

Report of *The Adoption Ministry Task Force* as authorized by the Church Council Baker Memorial United Methodist Church St. Charles, Illinois

Summary: *The Adoption Ministry Task Force* was authorized by a unanimous vote of the Church Council on April 18, 2005. The Task Force applied the *Wesleyan Quadrilateral* in its discernment process. In it, we considered:

1. Scriptural direction regarding adoption ministries.
2. The tradition of the Church regarding adoption, particularly the official position of *The United Methodist Church* as stated in *The Book of Discipline*.
3. Our experience with the Holy Spirit's direction regarding adoption ministries.
4. A reasoned approach to implementing adoption ministries.

The findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the *Adoption Ministry Task Force* are contained herein.

Task Force Participants:

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Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure.—Ephesians 1:4-5

Biblical Support for Adoption Ministries

³Give fair judgment to the poor and the orphan;
uphold the rights of the oppressed and the destitute.
⁴Rescue the poor and helpless;
deliver them from the grasp of evil people.

— *Psalms 82:3-4*

¹⁷“True justice must be given to foreigners living among you and to orphans, and you must never accept a widow’s garment in pledge of her debt. ¹⁸Always remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God redeemed you. That is why I have given you this command. When you are harvesting your crops and forget to bring in a bundle of grain from your field, don’t go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigners, orphans, and widows. Then the LORD your God will bless you in all you do.—*Deuteronomy 24:17-19*

¹⁶Wash yourselves and be clean! Let me no longer see your evil deeds. Give up your wicked ways. ¹⁷Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the orphan. Fight for the rights of widows.—*Isaiah 1:16-17*

Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must care for orphans and widows in their troubles, and refuse to let the world corrupt us.—*James 1:27*

¹³Some children were brought to Jesus so he could lay his hands on them and pray for them. The disciples told them not to bother him. ¹⁴But Jesus said, “Let the children come to me. Don’t stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these.” ¹⁵And he put his hands on their heads and blessed them before he left.—*Matthew 19:13-15*

³⁶Then [Jesus] put a little child among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷“Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes my Father who sent me.”—*Mark 9:36-37*

⁴But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. ⁵God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. ⁶And because you Gentiles have become his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, and now you can call God your dear Father. ⁷Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child. And since you are his child, everything he has belongs to you.—*Galatians 4:4-7*

The United Methodist Church's Official Position on Adoption

Adoption

Children are a gift from God to be welcomed and received. We recognize that some circumstances of birth make the rearing of a child difficult.

We affirm and support the birth parent(s) whose choice it is to allow the child to be adopted. We recognize the agony, strength, and courage of the birth parent(s) who choose(s) in hope, love, and prayer to offer the child for adoption.

In addition, we also recognize the anxiety, strength, and courage of those who choose in hope, love, and prayer to be able to care for a child.

We affirm and support the adoptive parent(s)' desire to rear an adopted child as they would a biological child. When circumstances warrant adoption, we support the use of proper legal procedures. When appropriate and possible, we encourage open adoption so that a child may know all information and people related to them, both medically and relationally. We support and encourage greater awareness and education to promote adoption of a wide variety of children through foster care, international adoption, and domestic adoption.

We commend the birth parent(s), the receiving parent(s), and the child to the care of the Church, that grief might be shared, joy might be celebrated, and the child might be nurtured in a community of Christian love.

¶161.L, *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2004*. ©2004 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission.

Goals of the Adoption Ministry at our church

The *Adoption Ministry Task Force* recommends the following goals for our church:

- To provide encouragement, support and sharing of information to families who are considering adoption, in the process of adopting or have adopted a child.
- To provide support for birth parents.
- To setup a funding mechanism and coordinate fund-raisers/mission projects to assist families who are adopting as well as children in foster care or orphanages.
- To share knowledge with members about the miracle of adoption and its benefits to the entire community.

The *Adoption Ministry Task Force* includes some of the following suggestions for ways to implement the above-captioned goals:

- To provide encouragement, support and sharing of information to families who are considering adoption, in the process of adopting or have adopted a child.
- Maintain a file of information to be shared with prospective adoptive parents including agency and other adoptive parents info.
- Foster networking of prospective and adoptive parents to help with sharing experiences and information on how to begin the process, deal with adoption related issues or to help alleviate fear or anxiety.
- Help prospective adoptive parents who are struggling with adoption as an option to understand the benefits of this path as a good Christian.
- Help coordinate fellowship opportunities for adoptive families.
- To provide support for birth parents.
- Provide a meeting place for birth parents to discuss their options and fears/anxieties.
- Provide information to assist with finding an agency.
- Offer prayer support and the assignment of a Stephen Minister.
- Provide financial assistance to families who are adopting as well as children in foster care or orphanages.
- Setup an endowment fund for donations from members .
- Coordinate fund raisers.
- Determine evaluation process for how financial resources will be distributed to adoptive families and children in foster care or orphanages (domestic and international).
- Coordinate mission projects to assist families with special needs children (i.e. build wheelchair ramp).
- To share knowledge with members about the miracle of adoption and its benefits to the entire community.
- Invite a birth mother and adoptive parents to share their stories.
- Share educational information and experiences in the children's and adult education circles.
- Invite Pastor Verboom to include the miracle of adoption in an appropriate sermon.
- Promote the idea of adoption also as saving a child (true Christian belief).
- Invite an agency specializing in international adoption or waiting children to speak to congregation
- Provide library resources about adoption.

Financing the Adoption Ministry at our church

Background

Originally an idea was proposed to create an Adoption Ministry Endowment to assist families. After speaking with Marie Kaputcka, Chairperson of our Church Endowment Fund, she explained to the Task Force that there would be a minimum of \$25,000 required in the endowment from which can be drawn a maximum of 4% per year (\$1,000 per \$25,000). There would need to be a committee that would review applications for financial assistance.

Pros of an Endowment: This would be an investment for future adoptions. Once the minimum was secured, the money would work for the ministry by earning interest without additional contributions. We could include an envelope in the offering envelope boxes like the B.G. Gross Fund.

Cons of an Endowment: Unless the \$25,000 was donated immediately, this would be a long term plan for an immediate need. People are more likely to give to an immediate need rather than to the future. Endowments seem appropriate and positive for investments such as the church building, but not necessarily for ministries. Ministries can change as the needs of adoptions may change over the course of many years.

After considering this data, the *Adoption Ministry Task Force* recommends against going with an endowment, and instead we propose adding the Adoption Ministry as a line item in the operations budget of the church.

Proposal

1. *The Adoption Ministry Task Force* recommends that the Church Council add *Adoption Ministry* to the operating budget of the church, beginning with \$500 in 2006. This budget would be used for materials needed for Adoption Ministry sponsored programs (educational resources, speakers, programs, publicity, etc.) as well as financial assistance for those families who are in the adoptive process with a financial need.
2. Funds could be added to this budget through fund-raisers or donations that are made to the ministry by individuals.
3. Grants would be dispersed after an application has been completed. An elected group (either an existing one or a newly created one) would be given the task to review applications and decide to grant funds based on a set criteria.
4. Donations would be promoted through requests in church publications (weekly bulletins and monthly *Carillon*), announcements, and programs.