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Newsletter | August 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

Several times in the past I have mentioned what seems to be a disturbing trend in intercountry adoptions, and especially those to the United States—namely, a gradual reduction in the number of adoptions completed each year. This has been going on for six years now, since the all-time high in 2004, and it doesn't show signs of improving. The number of intercountry adoptions to the U.S. in 2010 was just 11,058, compared with 22,991 in 2004—a reduction of 52%. This is in spite of a growing awareness in this country and an ever-increasing emphasis on the need for families to step up and provide permanent homes for needy children. Why is this happening? Is it that the number of orphans available for adoption has decreased dramatically? Or perhaps the number of families willing to commit to the arduous process of completing an intercountry adoption has dropped off by around half?

Sadly, the number of children needing permanent homes has not decreased. Rather, the number of such children continues to increase. And the pool of willing families has not decreased, either. So, what can explain this trend? What's going on here?

The answer to this question is complex, as I've said before. One of the entities responsible, as surprising as it may seem, is UNICEF and its parent organization, the United Nations. The U.N. is opposed to the concept of intercountry adoption to the extent that, as an organization, it favors long-term institutionalization over adoption to a different country. To many of us deeply involved in adoption, this idea is incomprehensible. What could possibly be behind the U.N.'s position and its attitude toward intercountry adoption?

Harvard Law Professor Elizabeth Bartholet has been involved in international adoption since 1985 and has written extensively on the subject. One of her papers, entitled *International Adoption: Thoughts on the Human Rights Issues*, published in 2007, takes a look at the pervasive attitude toward intercountry adoption among human rights activists and the U.N. She writes, "Human rights activists in the international adoption arena have spoken with a relatively singular voice—a voice that is generally critical of international adoption, calling either for its abolition, or for restrictions that curtail its incidence in ways that I see as harmful to children, limiting their chances of being placed in nurturing homes with true families, and condemning even those who are placed eventually to unnecessary months and years in damaging institutions. This voice has had a powerful impact, in part because the international children's rights organizations taking the negative view include such powerful ones as UNICEF and the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child."(1)

In another paper, entitled *Permanency is Not Enough: Children Need the Nurturing Parents Found in International Adoption*, published in 2010, Ms. Bartholet presents the case for international adoption as an essential component in solving the crisis facing unparented children worldwide. In her conclusion, she says the following: "We know that children need early, permanent, and nurturing parenting to flourish. We know that few of the world's many millions of unparented children will find this kind of parenting in their homes of origin or in domestic adoption. We know that few will find it in foster care because, in today's world, most countries keep their unparented children in institutions, and it will take time and resources to develop foster care as an alternative. We also know that foster care will generally not serve children's interests nearly as well as adoption. We must fight for children's rights to the early, permanent, and nurturing parenting they need, and this means fighting for international adoption."(2)

The reality facing the world at present is that the "problem" of orphans worldwide is huge and, sadly, growing. And so long as attitudes among those influential in shaping policy continue to oppose intercountry adoption, the problem will continue to worsen. The future will, in all likelihood, be shaped negatively by the fact that millions of adults will have grown up in institutions, without the nurturing and character-building possible only in a true family setting. And for believers in Christ, the roadblocks erected by the establishment, in whatever form they may take, are no excuse for failing to do what God has called us to do. It is still our responsibility to minister to needy children, including—for many of us—the responsibility to provide a permanent home for one or more of these special ones.

Should the church truly step up and do her part, the world will see the results, and God will be glorified.

Soli Deo gloria!



Notes:

(1) Elizabeth Bartholet, *International Adoption: Thoughts on the Human Rights Issues*, 13 Buff. Hum. Rts. L. Rev. 151 (2007), available at <http://www.law.harvard.edu/faculty/bartholet/BFH110-1.pdf> (last visited on August 22, 2011).

(2) Elizabeth Bartholet, *Permanency is Not Enough: Children Need the Nurturing Parents Found in International Adoption*, 55 New York Law School Law Review 781 (2010/2011), available at <http://www.law.harvard.edu/faculty/bartholet/PermanencyNotEnough.pdf> (last visited on August 22, 2011).

Spotlight: Waiting Children

In keeping with the "theme" of this newsletter, our Spotlight article will focus on the question of what can be done to help the millions of waiting children in the world—or at least, some of the millions of waiting children. There are currently more than two hundred of these kids listed on our website. Each one of these children is an opportunity for someone to make a difference. In the interests of bringing more attention to the listings on our website, we are going to begin sending out brief, waiting-child spotlight e-mails each month. Each of these spotlight messages will focus on three or four waiting children. We are asking all of you to do three things in connection with these messages.

First, we are asking you to read them. Remember, these are real children in real need. Each one is created in the image of God, and each and every one is stuck in some sort of institution, waiting for his or her permanent family and all that such a family can bring into his or her life. Also, please pray over every one of these kids. Pray for a family, and pray for the child's welfare while he or she waits.

Second, we are asking you to forward these messages to anyone you know who might be interested in helping needy orphans. It doesn't have to be someone who would necessarily be in a position to adopt—though, of course, adoptive families are what we are most hoping for. But persons or families who will pray would be great, and those who might be able to help financially would be great. We simply must get the word out about these children and their need.

And third, we are asking you to consider prayerfully whether God might be leading you, personally, to provide a home for one of these children. As you read these child-specific updates and pray for these children, please ask God whether He may be leading you to step out and be the family that child is waiting for. As we have said many times over the years, there simply is no way to describe the changes God will work in your heart as you follow Him into this great adventure we call adoption. I plan to develop some more thoughts along these lines as we move closer to National Adoption Awareness Month (November), so stay tuned. But in the meantime, we are asking you to pray and to open yourself up to the possibilities.

So, please be on the lookout for these new updates, the first of which should be coming out in the next few weeks. Never forget these many thousands upon thousands of children who do not have the love and security and nurturing that are found only in a family.

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.



Amanda,
in Guatemala



David, in China



Janie, in China



Amanda, at home
in Texas



David, at home
in Ohio



Janie, at home
in North Carolina

The Shepherd's Crook Ministries | 513.889.2449

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