



Striving to rescue the neediest orphans of God's flock...from any place on earth.



Prayer Needs

Please pray with us about the following:

- ❖ That adoptions will resume in countries such as Vietnam and Romania, which are currently closed
- ❖ That God would provide the necessary funds for all of our families in-process
- ❖ That the work and outreach of our ministry would continue to expand, to the glory of God's name

reflections

A favorite topic of mine is that of the many parallels between our adoption of special-needs kids and God's adoption of us into His family. I know that these thoughts are not original to me and are certainly not novel, but all the same it sometimes benefits us to repeat things we think we know well for the sake of our ongoing edification. I'm going to spend the rest of this column contemplating the parallels, and maybe you will be edified by this topic as I have been. I will speak of the adoptions Kathy and I have done and are doing, but the same is true of all of the other Christian parents out there who decide to adopt special-needs children. So the things I'll be saying about Kathy and me I will be saying, by extension, about all of the other parents as well. Also, I'll be referring to the hypothetical or allegorical child as "him" and "he," etc., but I intend a generic rather than a specific reference in every case.

When Kathy and I hear of a child and become convinced that God is calling us to adopt him, we begin the process by learning everything we can about the child. Bear in mind that once we become convinced that God is calling us to adopt, our minds are made up; the process of learning about the child no longer has anything to do with our decision to adopt, but is rather targeted at knowing the child. Similarly, our heavenly Father knows us intimately from the start—literally from before the start of time. And it is He who decides to pursue us, not the other way around. As we, Kathy and I, learn more and more about this child, we begin to fall in love with him. We have never met him, but we begin really and truly to love him. In a similar way, we know that God loves us from the start, again, before we even know He exists.

Now, Kathy and I begin to love this child even though we know about his medical or emotional "brokenness." We, in a very real sense, *decide* to love this child in spite of his special needs; not because of them, but in spite of them. We set our affection on the child, knowing that he is a part of our family even before we bring him home. And we know that, once we get him home and into the family, we will begin the process of attending to those physical and/or emotional disabilities. In the same way, God decides to love us in spite of our moral and spiritual "special needs." We are sinners at enmity with God, unable to do what is right or choose what is good, and yet He sets His affection on us and calls us out of our sin and into His forever family. Once we are in the family of God, He begins the process of healing our imperfections and brokenness, a process we call sanctification.

Of course, there are points at which these parallels break down, as all parallels between the finite and the infinite must, and there are probably many more such parallels that could be drawn. But I think that our contemplation of the beauty of the infinite as reflected in the finite is one of the ways in which we glorify our Creator, and glorifying our Creator—the One who knows us and loves us and saves us—is our highest calling here on Earth. May we all strive to do so more and more each day.

Thank You, Father,
Amen.

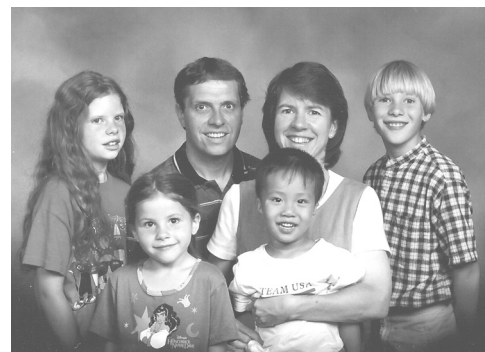


family spotlight



The Mitchells

by Kristie Rosenow



Back row: Jasmine, 10; Kevin; Ginger; Aaron, 11
Front row: Serena, 6; Gabriel, 4

"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say this—those He redeemed from the hand of the foe, those He gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south." Ps. 107:1-3

In July of 2001, Gabriel Lee Mitchell came home to Cincinnati, Ohio, and became the first non-Rosenow Shepherd's Crook child to complete an adoption. With this momentous and exciting event, the ministry took its first steps in the direction of its true calling, that of matching willing families with needy children from any place on earth. Gabriel traveled from his birth place in Shenyang, China, all the way to Cincinnati to join his forever family. His new parents, Ginger and Kevin Mitchell, already had three biological children, but they felt that God intended them to have four children. The Mitchells first began to consider adoption in 1999, but their overtures with Hamilton County did not bear fruit. In considering adoption, they agreed that they wanted a son under the age of five and were open to a child with hearing impairment—Ginger is fluent in sign language, and thought God might provide a point of connection between her gifts and a child's needs. Ginger's sister, Karen, told the Mitchells about The Shepherd's Crook and, feeling that this might be the answer they had been seeking, they contacted us in November of 2000. The Rosenows had just returned from China with their new daughter Robyn, and, while in China, had been introduced to a two-year-old hearing-impaired boy in Robyn's orphanage. Both of his outer ears were

badly deformed, and the orphanage officials were uncertain about how much he could hear and skeptical of his prospects for any recovery. The Mitchells, on hearing this, were very interested; they asked to see a picture of this little boy and promised to pray about pursuing his adoption. Before long, they became convinced that God was leading them to adopt this child. And so they, like so many others, began to weave the interminable chain of paperwork, red tape, and waiting that is a part of international adoptions.

Ginger, especially, was surprised at how difficult and complicated the process was. As she waited and waited without seeing any results, she often had to fight to convince herself that this adoption was ever going to happen. But when, after months of struggling and waiting, their travel papers finally came, she was so relieved she said that she felt like the whole process had "only taken five minutes." Nine months after beginning the journey, Kevin traveled to China to represent the family and bring his new son home. At first Gabriel was wild and destructive, but he was also very sweet and affectionate. He developed an especially strong bond with his mother; Ginger feels that her abilities with sign language helped to bring them together, since she was able to communicate with him long before he was able to talk.

Gabriel is now an unmistakable and indispensable part of the Mitchell family, and they can't imagine his not being there.

Shortly after coming home, Gabriel underwent surgery here in Cincinnati, and doctors were able to reconstruct an ear canal for one of his ears. Because of this procedure, Gabriel's hearing is now just below normal when he is using hearing aids. (He is still deaf without the hearing aids.) The combination of a stable home environment and his improved hearing has enabled Gabriel to make wonderful progress with his language, behavior, and social skills. Over the past six months, his speech development has been dramatic, and he is now making friends and really beginning to "fit in." Family members have commented on how much calmer and more obedient he has recently become. As always, he is very bright and inquisitive.

The Mitchells are open to the prospect of adopting more children in the future but agree that God is not leading them in that direction at the present. They were, about a year ago, very drawn to a little girl in China with a disability similar to Gabriel's. However, rather than adopting her themselves, they showed her picture to their good friends, the Blairs.

Continued on page 7

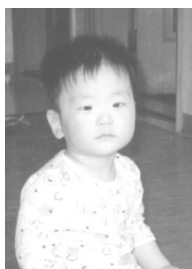
what was lost...

*"I will seek **what was lost** and bring back what was driven away...."*

Ezekiel 34:16

The following Shepherd's Crook children have come home to their families since our last newsletter was published.

Jaydon

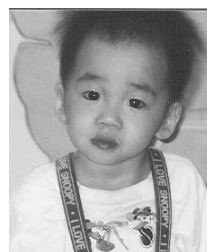


*Before, in a
Korean foster home*



*After, in his
Wooster, OH home*

Parker



*Before, in a
Korean foster home*



*After, in his
Brighton, MI home*

Natasha



*Before, in a
Russian orphanage.*



*After, in her
Cincinnati, OH home*

Carlin



*Before, in a Romanian
foster home.*



*After, in her
Cincinnati, OH home*

Emma and Katie



*Before, in a
Vietnamese orphanage.*



*After, in their
Skandia, MI home*

Christian



*Before, in a
Chinese orphanage.*



*After, in his
Cincinnati, OH home*

Rachel and Rebecca



*Before, in a
Vietnamese orphanage.*

*After, in their
Lakeland, FL home*

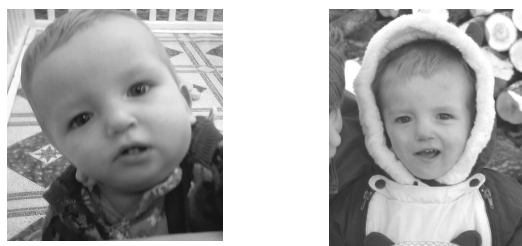
Cody



*Before, in a
U.S. hospital.*

*After, in his
Skandia, MI home*

Micab



*Before, in a
Russian orphanage.*

*After, in his
Eben Junction, MI home*

Quinn



*Before, in a
Chinese orphanage.*

*After, in her
Cincinnati, OH home*

Naomi, Abigail, and Madeline

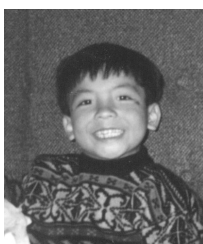


Before, in a Vietnamese orphanage.



After, in their Seattle, WA home

- **Correction:** In our last issue, we mistakenly listed Gabriel (shown below) as being in his Cincinnati, OH home; Gabriel was actually welcomed into his Skandia, MI home. We apologize for our mistake.



out from the nations...

"I will bring them out from the nations and...into their own land."

Ezekiel 34: 13

Adoptions have been started on the following children since our last newsletter was published



Luke

*Congenital heart defect; waiting in foster home in Korea.
Will soon be with his Cincinnati, OH family.*



Han Jing

*Spina bifida; waiting in a Chinese orphanage.
Will soon be with her Williamstown, NJ family.*



Jonathan

*Cleft lip/palate; waiting in a Chinese orphanage.
Will soon be with his Grand Rapids, MI family.*



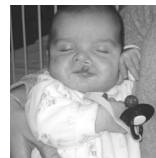
Magdalena

*Cerebral palsy; waiting in a Bulgarian institution.
Will soon be with her Avon, SD family.*



Benjamin

*Spina bifida; waiting in a Chinese foster home.
Will soon be home with his Cincinnati, OH family*



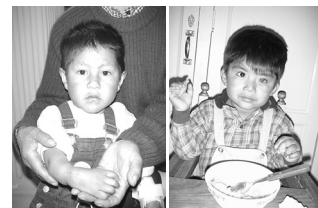
Logan

*Cleft lip; waiting in a Romanian institution.
Will soon be with his Mason, OH family.*



Aidan

*Cleft lip/palate; waiting in a Chinese orphanage.
Will soon be with his Cincinnati, OH family.*



Martin & Fernando

*Visual impairment & limb deformities; waiting in a Bolivian orphanage.
Will soon be with their Pickton, TX family.*

Note:

*The departments **What Was Lost** and **Out From the Nations** show only the children who have come home or whose adoptions have been initiated since the previous issue. For a complete list of all Shepherd's Crook children—waiting, home, or being adopted—visit our website, at:*

www.theshepherdsbrook.org

Bind the up Broken



china surgery trip

*"I will feed my flock, and I will make them lie down...I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, **bind up the broken** and strengthen what was sick."*

Ezekiel 34: 15-16

*"Bind up the Broken" is a new branch of our ministry devoted to providing medical aid to special-needs orphans in other countries. We chose the name "Bind up the Broken" because it is our desire to help heal and bind up the wounded and broken, as well as to find them safe and loving homes. Working arm in arm with an adoption agency called **International Assistance and Adoption Project**, our plan is to send gifted and generous surgical teams to other countries to provide medical care and surgery for special-needs orphans still waiting for families. The first surgeon recently completed his first trip to northern China to offer medical treatment to several children with spina bifida. We are praying that God will bless this ministry and allow us to expand to additional countries and other medical needs. Continue to check our website to follow the development of this new aspect of **The Shepherd's Crook**.*



During the week of November 17-23, 2002, we were privileged to watch a miracle unfold before our eyes via the Internet. A famous, talented, and very generous neurosurgeon named Dr. Jorge Lazareff traveled to Changchun, China, with his nurse, Julie Byrd, to provide medical care and surgeries for four children who were born with spina bifida. Many lives and hearts on both sides of the ocean were touched by the events that took place. Most of these events were related in e-mails and pictures that were posted to our special Yahoo site during that week. One e-mail posted by our beloved contact in China, known to most of us simply as Hannah, brought tears to the eyes of more than a few people as she expressed gratitude to all who donated time, money, energy, and prayers to make it all possible.

Although Dr. Lazareff still refuses to accept any thanks for what he and Julie have done for these children, we will be forever grateful to them both for sharing their God-given gifts for the sake of these needy ones, and enriching our lives at the same time. We are already raising funds and planning their next trip over.



Special thanks to Dick and Cheryl Graham of **International Assistance and Adoption Project**, without whose tireless energy and unfailing commitment this would not have been possible. We are also very thankful to all of those who helped raise the funds for the hospital costs; to Hannah and her husband, Dr. Frank – we love you; the Chinese doctors who worked with Dr. Lazareff; and to the many Chinese volunteers who gave selflessly of their time to sit by the children's bedsides, feed and care for them after their surgeries, and serve as translators for the Americans there. It could never have happened without the awesome teamwork we witnessed. Thank you all, and may God bless you for your love and generosity. □



- To read the excerpt of Hannah's e-mail mentioned above and to see more pictures of the trip to China, go to www.theshepherdsCrook.org, and click on "Medical Ministry" on the Areas of Ministry page.

Family Spotlight *(Continued from page 2)*

(The Blairs are now also a Shepherd's Crook Family and in fact are pursuing the adoption of this little girl.) We are grateful to God for bringing the Mitchells to us and for bringing Gabriel home to his forever family. □

upcoming events

- ☑ In **May, 2003**, we will be praising God, at our second annual Celebration Banquet, for the work that He has done through The Shepherd's Crook during the past year. We pray that many of our families, even those out of state, will be able to join us so that everyone can meet the Shepherd's Crook children who have come home since last year's banquet. We are planning a special music presentation involving many of the Shepherd's Crook children. Watch our website for the details of this celebration. Those already on our mailing list should be receiving an invitation in March or April.
- ☑ Our next newsletter will be published in **May, 2003**.

Our
website
has a new look

Check it out at www.theshepherdcrook.org

how can I help?

If you would like to help our ministry, here are a few of our needs.

- George Müller's autobiography has had a profound impact on how we view dependence on God, and we've found it to be very helpful for many of our families as they wrestle with issues of faith and trusting in God to provide for their expensive adoption and increasing family size. We would like to purchase a quantity of these books to be able to give to our families. If you would like to donate some of these or contribute toward their purchase, please contact us.
- In this month's newsletter, you can read about the incredibly successful surgical trip that Dr. Jorge Lazareff and his nurse, Julie, took to northern China in November. We are already planning his next trip and are actively trying to raise another \$5000-\$7000 for that trip. So far, we know of eight more Chinese children who might be able to benefit from this gifted surgeon's generosity. Please contact us if you would like to help raise the money for this trip.
- Our ministry of providing specially designed cleft-palate bottles and nipples, as well as other needed supplies to an orphanage in China and a hospital in Romania, continues to grow. The orphanage and hospital have no way to acquire these supplies themselves, and the bottles can quite literally mean the difference between life and death for cleft palate babies. The cost of keeping this area of our ministry going is approximately \$750 every six months. If you feel led to assist with this project, please contact us.

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*The Shepherd's Crook
Journal*

The
Shepherd's
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