

A close-up photograph of a young child with dark skin and curly hair, lying down and smiling. The child is wearing a thick, purple and grey striped knit sweater with white buttons. The background is slightly blurred, showing white and blue fabric. The text 'Adoption:' is overlaid in a large, yellow, sans-serif font at the top right.

Adoption:

Finding a Family for a Child
by Wanda L. Pritzel

Adoption. We think of it immediately when we hear of friends or family members who are experiencing infertility. What a wonderful solution! Yes, but it is so much more.

Adoption is not just about finding a child for a family who can't have a child. Consider it the other way around: *adoption is about finding a family for a child who doesn't have a family.*

Hundreds of thousands of children are waiting to be adopted. Consider the opportunity that exists for us to loudly proclaim our belief in the value of life by joining these children to permanent, loving families through adoption!

No matter what the age—from a 14-year-old girl in an east coast foster home, to a 5-year-old boy in a Russian orphanage, to a newborn baby in a Midwest hospital, to a frozen embryo in a cryogenic lab on the west coast—these lives are precious. God's design is for children to be raised in families where they will be loved, nurtured, and protected. Open your heart and mind for the few minutes it will take you to read this booklet, and consider these many opportunities to make a life-long and eternal difference in the life of one child through adoption.

Adopting an Older Child

Today in the United States, over 500,000 children are in foster care, and over 125,000 of these children are waiting for adoptive families. More than half are eight years old or older, and some have special emotional needs. Some are part of a sibling group who need to stay together. Most are children who have lived the early part of their childhood in chaotic and difficult situations. These children are legally free to be adopted, having had their legal ties to their birth families terminated. The only reason they are still in foster care is that no family has come forward to adopt them. Each of these children has their own unique story to tell, but they all have one thing in common: a desire to be part of a permanent family. Adults with previous parenting experience are often well suited to adopt an older child, with the special needs they might bring. Maturity, patience, understanding, a sense of humor, and perspective are personal qualities of adopting parents who are successful in parenting older children. Does this describe you or anyone you know? If so, consider finding out about the possibility of adopting an older child who is waiting for a family through your local adoption agency or your state's department of child and family service. Some states have programs similar to Iowa's *KidSake Waiting Child* program, where a photo listing and written description of waiting children is available to review (www.iakids.org).

Adopting Internationally

Thousands of children, from infants to teens, who live each day in orphanages in countries including Bulgaria, Russia, Poland, China, Vietnam, and the Philippines, are also waiting for permanent families. In many of these orphanages, the physical needs of the children for nutritious food and a safe environment, not to mention the critical needs of spiritual and emotional nurturing, are going unmet. Bringing one of these waiting children to a permanent place in your family would change that child's life, and yours, forever. International adoption is increasing in popularity, with over 25,000 children adopted by U.S. families each year. Each country has its own unique requirements, and it is important that you work with a licensed international child placing agency. Several years ago, the Lutheran human care organizations throughout the United States joined together to increase their efforts to place children from international orphanages, by forming the Lutheran Adoption Network (LAN). Through this network, families from any state with a participating Lutheran agency can adopt a child from one of 14 countries. Explore what LAN has to offer by visiting their web site at www.lanadopt.org. While you are there, be sure to read the incredible story of Yuliya, a beautiful little girl who made her way from an orphanage in Ukraine to her new family in America.





Adopting an Infant

Although infant adoptions in the United States are not as numerous as they were in previous generations, there are still many young men and women who chose life for their unplanned child, and who are looking for the right family to adopt the child they love but cannot raise. Through agencies or through private arrangements, approximately 30,000 infants are adopted each year in the United States. The bond and life-long relationship built between a child's birth family and adopting family through semi-open or open adoption can be a powerful example of love in action. Many resources exist for families interested in infant domestic adoption, through the Internet and through books written to help prospective adopting families learn how to get started. The publisher of Adoptive Families magazine produces a comprehensive "how to" guide each year (www.adoptivefamilies.com).

Adopting an Embryo

The most recent opportunity to provide homes for children through adoption is the possibility of adopting a child as a frozen embryo. These children, now existing in the earliest stages of their development and suspended in a frozen waiting place, also need families to raise, love, and nurture them! As in infant adoption, the genetic parents (who have more embryos than they need produced through their own fertility treatment) have the opportunity to select which family will raise their genetic child through adoption. After the selection, the frozen embryo is sent to the adopting couple's fertility clinic where the embryo is implanted into the adopting mother's uterus, to continue through gestation, and eventually to birth. One agency in the United States, Nightlight Christian Adoption Agency of California, is currently placing children through the frozen embryo adoption program they call "Snowflake Adoptions" (www.nightlight.org). This program received national attention when it was introduced by President Bush at a May 24, 2005 press conference on stem cell research. In affirming the value of every human life, President Bush noted that there is no such thing as a "spare embryo." To put a face to these embryos, twenty-one of the children adopted through the Snowflake program were introduced at the press conference. It is estimated that over 400,000 frozen embryos exist in the United States today, with less than 100 adoptions completed. As public awareness of the potential for adoption instead of destruction of these embryos grows, a greater number of these adoptions may result.

Adoption Resources

A concern some families have about adopting is the prohibitive nature of the cost involved. It can be expensive, but with a little creativity, it is certainly possible! The adoption of older children currently waiting in U.S. foster homes is not cost-prohibitive, and in fact may be accompanied by supporting financial resources from the state agency holding custody of the child. Infant adoption costs may range from several thousand to over \$20,000, depending on the area of the country in which you live and adopt. International adoption can be the most expensive, with costs (including travel to your child's country, and support for your child's originating orphanage) ranging from \$15,000 to over \$25,000. Although very new, the cost for frozen embryo adoption is less than infant and international adoption.

The good news is that there are resources that can help offset all of these costs! A Federal Tax Credit of up to \$10,390 exists for families who adopt,

as long as their income is less than \$150,000 per year. This is a direct tax credit, not a deduction from your income, and is applied against the taxes you owe, dollar for dollar. See IRS topic 607 for details about this adoption tax credit (www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc607.html). Also, many employers offer benefits designed to offset the costs of adoption for their employees.

What Can We Do?

We express our belief that there is no such thing as an “unwanted child.” Instead, we believe that all children conceived are gifts from God, and deserve a chance in life. A young mother faced with an unplanned pregnancy chooses life instead of abortion. We celebrate that decision. Now what? Is our job done? Is our witness complete?

The decision to give life was made by the birth parents of over 125,000 children in the U.S. and hundreds of thousands of children in foreign orphanages today. These children now have life, but have no family—no one to support and guide them through this life. You are invited and encouraged to prayerfully consider these possibilities:



1. Consider adopting a child yourself. Explore the resources, and see what doors God might open for you.
2. Share this booklet with a family you know who might consider adopting a child. Remember, this does not have to be a couple who is experiencing infertility. Perhaps a couple who already has parenting experience and can provide a nurturing, stable home for just one more. If you are a pastor, share this booklet with several families in your congregation who you believe might be open to considering adoption.
3. Help a family who wants to adopt a child fund their adoption expenses. If you don't know of anyone personally, ask your pastor if he knows of anyone who is considering adopting but is unsure because of the cost. You might also contact an adoption agency with an offer to help a family with adoption expenses.
4. Sponsor a child in an orphanage through a reputable agency. The agency links on Lutheran Adoption Network's web site will take you to several of these.
5. Organize financial support within your congregation or organization for a foreign orphanage. Again, one of the Lutheran agencies in Lutheran Adoption Network could help you get connected to an orphanage.
6. Pray for the children who, as you read this, are waiting for families.





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