



The Adoption Journey



Bethany envisions a world where every child has a loving family.

INTRODUCTION TO ADOPTION

It has been said that childhood is an adventure, not a race. Similarly, adoption is a journey not just an event. Adoption is both a legal and an emotional process as families build bonds of love, commitment, and attachment. Like other journeys, planning and preparation are necessary. We plan so that we can take the path that best suits our abilities and our dreams, whether that be infant, foster care, or international adoption. We prepare so that we will be able to better meet the responsibilities and navigate the inevitable twists and turns of parenting.

The journey of adoption enriches lives and expands worlds in ways that we often cannot anticipate. While not always easy, the rewards are great.

It is our hope and prayer that this booklet will be an early guide for your journey as you choose your path and explore your options. We are here to walk with you as you travel toward your ultimate goal of bringing a child or children into your family. It will be life-changing for all of you.

May God bless your family, today and always.



Kris Faasse
Vice President of Clinical Operations
Bethany Christian Services



HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT...?

COMMON MISPERCEPTIONS ABOUT ADOPTION

I can't love an adopted child like I could a biological child.

Adoptive parents, with biological children and without, will consistently tell you that they love their adopted children as much as a biological child. Adoptive parents experience a full range of emotions, joys, and challenges with their adopted children, just as they do/would with biological children.

Adoption is really intended for childless couples.

While many couples choose to adopt in part because they have experienced infertility, they are joined by many couples with children, as well as single adults, all choosing adoption because they have love to share and have a desire to provide a home for a child who might not otherwise have one.

The child won't ever develop an attachment to us as parents.

Children who are adopted experience various losses and need a nurturing family to help them deal with those losses. All children, especially older children, need time and a repeated sense of safety and care to build attachment with their new families. While there may be issues that children who are adopted have to deal with—especially if they are adopted as older children—experience shows us that

adopted children can and do attach to their new families. Every journey toward attachment is unique and requires engaged and committed caregivers.

Adoption is too risky—there are just too many unknowns.

It is true that every decision to parent through adoption contains risks, some that can be anticipated and many that cannot. We strongly believe in the importance of parents who are prepared, trained, educated, and provided with mentoring opportunities to better understand the realities of the type of adoption they are pursuing. But ultimately, most of the critical decisions we make in our lives (marriage, children, and career) contain risk and unknowns. Families who are ready for adoption truly recognize and accept the risk, and commit to their decision to love and parent a child, no matter the outcome.

It is just too expensive to adopt.

Actually, out-of-pocket expenses can be substantially less than the initial cost discovered at the beginning of the process. Through several different methods, including government adoption tax credits and other sources mentioned in the Financing Adoption section of this booklet, thousands of families have found creative methods to meet the financial requirements of an adoption.

DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTION



Women who find themselves experiencing an unplanned pregnancy face many difficult decisions. Will they choose an abortion? Will they choose to parent their child? Or will they consider adoption? Each of these decisions carries significant consequences and impact throughout their life. Expectant parents (mothers and fathers) who choose adoption make a deliberate decision to relinquish their parental rights and identify another family to take this responsibility and parent their children. They make this difficult choice, not because they don't love or want to parent their children, but because they feel unable to be the kind of parent they want for their child at that particular time in their lives. Children do not wait for parents to be ready to meet their needs, and birthparents, those who choose adoption, are deeply committed to meeting their child's immediate needs.

Parents who make adoption plans come from all socioeconomic backgrounds, child-bearing ages, races, and walks of life. Many expectant parents considering domestic infant adoption want to meet and build an ongoing relationship with the families they identify to parent their children. These parents experience the pain of the loss of their parental role and connection to their children with the hope of a better future both for themselves and their children.

Prospective adoptive families considering domestic infant adoption have the opportunity to not only provide a loving family for a child but also to affirm the difficult and loving decision made by their child's birthfamily through ongoing contact and relationship when possible.

QUESTIONS ABOUT DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTION

What is the first step to adopt an infant within the United States?

To start the process, visit www.bethany.org or call our main office at **1.855.328.7951** to request an information packet. If you live in a state where Bethany has an office, you will be invited to attend an orientation. If we do not have an office in your state, our staff will suggest other resources for you.

How will Bethany help us in the adoption process?

Once you have met with our staff personally at an orientation meeting and had the opportunity to ask any questions, Bethany's staff will work with you through the Home Study process that is required and completed according to state law. Once approved, we will help you in preparing your profile or photo book. Profiles, in a book or online, are one of the ways that you share information about your family with expectant parents who are considering adoption.

QUESTIONS ABOUT DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTION

(continued)

How will Bethany help prepare us to become parents through adoption?

The Home Study process is not just gathering information about your family, but it's also a time to help you understand adoption from the perspective of everyone involved. Our staff provides supportive and personalized education to answer your questions. You will also learn about the adoption journey through recommended books, videos, and by attending educational meetings.

How long will we have to wait for a child to be placed with us?

Wait times vary and depend primarily on when you are identified by an expectant parent considering adoption. Your willingness to develop a relationship with the birthfamily can impact the length of time that you wait, as well as your openness to the various prenatal histories of expectant mothers.

How will expectant parents know that we want to adopt a child?

Most expectant parents want to choose the adoptive parents for their children. They often start by looking through prospective adoptive family profiles, either at a Bethany office or on Bethany's website. Another way that expectant parents become aware of your desire to adopt is through personal contact with either you or a mutual acquaintance. Bethany also works with many hospitals, physicians, and pregnancy

care centers so that expectant parents will become aware that adoption is a life-affirming option and that there are many prospective adoptive families available to consider, including yours.

If we are identified by expectant parents for adoption, when will a child be placed in our home?

Sometimes, placement occurs directly from the hospital. Other times, the baby may go to interim care—a caring, temporary home placement while the birthparents determine if they will proceed with the adoption decision. Bethany staff will help you understand and walk with you through the placement process.

When will the adoption be finalized?

Your adoption will be finalized after the birthparents' rights have been relinquished and after a legally required period of supervision which varies from state to state.

When will the adoption fees be due?

Fees are based on the services Bethany provides and are typically collected at specific times throughout the process—you will be provided with a detailed explanation of fees prior to beginning the adoption process. You will also want to check with your tax advisor about the availability of the Federal Adoption Tax Credit and any state adoption tax credits which may reduce your expenses.

How do we handle ongoing contact with the birthparents?

Almost all adoptions have some level of openness or contact between the adoptive and birthfamilies. Bethany staff will help both families carefully consider the benefits and challenges that may come through open adoption relationships. The degree of openness is determined by the birth and adoptive families before placement. Some families are unsure about ongoing contact at first, but many adoptive parents discover that once they gain a better understanding of open adoption relationships and get to know the birthparents, they want to have an ongoing relationship for everyone's benefit.

Will Bethany help our family adjust to the changes in our lives?

Bethany is committed to providing post-placement services for families. There is a required supervision period after placement, determined by your state law, when you will meet with your Bethany adoption specialist to discuss how you are adjusting to parenting a new child and to identify any further support or resources that are needed. In addition, Bethany is available to provide post-placement support, guidance, education, and referrals, if needed, long after your adoption is finalized.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS – GOD’S SPECIAL PLAN

DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTION

A picture of Eric and Angie’s family plays out like paint across a canvas of quintessential American life. It’s easy to picture both parents laughing as their kids run around the backyard at a family barbeque, or watch them spending long, weekend fishing trips together on the lake. But life hadn’t always been this picture-perfect and easy for the couple.

The high school sweethearts got married and after eight years of trying everything to have children, they decided to turn toward adoption.

As part of the adoption process, the couple was able to interact with other families who had adopted domestically through open adoption.

Eric shared, “Once we were there and saw the birthmother and adoptive parents together, and how their love for that child and desiring the best for the child was the main goal, we knew that we wanted a better life for someone and to be in the kind of situation where we are making a family, not destroying one.”

Eric and Angie grew close to both of their children’s birthmothers. They learned about their lives, their fears, and their passions. The bond was so close that the couple was present in the delivery room when their son was born and had the honor of cutting the umbilical cord.

“When the kids were little, I made a little pocket photo album storybook and it’s called their miracle story,” says Angie. “Since they were babies, they knew that they were adopted and I have pictures of us standing with each of their birthmothers when they were pregnant.”

Their closeness did not come without its challenges. After the birth of their son, his birthmother had doubts about her decision to choose adoption. For Eric and Angie, it spelled

anxious and trying times. But the couple put their faith in God. In the end, the birthmother did decide to continue forward with the adoption.

Tragically, both of the children’s birthmothers passed away—one, a few months after birth and the other, in a car accident.

“We were blessed knowing that God had a plan for the children,” says Eric. “He knew before anyone else. That’s why I say we were blessed to know these young women, because even though they didn’t know what their lives would entail, they made sure that their children were okay.”

Each child’s middle name bares a connection to their birthmother, but beyond a name, their birthmothers’ legacy can be witnessed in the smiles, laughs, and talents of the children.

The couple believes that their family is the greatest gift that God could provide them.

“Without Him we would never have made this journey,” says Eric. “We held on to our faith and a little at a time, He revealed His grace to us.”



RELATIONSHIPS IN ADOPTION

There are many topics that can create anxiety for a prospective adoptive family, but relationships with birthfamily members and others who were important in the life of your child prior to adoption, are often at the top of the list.

We know that a family's initial thoughts and anxieties about openness and relationships can influence the decisions they make in early stages of considering adoption. We'd like to put your mind at ease and inspire you to enter into this unique aspect of adoptive parenting with an open heart and a child-centered focus.

As you move forward in your journey, our staff will share specific details about the types of relationships with birthfamily members that are common in the type of adoption you select, and provide you with guidance and support in developing and maintaining relationships.

While it can be easy to assume that connection and relationships with birthfamily and other important people are really only possible in domestic infant adoption and don't apply to foster care adoption or international adoption, the reality is that this is not always the case. In fact, connections and relationships in adoption are becoming more the norm—when possible and safe for the child and all involved. Research, and personal experiences, are consistently showing that all members involved in an adoption plan benefit when there is ongoing connection, honest communication about adoption, and mutual respect for the role that each plays in the adoption relationship.

Adopted persons, as children and later in life, benefit from maintained relationships with birthfamily and other influential caretakers. The access they have to birthrelatives and their own medical, genealogical, and family histories helps them come to terms with the reasons for their adoption, find real answers to the common questions about identity and belonging, and promotes more honest discussion about adoption with their adoptive parents.

Adoptive parents have found that maintaining relationships actually leads them to feel less fearful and more confident in their role as parents. They experience greater empathy for the birthfamily and are better able to understand their children, answer their questions, and respond to their feelings about adoption.

This is not to say that relationships in adoption aren't challenging, complicated, and with varying levels of closeness and connection that may even ebb and flow over time. This is a reality in many of the relationships we maintain. But the love and commitment of parents to the short and long-term well-being of their child means that these relationships are worth the risk and worth the hard work.



FINANCING ADOPTION

One of the primary barriers for many families who are considering adoption, is the cost. While these fees can be a barrier for many families, we have helped thousands of people achieve their goal of adopting. Through generous gifts from our donors, adoption tax credits, and other sources mentioned below, thousands of families have found creative methods to meet the financial requirements of an adoption.

SOURCES OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Caring Connection

Bethany's Caring Connection provides financial assistance to Bethany families committed to adopting children with special placement needs. Grants are awarded based on the child's special placement needs and on the financial need of the family interested in adopting.

For more information, visit Bethany.org/CaringConnection, call 1.800.BETHANY, or e-mail caringconnection@bethany.org

Adoption Grants

Families without the finances to cover the full cost of adoption may be able to apply for grants through several organizations. One example is Show Hope, founded by Steven Curtis and Mary Beth Chapman, who are public advocates for adoption. Show Hope awards adoption grants to qualified families already in the process of adopting. The size of the grant awarded is determined by several factors, the most important being financial need.

To learn more, visit showhope.org

Short-Term Loans

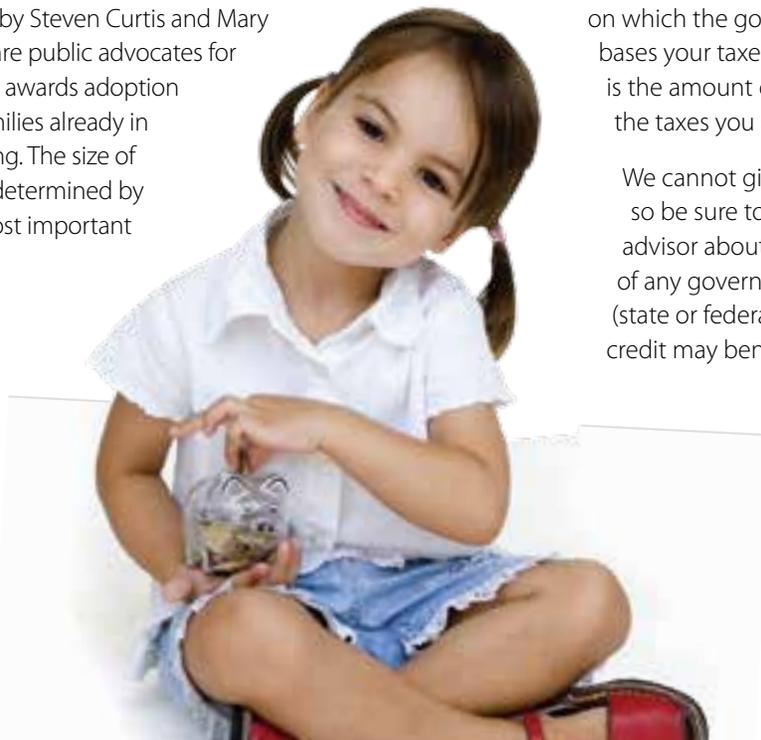
America's Christian Credit Union is one example of a financial institution offering an affordable, adoption loan program to help obtain the funds you may need.

For more information, visit americaschristiancu.com

Adoption Tax Credits

In recent years, the federal government (irs.gov) and many state governments have offered incentives to adopt children by providing tax credits. It is important to understand the difference between a tax deduction and a tax credit. A tax deduction reduces the amount of income on which the government bases your taxes. A tax credit is the amount deducted from the taxes you owe.

We cannot give tax advice, so be sure to consult your tax advisor about the availability of any government tax credit (state or federal) and how that credit may benefit you.



THE JOURNEY AFTER ADOPTION



Bethany encourages adoptive families to view adoption as a unique, lifelong experience that will be part of their new normal way of life rather than an experience that ends with finalization. Striving to change the perception that something must be “wrong” when challenges arise, we want families to feel comfortable seeking assistance and feel empowered and supported when addressing a variety of needs.

Post-adoptive families may seek support and services for a variety of reasons.

Some common areas include:

- Processing grief and loss
- Navigating open relationships
- Building attachment and improving family bonds
- Adjusting family roles and dynamics
- Healing from trauma, abuse, and neglect
- Addressing challenging behavior
- Developing identity through life stages of adoption
- Planning for birthfamily search

There is a diverse array of post-adoption support and services that are beneficial for families at various times in their adoption journey. Many supports and services are offered through Bethany’s local branches and through other providers within your community.

Some examples of post-adoption support and services that are commonly utilized include:

- Support groups, mentors, and camps
- Referrals for specialized medical and developmental service providers
- In-person and online education
- Case management for challenging situations
- Mediation between adoptive family and birthfamily members
- Counseling and specialized mental health services
- Recommended resources for adoption-related or child-specific topics
- Birthfamily search and homeland travel services

During the adoption process, Bethany’s adoption specialists work with each family to identify local supports and services. Our staff will continue to be a source of support after adoption. Remember, your adoption journey was never designed to be traveled alone. Post-adoption care is an opportunity to enhance your family’s strengths and can help navigate challenges along the way.



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1.800.BETHANY bethany.org



facebook.com/bethanyfans

twitter.com/bethany

bethany.org/blog

youtube.com/BethanyChristianSvcs



While our branch offices are often the best informed about resources in their local community, Bethany's Post-Adoption Contact Center (PACC) is also ready to provide support and information to anyone seeking help after adoption. Available nationwide by phone or e-mail, PACC is staffed by licensed, adoption-competent professionals that provide support, education, and referral assistance to anyone touched by adoption.

monday-friday
8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. EST

1.866.309.7328

bcspostadopt@bethany.org

Post-Adoption
Contact Center 

the support you need. the help you want.