Meet the Parents

Adoptions in the Kingdom

A Kingdom Pictures Release “MEET THE PARENTS” A KINGDOM NEWS NETWORK PRODUCTION

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Meet the Parents

“Moved by the Spirit, be went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: ‘Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.’ The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: ‘This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.’” – Luke 2:27-35

“A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, and we all have been lonely at some time and in need of family. It only lasted a week, but it will keep me happy for a long time. We had lots of playing and laughing and catching up and remembering and dreaming. It only lasted a week, but it will keep me happy for a long time. God sets the lonely in families, and we all have been lonely at some time and in need of family. God knew we were all messed up and lonely. In his typical, unorthodox way, he came up with a most unusual plan to place us in families. He had his only son come into the world to poor, obscure parents in the most incredible way imaginable. Through his birth, life, death and resurrection, Jesus enabled each of us to be adopted into God’s family. He understood adoption, because his father Joseph adopted him. The church is family, and people are drawn to the warmth and love of the church family that they see. So many of those who eventually leave the church do so because they didn’t experience family the way that God intends. Thankfully, we are learning more and more about how to build solid, loving family in the church.

This issue of LA Story, “Meet the Parents,” fits perfectly with the Christmas season we have just enjoyed and the new year we are beginning. It is about adoption, and is a tribute to the countless loving disciples who have opened their hearts and their families to children who needed parents. James writes that God’s definition of pure and faultless religion is looking after orphans and widows, as well as living a godly life (James 1:27). Literally hundreds have adopted children of many different races and cultures from countries around the world. I am especially touched by those who had already completed their own physical families, but decided to adopt an orphan because he or she needed a home. Three of the World Sector Leader families are among this number. Scott and Lynne Green adopted Ariel from China. Doug and Joyce Arthur adopted Nathanael from India. Marty and Chris Fuqua adopted Anya from Russia. (See article on p.4) We should be proud that we have leaders who have such hearts, who are leading the way. Let your heart be touched as you read about some of these Kingdom adoptions.

We are especially encouraged by the phenomenal work that HOPE worldwide is doing to serve children in so many ways literally around the world. That service is inspired and generated by God’s profound love working through Bob and Pat Gempel and the entire HOPE worldwide staff. Never miss an opportunity to serve with HOPE.

Hopefully, you have reflected on your first year of this new millennium, rejoicing in the victories and learning from the defeats. Thank God for new beginnings and for a brand new year. “Family” is the word for 2001. Whether you are just starting your family at the wedding altar, adding to it by having a baby or adopting a child, or just being a growing part of your spiritual family, let’s live so that our Heavenly Father will be proud of his kids.
by Pat Gempel, HOPE worldwide World Sector Leader

By faith we know that God sets the lonely in families (Psalm 68:6). Why then are there so many orphans in the world? Why are so many parents separated from their children? Why all the pain and loneliness? The best answer I ever heard came from a sister in Phnom Penh, Cambodia whose parents and siblings were killed in the late 1970s by the Pol Pot regime. She said: “Without God, horrible things happen.” Our goal as disciples is to be like the Lord and do all we can to set the lonely in families.

Adoption is Part of the Solution

Spiritually, we are all orphans, adopted by God to be his sons and daughters (Ephesians 1:3-6). Remember, Moses, Samuel and Jesus were all adopted. God definitely believes in adoption and he commands us to help as many as possible to be adopted into his family.

We at HOPE worldwide are very proud of HOPE for Children, our adoption agency in Atlanta, Georgia which, as of December 2000, has helped 367 families adopt children from the United States, Romania, India, China and Cambodia in the past 10 years. Additionally, hundreds of disciples have adopted through other sources both nationally and internationally. However, in our lifetime there will be millions and millions of orphaned children who are in need of a home. Though adoption is an ideal solution, we know intuitively it cannot be our only approach to setting the lonely in families.

Foster Care Helps the Thousands

The most common approach to caring for abandoned children in the United States is the foster home method: a child (or children) becomes part of a nuclear family. The Boston Church is leading the way in this respect, with disciples taking in foster children that are wards of the state of Massachusetts. Many of these families eventually adopt the children as well.

Another very effective approach to foster care was developed in New Delhi, India, Jakarta, Indonesia and Bucharest, Romania. In these three locations, HOPE worldwide has a “group home” (family center or orphanage) where 12 to 15 children live with “house families” (a staff of about 15 adults). In comparison to the traditional institutional orphanage, these small group homes are able to provide an atmosphere of love and care that begins to heal the many wounds of the abandoned child. In New Delhi, in the first year of operation, 52 children were cared for and then placed in permanent families once their physical and emotional needs stabilized. The same outstanding successes occurred in Jakarta and Bucharest. In the near future, we will break ground on HOPE’s first children’s Village, which is to be built in Thiruchirapalli (Trichy), South India. This village will include five villas, each housing 12 to 15 children. Additionally, there will be a Community Center, which will provide opportunities to worship God and to learn specialized computer skills as well as house a clinic and a gymnasium. These facilities will also be open to the community, so that the children can invite their friends home from school.

Life skills that are learned day-to-day in an ordinary family are missing with an institutionalized child. Thus the staggering truth that most children raised in institutions end their lives in crime and many commit suicide. As good as they are, foster care and group homes alone will not meet the needs of the millions of abandoned children around the world.

Orphanage Assistance Programs Help the Millions

In 1992, the first technical assistance program of HOPE worldwide took place. A team of physicians, nurses, physical therapists, teachers, sports trainers, speech therapists and others from around the world were led by Dan and Elexa Liu to Shanghai, China to diagnose the health status of the 500 children in the orphanage and to train caregivers. Across all cultural, economic and political barriers, the love of God bonded everyone together. Several of those children were eventually adopted, opening the door for over 100 Chinese orphans to be adopted.

Similarly, the efforts of Shawn and Lena Wooten in Moscow, Russia and Kiev, Ukraine have focused on orphans in large institutions. They are doing work which to our knowledge is not being done anywhere else. For the last eight years, these children have been taught vocational, computer and life skills by disciples who visit the orphanages regularly. The children are able to build friends outside the institutions who teach them about love and real life. When they leave the orphanage many are given jobs in the Senior Centers, but all of them have big brothers and sisters who help them to figure out life on their own. (See article on p. 5)

How Can You Help God Set the Lonely in Families?

In 1991, when my husband Bob and I began the work of HOPE worldwide, the plight of orphans was a very personal issue. At the time of our marriage, my husband had enthusiastically adopted my two children from a previous marriage, Douglas Arthur and Kimberly (Arthur) Evans. Later he also supported me in locating a third child I had put up for adoption at birth prior to our marriage. God has truly blessed us to be reunited with and to love Roxanne Armes, her husband and their children as well as her adoptive parents and grandmother. They are all disciples now and Eddie and Roxanne lead the teen ministry in the Commonwealth World Sector.

All of our family love orphans. Douglas and Joyce Arthur, along with their children Christopher and Jessica, adopted our grandson Nathanael from India. Roxanne “adopts” every teen in the Kingdom, and Kim and Walter have a heart for orphans. However, adoption is not for everyone. God has different roles for all of us. You must struggle to discern God’s unique plan for you. Please ask the Lord to give you a clear answer about what you can do to set the lonely in families and remember Bob and me in your prayers as we continue to serve the Lord.
Life With Anya
by Chris Fuqua, Northern Federation World Sector Women’s Ministry Leader

"Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.”
– Proverbs 19:21

In 1995, while visiting our close friends Shawn and Lena Wooten, Geographic Leaders for HOPE worldwide, we joined them in spending a day at one of the local Moscow orphanages. We each coupled up with a child. Marty’s partner was 11-year-old Anya. Anya was placed in the orphanage at age eight after her mother, and only living relative, died suddenly while Anya was in the hospital following an unrelated accident. For the next three years, she never had a visitor.

Marty was particularly moved by Anya, who is only seven months younger than our son Ben and six months older than our daughter Maria. He desperately wanted to help. Over the next year, our family wrote her letters and even visited her in December of 1996. We discussed adopting Anya on several occasions but, with two preteen kids of our own, and our World Sector and International Campus Ministry responsibilities, we could not see how to add another child. During that year, Maria, who was 10 years old, began to pray specifically for us to adopt Anya. After our December visit, Marty’s heart was deeply moved to help. No amount of responsibilities could outweigh God’s desire for us to look after the orphaned. Within a year, we flew to Moscow to bring home our third child.

Over the last three years we have had our challenges learning to be a family of five, but we could not imagine life without Anya. God’s purpose for our visit to the orphanage that day continues to be revealed. In the last two years, both Ben and Maria were baptized as disciples. Ironically, the issues that most helped Maria become a disciple were overcoming the challenges of sharing her life and her parents with her new older sister. To God’s glory, we look forward to seeing God’s purposes continue to prevail.

Twice Blessed
by Norm Wakumoto, Tokyo Church of Christ – www.intlcc.com/tokyo

Two years ago my wife Mary and I placed a crib in our spare bedroom and began praying for God to fill it. Little did we realize the double blessing we would receive! My heart is filled with sheer joy at having become a father of two beautiful adopted boys: Daniel (2) and Jason (18 months).

As a father, I not only see my failings and weaknesses more clearly, but I am more deeply aware and grateful for the awesome Father we have in God. Daniel, our active and energetic dynamo, was born into poverty in Cambodia. Abandoned, he was placed into a local orphanage housing nearly 300 children. On the other hand, Jason, our gentle-spirited son, was born into the prosperity of the U.S. and placed into a foster care home due to endangerment. Although they were from cultural and economic extremes, Daniel and Jason were on equal grounds both facing very difficult and uncertain futures.

Many times over the past two years, my wife and I wrestled with whether the adoptions would come through. We agonized over bureaucratic snags and went through emotional highs and lows. God worked powerfully through the prayers and support of disciples in the Tokyo Church, and friends and family worldwide.

In 1996, Bruce, Cathy and Shelby Weber adopted Molly (far left, age 9), who was discovered at three months old in an abandoned movie theater in China. In 1999, the Webers rescued Timothy (third from left, age 1), who was dying of starvation in Cambodia. Wanting to help other families adopt, the Webers initiated an adoption fund in the Louisville Church that is collected weekly at services.

Julion was born three months premature in August 1999, and spent his first three months in the hospital. Through the HOPE for Children adoption agency, he was visited frequently by disciples and foster parents Randy and Sherri Flick. After being released to the Flick’s with around-the-clock nursing care, Julion stopped breathing and his heart stopped beating for over 20 minutes before being resuscitated. Miraculously, Julion left the hospital in 19 days with no apparent brain damage. In an urgent effort to locate an adoptive family, a flyer was distributed, and Jeff and Michelle Miller, disciples in the Louisville Church, answered the call. Julion is pictured here with his new big sister Kelsey Miller.
Adopted Twice

Any family that has adopted a child knows the joy that fills their home. Likewise, any person adopted by God through baptism knows the inexpressible joy that fills their life. But God, who does immeasurably more than we can imagine, is working powerfully to see that many will experience both in their lifetime.

Since the first HOPE worldwide assisted adoption in 1992, nearly 500 children have been placed with families in God’s modern-day movement through the help of HOPE and other sources, fulfilling his biblical command to “look after orphans…” (James 1:27). Now, only eight years later, we are beginning to see many of these once-orphaned children growing up to be adopted as true disciples of Christ. Those “adopted twice” include:

- Nathanael Arthur: Son of Commonwealth World Sector Leaders Doug and Joyce Arthur
- Robin Nelson: Son of Atlanta Church disciples Bob and Becky Nelson
- Johnny McIntosh: Son of Orlando Church disciples Joe and Doralynn McIntosh
- Kari Beene: Daughter of Tommy and New York City Church Geographic Sector Administrator Connie Beene
- Chris Whitaker: Son of Orlando Church Kingdom Kids Directors Pat and Cindy Whitaker
- Amber Blough: Daughter of Washington DC Church disciples Doug and Candy Blough
- Andrew and Sarah Stevens: Son and daughter of Boston Church disciples Don and Janet Stevens
- Vincent Williamson: Son of Los Angeles Church disciples Lawrence and Sherry Williamson

Nancy and I had no resources to pay for the high cost of adopting Emma. However, through an innovative program that uses funds collected in the children’s ministry of the New York City Church of Christ, we were able to offset the approximately $12,000 needed to cover airfare, hotel, agency fees and donation to the orphanage. The children of the New York City Church, quite literally, paid for Emma. Without them, we and her would still be on opposite sides of the world.

As Emma grew older and her sweet nature blossomed, we sent photographs of her to the famous Ford modeling agency in New York. Soon afterwards, they began to send her out on modeling jobs. This once-abandoned child from the bank steps was, among other assignments, featured on the cover of Healthy Kids magazine this past September.

The three of us have been together for just over three years now, and Emma is coming up on her fourth birthday. She is, as her mother likes to put it, “high on life.” Sometimes when the three of us are walking on the street, she will look up and exclaim delightedly, as if she has just discovered the most wonderful thing in the world, “We’re all together!” And I think, yes we are. Thanks to God and some loving children.

God’s Little Star
by Declan Joyce

Two or three days after she was born, the little girl that my wife Nancy and I would eventually adopt was left alone on the steps of a bank building in the southern Chinese city of Mao Ming. Only God knows the anguish that her birth mother must have felt in abandoning her to such a grim and uncertain future. As it turned out, however, God was watching over this little girl.

Emma was found and referred to the local orphanage, where the staff gave her the name Xiao Zhuo (which means, literally, Little Exceptional One or, as I prefer it, Little Star). Nine months later, on November 10th, 1997, Nancy and I entered this little star’s life when we arrived in Mao Ming to become her parents.

An Answer in Moscow & Africa

With some of the largest populations of orphaned children in the world, Moscow and South Africa together face a desperate crisis. Moscow has over 700,000 children living in institutions. For every 100 of these, 30 will end up homeless, 20 will go to jail, and 10 will commit suicide. Sixty out of every 100 girls will turn to prostitution. In South Africa, the number of children orphaned by AIDS rose by 400% in just four years. It is estimated that by 2015, orphans will make up between nine and twelve percent of the total South African population. However, in the midst of this dark reality, the disciples in the Moscow and Johannesburg Churches are making a difference.

With the support and direction of Shawn and Lena Wooten of HOPE worldwide, disciples in the Moscow Church are volunteering as big brothers and big sisters for many of these children, and remain their best friends and counselors after they leave the orphanage. Last year, over 2000 children celebrated their birthday with disciples. In their most outstanding program, HOPE worldwide Kid’s Club, disciples teach professional and life skills that prepare orphans for life in society. In their last two graduations, all who attended the program were accepted to college. Since the programs began five years ago, 30 former orphans have studied the Bible and become disciples.

Under the direction of Dr. Mark Ottenweller, HOPE worldwide is providing support and care to the orphans and children in South Africa who are affected by AIDS. The Soweto AIDS Program is designed to support HIV-positive parents, pregnant women and their children. Disciples in the Johannesburg Church are also taking responsibility for the future of these youngsters, visiting the Soweto orphanages regularly to feed and give them the love and affection they need. One disciple is hosting a set of 16-month-old twins in her home despite their constant illnesses due to AIDS and frequent trips to the hospital for care.
Home to Stay

All in the Family – Los Angeles
by Marcia Lamb

According to the latest figures, there are currently in excess of 48,000 children in foster care in Los Angeles County alone. Of these, prospects are dimmer for multiple siblings, who are rarely adopted with family ties intact. But in the case of eight brothers and sisters in Antelope Valley, God’s desire for unified families prevails.

In addition to raising five children of their own, Alfred and Lydia Carillo have fostered many children and have adopted three.

As their children grew up and left home, the Carllos continued to fill their nest as fast as it emptied. In 1993, they were asked to take in a family of four children who were wards of the state. Soon thereafter, Jesse, Myra, Victor and Carla all had a new home.

Four years later, three additional siblings from the same family were discovered and the Children and Family Services Department took custody of all but one of the young people. Then Alfred and Lydia knew that they were unable to care for seven children.

But family is family when it comes to the Carllos clan. Their oldest daughter Lona and her husband Ed Aguierre, who are disciples in the Los Angeles Church, offered to take in the two youngest children, despite having three of their own. The eldest of the three moved in with Lona’s brother and his wife, Luie and Margaret, who now have six children in the house: the new arrival, two foster children and three of their own.

Both branches of the Carillo family live only blocks away from Alfred and Lydia and so all seven siblings are able to remain in regular contact and attend the same school. Then, in the summer of 1999, when an eighth sibling was discovered, the immediate response of the Aguierres was, “Come join the family!”

Double Deal – Atlanta
by Declan Joyce

Parenthood, as many parents will tell you, is God’s opportunity to teach us about surrender. With adoption, however, the lessons often begin long before there are any babies to cuddle or hands to hold.

Just ask Shawn and Holly Deal, disciples in the Atlanta Church and the parents of two adopted children, Danny (4) and Moriah (2). Making these two youngsters a permanent part of the Deal household was a three and a half year legal and emotional roller-coaster ride that culminated at the Georgia Supreme Court. It also took Shawn and Holly’s faith and trust in God to (but never beyond) breaking point.

The Deal’s decision to adopt Danny was made on faith, as the missing birth father could have reappeared at any point to contest the adoption. And that is precisely what happened several months after they took Danny home. The couple’s lawyer told them that there was virtually no prospect of their winning the case. “With the odds against us, we knew God was our only hope. We had to put our trust in him,” says Shawn.

Against all expectations, the birth father’s petition for Danny was denied despite a year-long appeals process. On February 4, 2000, Danny became fully and legally the Deals’ son.

After losing a battle for a second adoption, the Deals were put in touch with a couple who had adopted a child from China only to realize that they were not equipped to properly take care of her. One breathless series of events later, Myra Yang Deal, the girl that Shawn and Holly believe was intended for them all along, became the latest member of the Deal household.

A Church to the Rescue

From a city in the middle of the USA, the cries of orphans around the world have been heard and their tears wiped dry. According to Keith and Jayne West, Evangelist and Women’s Ministry Leader of the Louisville, Kentucky Church, “At the end of the year 2000, 24% of the married disciples in our church adopted children from around the world.” Since 1994, 23 children from Romania, China, Jamaica, India, Cambodia and the USA were adopted into 19 loving families through the help and support of the HOPE for Children agency in Atlanta, Georgia.

www.hopeforchildren.org
The launch of the beta version of the UpCyberDown web portal this last December marked the beginning of a new era for the Kingdom on the Internet. The portal was launched through the leadership of the NET World Sector Leader Russ Ewell and the teamwork of James Johnson, Director of Web Properties, Mike Allen, Ron Booth, Darren Holland and Helen Talliaferro of the San Francisco Church. More than a website, the new portal has e-mail, news, from around the world, Webcasts, and more! The goal of the portal is to build an online community of disciples, where Christians can go to receive inspiration and encouragement, communicate with other disciples, and submit their own stories and good news for the Kingdom to see. Come and be a part of God’s movement on the web at www.upcyberdown.org

Filmed in Tokyo, Japan, KNN 35 celebrates the historical Kingdom events that took place in the year 2000. Video highlights include: the Manila Christian Jubilee, where over 110,000 gathered to hear God’s word preached; the Jubilee 2000 Celebration in Los Angeles, including segments from Kip McKean’s address. Also included is a story of how two teens started a church in India and how one man brought the gospel to an entire village in Papua New Guinea. One of the most popular features is “A Day in the Life of the Kims” — a typical Thursday with PacRim World Sector Leaders Frank and Erica Kim and their daughters. If you have not seen KNN 35 yet, contact your Ministry leader. www.kingdomnewsnet.org

LOS ANGELES — Over 14,500 disciples from the Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Phoenix and Las Vegas Churches, as well as all the World Sector Leaders and Administrators, gathered at the Forum Stadium in Los Angeles, California for a historic event on November 11th, 2000. The event was entitled “Jubilee 2000” and was held to celebrate the completion of the Six-Year Plan. This ambitious program for world evangelism was outlined in the 1994 Evangelization Proclamation and involved planting a church in every nation of the world with a city of 100,000 or more people. The celebration part of the program was a collaboration by the New York City, Boston and Los Angeles Churches and KNN and included a reprise of the original UpsideDown musical, traditional dances from around the world, and a 171-nation flag ceremony featuring the countries that currently have churches of disciples. You can view or listen to the entire evening on the KNN channel of the new UpCyberDown portal. You can also order your own copy of the event through DPI at www.dpibooks.com

SINGAPORE — This past November, the Singapore Church was recognized as the nation’s top volunteer fund-raising group for the second year in a row. John Louis, Southeast Asia Geographic Sector Leader and Evangelist for the Singapore Church, received the award on behalf of the church from Mr. S.R. Nathan, the President of the Republic of Singapore.

MOVED TO HELP — In October 2000, Bernardo Gamba, a husband and father of two boys, visited his brother at work without a clue that his life was about to change. Having been on a kidney dialysis for more than seven years, Bernardo despaired of ever living a normal life. However, one of his brother’s employees was Melyda Contreras, a disciple in the North Region of the Los Angeles Church. Moved by his story, she offered to be tested as a possible kidney donor. Unbelievably, she matched.

By the time Melyda woke from surgery this past December, the good news had already arrived. The surgery was a success — Bernardo’s body had accepted Melyda’s kidney! Of course, Bernardo’s life was forever changed as a result of her sacrifice, but Melyda knows that God was also working to deepen her relationship with him during a spiritually weak time in her life.

In September 2000, Discipleship Publications International (DPI) reached a major milestone: the release of its 100th book, Getting the Most from the Bible, by G. Steve Kinnard. This marks the second major milestone reached by DPI in recent years. In 1998, after only five years of operation, DPI printed its one-millionth volume.

“Goodbye, Kingdom’s Rose” — A Tribute to Betty Crosby

Betty Crosby’s life will always be an inspiration to disciples in God’s modern-day movement. She was there in Bob and Pat Gempel’s living room in Concord, MA for the first meeting of the 30 “would-be” disciples when God began his modern-day movement. Throughout her life, Betty’s walk with God inspired many to follow Jesus. Even in the past year, as she was diagnosed with cancer and moved to spend her last days with her family in the Washington DC area, her peace and joy continued to draw people to her Lord, Jesus Christ.

Betty’s influence was also felt through her impact on her family. Her daughter Joyce Crosby, who was also among the original 30, later married Douglas Arthur and was among the first international missionaries sent out from the Boston Church. They now serve as the Commonwealth World Sector Leaders.

Please visit the Kingdom News Network website or the Washington DC Church website to read testimonials from a few of the many who have been forever changed by the life of this one woman. www.kingdomnewsnet.org; www.dc.icoc.org