

'Look after orphans'

Twenty ways to become an adoption-friendly church

by PAUL GOLDEN



The Bloemsma family from East Flat Rock, N.C.

WHILE CHRISTIANS commonly praise adoption, most American churches do not have a single family that adopted a child during the past year. Churches can and should play a crucial role in encouraging members to “look after orphans in their distress” (James 1:27). Here are some specific ideas on how to become an adoption-friendly church:

1 Pray that you and your church would become adoption-friendly.

Pray that potential couples will be sensitive to the Lord’s leading in their lives. Pray that the church as a whole steps up its involvement in assisting couples who adopt.

2 Preach key passages on caring for orphans and spiritual adoption.

Passages like James 1:26-27 remind us that pure and faultless religion emphasizes care for those who are least able to care for themselves. Ephesians 1:3-5 portrays the act of physical adoption as a great object lesson for spiritual adoption in Christ). Since God cares for us in *our* affliction, we should care for orphans in theirs.

3 Invite guest speakers to raise awareness of adoption needs and opportunities.

Those who lead adoption ministries can share their passion with your church in small groups, Sunday school, and services. Give church members the opportunity to hear about these needs while giving them ways to help.

4 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 provide helpful facts for couples to make informed decisions.

5 Frequently list pro-adoption ministries and organizations. List them in your church bulletin 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 helpful resources.

6 Encourage couples facing infertility to connect with adoptive parents.

Some couples hop onto the emotional roller coaster of infertility drugs and in the process incur huge medical expenses. Graciously counsel those couples to consider the privilege of parenting an adopted child (before their emotions and finances are exhausted).

7 Regularly have adoptive parents and birth mothers share their testimony 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.

8 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). Adoption costs vary from a few thousand dollars to \$20,000 or more. The cost should not scare off potential adoptive families, but should motivate the church as a whole to “count the cost” and offer assistance. What price tag can we put on a young life?

9 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 encouragement can greatly encourage the couple by affirming their decision to pursue adoption.

10 Create a standing church fund for adoptions costs.

Church members can contribute to this special fund that adoptive families can utilize (either an interest-free loan or one-time gifts to these couples). Churches can also take up a special Deacons’ Fund offering.

11 Challenge Sunday school classes and smalls groups to raise money for adoptive couples.

Love offerings help lessen the financial burden of adoption while exhibiting how members of the body of Christ can encourage and support each other. Imagine the surprise on the couple’s

The Magnuson family
from Minneapolis, Minn.



faces when they discover that their own Sunday school class sacrificially gave to help in the adoption of their child.

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

13 Create email list-serves of adoptive parents for support and encouragement. Since the adoption process brings emotional highs and lows, staying connected by email can prove helpful—especially when a couple needs a timely word of encouragement.

14 Connect with local social service agencies. Most counties and states have child welfare and foster care programs in which Christians should be involved. Many times there is financial assistance for those families who are foster parents or are in foster-adopt programs.

15 Use attorneys or case workers within the church family. Some lawyers specializing in family law are willing to donate their time and expertise to assist a church family with the legal documents for adoption. Such volunteers provide both financial savings and peace of mind.

16 Sponsor a child. Find a ministry of like faith that you know and trust—encourage others to do what they can to pray for and financially support orphan and adoption ministries.

17 Participate in mission trips to orphanages abroad. What better way to raise awareness for adoption than to experience the desperate living conditions of others?

18 Maximize special holidays to emphasize adoption. When adoption needs are presented with sensitivity and discernment, Mother's Day (and even Father's Day) can be an ideal time to raise awareness of adoption. A special offering could be collected for an adoptive couple. An adopted child or

adoptive parent could give testimony to God's gift of a family to them. At an annual Sanctity of Life day, typically the third Sunday each January, discussion of adoption can be a poignant reminder to the church of the devastation of abortion, and at the same time a powerful prompting for the church to become adoption-friendly.

19 Celebrate adoption as a church family. Affirm those who pray and encourage others to adopt. Encourage those who give financially to adoptive parents. Celebrate the living object lesson of Ephesians 1:3-6.

20 Support adopted kids as they struggle with questions of identity, abandonment, or rejection. 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. Will you help your church become adoption-friendly? 🌐

—Paul Golden works at Baptist Bible Seminary in Pennsylvania