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Newsletter / November 2011

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Prayer Requests

- We encourage you to pray fervently for the children of the world who are waiting for their families to find them.
- Pray for the adopted children and their families, particularly as they go through the sometimes-painful process of getting to know each other and becoming a family.
- Pray for The Shepherd's Crook Ministries: that God would bless us financially and allow us to continue doing this important work in His name

Note: this newsletter is a corrected version of the one we sent out three days ago.

From the Director

We didn't manage to get a newsletter out last month. Things were just too busy around here, largely due to a couple of family commitments, along with the fact that we were preparing for a couple of speaking engagements and all that goes along with those activities. The second of those speaking engagements was at our home church, in recognition of Orphan Sunday and National Adoption Awareness Month.

Our federal government has designated November as National Adoption Awareness Month—to be observed every year—as a way to increase awareness of the plight of the orphan, and especially the many thousands of orphans living in foster care here in the United States. The first Sunday in November has been named Orphan Sunday by the Christian Alliance for Orphans, as a way to involve the Church more directly in the whole question of orphan care, internationally, and the responsibility of God's people to minister to the fatherless. It was our privilege to speak to our home congregation on these important questions, and we are blessed to be a part of a church that takes this issue seriously. Sadly, not all churches we are familiar with are similarly committed to this issue.

In my talk that Sunday, I told a couple of stories of children associated with our ministry. The first story begins in a large city in east-central China. In late spring of 2005, a little boy is born. It is immediately apparent that something didn't go quite right in his development. His legs are all wrong. They are much shorter than they should be and are twisted unnaturally. Eventually this little boy finds himself in an orphanage. The future looks bleak. How could a child so deformed hope to be adopted, when there are already so very many orphans in China alone? Millions. Apparently this child, who is called Min Le, doesn't know about his bleak future. His disposition is sunny and contagious. He smiles easily and warms the hearts of those who come in contact with him. He is determined to walk, even though his legs will never allow it. He works hard and learns to crawl before he is a year old, in spite of his twisted and inadequate lower limbs. And, as he thinks about life and dreams about a real family, he waits.

The Shepherd's Crook has been a part of many adoption stories over the years. Some have been happy ones, in which children were brought home to their forever families, with healing and nurturing freely flowing. But some of the stories we've lived, as a ministry, have not been so happy. One example is a little girl named Nguyen Thi Ut. Ut was born in Vietnam in May of 2002. This tiny baby weighed less than two pounds at birth. She seemed fairly normal physiologically, except for the fact that she was such a tiny preemie. Over the next few months, though, it became clear that she was not doing well. Ultimately she was diagnosed with failure to thrive, a medical condition that is characterized by lack of appropriate growth in a child as she develops. There are many factors considered to be causes of failure to thrive, and there is still much that doctors do not understand about it, but it is often attributed to the lack of proper nurturing from the child's parents—as in the case of a child in an orphanage. It is actually a wonder that more orphans do not develop this dangerous condition. As the months progressed, Ut grew more and more frail. She needed all the benefits a permanent family could provide for her, but time was growing short.

How can we place a value on the life of a child? Some of the children Kathy and I have adopted would be considered "of lesser value" by the world's standards. I can tell you from personal experience that a child's value is incalculable and has nothing to do with what he or she can contribute to society. In an absolute sense, their value stems from their having been created in God's image. And God is aware of their value. Jesus said, "See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 18:10)

Nguyen Thi Ut continued waiting in Vietnam for a family to come forward and adopt her. Unfortunately, time ran out for this frail child. On March 26, 2003, she lost her battle with all that was wrong with her little body, and she slipped into the unknown. We believe that she was ushered into the presence of the Lord of Creation, finally freed from pain and suffering, finally able to look into the face of the Source of Love and Goodness. Like millions of other children, she left this world without ever having experienced the love and nurturing that come through a family. I can't help wondering what God will have to say to His church for the failure to do everything that can be done on behalf of the fatherless. Will He be pleased with what we have done?

I also told the story of little Min Le. A family did come forward to pursue this child's adoption, and after a long and typically difficult process, the adoption was approved. On November 19, 2009, Min Le's new father and brother traveled to China to welcome him into his new family. He is now home, experiencing the love and security that can only come to a child through his family. He is also receiving the medical care his body needs to heal and reach its full potential.

Each year, there are thousands of children who come home to their forever families, and there are millions upon millions who continue to wait. God has called on His church to care for the fatherless. We have more than two hundred waiting children listed on our site, and they are representative of the more than fifteen million orphans in the world. Ask God how you might get involved in the fight on behalf of the fatherless. And listen for His reply. I sincerely doubt that His answer will be to do nothing. Everyone can do something.

Soli Deo gloria!

Spotlight: Children's Accounts

The majority of TSC's work focuses on helping adoption agencies find forever families for their waiting children, but we also provide several forms of assistance to families adopting children listed on our website. We establish an account for each child listed, and interested people (other than the adopting family) may make tax-deductible donations to those accounts. One hundred percent of donations made on behalf of a child goes into that child's account. The funds in a child's account may be used to pay for any expenses related to his or her adoption, or for his or her ongoing care after the adoption has been completed.

Any of you who have followed our ministry for very long are doubtless aware that our regular monthly general fund giving falls short of our regular monthly expenses. This has brought us to the point of financial crisis several times over the years. It is important to note, in light of this, that the children's accounts described above are separate from our general fund. All of our operating expenses are paid out of our general fund, not out of the money set aside for children's accounts. Even if TSC were brought to the point of financial collapse—meaning that our general fund was completely depleted and we had to close our doors—the money in the children's accounts would still be there, waiting for the adopting families to request it to cover expenses related to the child being adopted. We have a plan in place to make sure that all of those funds would be properly disbursed, even if TSC formally should cease to exist.

Usually, when I mention a specific child or group of children in this column, I conclude by asking you to join us in praying for their adoption. This month, however, I would like to ask you to consider helping one (or more) of these children in a tangible way, as well. It can be tempting to refrain from giving because of an inability to send a large check, but I urge you not to let such a thought stop you. The expenses related to an adoption vary widely, from \$10 to have a document authenticated, to \$200 to buy new article (such as a stroller or car seat) for the child, to several thousand dollars in fees to the adoption agency. If everyone reading this e-mail were to donate only \$25 to the account of one child whose adoption is pending, the adoptive family would quite suddenly have about half of the money needed to complete the adoption. So, I ask that you take a look at the children on our website and prayerfully consider donating to one of their accounts. We desire to see more children come home to their forever families, and your gifts can play a critical role in making that happen.

Completed Adoptions

The following children have come home to their adoptive families since TSC began in 2000. We include them as representatives of all of the children who have come home. Their faces provide just a glimpse into how significantly these lives are changed, as the children transition from the hopelessness and aloneness they once knew, to the comfort and security that come from belonging to a family. Thank you for helping us make these dreams realities, both for the adopted children and for their families.



Eli,
in China



Eli, at home
in Ohio



Isaac,
in Guatemala



Isaac, at home
in Texas



Lianne,
in China



Lianne, at
home in Kentucky

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