



Becoming an Adoption Friendly Church

Do Christians realize that adoption is truly a special opportunity for believers to affirm and demonstrate the sanctity of life to an unsaved world? Sadly, and for a variety of reasons, many Christians do not seriously consider adopting. Churches can and should play a crucial role in encouraging their members to “look after orphans . . . in their distress” (James 1:27, NIV). Here are some specific ideas on how to become an adoption-friendly church.

Pray that you and your church would become an adoption-friendly church. The ministry of prayer is invaluable. Pray that potential couples will be sensitive to the Lord’s leading. Pray that the church as a whole would step up its involvement in assisting couples who adopt.

Preach key passages on caring for orphans and spiritual adoption. Passages like James 1:26 and 27 remind us of what pure and faultless religion is all about (caring for those who are least able to care for themselves),



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the church the opportunity to hear about these needs while naming ways to help.

Make adoption resources available to the church family. A wealth of adoption resources—both secular and Christian—can be helpful to couples considering adoption. Most of the time misconceptions about the adoption process keep families from considering adoption. The church can be a tool to provide helpful facts for couples to make informed decisions.

Frequently list pro-adoption ministries and organizations. List them in your church bulletin from time to time and have a “resources” link on your church website connecting to these fine ministries. You help these ministries by making them known to your people, but you also assist your people by providing accessibility to these helpful resources.

Encourage couples facing infertility to connect with adoptive parents. So often the emotional roller coaster of infertility drugs can be taxing on a couple, not to mention the significant medical expenses incurred because of costly infertility treatments. Graciously counsel couples to consider the privilege of parenting an adopted child (before their emotions and finances are exhausted).

Regularly have adoptive parents and birth mothers share their testimonies of God’s goodness and grace. Testimonies can be powerful reminders to the congregation of what

good can come out of a bad situation as ordained by God.

Educate your church family regarding the costs involved in the adoption process. Most members in the church may be unaware of the expenses involved in adoption, such as home studies, background checks, attorney fees, airfare, and travel costs (especially for international adoptions). Average adoption costs vary from a few thousand dollars to \$20,000. The cost should not scare off potential adoptive families, but rather should motivate the church as a whole to “count the cost” and assist as best they can. What price tag can we put on a young life?

and the act of physical adoption in Ephesians 1:3–5 is a great object lesson for spiritual adoption in Christ. “God’s example of care for us in *our* affliction should impact our understanding of what it means to care for orphans in *their* affliction,” says Dan Cruver, ministry outreach coordinator for Carolina Hope Christian Adoption Agency.

Invite guest speakers to raise awareness of adoption needs and opportunities. Speakers who have adopted or lead an adoption ministry can share their passion with your church in small groups, Sunday School, and morning or evening services. Give

“While it’s common for Christians to praise adoption, at least 80 percent of American churches do not have a single family that adopted a child during the past year.”

—WORLD, Jan. 22, 2005

Encourage the church family to give financially to adoptive couples. Giving financially to adoptive parents is one of the most—if not the most—significant things you can do. As potential couples take the giant step of faith in the adoption process, one of the biggest concerns will be, How are we going to pay for this? A monetary gift, along with a note of support, can greatly encourage the couple by affirming their decision to pursue adoption. Whether it’s a \$50 or \$5,000 gift, what a shot in the arm to their walk of faith it will be. This is a tangible way to “put our money where our mouth is” if we say we are pro-life.

Create a standing fund at church for adoption costs. Church members can contribute to this special fund, which adoptive families can utilize (either an interest-free loan or onetime gifts to these couples). ABBA Fund (see inset for webpage) provides fund administration and an approval process for churches at no cost. This is yet another way for the church to show it is serious about being an adoption-friendly ministry.

Challenge Adult Bible Fellowships, Sunday Schools, and smalls groups to raise money for the adoptive couple. Love offerings help lessen the financial burden of adoption while exhibiting how the Body of Christ can encourage and support each other. Imagine the surprise on the couple’s faces when they discover their own Sunday School class sacrificially gave to help in the adoption of their child.

Take a deacons’ fund—type offering for adoption expenses. Christians often verbalize their disdain for the abortion movement yet do little to make a positive difference. Once again, the church’s collection of funds to give to fellow members forces the church to “put its money where its mouth is.” If we talk the pro-life talk, we must walk the walk.

Establish an Adoptive Parents Small Group in your church. Get a key person in the church to take on this ministry, which could meet monthly or quarterly as needed. This support-type group provides encouragement for couples in the midst of the adoption process or those contemplating adoption.

Create an e-mail mailing list of adoptive parents for support and encouragement. The adoption process can run the roller coaster of emotions. Staying connected by e-mail can prove helpful, especially when a couple needs a timely word of encouragement.

Connect with local social service agencies. Almost every county has child welfare programs and foster care programs that Christians should be involved in. Many times these agencies offer financial assistance for families who are foster parents or are in foster-adopt programs.

Utilize attorneys or caseworkers within the church family. Your church membership may include lawyers who specialize in family law and would be willing to donate their time and expertise to assist with the legal documents for an adoption. Knowing that their legal expert is a Christian provides peace of mind to an adoptive couple. Also, the financial savings resulting from pro bono work could be significant.

Sponsor a child. Find a ministry of like faith that you know and trust, and encourage others to do what they can to pray for and financially support orphan and adoption ministries. For example, support Bethesda Outreach, a ministry to AIDS

orphans in South Africa (Evangelical Baptist Missions; <http://bethesdaoutreach.ebm.org>).

Participate in missions trips to orphanages abroad. What better way to raise awareness for adoption than to experience the desperate living conditions of so many children worldwide!

Maximize special holidays to emphasize adoption. But be sensitive and discerning in the way the emphasis is presented. Mother’s Day (and even Father’s Day) can be an ideal service to raise awareness of adoption. A special offering could be collected for an adoptive couple. An adopted child or adoptive parent could give testimony of God’s gift of a family to them. National Sanctity of Human Life Day is observed annually on the third Sunday of January. It can poignantly remind the church of the devastation of abortion, while prompting the church to become adoption friendly.

Celebrate adoption as a church family. Affirm those who pray and encourage others to adopt. Praise those who give financially to adoptive parents. Celebrate the living object lesson of Ephesians 1:3–5.

Adoption is the ultimate expression and outworking of loving the modern-day orphan. While not every Christian will be led by God to adopt, the church can and should do what it can to encourage and facilitate adoption. How will you and your church live out James 1:27? Will you help your church be an adoption-friendly church? **B**

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Resources

Bethany Christian Services One of the largest adoption agencies in the U.S. www.bethany.org

Baptists for Life A pro-life ministry based in Grand Rapids, Mich. www.bfl.org

Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption Named in honor of Wendy’s founder, Dave Thomas; provides adoption grants; promotes foster care adoption www.davethomasfoundation.org

Steven Curtis Chapman A movement to care for orphans by Christian recording artist; great resources for Christian families looking to adopt and minister to orphans www.showhope.org and www.howtoadopt.org (helpful adoption links and application for adoption grant)

IRS Tax Credits Info on how to receive up to \$12,150 federal adoption tax credit per child for 2009 www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc607.html

Bethesda Outreach A ministry of Evangelical Baptist Missions ministering to AIDS orphans of South Africa www.bethesdaoutreach.org/about_history.htm

Together for Adoption A Christian movement with invaluable resources and an annual conference www.togetherforadoption.org

ABBA Fund Assists with interest free loans and adoption funds (provides fund administration for churches at no cost) www.abbafund.org

Adoption Discovery A seven week curriculum designed to assist prospective adoptive parents www.adoptiondiscovery.org