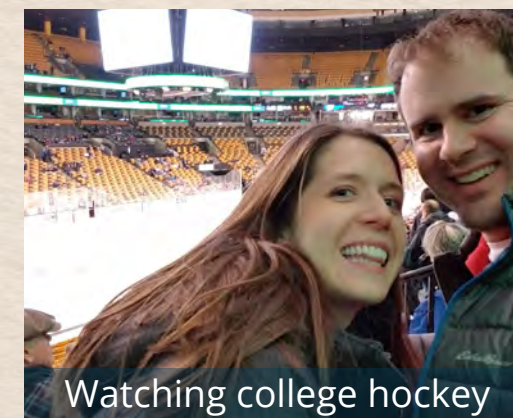
Our wedding day



Sharing a laugh



At a Clemson football game



Watching college hockey



In our kitchen





Lobster lunch

## Meet Ben (written by Lauren)

Ben is kind, patient, and easygoing. When the world around me feels busy and exhausting, he is a calming presence. He cares deeply for his family and friends. He is also a loving husband, often showing his love in ways I know he learned from watching how his dad cares for his mom. In addition, Ben is loyal, especially to his favorite sports team, Clemson Tigers football. It would be an exaggeration to say that he has turned me into a football fan, too, but I do love joining in his enthusiasm as he cheers on his alma mater. I know he'll share his game day excitement with our future son or daughter; I can't wait to see them both decked out in orange and purple!

I also admire the way Ben's engineering mindset, critical thinking, and reasoning apply across so many areas of his life. More often than not, he solves a problem that I'm stuck on simply by looking at it in a different way. I'm grateful that he will be able to teach our child an engineering approach to thinking about the world (something I was not exposed to when I was growing up).

Ben is also incredibly hard-working and cares about providing for me, along with our future family. I'm continually amazed by his ability to teach himself new skills quickly and thoroughly. He can learn about the inner workings of our refrigerator to diagnose and fix an issue. He can build a computer system in his spare time to better fly his drone in our backyard. Most importantly, though, he knows how to share his enthusiasm and curiosity with others. I know he'll be wonderful at helping our child discover the world around them.

Ben's sense of humor is one of the other incredible things about him, though it is unexpected. He's not the funny guy always at the center of attention, but he likes to make me laugh and comes up with clever jokes at just the right moments. He is playful at home, bringing out that side in me, too. I can't wait to watch him pretend-sneak-up next to our child to give them a hug and an Eskimo kiss, like he does with me now.

Ben at his parents' annual oyster roast



Ben smoked a turkey for Thanksgiving





# Meet Lauren

*(written by Ben)*

Lauren is an amazing person, and I am so lucky to be married to her! Lauren is kind to everyone and everything she encounters. Before we met, she volunteered with a number of charities, worked at fundraisers, and tutored for a local adult literacy program. Since moving into our house in the suburbs, she has continued to selflessly volunteer her time within our new neighborhood, working at the public library every week, as well as helping various charities through our church. Lauren loves the time she spends volunteering, and I am excited that she will help teach our future child the importance of giving back to their community.

On top of being amazed by Lauren's kindness, I am always astounded by her caring nature. Recently at church, a few members came up to her to say that the sympathy cards she writes to the sick members really make a difference to them. I think this is so amazing, but it is certainly not surprising to me; this is just the type of empathetic person Lauren is. I know this empathy will be quintessential in helping our future child feel loved and understood whenever they are upset about something in the years to come.

In addition to being empathetic, Lauren is also very mindful of respecting other cultures. When traveling in Thailand a few years ago, Lauren always wore a long dress with sleeves when we visited the Buddhist temples, even though it was very hot outside, and it would have been easy to disregard their norms by pleading ignorance. I know that she will strive to teach our future child to be just as respectful as she is of other people and their cultures.

Lauren is also incredibly thoughtful, as she is always careful to ensure that others' needs are met before her own. I sometimes even need to make sure that she eats when we host parties because she will be so busy taking care of our guests that she will forget to eat! She also always asks people if they have dietary restrictions or allergies in the invite for the annual barbeque that we host at our home.

Lauren is patient and understanding of all the children she encounters; it is a joy for me to watch her interact with them. She knows what kinds of activities or snacks they would enjoy and makes sure to have them on hand before every visit—often making most of the snacks from scratch! Recently, when we hosted some friends who have a four-year-old son, Lauren knew how much their son loves graham crackers, so she made some just for him. I can't wait to see what types of fun projects or delicious treats she whips up for our future child and their friends one day!

This leads me to one of the other best things about Lauren, her skills in the kitchen. For my birthday a few years ago, Lauren made the most amazing brownies that I have ever had; they were the perfect density, with super dark chocolate in them. It has been hard for me to enjoy any other baked goods after experiencing those, even though I have quite the sweet tooth. In addition to her universally amazing baked goods, she has also introduced me to the world of homemade savory pies; for brevity, though, I will refrain from espousing the wonders of eating her beef potpie on a cold winter's night. I can't wait to watch her and our child in the kitchen baking delicious treats (which I guess I will just have to taste test for them).



Meeting a friend's twins for the first time



Ben likes to sneak photos of Lauren



Lauren in Seoul





Our families together

# Our Family & Support Systems

We were both raised with the idea that spending time together as a family is the most important thing. Each of our families sat down for homemade dinners together at our kitchen tables every night. The future we imagine is full of family dinners that we all prepare together, involving our child with us in the kitchen at a young age. In addition to having family dinners, Ben's parents always planned elaborate, themed birthday parties, with hand-crafted decorations, and Lauren's mom hand-sewed all of her Halloween costumes. We're eager to engage our child's creativity with similar projects for birthdays and holidays. Lauren also treasures the bedtime stories her parents read to her every night when she was younger, so making this part of our nightly routine with our child is one of the things she is most looking forward to.

Both of our families are incredibly supportive of our decision to adopt. Our parents are over-the-moon at the prospect of having a grandchild! Ben's parents live in South Carolina, while Lauren's live in New York State. We get together with them in-person several times a year and talk or text regularly in-between our visits. Lauren's dad is retired, and Ben's dad is planning to retire within a few months; we know they'll take advantage of this flexibility to be very involved as grandparents. Many of their friends are already grandparents, so they can't wait to get started snuggling, storytelling, and spoiling. Ben's parents are also daydreaming about beach trips with us and their future grandchild!



With Ben's family in Seoul



In addition to our loving parents, we each have a younger brother. These sibling relationships are very important to us. Entertaining and nurturing our brothers through the years, along with those moments when we realized we needed to step back so they could figure things out for themselves, prepared us for parenting in ways we weren't even aware of when we were younger. Ben's brother is currently living in Arizona with his wife, while he attends graduate school. Lauren's brother is a surgeon in Boston. We really value the times we share with our brothers, whether talking through the latest challenge one of us is facing or celebrating a holiday with a delicious feast. They will be excellent role models for their future niece or nephew (and we know they'll relish telling him or her stories about what we were like growing up).

The family of friends we have built is also a wonderful source of celebration and support. Lauren met her childhood best friend, Courtney, more than 30 years ago, and is the godmother to her first child, a very busy three-year-old boy named Nolan who loves playing with cars. We have happily watched many of our other friends have children, too, in recent years, and we consider ourselves lucky to be able to learn from their parenting experiences. We're so excited to bring our own child into the mix for playdates, birthday parties, and family hikes with them.



Relaxing around the fire with Ben's brother and sister-in-law



Lauren's brother graduates from medical school



Lauren and her godson



Hosting Lauren's family for Christmas



# Our Home

We live in a sun-filled house in a suburb northwest of Boston. Our open kitchen and dining room are perfect for hosting family for Thanksgiving dinner and friends for our annual college-football-season-kick-off barbeque. In our backyard, we experiment with growing different vegetables, herbs, and flowers. We love going for walks in our neighborhood or in a nearby woodland park. We use this time walking to talk things through together, to recharge, and to spend time with friends. We can't wait to introduce our future child to these fun events and bring them along on our walks.

Our home is tucked down a tree-lined street. Every day in our neighborhood, we hear children's voices and laughter. The kids from the houses around ours all play together, running from yard to yard, riding their bikes or scooters, and sledding down snowbanks. This is one of Lauren's favorite things about our neighborhood, because it reminds her of the small town where she grew up playing outside with her next-door neighbor every day. We're looking forward to hearing our child playing outside with the neighborhood kids one day!

Our house in winter



In our living room



Cutting our Christmas tree



Our living room







Kissed by an elephant in Thailand

# Our Travels

Lauren absolutely loved studying abroad in London when she was in college, but she hadn't made travel a priority in her life after that, until she met Ben that is. Telling tales from Germany, Hungary, and South Korea, Ben made his zeal for exploring new places contagious! Our first trip together was to Thailand, where we marveled at Buddhist temples, were kissed by an elephant, and took a cooking class. The following year, we traveled to Seoul, South Korea, with Ben's parents for the wedding of his brother, who was living there at the time. By far, however, our favorite trip together so far has been our honeymoon to the Azores (Portuguese islands in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean). We hiked around beautiful lakes, feasted on fresh seafood, meandered through picturesque towns, explored local history museums, and learned a few new things at science centers. We hope to go back some day with our child, especially since it is a family-friendly vacation destination.

We aren't planning any more big trips in the short-term, so that we can focus our time and financial resources on starting our family. When the time is right, though, we are excited to introduce our child to our love of travel and to the different cultures of the world.



Honeymooning in the Azores



Hiking on our honeymoon



Our 1st anniversary trip to Portland, Maine



# Our Jobs

Lauren works on communications and fundraising strategy at a college outside of Boston. Education was a big priority in Lauren's family when she was growing up, so she is proud that her work now helps make higher education more accessible to all types of people. One of the things she finds most rewarding about her work is being part of a high-performing team of bright and thoughtful colleagues.

Ben is a research engineer working on computer vision and machine learning. His current projects involve drones, and the work he is doing is on the cutting edge of today's rapidly advancing technology. He loves the feeling of exploring what is possible in order to discover and devise novel solutions to problems.

While we enjoy our careers, we place a higher value on keeping a work/life balance, so our future child will be our top priority. Our employers are very supportive of our decision to start a family through adoption and know that we will prioritize being parents when a child enters our lives.



Making dinner together



Gardening in our backyard



Lauren teaching Ben to x-country ski



# *Our Gratitude*

We cannot begin to thank you enough for taking the time to learn about us during your decision making process. Although we realize this must be a challenging time for you, we hope that, if you decide to place your child for adoption, the fact that you can place your baby into a warm, patient, and loving home, such as ours, brings you some peace. We also want you to know that we recognize your selflessness and strength in considering an adoption plan for your child; we would feel incredibly honored if you entrust us as the family with whom you place your baby.

Regardless of the level of contact you are interested in having with your child and us, we will honor your role in your child's life. They will know that their story began with you and with a very courageous form of love. Finally, we want you to know that we are committed to doing everything in our power to provide your child with the kind of life you wish for them. Thank you for considering us as potential adoptive parents for your child. Please call Full Circle Adoptions at 1-800-452-3678 if you would like to learn more about us or speak with us.

Warmly,

## *Lauren & Ben*

Lauren & Ben



On our front steps



