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Newsletter | July 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

## From the Director

Last month I closed my column by saying that I would write my next column on the number of orphans worldwide. While this might seem on the surface to be a relatively easy number to quantify, in reality it is not. The reasons for this are many, including the fact that most countries would rather not openly publish the number of orphans they have in institutions.

A number that is commonly quoted is 143 million. In some cases, the number might be 145 million or 150 million. All of this seems rather confusing, and in truth these numbers are, at best, misleading. The origin of these numbers is a report produced by the United Nations under the auspices of UNICEF in 2005. The report estimated that there were 132 million orphans in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Subsequent reports over succeeding years raised this number proportionately, with the latest, published in 2010, indicating that the number of orphans worldwide had risen to 153 million in 2009. So, on the surface, it would seem reasonable to conclude that the number of orphans in the world is somewhere above 153 million today. But is that truly the case?

The question arises from the definition of "orphan." An article on UNICEF's website provides the following clarification of their estimation of orphans around the world: "This large figure represents not only children who have lost both parents, but also those who have lost a father but have a surviving mother or have lost their mother but have a surviving father." Further explanation is provided, as follows:

"This definition contrasts with concepts of orphan in many industrialized countries, where a child must have lost both parents to qualify as an orphan. UNICEF and numerous international organizations adopted the broader definition of orphan in the mid-1990s as the AIDS pandemic began leading to the death of millions of parents worldwide, leaving an ever increasing number of children growing up without one or more parents. So the terminology of a 'single orphan'—the loss of one parent—and a 'double orphan'—the loss of both parents—was born to convey this growing crisis."

It is much more difficult to come up with a reliable estimate of the number of "double orphans" worldwide because, other than the United Nations, there just aren't any organizations with the resources and scope to provide the data necessary for an estimate. However, other UNICEF reports estimate that, among the numbers of orphans included in the 153-million estimate, there are approximately 97 million are orphans with a surviving mother only, and approximately 40 million with a surviving father only. Thus, the number of "double orphans" included within the 153 million "orphans" would be approximately 16 million.

So, what does all of this mean to us? First, we should all bear in mind that statistics can be misleading if careful definitions are not attached. (This is true in all areas of communication, not just those having to do with orphan care.) Second, even if we limit our consideration to "double orphans"—which would be something like 16 million children—there are way too many orphans in the world. Sixteen million is roughly twice the combined population of the five boroughs of New York City, and more than the population of forty-six of the fifty states in America. We have much work to do. It is staggering to think of so many children out there who need families, but we should bear in mind that God knows each of these children by name, and each of them has infinite value as an image-bearer of the Creator. Please join us in our work to help find homes for these infinitely valuable children.

Finally, just a quick update on the financial status of TSC. We have been blessed once again by the outpouring of support from God's people. We have enough available funds to carry us for several months now, and we intend to continue doing the work God has called us to do. We thank you in His name.

Soli Deo Gloria!

## Spotlight: Republic of Georgia

Over the past nine-and-a-half years, we have worked on behalf of orphans in a number of countries around the world, spanning five of the six inhabited continents. Sadly, some of those countries have closed their doors to international adoptions, and so children in places such as Romania, Guatemala, Bolivia, and Liberia cannot currently be adopted to another country. At the same time, however, God has allowed us to work with other countries whose orphans need a voice, including the Republic of Georgia.

Georgia is located in the region of Eurasia, bordered by Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Russia, and the Black Sea. This nation has a long and storied history, including its official adoption of Christianity in the early fourth century, making it one of the first countries to do so. In the past two centuries, Georgia was annexed first by the Russian Empire, and then again by Soviet Russia after just three years of independence. It was only after the Rose Revolution of 2003 that democracy and economic reforms were introduced, bringing stability to the nation. Since 2003, the number of Georgian orphans adopted to the U.S. has declined nearly every year, reaching a ten-year low of just two completed adoptions in 2010. We would obviously like to see more orphans adopted from Georgia, and so we are thankful to have begun working with an adoption agency licensed in Georgia, and just a couple of weeks ago we listed our first Georgian orphan, a little girl referred to as "N."



When you visit [her listing](#) on our website, you will notice that she, like many of our other waiting children, has no picture. This is the result of Georgian regulations. There are many children whose pictures cannot be posted online, but that doesn't lessen their need for a forever family. This five-and-a-half-year-old girl is described by her foster parents as having a calm, sweet personality in spite of her many physical challenges and limitations. Her disabilities include a cleft lip and palate (only her lip has been repaired), mild frontonasal deformation, missing tibia, twisting of the extremities (this is improving with the use of soft casts), hand deformities, and severely stunted growth (she is currently 28.3" tall, weighs 15.43 lbs, and has a head circumference of 16.9"). She is clearly in need of a lot of care, and we ask that you not only pray for the waiting children in Georgia, but also for "N", in particular. If you feel that God might be leading you to consider adopting her, please submit a request for more information at the bottom of the page linked above. As always, thank you for your support and for your hearts for these children.

## 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.



Bella, in China



Bella, at home in Ohio



Jamie, in China



Jamie, at home in Ohio



Parker, in Korea



Parker, at home in Michigan

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