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Newsletter | April 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

I was privileged this morning to watch some video from this past weekend's Dove Awards program, in which Third Day performed their song, "Children of God." After the song finished, and after Tim Tebow spoke briefly, Steven Curtis Chapman and his wife, Mary Beth, were invited up onto the stage to be recognized for their work in the field of adoption. The Chapmans founded an organization, called Show Hope, to provide assistance grants to families pursuing adoption. Mary Beth's remarks were poignant and touching, and especially as she remembered their little Maria, adopted from China, who was killed in a tragic accident in 2008.

One of the things Mary Beth mentioned in her talk was the fact that more than twenty-seven hundred families had received grants since the founding of Show Hope. That is a lot of families, a lot of money, a huge impact. As I was thinking about all of this, it occurred to me that Show Hope has been involved in nearly ten times the number of adoptions The Shepherd's Crook has been a part of, during roughly the same period. Initially, that made me feel sort of small. It made me think thoughts about insignificance and lack of impact. And it made me think about the very large number of small organizations like ours, compared with the relatively few that are like Show Hope. I wondered how much point there was for all of us little guys to be doing what we're doing, when our actual impact on the overall problem is so . . . well, small.

As I thought about it some more, though, I realized that I was looking at this the wrong way. First, if there are in fact a whole lot of little organizations having an impact similar to that of The Shepherd's Crook, then we aren't really so insignificant after all, not in the aggregate at least. But that isn't really the point, either. The real point is that God uses both big guns and little ones to do His work. We have many examples of "big guns" down through history. People like the Apostle Paul, and William Tyndale, and Martin Luther, and Jonathan Edwards. In addition to these big names, history is replete with little people, ordinary Christians who live and work and raise their families, all to the glory of God. In fact, some of the most critical players in the panoply of God's redemptive history have been unknown to most of us. They have been the mothers and fathers and Sunday School teachers and preachers and evangelists who have played key roles in the lives of the ones who went on to become the pivotal influences. That simply is how God chooses to do His work. A few really well-known personalities in each generation, and countless unknowns all along the way.

The Shepherd's Crook is content to be one of the unknowns quietly doing God's work in the light He has given us. We are happy to work alongside of organizations like Show Hope and Family Life Today and Focus on the Family, doing our little part as a portion of the huge overall picture. We thank God that He brought us into this world of adoption and into this work, and we pray that He will continue to give us work to do and to lead us as we do that work. And we are thankful for the three hundred or so families that have been a part of the work we're doing, and the children whose lives have been forever changed as a result. We are thankful to the many volunteers who have given so much to make this ministry the success that it is. We thank all of the many, many supporters who have donated money and who have prayed so faithfully over the years. Without all of you, this ministry could not and would not continue to exist or be able to do the important work God has given us to do.

Soli Deo gloria!

Spotlight: Bulgaria

Bulgaria—known officially as the Republic of Bulgaria—is a former Soviet country nestled in Eastern Europe, bordering Turkey, Greece, and the Black Sea. It is the sixteenth-largest country in Europe in terms of geographic size, and its population of about seven and a half million ranks it ninety-seventh in the world. The majority of Bulgaria's citizens are native Bulgarians, who can trace their country's political and cultural history to the late seventh century A.D., when the First Bulgarian Empire was founded. There have been several political changes since that time, including Bulgaria's conversion to communism following World War II, but today it is a republic with a prime minister, a parliament, and a president who is elected directly by the people. Bulgaria has worked hard in recent years to foster relations with other leading countries of the world, including acceding to the European Union and implementing the Hague *Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption*.

In 2009, UNICEF estimated that there were ninety-four thousand orphans in Bulgaria. Sadly, the number of adoptions from Bulgaria to the U.S. have fallen from a ten-year high of 295 in 2001 to only 40 last year. There are a couple of potentially encouraging details in this picture, however. In 2008, there were only five children adopted from Bulgaria by U.S. citizens, so we are once again seeing an increase in adoptions, albeit a slow increase. The U.S. Embassy in Bulgaria has also said that the Bulgarian adoption authority—the Ministry of Justice—gives priority to parents who want to adopt a child with a medical condition. They estimate that eighty percent of the orphans adopted out of Bulgaria are special-needs orphans, and the Embassy expects that this trend will continue.



We have had only a handful of children from Bulgaria come home through the efforts of TSC, and we would certainly like to see more families adopt these waiting children. Right now, there are some four dozen Bulgarian orphans listed on [our site](#). Please join with us in praying for these children, as well as for the other orphans in Eastern Europe.

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.

Levi was adopted upon his birth, right from the hospital, so no before picture is available



Levi, at home in Ohio



Nathan, in Uganda



Nathan, at home in Washington



Teddy, in Liberia



Teddy, at home in New Jersey

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