ESSENTIAL POST-ADOPTION SERVICES FOR THE LOCAL

CHURCH: A MULTI-CASE STUDY

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by

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APPROVAL SHEET

ESSENTIAL POST-ADOPTION SERVICES FOR THE LOCAL
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I dedicate this thesis to my family and dear friends, who encouraged and prayed for me through all the highs and lows of this program.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PAS   Post-Adoption Services

PA   Post-Adoption

CAFO   The Christian Alliance for Orphans

ETC   Empowered to Connect

WRAP   Wrestle in prayer, Respite care, Acts of service, Prayer/encouragement

QSR   Qualitative Research Data Analysis Software

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PREFACE

Adoption has always been something that I thought I knew a lot more about than I actually did. Doing this research has helped me to understand some of what it means or what it really entails to adopt, especially the needs that come with adoption and what that means for adoptive families and for the local churches. I thank God for giving me the opportunity to do this research and especially for insightful leaders and professors at SBTS who perceived the need for post-adoption services in the local church as worth investigating and addressing. I also thank my supervisor, Dr. Anthony Foster, whose passion for the orphans (especially in the foster system), insights to the aspects of adoption, and overall guidance and patience constantly inspired and encouraged me throughout this research.

I am grateful for Kimber Graves. Her generous offer to provide expert information and direction for research sites was a great help and relief. I will also like to thank all the coordinators of adoption ministries who gave me their time and attention and were very ready to give me the information I needed for the field part of this research.

I cannot forget to thank Dr. Randy Stinson, who made it possible for me to study in the Ed.D program. In the same light I want to thank the Missio Dei Church family and Chilsolm Baptist Church family for all their support throughout my studies at Southern.

For my mom, the wisest woman I know, I thank God for your life. Your words

of encouragement, to work harder and to persevere in hardship, have truly been a preparation for this aspect of my study. To my dad, thank you for sending me to the best schools you could afford and giving me the opportunity to have an education.

To my family here in America, the Yongs, thank you for encouraging me and loving me indiscriminately. I appreciate your services to me when I was overwhelmed by my work. Linda, you are simply wonderful. Thank you for your editing suggestions. Philemon, thank you for all the wisdom spoken into my life and for all the innumerable ways you have helped me and have been patient with me.

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Ultimately, the hand of the Almighty has strengthened me, carried me, upheld me and supported me throughout this part of my studies. I never thought that this program would draw me as close to God as it has; my perseverance in hardships has been stretched beyond what I could ever imagine. Thank you, my God and my Savior! I believe all the people you put on my path during this journey were your hands and feet to bring me safely through. May this work be used in the local church to inform many that they may be your hands and feet for adoptive families and orphans all around the world.

Emmanuela Nsang Nyam

Minneapolis, Minnesota
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CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH CONCERN

Adoptive families face several challenges ranging from the child's development and education, health and medical problems, behavior problems, birth family, and history issues. These challenges and other needs when encountered without a consistent presence of a strong support system or services around these adoptive families could be very detrimental for the emotional and relational health of adoptive parents and their children, and may sometimes lead to adoption disruptions.[1]

Introduction

In their article, "Hope for the Children: A Community-based Approach to Supporting Families who Adopt Children," Kramer and Houston have identified the concern that, though adoption has been on the rise since President Clinton's Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000 and the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, not as much effort has been devoted to developing or creating post- adoption support services (formal or informal) for the long-term needs of the adoptive families.[2] Without a well-established system of support for adoptive families, their ability to deal with the ongoing demands of parenting a child with emotional, developmental or physical difficulties will be

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[1]Laurie Kramer and Doris Houston. "Hope for the Children: A Community-based Approach to Supporting Families who Adopt Children." *Child Welfare* 78, no. 5 (September/October 1999): 611.

[2]Ibid., 116.

overwhelming. Churches are recognizing that it is important to provide support more as a proactive rather than reactive measure, for the adoptive and foster families within their congregations.

Presentation of Research Problem

Post-adoption issues of adoptive families are exigent and ever changing such that it has become a challenging issue for the leadership of the church.[3] In a study conducted in 2007, sponsored by FamilyLife and Focus on the Family,[4] the post-adoption challenges faced by adoptive families and the resources that could most aid these families within the local church were identified. Through a study of 423 families it was discovered that parents sought help 23.3 percent of the time from adoption agencies/social workers, 22.6 percent of the time from family or friends, 13 percent of the time from bookstore resources, and 9.2 percent of the time from the church or the pastor. However, parents indicated that resources such as professional biblical counseling, respite care for parents and adopted children, support systems through their local church (e.g., mentors and support groups), books from a biblical worldview, education from adoption professionals and parents regarding post-adoptive needs, and openness about the

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[3]Randy Stinson "Disrupted Adoptions: A New Challenge for the Church," in *A Guide to Adoption & Orphan Care*, ed. Russell D. Moore (Louisville: SBTS Press, 2012), 70. See also, Johnny Carr, *Orphan Justice: How to Care for Orphans Beyond Adoption* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), kindle, loc. 2651.

[4]"Focus on the Family is a global Christian ministry dedicated to helping families thrive. They provide help and resources for couples to build healthy marriages that reflect God's design, and for parents to raise their children according to morals and values grounded in biblical principles. They come alongside families with relevance and grace at each stage of their journey. They support families as they seek to teach their children about God and His beautiful design for the family, protect themselves from the harmful influences of culture and equip themselves to make a greater difference in the lives of those around them." Focus on the Family, "About Focus on the Family," accessed March 7, 2014, http://www.focusonthefamily.com/about_us.aspx.

reality of adoption related issues would be most preferable and helpful in addressing the post-adoptive challenges.[5]

Houston and Kramer have also identified through a three-year study of post-adoptive families that when adoptive families are faced with adoption related issues they will turn to "draw from multiple service providers and social networks that span across formal and informal social domains" and one of these is often the church community.[6] If the families within the local churches are most likely to turn to the church for assistance and support when facing challenging emotional, psychological or behavioral issues or when in need of counsel and support, then it is but right that the church should identify and provide for adoptive families a well-established system of post-adoption services that provide spiritual, emotional, informational, and concrete support.

Carla Barnhill notes that when adoptive and foster families within the congregation are faced with emotional, psychological and spiritual issues, parents will turn to their church communities and often churches do not know how to help or do not have an established system of services to provide support for these families, leaving parents and child to suffer.[7] The difficulties that arise in post-adoption often cause parents to struggle with feelings ranging from shame to anxiety stemming from the issues that their adopted children bring into their families. Adoptive parents need support from

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[5]FamilyLife and Focus on the Family, "Jordan Project: Understanding the Post-Adoptive Experiences of Parents," (2007), accessed March 29, 2013, http://adoptivedads.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/11/summary-of-jordan-project-report.pdf.

[6]Doris Houston and Laurie Kramer, "Meeting the Long-Term Needs of Families Who Adopt Children Out of Foster Care: A Three Year Follow-Up Study," *Child Welfare* 87, no. 4 (2008): 148-49.

[7]Carla Barnhill, "Coming Alongside Parents," *Christianity Today* (July 2010), 24.

within the Christian community that provides an atmosphere where they can be vulnerable and also find counsel for their needs.

The type of support needed for post-adoption are quite different from pre-adoption because of the peculiar challenges that arise post-adoption.[8] Oftentimes, during the pre-adoption process, adoptive families (couples) go through a lot of paper work, interviews, fund-raising, counseling sessions, and agency meetings. Subsequently, when a family finalizes the process of bringing a child into their home it often feels like the major hurdle of the adoptive process, with heavy involvement of agencies, family members, friends and the church community is now behind them. Also when beginning the process of adoption parents are most likely to be more "financially, physically and spiritually prepared often without much consideration of the emotional effects that come along with adoption, such as attachment and bonding difficulties."[9]

However, the challenges of post-adoption are often overwhelming, arising from significant emotional, developmental or behavioral needs of the adopted child or resulting from emotional or spiritual difficulties faced by the adoptive parents. In any case oftentimes, beyond the point of pre-adoption, there seems to be less of a support system (in most local churches that practice adoption) set up to come alongside families and walk with them. A set of support systems, resources, and services are often an effective means of ministering to the needs of adoptive and foster parents and their children.

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[8]Houston and Kramer, "Meeting the Long-Term Needs," 150.

[9]Debl Grebenik, "A New Definition of Attachment/Regulation: Attachment Is the Affectional Tie between two people," (2008), accessed March 29, 2013, http://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/adoptive_families/attachment_and_bonding/new_definition_of_attachment_regulation.aspx.

Adoption Challenges

Orphans can also be called "at-risk children" or in biblical terms "the fatherless" or "the weak." This means that most of these children have lost much in their lives and have often been neglected or abused one way or the other. As a result, there is bound to arise many challenges when these children are brought into homes of people who seek to love them and care for them as their own. Post-adoption challenges arising from issues that either adopted children or adoptive parents have faced in their past have been carefully studied by most child development specialists and family crisis specialists or counselors, to show that there is a need for these issues to be addressed.

The problems adoptive children bring into a family include attachment disorders and complex medical situations, emotional, developmental, and behavioral needs. These problems could lead to adoption disruptions and which may affect the record number of adoption placement of children especially with special needs.[10] Psychologists or counselors have identified some emotional, spiritual and psychological issues common to adoptive families. Loss, sadness, and grief are often identified as the primary adoption issues faced by members of the adoptive family from which other issues flow.[11] Often, a sense of loss causes adopted children to wonder about their defectiveness and why they were let go by their birth parents. This may lead the child to display defiance, anger, aggression, acting out and low self-esteem. In addition, the experience of traumatic loss, neglect and sometimes abuse experienced by adopted

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[10]Houston and Kramer, "Meeting the Long-Term Needs," 611.

[11]Sherrie Eldridge, *20 Things Adoptive Parents Need to Succeed* (New York: Delta Trade

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children often affects every area of their development.[12] Some adoptive parents who are not able to have children of their own will suffer from grief and loss over never having their own biological children. This often leads to "unresolved psychological issues such that every day spent with a disturbed child heightens the awareness of their own issues."[13] Loss and grief, bonding and attachment issues, hidden shame and guilt, anxiety and fear tied to abandonment-rejection issues are most issues pastoral counseling should be able to address. These challenges are especially displayed through interactional tension, and interpersonal dynamics between the parents and children. Such challenges are often unique to adoptive families and need to be addressed.[14]

Of equal importance is the need for adoptive couples to have a strong basis for their marriage. Ellicott analyzes the staggering consequences of failed marriages on children and concludes that this must cause couples to be cautious and work hard not only to take care of their children but to work at keeping their marriage intact because this will affect, to a great extent, the well-being of their children.[15] The emotional and

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Paperbacks, 2009), xxiii.

[12]David Howe, *Patterns of Adoption: Nature, Nurture and Psychosocial Development* (Cornwall: Blackwell Science, 1998), 2-8. For identification of cognitive and behavioral issues of adopted children, see Carol Lozier, *The Adoptive & Foster Parent Guide: How to Heal Your Child's Trauma and Loss* (Louisville: Forever-Families, 2012), kindle, locs. 179-217.

[13] Gregory C. Keck and Regina M. Kupecky, *Parenting the Hurt Child: Helping Adoptive Families Heal and Grow* (Colorado Springs: NAVPRESS, 2009), 35. See also, Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner, *The Spirit of Adoption at Home in God's Family* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 17-19. Stinson has also noted that some couples with all sorts of problems see adoption as a marriage builder or think that adopting will fix their lives or the problems in their marriages. However, he argues that such motives for adoption will generate more issues than fix them. See Stinson, "Disrupted Adoptions," 73.

[14]Ryan Noel Fraser, "A Fairy Tale with a Twist: Pastoral Counseling with Adoptive Families," *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling,* 59 (Spring-Summer 2005): 63-78.

[15]Cheryl Ellicott, *This Means War: Equipping Christian Families for Foster Care or Adoption* (Colcord, OK: Sweetwater Still Publishing, 2010), kindle, locs. 334- 407.

psychological issues that both adoptive parents and adopted children face can take such a huge toll on the family that relationship dynamics between couples or between parents and child can potentially be disrupted. With such difficulties, there is the need for adoptive parents to get support from both "professional and lay communities," to help them properly in their different areas of need.[16]

Focusing on the adoptive family, Purvis, Cross, and Lyons look at the problems of attachment difficulties like conduct disorder, depression, anxiety, attention deficits, and learning disabilities (faced by adopted children) from a holistic approach and conclude that there is need for a multidisciplinary approach to the treatment or healing of the "whole child, with all his or her interrelated needs, not just one aspect or behavior."[17] Howe also notes that the awareness and identification of various stressors present, especially in post-adoption, has led to the recognition of the value of practical and material support for adoptive families.[18] As a result, professionals, through an expert knowledge of adoption and its various needs, can provide parents with support in dealing with the issues involved.

Relevance of the Research Problem

The Church's Call

Adoptive parents and their adopted children face specific challenges and

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[16]Keck and Kupecky, *Parenting the Hurt Child*, 22.

[17]Karyn B. Purvis, David R. Cross, and Wendy Lyons Sunshine, *The Connected Child: Bring Hope and Healing to Your Adoptive Family* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2007), 5.

[18]Howe, *Patterns of Adoption*, 202-4. "Families who adopt children with histories of abuse and neglect are likely to encounter a variety of stressors which may contribute to family discord." Houston and Kramer, "Meeting the Long-Term Needs," 147.

oftentimes these needs are not targeted through the ministries of the church.[19] This

observation is sad but true. Adoption is part of the mission of the church, so post-

adoption ministries must continue to care for adoptive families, providing the necessary

resources and support needed for their guidance on this lifelong journey and for their

spiritual growth as individuals and families. It is the call of the church to care for the

orphans. There is a great need for the post-adoption practices of the church to provide

both correctives and solutions to the challenges that come with adopting and living and

growing together as an adoptive family. There is a need to take post-adoption issues

seriously by establishing support services that are proactive rather than reactive.

The church of God has been called to care for the orphans and protect the weak

and fatherless (Jas 1:27; 2:16; Deut 10:18; Pss 10:14; 68: 5-6). The call to adopt "rests at

the very heart of the history of redemption" and it is the foundation and goal for the

mission of the church to the world.[20] The mission of the church is derived from Christ's

mission and command to his disciples, for through Christ many sons are born into the

family or Kingdom of God (Matt 28:19-20; 2 Cor 5:16-21; Rom 8:12-17). Biblically,

"adoption and orphan care is part of the mission of the church, not something we do

because we are infertile but a tangible demonstration or picture of the gospel—of God's

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[19]When adoptive parents are told that adoption is a life-long process, they are often not given information about the various difficulties that this process involves and what issues may arise and how they can be understood or dealt with. See Deborah D. Gray, *Nurturing Adoption: Creating Resilience after Neglect and Trauma* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2012), 16.

[20]Jason Kovacs, "Adoption and Missional Living," in *Reclaiming Adoption: Missional Living through the Rediscovery of Abba Father,* ed. Dan Cruver (Adelphi, MD: CruciformPress, 2011), Kindle, loc. 1052. As people who have been adopted by the Most High God through his Son Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit the church is called to take this gospel message to the world, both declaring this good news and demonstrating the word and character of God to the world. The church has been chosen by God to show the world an example of his justice seen especially in the gospel of the cross.

adoption of us—put on display for the world to see and give glory to God."[21] In this

mission, the church should, in all its ministries, equip its members to care for the orphans

and be especially concerned about the special needs of those who have committed

themselves to bring the lost children into their homes.[22]

In the church, "well-meaning adoptive parents who lack the support of their

church community can get to the point of feeling so overwhelmed, discouraged, and

alone that they throw in the towel,"[23] and this is all the more reason for the church to seek

to understand the present challenges of adoption and provide the needed support for

adoptive families. Adoption is a lifelong process. Understanding that adoption is the

mission of the church to reach the orphans of the world with the gospel of Christ and

disciple them in truth by first bringing them into our homes, the Christian must see the

completion of an adoption process with the child or children finally brought into the

home as that initial step, which can be compared to a believer's initial step of faith and

repentance: a beginning that precedes an outworking of sanctification and a fuller

completion of what has been started. The call to care for the orphans and the weak entails

not only an active involvement in bringing children into our homes but engaging our full

resources and services as a church to proactively assist the families that bring the adopted

child into their homes.

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[21]Kovacs, *Adoption and Missional Living*, kindle, loc. 1080.

[22]Ibid., kindle, loc. 1099. In his article "Equipping the Generations: God, the Gospel, and the Global cause of Christ," Gundersen defines adoption thus: "Spreading the name of Jesus Christ into the hearts and lives of people by bringing the smallest and neediest of the world's population in our homes, making them part of our families, and investing the gospel into their lives from the backyard to the dinner table to the bedside… so that by God's grace they can grow up and walk the narrow road-in a manner worthy of the incarnate savior of the world, who is infinitely more precious. David A. Gundersen, "Equipping the Generations: God, the Gospel, and the Global Cause of Christ," *Journal of Family Ministry* 2, no. 1 (Fall-Winter 2011): 86-88.

Being Proactive not Reactive

Considering the challenges faced by adoptive families, parents and children alike, the need for post-adoption support such as counseling, accountability groups, support groups and communities is a necessity for every family or community (such as the church) that seeks to have a wholesome practice of adoption. The call and mission of the church to care for the orphans is a unique one. The efforts of the church to be effective in this mission must be strengthened by ensuring that not only pre-adoption services for the church are identified but also post-adoption services are established and fortified for the purpose of addressing the issues adoptive families face and supporting them throughout their journey. Rather than having support systems that are reactive to post-adoption issues, the church leadership should be proactive in its approach to post-adoption issues.[24] Christians are on a mission for the kingdom of God and adoption is part of that mission. It starts (but does not end) by bringing children into our homes so that we can love them as God first loved us and disciple them that they may grow to know God, love Him and live for Him.

Adoption is a lifelong process that includes unique challenges and the means God uses to bring about transformation and healing for the lost and orphaned children of the world. The mission of the church in adoption could be even more effective by providing essential post-adoption services for its adoptive families to help address the problems that arise within the context of the adoptive families and in the lives of the

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[23]Johnny Carr, *How to Care for Orphans Beyond Adoption*, kindle, loc. 2645.

[24]Stinson, "Disrupted Adoptions," 75.

individuals.

Bennett advises that the church needs to provide post-adoption services for adoptive families that include spiritual care. He recommends having a prayer ministry that supports and prays also for the specific struggles of adoptive families, as well as informal gatherings for adoptive families to come together in fellowship, and a strong biblical counseling ministry that can help people think through their problems biblically.[25] Adoption support ministries of the church must call adoptive families to the reality of what they have set forth to do and walk alongside these families as they rejoice or cry or fear or suffer because of the reality of the ministry in which they have chosen to engage themselves.

Current Status of the Problem

Randy Stinson has argued that post-adoption issues are a demanding area for church leaders and that these issues could possibly result in adoption disruption.[26] This is a call for concern for the leadership of the church, since it is the church's responsibility to support adoptions both pre and post. In a study done by Houston and Kramer, 34 newly adoptive families were assessed over a period of three years to find out how much agency and non-agency supportive services actually do contribute to the stability and well-being of adoptive families. Through this study, they discovered that providing adoptive families with formal and informal support services that assist with their ever-changing needs is

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[25]Daniel J. Bennett, *A Passion for the Fatherless: Developing a God-Centered Ministry to Orphans* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011), 202.

[26]Adoption disruption is "when a family adopts and, for some reason, realizes it can no longer take care of the child, then makes a decision legally to end its parental rights." Stinson, "Disrupted Adoptions," 71.

very important.[27] The amount and quality of the support afforded to adoptive families when parenting a child with a history of abuse or neglect significantly contributes to the family's stability.[28]

Looking at the assessment of the needs of adoptive families presented by counselors and behavioral therapist is enlightening for the church on the issues that adoptive families may face. However, these challenges need to be assessed in order for the church to be able to address them. Graves argues that the church should be willing to learn about these problems so as to understand the needs of the adoptive families and present to them a practical and yet hopeful picture of adoption.[29] Stinson has also identified certain "disruptions" that could take place within the adoptive families and that need to be addressed by the church. Like Graves, he recommends that the church's leadership needs to specifically outline when and how to engage these issues because the ramifications of adoption do not stop when a child come into their adoptive homes, but rather is a life-long process. Thus the commitment of the church should exceed the level of the pre-adoption counseling and include post-adoption care and a support system. [30]

Barnhill has also stated that churches around the country are getting more involved in orphan care and launching orphan care ministries that are lay-led.[31] How

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[27]Houston and Kramer, "Meeting the Long-Term Needs," 145.

[28]Ibid., 147.

[29]Kimber Graves, "Orphan Care Ministry: Becoming an Adoption Friendly Church," in *A Guide to Adoption & Orphan Care,* ed. Russell D. Moore (Louisville: SBTS Press, 2012), 64-69. So, the church must begin by understanding the specific needs of adoptive families as an essential beginning to dealing with these needs so as to come alongside them to strengthen them.

[30]Stinson, "Disrupted Adoption," 75.

[31]Churches such as Saddleback Church in Orange County, California; Christ Community Church Franklin, Tennessee; First Baptist Church in Cambridge, Minnesota; and Irving Bible Church in

must the church respond to these challenges? The Christian Alliance for Orphans (CAFO) is an organization of local churches that was born of the need to proactively care for orphans. It recognizes the need for orphan care and support services for the church. Part of their mission is to provide online resources that address key topics on orphan care and adoption hosted by local church orphan care ministries and co-presented by one or more national experts on the subject. In one of their webinars, they recognize the needed yet lacking post-adoption support services for adoptive and foster families within the local church and suggest that congregations should come alongside adoptive and foster families to provide a wrap-around support system set up to assist these families.[32]

Karr has noted, "It is one thing to talk big or even give money to an orphanage overseas. But when it comes down to the nitty-gritty—the rough kids in our own smooth running churches—how will we respond?"[33] Being proactive about the post-adoption challenges of adoptive families will mean intentionality on the part of the church in identifying support services for its adoptive members. Rick Morton notes that the church, especially its leadership, should be able to assist adoptive families by identifying networks of relationships within the church and even partnering with helpful organizations or adoption support services outside the church so as to provide consistent and sufficient assistance and support for adoptive families.[34]

North Texas are a few churches she identifies as having an orphan care ministry that helps adoptive families both in pre-adoption and post-adoption (through educational and connections to family support groups). Barnhill, "Coming Alongside Parents," 24.

[32]Katie Overstreet and Gail Wahl, "Wrapping Around Adoptive Families: How to Provide Support to those called to Adopt or Foster," accessed March 29, 2013, http://www.christianallianceforworphans.org/resources/webinars/.

[33]Johnny Carr, *How to Care for Orphans Beyond Adoption,* kindle, loc. 2587.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to identify the key post-adoption support services of selected exemplar churches in order to describe these practices and to suggest what an effective post-adoption ministry could look like.

Research Question

What are the essential post-adoption services of the local church?

Definitions

Adoption: Adoption happens when a family decides to take a child that is not biologically theirs into their hearts and home and raise him or her as their own; giving him or her all the privileges of a biological child. This process entails that the relationship between the biological parents and the child is ruptured and closed legally so that the child can be legally transferred to a new set of parents.[35]

Orphan care: Orphan care will generally be defined as God's charge to His church to take care of the fatherless and it is a gospel response; a display of God's love and adoption of sinners for his kingdom's sake and for his glory. This includes specifically, ministries in the local church that relate to taking care of the fatherless (adoption, foster care/orphan care).[36]

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[34]Merida Morton and Rick Morton, *Orphanology: Awakening to Gospel-centered Adoption and Orphan Care* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers. 2011), 123-24.

[35] Howe, *Patterns of Adoption*, 1.

[36] Bennett, *A Passion for the Fatherless*, 36-37.

Post-adoption services (PAS) or support programs: These are services or support systems usually provided by the government, communities, and professional individuals to address the needs (educational, clinical and material) of adoptive families post-adoption or mostly to support troubled adoptions.[37]

Missional: Focusing on the mission of God to the Church to spread the name of Jesus Christ to every people group in the entire world and to make disciples of them (Matt 28:19-20). So, through adoption and orphan care the church visibly demonstrates the gospel, fulfilling its mission to the world by bringing orphaned children into their homes, making them part of their families and discipling them in the truth of the gospel.[38]

National Association of Evangelicals Definition of Evangelicals: Evangelicals believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God. They believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory. They believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful people, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential. They believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life. They believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved

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[37] Richard P. Barth and Julie M. Miller, "Building Effective Post-Adoption Services: What Is the Empirical Foundation?" *Family Relations* 49*,* no. 4 (2000): 449-50.

[38] Kovacs, "Adoption and Missional Living." Kindle, locs. 1053-1100. See also David A. Gunderson, "Our Paper Pregnancy: God the Gospel and the Global Cause of Christ," in *Adoption and Orphan Care,* ed. Russell D. Moore (Louisville: Crossway, SBTS Press, 2012), 30-31.

unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation. And they believe in the spiritual unity of believers in the one Lord Jesus Christ.[39]

Conclusion

The call for orphan care is part of the mission of the church and reflects God's own heart and action towards all believers. Most adoptive families within the local church have unique needs and challenges and identifying or establishing post-adoption ministries for the church is a necessary and needed tool to help them face these challenges. The local church should be able to establish or identify those support services and resources that will be most helpful for the adoptive families within their congregation. By so doing, they are coming alongside parents and providing needed support and counsel for their journey.

If adoption is not an option for the church but a call and a mission from God to the church, then the ministries that support adoption are not optional but a necessity for the completion of this mission. This mission does not end when children enter our homes, rather, the decisive battle begins. The church must arm its members with the weapons that God has provided, praying to God for wisdom to understand how to equip adoptive families for battle within their homes, how to support them and come alongside them encouraging them and keeping them accountable. Our mission in adoption is a lifelong process not just for these families but also for the church. The call is tangible for the local church to engage its adoptive families, supporting them through intentionally designed resources or support systems that speak to their specific needs and challenges.

[39] "National Association of Evangelicals," December 15, 2013, http://www.nae.net/about-us/statement-of-faith.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The modern practice of adoption, especially in the United States of America, provides an avenue or a setting for children to be raised by parents who are not their biological parents. However, the modern concepts of adoption vary from a biblical understanding of adoption. David Howe states that adoption is a social event that provides the setting and solution for parents without children and for children without parents to meet each other's emotional need.[1] Foster Cline in his foreword to *Parenting the Hurt Child* by Keck and Kupecky claims that everyone who makes the choice to parent a hurt child (adopt) has a dream and these dreams are varied. "Many include the anticipated fulfillment of helping someone else out of a tough situation, the feelings of satisfaction when a grateful child returns our love, the joy of seeing a person flower from a child into an adult who reaches his or her full potential."[2] For the Christian community, adoption is more than this in that it is ultimately for the glory of God. It involves an aspect of orphan care ministry frequently talked about, thought of, and noticed in the local church. The call to care for the orphan is a gospel response and display of God's

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[1]David Howe, *Patterns of Adoption: Nature, Nurture and Psychosocial Development* (Cornwall: Blackwell Science, 1998), 1-2.

[2]Gregory Keck and Regina Kupecky, *Parenting the Hurt Child: Helping Adoptive Families Heal and Grow* (Colorado Springs: NAVPRESS, 2009), 13.

love and adoption of sinners; how God sought us and made us part of his family (Eph 1:15; Gal 4:6).[3] All adoptive parents have a worldview that drives their reasons for adoption and, as do all adoption practices and services.

Whatever the reasons for adoption, the nature of the setting and prior experiences of the adopted child and adoptive parents do generate several needs and challenges. Behavioral and emotional problems of adopted children often pose considerable challenges for adoptive families. These problems have been identified as the greatest source of stress in adoptive families.[4] Even though most adoptions are successful, adoptive parents and children continue to experience high levels of stress as they or many of them still deal with complex and difficult developmental challenges.[5] Regrettably, in some cases adoptive parents are often not given information, in advance, about the various difficulties that the process of adoption involves and what issues may arise, how they can be understood, and dealt with.[6]

General concerns have arisen among adoption experts and researchers about the need for Post-Adoption Services (PAS) due to an increase in adoption, especially of special needs children, and a supposed increase in disruptions. The increase in adoption and of adoptive families within the local church has also resulted in Christian professionals and experts questioning what the local church is doing to address the needs

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[3]Christian Alliance for Orphans, "Core Principles," accessed September 8, 2013, http://www.christianalliancefororphans.org/about/core-principles/.

[4]Deborah D. Gray, *Nurturing Adoptions: Creating Resilience after Neglect and Trauma* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2012), 20.

[5]Judith S. Rycus et al., "Confronting Barriers to Adoption Success," *Journal Family Court Review: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 44, no. 2 (April 2006): 24, accessed October 2, 2013, http://ihs-trainet.com/assets/BarriersArtic.pdf.

of adoptive families. Graves, an adoption specialist for Bethany Christian Services,

contends that though adoption agencies have a responsibility to provide post placement

services, the church also has a role to minister to families who have opened their homes

to the orphaned child, in adoption. She challenges the local church not to only declare the

biblical mandate but also to make it safe for adoptive families to turn to them and not to

the bookstore, "when the faith walk of adoption becomes difficult."[7] But there is scarcity

of research in the area of PAS, especially in the local church. Whatever has been done in

the local church to address the post-adoption needs of adoptive families, not much has

been documented.

The needs of adopted children and adoptive families range from the physical,

emotional, and psychological to the spiritual and are of varying intensity, depending on

each family. Also, most issues of adopted children and their families could threaten

adoption if not met.[8] So, successful adoption requires ongoing support even though not

all difficulties in adoption require PAS. [9]

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[6]Gray, *Nurturing Adoptions,* 16.

[7]Kimber Graves, "Orphan Care Ministry: Becoming an Adoption Friendly Church," in *A Guide to Adoption & Orphan Care*, ed. Russell D. Moore (Louisville: SBTS Press, 2012), 67.

[8]Laurie Kramer and Doris Houston. "Hope for the Children: A Community-based Approach to Supporting Families Who Adopt Children," *Child Welfare* 78, no. 5 (September/October 1999): 611.

[9]Still, the issue of disruption is clouded by a lack of consistency in the research population on adoption disruptions. This may be because when measuring disruptions, displacement and dissolutions; researchers do not always clearly define what particular variables are responsible for termination of adoption considering the different circumstances and times. Nonetheless, research shows that 86 percent of parents who experienced adoption disruption said they would adopt again and 50 percent of them said they would adopt the same child, but with knowledge of the expectations of various stages of adoption. This evidence, though not exhaustive, shows that post-adoption services are crucial to the success of adoptions. Richard P. Barth and Julie M. Miller, "Building Effective Post-Adoption Services: What Is the Empirical Foundation?" *Family Relations* 49, no. 4 (2000): 447-48. See also, Rycus et al., "Confronting Barriers to Adoption Success," 25.

In a recent research study reported by Yates and Kulesz, they claim that a crucial part of the journey of adoption begins after the child enters the home. However, most support services are often withdrawn at this "critical juncture of permanency."[10] Given that adoption disruptions will create further trauma for the children in question, a continuum of support services for the adoption process is the best way to prevent disruption and the establishment of these services will require better practical philosophy and guidance to be effective.[11]

Structure of Chapter

This chapter will review relevant literature on post-adoption services for the local church, starting by establishing the biblical perspective on the practice of adoption and its implications for post-adoption practices. Second, I will review the literature on the background of the issues of adoption to ascertain the need for post-adoption services. After this, I will identify and assess the various needs and the types of services typically used to address these needs. I will also review the research on various post-adoption service models to find out the essential components of their practices that could be adapted for the local church. Then I will discuss the suggestions from professionals, based on their frequent use and on the preferred needs of adoptive parents for establishing post-adoption services. In the final section I will identify and outline the recommended

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[10]Michael Yates and Kristi Kulesz, "Supporting the Promise of Permanency: Post-Adoption Services for Children and Families," accessed September 2, 2013, https://www.adoptioncouncil.org/publications/adoption-advocate-no-56.html.

[11]Doris M. Houston and Laurie Kramer, "Meeting the Long-Term Needs of Families Who Adopt Children Out of Foster Care: A Three-Year Follow-Up Study," *Child Welfare* 84, no. 4 (2008): 147. See also, Howe, *Patterns of Adoption*, 100.

components of essential post-adoption services in the local church, suggest a research

hypothesis, and then give a summary of the findings.

Biblical Perspective on the Practice of Adoption

The call to adopt "rests at the very heart of the history of redemption" and it is

the foundation and goal for the mission of the church to the world.[12] With this in mind,

Gundersen defines adoption as follows:

> Spreading the name of Jesus Christ into the hearts and lives of people by bringing
> the smallest and neediest of the world's population in our homes, making them part
> of our families, and investing the gospel into their lives from the backyard to the
> dinner table to the bedside . . . so that by God's grace they can grow up and walk the
> narrow road in a manner worthy of the incarnate savior of the world, who is
> infinitely more precious.[13]

For the Christian, adoption is a response to the biblical mandate to care for the orphan

and to spread the glory of God into hearts through the gospel of his Son. The mission of

the church is derived from Christ's mission and command to his disciples, for it is

through Christ that many sons are born into the family (Kingdom) of God (Matt 28:19-

20; 2 Cor 5:16-21; Rom 8:12-17). Christians are on a mission for the Kingdom of God

and adoption is part of that mission. It starts (but does not end) by bringing children into

Christian homes so that we can love them, as God first loved us, and disciple them that

they may grow to know God, love Him, and live for Him. In this mission, the church has

to equip its members to care for the orphans and especially be concerned about the

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[12]As those who have been adopted by the Most High God through his Son Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, the church is called to take this gospel message to the world, both declaring this good news and demonstrating the word and character of God to the world. The church has been chosen by God to show the world an example of his justice seen especially in the gospel of the cross. See, Jason Kovacs,"Adoption and Missional Living," in *Reclaiming Adoption: Missional Living Through the Rediscovery of Abba Father,* ed. Dan Cruver (Adelphi, MD: Cruciform Press, 2011), Kindle, loc. 1052.

[13]David A. Gundersen, "Equipping the Generations: God, the Gospel, and the Global Cause of

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special needs of those who have committed themselves to bring the lost children into their homes.[14]

For the adoptive parent, the call is to make it their life-long objective to keep their relationship with God as the most important thing in their lives, so that out of this love will flow a love for their adopted children.[15] For the church, the present day needs and conditions of the adopted child and the increased number of adoptive families within the local church present challenges and needs to be met.[16]

It is imperative thus that the local church addresses the issues of the adoptive families with a focus of the Christian mandate and mission in mind. For this to happen the local church must come at this from a biblical and theologically grounded worldview guided by its belief that adoption is fulfilling the mission of God.[17] The core principles of the Christian Alliance for Orphans echo and expand on this thought. First off, adoption practices should begin with God's heart and then the believer's heart. God is interested and deeply vested in the plight of the orphans (Deut 10:18; Pss 10:14; 68:5-6, Isa 58:5-12) and the Christian is also called to share in this passion by bringing the love of Christ to each child through words and actions (Isa 1:17; Jas 1:27). The Christian's call to adoption also requires a commitment to love and provide for the whole child (physical,

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Christ," *Journal of Family Ministry* 2, no. 1 (Fall-Winter 2011): 86-88.

[14]Kovacs, "Adoption and Missional Living," kindle, loc. 1099.

[15]Cheryl Ellicott, *This Means War: Equipping Christian Families for Fostercare or Adoption* (Colcord, OK: Sweetwater Still Publishing, 2010), kindle, loc. 46.

[16]Kathleen A. Waters, "A Model For Establishing an Adoption Support Ministry in a Local Church" (D. Min. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1999), 153.

[17]For the local church "adoption and orphan care is part of the mission of the church, not something we do because we are infertile but a tangible demonstration or picture of the gospel—of God's adoption of us—put on display for the world to see and give glory to God." Kovacs, "Adoption and

emotional and spiritual needs), and it has eternal value (Jas 2:16; Mark 10:42; Phil 3:8).

This implies that, whenever possible, orphans should be placed into loving and caring

homes, permanently. Finally, the local church has a central role to provide services and

resources for adoptive families within the congregation to assist them in caring for the

adopted children within their homes.[18]

So, for adoptions within the local church to be successful, the local church has

a particular responsibility to support adoptive families along the journey of adoption, by

providing essential post-adoption support services and helping them navigate these

waters with the compass of the gospel.

Background of the Issues of Adoption

Most adoptive families face many difficulties that can be associated with the

issues of adoption disruption. These difficulties often require post-adoption services.

However, some families are able to get by successfully without significant use of post-

adoption services. Barth and Miller note that most adoptive families have successfully

raised their children or have good relationships with their adopted child without

substantial use of post-adoption services. Nevertheless, despite the success, most

adoptions could still be occasionally challenging.[19]

Missional Living," kindle, loc. 1080.

[18]Christian Alliance for Orphans, "Core Principles," accessed September 28, 2013, http://www.christianalliancefororphans.org/about/core-principles/. In these principles we hear echoes of, placing orphans in homes, meeting the needs of adoptive families, permanency and providing resources for adoptive families.

[19]Barth and Miller, "Building Effective Post-Adoption Services," 447.

Researchers have reached no consensus on whether or not the levels of problems faced by adopted children are unusual.[20] However, those who believe that adopted children face unusual levels of problems provide different explanations for these problems. Over the years, issues of adoption have been identified from theories ranging from the genetic defect theory, loss and grief theory, attachment theories, family systems theories (system of adoptive families and outcomes of adoption based on this), stress and coping theory, and developmental psychopathology and behavioral genetics theories. In the 1960's the genetic defects theory changed to speculation about the role of parent and adoptive parent and the psychopathology of the adopted youth, that is, the readiness of adoptive parents and how that affects the adopted youth.[21] Following is a review of the first three predominantly used theories.

The Genetic Defect Theory

This theory was most pervasive in the 1940's. Mental health professionals speculated that the genetic defects resulting from the interaction of the pre-natal and post-natal environments of the adopted youth could be the cause of the problems experienced in adoption.[22] In *Patterns of Adoption,* David Howe claims that for the psychologists, behavioral geneticists and social scientists in general, "observing the growth and development of the adopted child provides a unique opportunity to explore the complex

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[20]Mandeep K. Dhami et al., "An Evaluation of Post-Adoption Services," accessed October 2, 2013, www.sciencedirect.com.166.

[21]Barth and Miller, "Building Effective Post-Adoption Services," 447-48.

[22]Barth and Miller, "Building Effective Post-Adoption Services," 248. See also, Howe, *Patterns of Adoption,* 26-50.

interplay between biology and environment, nature and nurture."[23] The question with this theory has to do ultimately with how nature interacts with nurture to determine the outcomes of adoption.

Loss and Grief Theory

In the 1970's, the main issues of adoptive families identified were those linked to loss and grief arising from children's loss of their biological families. The focus was then to help children deal with their loss and grief.[24] Most authors writing on adoption issues still identify loss and grief as the central feature of the adoptive experience from which most issues arise. Eldridge ascertains that loss, sadness/grief are the primary adoption issues faced by most members of the adoptive family from which other issues flow.[25] In light of this, Howe explains that for adoption to happen there has to be a split between nature and nurture where the biological parent gives up their nurturing duty. This often leads to an experience of loss (for the adopted child) from which stems several issues. For the adoptive parent, loss (especially due to infertility) creates stress and leads to emotional vulnerability. For the adopted child loss often leads to different reactions or manifestations (which are a way of grieving their loss).[26]

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[23]Howe, *Patterns of Adoption*, 9.

[24]Barth and Miller, "Building Effective Post-Adoption Services," 248.

[25]Sherrie Eldridge, *20 Things Adoptive Parents Need to Succeed* (New York: Delta Trade Paperbacks, 2009), xxiii.

[26]Howe, *Patterns of Adoption*, 62, 66-67, 77. Often, a sense of loss causes adopted children to wonder what is wrong with them that led their birth parents to put them up for adoption and this may lead the child to display defiance, anger, aggression, acting out and low self-esteem. Plus, the experience of

Attachment Theory

In the 1990's problems with attachment were largely seen as the explanation for the issues that adoptive children face. John Bowlby formulated the basic tenets of the attachment theory that changed general thought on the bond between child and mother and its disruption through separation, deprivation, and bereavement. Bowlby's attachment theory implied that infant attachment to a mother figure is vital for human development.[27] Meanwhile Mary Ainsworth's pioneering methodology made it possible to test some of Bowlby's ideas empirically and helped expand the theory. She contributed the concept of the attachment figure as the secure base from which an infant can explore the world and also formulated the concept of maternal sensitivity to infant signals and its role in the development of infant-mother attachment.[28]

In relation to adoption and adopted children, Howe clearly describes the attachment theory as a "framework for classifying different behaviors and relationship patterns suggesting various psychological patterns that cause us to see different relationships and behavioral patterns. These theories help adoptive parents and social workers make sense of puzzling and perverse behaviors of adopted children."[29] Attachment happens during the first 18-36 months of a child's life, depending on whether

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traumatic loss, neglect and sometimes abuse experienced by adopted children will affect later development.

[27]Inge Bretherton, "The Origins of Attachment Theory: John Bowlby and Mary Anisworth," *Developmental Psychology* 28 (1992): 759-75, accessed October 27, 2013, http://www.psychology.sunysb.edu/attachment/online/inge_origins.pdf. See also John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 3:38-43.

[28]For more about Ainsworth's classification of various forms of attachment behavior and the consequences of each attachment pattern, see Rhett Diessner, *Classic Edition Sources: Human Development,* 3rd ed. (Dubuque, IA: McGraw- Hill Contemporary Learning Series, 2008), 104-8.

[29]Howe, *Patterns of Adoption*, 136.

they are exposed to love, nurture and life-sustaining care. During these first months the

attachment-bonding circle is formed. It begins when the child shows need of any kind

and is given gratification. This leads to trust that this person can meet their needs,

resulting in a repeat of the circle (as long as the child's needs are met). However, when

abuse and neglect happen it interrupts this circle causing personality issues for the child.

Keck and Kupecky provide a list of symptoms of attachment disruptions for children who

have experienced neglect or abuse in early childhood.[30]

Despite the different theories on adoption, all theorists agree that the issues of

adoption often affect both adopted children and their adoptive families. These theories

also show that there are needs to be addressed within adoptive families and this

strengthens the argument for the need of post-adoption services.

Scope and Nature of Post-Adoption Services

The extent and distinctiveness of post-adoption services, for addressing the

issues of adoption, will depend mostly on the quantity and type of needs of the adopted

children and their adoptive families and also on the possibility of meeting these needs

"with the existing approach to service delivery."[31] Research on adoption shows that

adopted children have a greater risk of emotional, educational and behavioral disorder.

These needs depend on the circumstances prior to adoption, or the degree to which they

have experienced physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, other developmental trauma, and

the physical and mental health histories of birth parents. Specifically, adopted youth have

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[30]Keck and Kupecky, *Parenting the Hurt Child*, 26-27.

[31]Barth and Miller, "Building Effective Post-Adoption Services," 448.

greater vulnerability to behavioral disorders and lower rates of developmental

outcomes.[32]

**Needs Assessment: Commonly
Identified Issues of Adoptive Families**

      First of all, it is necessary to identify the type of needs and amounts that would

warrant support services. Houston and Kramer report that there are several complex

issues faced by adopted children who have experienced physical abuse, neglect, sexual

abuse, drug exposure, HIV exposure, and disrupted attachments. In the state of Illinois

they discovered that for children receiving post-adoption services that were previously

abused and neglected; 65 percent were depressed, 47 percent suffered from post-

traumatic stress disorder, and 79 percent experienced problems of separation, loss, and

attachment disorder.[33]

      Children who are adopted from foster care or who faced traumatic conditions

in their formative years often struggle with emotional, developmental or behavioral

disorders. Another factor that influence or cause these issues include the age of child

placement; adopted babies versus children adopted at an older age.[34] Adopted children

are three to four times most likely to have special educational needs and therefore need

special education programs. Some examples of conditions that warrant special education

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[32]Howe, *Patterns of Adoption*, 18. See also, Barth and Miller, "Building Effective Post-Adoption Services," 448.

[33]Houston and Kramer, "Meeting the Long-Term Needs," 146-47.

[34]Howe, *Patterns of Adoption*, 77.

include emotional disturbance, neurological impairment, learning disabilities, or cognitive problems associated with fetal alcohol syndrome or effects.[35]

On the other hand, when couples are unable to have children (infertility) they feel a sense of loss and this requires a time of grief and mourning to help couples resolve their feelings. Failure to fully grieve and mourn this loss could create handicaps in emotion or inability to help an adopted child deal with his or her own feeling of loss. Inadequacy, anger, resentment, and guilt/hostility toward an adopted child are some of the feelings that frequently arise when issues of loss are unresolved in the life of the adoptive parent.[36] Keck and Kupecky claim adoptive parents who suffer from grief and loss will often have "unresolved psychological issues and every day spent with a disturbed child will heighten awareness of their own issues."[37]

The relationship between parents also determines the emotional and social climate of a home. The feelings the mother and father have towards each other influence the dynamics of relationships within the home and affects children's socio-emotional stability. It is important that marriages of adoptive parents be "stable, happy and mutually satisfying,"[38] because in adoption, children can put a strain on the marriage of adoptive parents.

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[35]Rycus et al., "Confronting Barriers to Adoption Success," 4,12.

[36]Howe, *Patterns of Adoption,* 2-8. For identification of cognitive and behavioral issues of adopted children see Carol Lozier, *The Adoptive & Foster Parent Guide: How to Heal Your Child's Trauma and Loss* (Louisville: Forever-Families, 2012), Kindle, locs. 179-217.

[37]Keck and Kupecky, *Parenting the Hurt Child*, 35. See also, Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner, *The Spirit of Adoption at Home in God's Family* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 17-19.

[38]Howe, *Patterns of Adoption*, 57.

Ellicott analyzes the staggering consequences of failed marriages on children and concludes that this must cause couples to be cautious and work hard not only to take care of their children but to work at keeping their marriage intact because this will affect, to a great extent, the well-being of their children.[39]

Also, the quality of parenting and the relationship between parents and children will affect the psychosocial dynamic of a child's development. Anxiety in parents will lead to anxiety in children afraid of rejection. Ellicott argues that the spiritual battle or attack is often aimed at the adoptive parents through various spiritual distractions or compromises that drive families to embrace ungodly practices or arising from worldly worldviews rather than biblical and godly advice.[40] She also notes that some issues common with adopted children, such as learning disabilities, attachment difficulties, sexually inappropriate behaviors, violent tendencies, emotional trauma, mental illness or self-destructive behavior, and extreme manipulative skills can suddenly become a weapon of the evil one against the adoptive parents and the family as a whole.[41]

The needs assessment shows that adoptive families have issues that range from the physical and emotional, to psychological and spiritual aspects of the human nature and thus affect the entire person and their relationships.

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[39]Ellicott, *This Means War*, kindle, locs. 334- 407.

[40]Ellicott, *This Means War*, Kindle, loc. 84.

[41]Ibid., kindle, loc. 109.

Models of Post-Adoption Services and Programs

Most research shows that post-adoption services are often provided or used primarily as a reaction to troubled adoptions. The Child Welfare League of America in 1971 provided guidelines for post-adoption support (through counseling and group meetings) mainly for supporting adoptive families with older child adoptions. Professionals can provide such services to address the needs of adoptive families within their state. Now most states are taking initiative to provide several adoption services for adoptive families.[42] Here, we will review some PAS programs to understand components that are effective for establishing comprehensive services.

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in Los Angeles County is an example of traditional state practice of adoption. It is aimed at empowering and strengthening adoptive families through ongoing resources and services. Its services and resources are aimed at the adoptive parents, the adoptee and the birthparents or individuals who have participated in adoption through the Los Angeles County DCFS. This department provides services through individual and group contacts or through community groups. They provide help and support through information, referral to resources, individual crisis counseling and support, monthly support groups, and family preservation services.[43]

Research also shows that several models of adoption programs have emerged over the years in response to the specific needs of adoptive families. The Adoption

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[42]Ellicott, *This Means War* Kindle, loc. 449.

[43]"Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services: Post Adoption Services," accessed September 28, 2013, http://dcfs.co.la.ca.us/adoptions/postadoption.html#4.

Support and Preservation model used in Tennessee is a state endeavor to address the needs of adoptive families and to support permanency.[44] This model employs several services to provide a well-rounded and coordinated support system for adoptive families.

It provides suggestions for what a support system for adoptive families should include. They have individualized in-home crisis intervention 24/7, therapists on emergency call, relief team-building and respite care for parents, support groups for families and parents with fun and recreational activities, adoption preparation class addressing the main issues of adoption before and after adoption, other advocacy (information on educational needs etc.), community education for those directly involved in the lives of the adoptive families and those around them to understand the issues they face, and a centralized website for information and service to provide easy access for families to request services (resources, find support groups, etc.). Also, this model employs trained professionals to address the needs of adoptive families with therapists to lead support groups. An evaluation is administered to the parents and children pre- and post-treatment, using instruments such as the stress index, trauma stress index, and behavior checklist, to find out the effectiveness of treatments.

A crucial part of this program is the Master's level trained clinicians who specialize in trauma-informed, attachment-based treatment protocols. In this program the therapists also provide in-home therapy for the families and operate from a home base so as to encourage accessibility and comfort. Some treatment models and techniques used by family therapists include, but are not limited to TF-CBT (Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy), PCIT (Parent and Child Interaction Therapy),

ARC (Attachment and self-Regulatory Competency), and TBRI (Trust-Based Relational Intervention™).

In fact, this program utilizes a comprehensive and coordinated use of services to ensure that the needs of adoptive families are met.[45]

Providing coordinated adoption support services through formal-agency linked resources and informal indigenous resources is another attempt to effectively help adoptive families deal with transition and meet the special needs of adopted children. An example of such a support program is the Hope for the Children program, which is a community-based approach to support adoptive families with special needs children.[46] In a research study, Kramer and Houston investigate this support system to find out the advantages or helpfulness of a community-based coordinated system of services.

The community-based approach creates a support system by first establishing the needs of the families involved so that they can provide the most needed support and resources and determine who should provide the resources and the means of provision. The program has community-based services that proactively target the needs of families. Some services designed to preserve the family include in-home services, respite care, parent education, and parent support groups.[47]

They determined that the greatest concerns of adoptive parents were their children's development and education, health and medical problems, behavior problems

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[44]Yates and Kulesz, "Supporting the Promise of Permanency," https://www.adoptioncouncil.org/publications/adoption-advocate-no-56.html.

[45]Yates and Kulesz, "Supporting the Promise of Permanency,"

[46]Kramer et al., "Hope for the Children," 611.

[47]Ibid.

at home, and birth family history. Parents within this program also had preferences regarding who to seek for the assistance for their adoption-related needs. These services ranged from formal agencies' support to informal, non-agency related network support. The support system included spouses, parents, best friends, the faith community, neighbors and family members, other adoptive parents, and respite care providers. However, most parents noted that the informal support system was most helpful to them. Given this finding, Kramer and Houston suggest that it is necessary for support systems to "include these individuals in adoption education and service planning activities."[48] Parents however, reported that services were uncoordinated, which led to "duplication of services, simultaneous pursuit of conflicting treatment goals, or unattended problems." Also, the indigenous support network of these families was often kept off the planning and implementation of service delivery for these families.[49]

An outstanding feature of the community based coordinated systems service program is the high level of service coordination. But like every other system, some aspects of the community based support program could be considered as disadvantageous. The close proximity of service personnel and volunteers could seem intrusive on family privacy, causing parents to feel scrutinized by professionals and volunteer service providers. Also, programs providers have limited control over needed resources outside of the program; in particular they have insufficient access to the state agency overseeing adoption.

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[48]Kramer et al., "Hope for the Children," 611.

[49]Ibid.

The community-based approach is similar to the support and preservation model in that it provides accessibility of services for families, a proactive support system that helps preserve families (especially those with special needs children) and prevents disruptions. However it is not as coordinated as the preservation model because it does not consider the informal system of support in its planning and implementation of services and it fails to incorporate and provide access to state agencies and services for families within the program.

On the other hand, traditional support services are mostly agency-based and professionally directed services used to help children integrate into families. Such services are rather child focused, unlike the contemporary practices of therapeutic intervention that is more family focused.[50] Houston and Kramer argue that the traditional form of PAS fails to help adopted children and their adoptive families integrate into a larger community network and as a result, could bring about isolation. They suggest a model of PAS program that follows "ecological and developmental frameworks to systematically link adoptive parents with community based support systems, e.g., educational organizations, neighborhood groups, and social networks receptive to their family."[51]

Another approach to PAS is the wraparound program that provides a "mechanism for both formal and informal service providers to come together on a regular basis to discuss children's needs and see how coordinated support services could be best

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[50]Rycus et al., "Confronting Barriers to Adoption Success," 27.

[51]Houston and Kramer, "Meeting the Long-Term Needs," 165.

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delivered."[52]Such a model will have many advantages in meeting the needs of families

because it brings together professionals and nonprofessionals who provide support for

adoptive families. This system could provide knowledge on the issues facing adoptive

families, open conversation among support members of the wrap-around team and also

enhance understanding of issues facing the families to create effectiveness in providing

support, and minimize the likelihood of service duplication.[53] This program has also been

suggested in a webinar on the Christian Alliance for Orphans (CAFO) website. They

suggest that the wrap-around program could act as a support service for adoptive and

foster families within the local church where the congregation comes alongside adoptive

and foster families to provide a support system set up to assist these families.[54]

Essential Components of Post-Adoption
Service Programs

A review of research studies on adoption practices proves that there is need for

sustained post-adoption support for adoptive families because less support could be

detrimental to families with adoptive children already experiencing emotional,

educational and developmental difficulties.[55] Present research on PAS is based on such a

limited number of projects that it fails to provide conclusive evidence. Sometimes,

research studies often have methodological flaws such as a small sample, and the length

of the service period is often rarely specified.[56] Despite the extensive adoption literature,

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[52]Kramer and Houston, "Hope for the Children," 611.

[53]Ibid., .

[54]Katie Overstreet and Gail Wahl, "Wrapping Around Adoptive Families: How to Provide Support to those called to Adopt or Foster," accessed March 29, 2013, http://www.christianalliancefororphans.org/resources/webinars/.

[55]Houston and Kramer, "Meeting the Long-Term Needs of Families Who Adopt Children Out of Foster Care," 162.

[56]Barth and Miller, "Building Effective Post-Adoption Services," 150.

there is limited empirical knowledge on the causes of success or failure or conditions that promote successful adoption outcomes and "the types of services and programs best suited to promote desired outcomes for children with different circumstances and needs."[57]

Despite the lack of a precise estimate of the effectiveness of PAS, Barth and Miller maintain that there is a consensus among researchers on how to determine the program elements that could be most related to the effectiveness of PAS. These elements have been categorized to provide a common language for the components of PAS. They are educational and informational services, clinical and health services, and material or concrete services.[58]

Educational and informational services provide adoptive parents with information through literature that will help them understand their child and deal with issues of adoption. These services include small groups, seminars, or adoption agencies, information about their adopted child or aspects of adoption process, and special services. For information, parents often request full disclosure of information about their child's medical, social and genetic history.

Clinical services include family and marital or individual therapy or counseling and health specialists. Adoption professionals have commonly employed therapy or counseling to address the issues of the adoptive families. These efforts normally target the members of the family who are experiencing challenges or who need help.[59] Keck

[57]Rycus et al., "Confronting Barriers to Adoption Success," 23-28.

[58]Barth and Miller, "Building Effective Post-Adoption Services," 450. See also, Kyle David Raque, "A Program for Post-Adoption Services" (Ph.D diss., Spalding University, 2006), 46-49.

[59]In order to target adoption issues caused by neglect and trauma, and to create resilience,

and Kupecky, psychologists and experts in adoption issues, assert that the effectiveness of therapy is its direct relation to "the problems that the family and child are experiencing. Specific problems warrant specific solutions."[60]

Material services include financial subsidies, respite care, and support for temporary placement of children into residential care.[61]Contact with self-help groups or other adoptive parents and respite care are identified as most effective components of this category. Overall, services that are time limited and family focused are most effective for adoptive families.[62]

In a research of a three-year follow-up assessment of 49 families, Houston and Kramer evaluate the extent to which informal and formal support services affect the stability of child and family's well-being. They found that the families with special needs children often sought emotional, informational and concrete support from multiple service providers and networks of formal and informal social domains. These families chose to use each domain of service as per their needs.[63]However, they note that post-

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Deborah Gray has outlined certain "processes that could be utilized by parents to help adopted children promote emotional intelligence, confidence, and better emotional physiological regulation daily." Gray, *Nurturing Adoptions*, 151-98. For more on parental guidance to behavioral therapy, see also Carol Lozier, *The Adoptive & Foster Parent Guide.*

[60]Treatment or counseling must target the parents struggles and provide those tools/practical strategies for parents that could help provide correctives in the emotional disparity in their home. Keck and Kupecky, *Parenting the Hurt Child*, 30.

[61]Barth and Miller, "Building Effective Post-Adoption Services," 452.

[62]Families with special needs children often prefer supportive resources such as; emotional (interpersonal exchange that help individuals feel cared for and enable them to mobilize the psychological resources needed for coping). Informational support includes knowledge that may enhance parenting a child with special needs and concrete aid includes tangible forms of assistance such as medical care, educational services, psychotherapeutic services, child care, recreational opportunities and financial subsidies). See Houston and Kramer, "Meeting the Long-Term Needs," 148.

[63]The informal non-agency support made up of family, friends, neighbors and church affiliated; the informal agency linked services peers, adoptive or foster parents- formal non-agency support

adoption support resources were more "beneficial in helping parents understand, manage, and cope with children's behavior but did not improve children behavioral outcomes."[64] In this research informal support systems were linked to most positive outcomes of adoption.

From the above analysis of the components of PAS, we see that there are services that are mostly used and preferred by adoptive parents. For adoptive families with special needs children, formal and informal adoption supportive resources do enhance the families' adjustment to adoption short-term but little is known about the long-term impact of such support systems. Nevertheless a strong support network could increase the adoptive families' capabilities of coping with adoption issues.[65]

Suggestions for Developing Post-Adoption Programs

Experts and professionals have identified some of the most useful services based on the use of these services by most adoptive families. In order to provide effective support for adoptive families, PAS programs could be adapted through a thorough understanding of the needs of adoptive families. Some such adaptations could include "viewing adoption from a family context, understanding the effect of adoption on children at different developmental stages, and honoring the child's past."[66] Keck and Kupecky advise that when adoptive families face adoption related difficulties, support from both professional and lay communities should be provided to help them properly, as

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provided by trained professionals. For example, teachers, medical providers, and therapists and the formal agency support by child welfare services. Ibid., 148-49.

[64]Ibid., 161-64.

[65]Ibid., 147-48.

individuals and as a family in their different areas of need.[67] Certainly, post-adoption

programs need to provide essential care and support for adoptive families and seek to

meet the specific and unique needs of each family in their charge.

A post-adoption program must also understand and take into consideration the

developmental stages of the adopted children so that they can provide understanding of

child functioning and parent child relationship over time and at different developmental

stages. The developmental changes over the life course of adoptive children may

introduce different needs for adoptive families that may launch the family into crisis.[68] In

fact, understanding the developmental issues of adoption does provide "comprehensive

care programs that advance healthy developmental permanency for the adopted child . .

."[69]

Barth and Miller have argued that family centered models of post-adoption

programs do not provide comprehensive services, especially those services outside of the

family setting that are most needed to improve the functioning of the adopted child in

school and in community.[70] In a related argument, Yates and Kulesz suggest that post-

adoption programs should reflect the families and communities that they serve. They

should also employ trained professionals "experienced in trauma-informed, attachment-

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[66]Barth and Miller, "Building Effective Post-Adoption Services," 453.

[67]Keck and Kupecky, *Parenting the Hurt Child*, 22.

[68]The issues and experiences of adoption have underlying tones of human development and behavior. Houston and Kramer, "Meeting the Long-Term Needs of Families Who Adopt Children Out of Foster Care," 150.

[69]Yates and Kulesz, "Supporting the Promise of Permanency."

[70]Barth and Miller, "Building Effective Post-Adoption Services," 452.

based treatment protocols" not just traditional counselors.[71] This means that those providing post-adoption treatment/care should be trained professionals knowledgeable about the unique needs of the adoptive families.

Finally, for an approach of PAS to be effective it should be based on known profiles of problems faced by adopted children and on the interventions that have worked best in mitigating the changes in the past.[72] Any model of PAS or program for adoptive families should be proactive and should include services designed to preserve the family.

In a research reported on Utah's Post-Adoption Support three-year plan for special needs children, placed and supported by the Division of Child's and Family Services, the researchers discovered that there is a seeming increase in sensitivity towards the needs of adoptive families. The majority of parents surveyed had experienced disrupted adoption due to unmet expectations, grief, and lack of support during their crisis time. Yet they were able to identify these services that could have met their needs and prevented disruption.

1. Offer flexible and accommodating parent-to-parent support network groups (or focus groups).

2. Suggest mental health systems competent in adoption issues. Suggest education systems that understand and respond to the needs of adoptive children and their families.

3. Organize both scheduled and in-home respite care for adoptive families with trained staff members.

4. Provide increased collaboration between multidisciplinary service providers serving adoptive families.

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[71] Yates and Kulesz, "Supporting the Promise of Permanency."

[72] Barth and Miller, "Building Effective Post-Adoption Services," 454. See also, Dhami et al., "An Evaluation of Post-Adoption Services," 165-66, and Kramer and Houston "Hope for the Children," 611.

5. Create awareness of and access to recently developed services for adoptive families. Use newsletters to communicate information. Provide reference list of services for adoptive parents.

6. Create a coordination of resources available to adoptive parents within the particular state or area and provide ongoing information to them, of these resources (esp. supportive and informative articles concerning special needs adopted children. [73]

Adoptive families will be best supported when given those services that are "trauma-informed, attachment based, highly individualized, and able to meet each family where it is."[74] Ongoing education and program developments should be a critical service philosophy for post-adoption support systems.

Essential Practices for the Local Church

After identifying the needs of adoptive families, the various components of support services and the different kind of programs that exist, our concern remains for the local church and its essential post-adoption services. In addition to the obvious reasons stated by researchers and experts on the necessity of post-adoption services, the local church has reasons peculiar to it that should move it to be passionate about the creation of post-adoption services. The literature review on state or community program components along with suggestions of expert researchers can inform the church on what essential services would best serve adoptive families within their congregations.

In a qualitative and quantitative research project (The Jordan Project) carried out by the Family life and Focus on the Family to understand the post-adoption experience of adoptive families, 423 families who were assumed to be mostly Christians

[73]Susan Cutler Egbert, "Utah's Post Adoption Support Three-Year Plan: Evaluation of Year Two," iii, accessed September 2, 2013, http://www.socwk.utah.edu/pdf/postadoptionyear2.pdf.

[74]Yates and Kulesz, "Supporting the Promise of Permanency."

were sampled and it was discovered that most of these families had needs of post-adoption services that they wish were met by their local church.[75] Here are some of those services that parents indicated were important to them:

1. Professional counseling from a Biblical worldview.

2. Respite care for parents and adopted children.

3. Support systems through their local church (mentors, support groups, etc.).

4. Books from a Biblical worldview.

5. Education for adoption professionals and parents regarding post-adoptive needs, and openness and realism regarding adoption-related issues.

As can be surmised from this report, most adoptive families within the local church wish that their churches had services or could recommend those services that addressed their needs from a Christian perspective. Yet, as far as is documented, most churches are not doing much to provide these post-adoption services for the adoptive families within its congregation.

To start, the local church must be enterprising in its approach to supporting adoption by taking into consideration the needs/realities and dynamic of adoptive families. The church should intentionally set up those systems that assist in adoption. Growth in orphan care should equal growth in support systems for adoptive families within the church.

The first step is to assess and understand the challenges of adoptive families (within the local church) from a particularly Christian perspective and with consideration

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[75]FamilyLife and Focus on the Family: The Jordan Project, "Understanding the Post-Adoptive Experiences of Parents," 2007, accessed March 2, 2013 http://adoptivedads.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/11/summary-of-jordan-project-report.pdf.

for the needs of the particular people affected. Graves argues that the church should be

willing to learn about these problems so as to understand the needs of the adoptive

families and present to them a practical and yet hopeful picture of adoption and their

needs.[76] To engage adoptive families through post-adoption services, Graves suggests

that the local church must begin by creating awareness and a culture of adoption. Each

local church must identify the needs of adoptive families within its church community

and create a support system of services that addresses these specific needs rather than

adopting one "cookie cutter" post-adoption program for all local churches. Such a

process can be facilitated through a taxonomy that forms a menu of services that will

make the most sense in any given situation, and from which custom solutions could be

brought to bear. Such a taxonomy could then provide established categories for the

church to form its thinking on post-adoption services.[77]

Also, churches should understand that adoption is a life-long process and

should take measures to provide long-term assistance for adoptive families in every

situation. In her research on post-adoption services within the church, Waters argues that

the biblical mandate to the church puts it at a crucial position to care for the orphan. Yet,

like Graves, she argues that rather than depending on the government to provide adoption

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[76]Graves, "Orphan Care Ministry," 64-69. So, the church must begin by understanding the specific needs of adoptive families as an essential beginning to dealing with these needs so as to come alongside them to strengthen them.

[77]Leaders and staff should take initiative to educate themselves (or by adoption professional) and members to understand the needs of these families (create a culture of awareness) that will lead to particular parenting styles. Churches need to be fully committed to knowing and understanding the realities and issues present in post-adoption for the adoptive families. Ibid., 68-69. A taxonomy or identified existing categories could form some kind of a menu that makes sense for any given situation and could be customized for specific settings and needs.

support systems the church should take action in establishing adoption support ministries to care for adoptive families within the church community.[78]

In her attempt to address this need, Waters sets out to create a support group model that could be used by church leaders (professional and lay) to provide adoption support. She employs the small group model and principles used by Christ to provide a model for adoption support groups. She also suggests that such groups should aim at providing emotional and spiritual support since members going through similar situations can understand, encourage and pray for each other.[79] In the various sessions of her proposed model she deals with issues that members of adoptive families may face.[80] For example, in session three of the proposed support group model, she addresses the five stages of grief to help families heal.[81] Hers is an example of what could be done to establish a small group support system.

Another form of service commonly used in the local church to assist adoptive families is counseling. Counseling has been one of the main ways of ministering to adoptive families both within and outside of the church. The purpose of such counsel is often to support and sustain all involved, especially in helping the adopted children's relationship with the present family, and to help them confront their past and present social environment with the aim of providing needed healing.[82]

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[78]Kathleen, "A Model for Establishing an Adoption Support Ministry in the Local Church," 1.

[79]Ibid., 113.

[80]Ibid., 133-52.

[81]Ibid., 147-48.

[82]Since most of the challenges faced by adoptive families are unique to them the pastoral counselor should address them. For example, loss and grief, bonding and attachment issues, hidden shame and guilt, anxiety and fear tied to abandonment-rejection issues are challenges especially displayed through

In its support services to adoptive families, the local church must always bear in mind that the adoption ministries of the church are missional in purpose, seeking to reach the orphans of the world by bringing them into Christian families for nurture towards Christ-likeness. Moore says that such a mission is spiritual warfare and must be intentionally engaged by the church through its pastoral care and teaching ministries.[83] The local church must seek to maintain faithfulness to the biblical mandate and mission in its practice and services of adoption.[84]

Adoption is part of the mission of the church and thus, there is the ever-present need for post-adoption ministries specifically geared to address the identified issues of adoptive families. However, it is not fully evident what the local church is doing about meeting these needs. Therefore, it is presumed that there is a lack of sufficient essential services aimed at providing adoptive families with the necessary resources and support needed for their guidance on this life-long journey of adoption, for healing and for their spiritual growth as individuals and families.

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interactional tension, and interpersonal dynamics between the parents and kids. Such challenges are often unique to adoptive families. Ryan Noel Fraser, "A Fairy Tale with a Twist: Pastoral Counseling with Adoptive Families," *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 59 (Spring-Summer 2005): 63-78.

[83]Russell D. Moore, "Orphan Care Isn't Charity: Spiritual Warfare in Adoption and Orphan Care," in *A Guide to Adoption & Orphan Care* (Louisville: SBTS Press, 2012), 76-81. As the church engages in this mission, it acknowledges that the family is the most effective setting to nurture the lives of children. See also, Ellicott, *This Means War*, kindle, locs. 57-132. She provides redemptive-focused and gospel-centered approach to adoption issues, showing that the goal of adoptive parents is to teach and display the adoption reality of the gospel that all believers have experienced in Christ.

[84]See Appendix 1 for the Southern Baptist Convention's Resolution 2: On Adoption and Orphan Care, June 2009, accessed March 2, 2013, http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/

Conclusion

Adoption does not end when children are brought into the home. It is a lifelong journey for the families that choose to adopt. However, the issues facing adoption could act as a threat to the outcome of adoption. These issues are best addressed through a coordinated system of services, according to the needs of the adoptive families and preferred by adoptive parents. The mandate to care for the orphans practiced in the church today through adoption requires that the local church be proactive towards meeting the post-adoption needs of the adoptive families through a coordinated system of services that are well thought through from a biblical perspective.

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CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

For this research, to facilitate the readers' understanding of post-adoption ministries in the local church, I conducted a descriptive mixed methods study research that ascertained what post-adoption practices could be most effective for the local church. A descriptive case study was selected to show different perspectives or approaches on the issue and provide better generalization or applicability of the results of the findings.

Also, the selected local churches showed different perspectives of the process that I intends to portray. To fully answer the research questions and provide a helpful manual for use in establishing essential post-adoption ministries, I used an analytical strategy to identify issues within each case, looking for common themes that transcend the cases to report their meaning and lessons learned from the cases. In this chapter I detail the design essentials (tools, procedures, etc.) of this research that were used for the on-site research and for drawing conclusions from the data that I acquired during this period. As I moved forward in this research I found that few churches were proactive with reference to essential post-adoption services or have some form of post-adoption support system in the local church. It is generally assumed that most local churches most likely do not have a clearly defined approach to post-adoption services. Therefore, I had to identify five exemplar churches by sending out a survey questionnaire to ascertain the

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existence of a post-adoption ministry, to investigate their post-adoption practices and understand what the characteristics of an exemplar post-adoption ministry in the local church could look like.

Research Question

What are the essential post-adoption services of the local church?

Delimitations of the Proposed Research

1. No post-adoption practices of institutions outside the local church were studied during this process.

2. The biblical foundations for orphan care ministries maybe referenced but will not be addressed in detail because it does not serve the purpose of this research.

3. Historical practices of post-adoption in the church may be mentioned but not elaborately.

Definition of Research Population

The population is evangelical churches in the USA with exemplar orphan care ministries that practice pre-adoption counseling and post-adoption support services. The survey questionnaire ascertained the existence and use of these establishments. Exemplar means that they are gospel-centered and biblically sound, having visible success in their orphan care ministries, and whose programs could be used to provide a paradigm for orphan care ministries that fulfill the biblical command to take care of the fatherless in the world around them.

Description of the Research Sample(s)
and Sampling Technique

As a descriptive mixed methods, a purposive sample of five churches were studied out of the several surveyed to ascertain their practices of post-adoption. The

churches that were studied are churches with orphan care practices and especially post-adoption support services. As a partly qualitative study, the sampling technique is purposive sampling[1] because I selected the specific sites (churches) for study to purposefully inform my understanding of the research problem. The critical case or maximum variation sampling strategy[2] was employed to show the diverse practices of sites based on specific characteristics of their practices of post-adoption support services.[3]

Delimitations of the Samples as a Result
of the Sampling Technique

Since this is a descriptive case study research, the samples were limited to five churches that could provide an understanding of the practices of orphan care ministries in regard to post-adoption support services. These churches are evangelical churches that have had some success in orphan care through their participation in advancing the case of orphans in conferences and through their devotion to post-adoption ministry.

Limitations of Generalization of Research Findings

Considering that this is a descriptive case study on post-adoption ministries in the local church, the generalization of the findings will be limited to the practices of post-adoption support services in the specific local church. Given that this study provides a description of practices of exemplar churches in the USA, application of most of the

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[1]"When the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem in study. John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications. 2013). 156.

[2]A qualitative sampling strategy that "permits logical generalization and maximum application of information to other cases." Or maximum variation strategy to "document diverse variations of individuals or sites based on specific characteristics." Ibid., 158.

[3]Ibid., 156.

practices were limited, culturally, to the present day church in America (or similar churches).

Proposed Methodological Design
(Data Collection Procedures)

Data collection types in this descriptive case study include interviews, a survey, and documents.

Face-to-Face Interviews

First, face-to-face interviews with the ministry coordinator or an individual who can speak authoritatively about the ministry were used to gain historical information about the churches' practice of post-adoption ministries. Such interviews enabled me to be able to ask pointed questions allowing me control over the line of questioning. It is also useful when participants cannot be directly observed. In that case they can provide historical information. However there are certain limitations to this type of data collection. The information collected during an interview is often indirect information filtered through the views of interviewees. It is not in the natural setting, and my presence may have led to bias and not all people are articulate and perceptive.[4]

Survey

Surveying is useful in helping the researcher explore topics that may be uncomfortable for participants to discuss, however it can be intrusive when dealing with hard issues of post-adoption. Therefore, I created survey questions that were answered

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[4]See Appendix 2 for interview protocol.

anonymously by adoptive families who have received services from their church' post-adoption ministry. Although it made this process less intrusive, it did not enable me to obtain sufficient data. The demographic questions were the same as the interview questions.[5] Since I used purposive sampling to choose those samples that have particular characteristics relevant to this study, the families surveyed were adoptive families within the congregation willing to respond anonymously to the survey.

Documents

The last form of data collection was documents, including public documents such as ministry webpage information, ministry blogs, and ministry brochures. This form of data collection enabled me to document the language and words of the participants. It is easy and convenient to access when necessary, it represents data, which are thoughtful because the individual has given thought in compiling them, and it is written evidence that saves the researcher time and the expense of transcribing. Again, this method of data collection has its disadvantages in that not all people are equally articulate and perceptive. Information may be protected and unavailable to the public, and it requires that the researcher search out information in hard-to-find places. It also requires transcribing for computer entry and the documents may not be authentic or accurate. Due to the nature of the research, any published information in the ministry website was assumed authoritative.

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[5]See Appendix 3.

Recording of Documents
and Visual Materials

Recording of documents and visual materials were based on my structure of

taking notes. The notes reflect the following:

1. Information about the documents or other materials.

2. Key ideas in the documents.

3. Primary material: Information directly from the people or situation under study.

4. Secondary Material: Secondhand accounts of the people or situation written by others.

5. Comments on the reliability and value of the data source.

Strategy for Analyzing Collected Data

To develop a general understanding of the data, I recorded initial thoughts by

taking notes on the margin of field notes or transcripts of interviews. This was the first

step to help me form broader categories of information establishing codes and themes

written in short phrases or ideas. These ideas were transcribed into a codebook that

includes codes derived from the literature base and codes from the analysis of the

interview and documented data. This coding process enabled me to organize the data and

facilitate consistency.[6]

Also, I further analyzed the data by coding[7] the data from the interviews,

survey, and documented data (dividing the data into small units). Each unit of the

transcribed interview and document was assigned a label derived from phrases composed

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[6]John W., Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd., 2011), kindle, loc. 2259.

[7]"Grouping evidence and labeling ideas to reflect increasingly broader perspectives." Ibid., kindle, loc. 2276.

by the researcher. Codes and memos were placed in the margins of the transcribed pages were I assigned code words to each text segment recorded on the left side of the margin and recorded broader themes on the right side of the margin. Then I represented the results of the analysis on a table.

Interpretation and Validation Process

After establishing themes I represented the interviews, documented data and survey responses.

**Analyzing and Presenting the Interviews
and Documented Data**

To analyze and present the interviews and documented data, I used the QSR NVivo, a qualitative analysis software bought and downloaded from the Internet (http://www.qsrinternational.com/what-is-qualitative-research.aspx). This software program helped with coding, analyzing, and managing the interviews and documents of this research.[8] Here is an example of how I represented the data from the interviews using representative quotes from participants to show the emerging themes from the data.

The first probing question was "Tell me about your church's understanding of post-adoption issues and services." According to the respondents, their understanding of post-adoption issues included physical, social, educational and spiritual issues. However their understanding of these issues depended on the particular issues facing adoptive families within their specific congregations. Most of them understood and displayed knowledge of the various post-adoption issues and elaborated on those issues that some

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[8]Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry Research Design*. 204.

families within their congregation have been through and how their church was able to assist these families: "My understanding is that adopted children come into their adoptive homes with several hurts and this may lead them to have violent tendencies, be with-drawn and unable to bond with one or both of the parents (I think this is known as attachment disorder…), acting out in public, physical disabilities and educational disabilities" (Interviewee 2, male). Others elaborated on the issues of post-adoption and their possible consequences noting "the issues of post-adoption can cause rifts or division in families and marriages in particular…" (Interviewee 4, male). The services mostly referenced by most of the interviewees were biblical counseling, support groups, respite care, and seminars on post-adoption issues; "when these families or marriages are not continually strengthened spiritually, mentally and emotionally through these services they could crumble under the burden these issues impose" (Interviewee 3, male). Also, some lamented their lack of professional understanding on the issues of post-adoption and how that affected how some issues were addressed in particular situations; "a more professional understanding of some of the issues these children face will go a long way to give balance to our efforts," one person said (Interviewee 5, male). Understanding the issues of post-adoption is a necessary step towards helping adoptive families deal with these issues but sometimes some services may have to come from outside of the local church, and most of the respondents acknowledged that sometimes "pointing adoptive families to professional services outside of the church is the best way to help them…" (Interviewee 1, female).

To present the documented data, I first provide a summary of the data followed by a discussion of how the data answers the research question. For example:

ETC (Empowered To Connect) Parent Training equips parents with a holistic understanding of their child's needs and development while empowering them with the tools and strategies to effectively meet those needs, build trust, and help their child heal and grow. The training is taught from a Christian perspective and focuses on a wide range of topics and issues relevant to adoptive and foster parents, including helping parents understand the impact of their child's history, what they themselves bring to the parent-child relationship, the fundamentals of attachment, the impact of fear, and the importance of meeting their child's sensory processing, nutritional and other physiological needs.[9]

Also they have a ministry known as Beyond Adoption:

Beyond Adoption is a global orphan care ministry providing hope and a future to those who will never be adopted through community transformation and the love of Christ. We empower people to serve vulnerable children through education, medical care, life-skills training, and spiritual growth.

This church has documented records of their ministry efforts to orphans at home and abroad that provides proof of their success in advancing the case of the orphans, having identified their concern for orphan care through their devotion to adoptive families and orphans at home and abroad. They show a ready understanding of the issues of post-adoption and how they should be approached and the perspective from which parents must be helped to address these issues.

Analyzing and Presenting Survey Data

An internet-based survey collection service [SurveyMonkey] was used to collect data and to facilitate the process of analysis. The survey responses were analyzed and the percentages of each question determined using the SurveyMonkey. All analyzed data, represented on tables, were downloaded onto the Microsoft Word computer program and analysis represented on tables:

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[9]Tapestry Adoption and Foster Care Ministry, "ETC," accessed March 7, 2014, http://tapestryministry.org/get-involved/etc-parent-training.

Table 1. Example of table from survey data

How many adopted children do you have?		
Answer Options	*Response Percent (%)*	*Response Count*
One	50.0	5
Two	40.0	4
Three	10.0	1
More than three	0.0	0

To represent the data I grouped certain questions on various themes then the percentages of the questions were calculated to get the mean of the number of questions in a group and their total percent represents each theme. For example, one theme came from questions 9, 10 and 11, and since the percentages for these questions are 80, 70 and 75 respectively, then they were all added up and divided by the sum total of 300 percent (as in this case) and then multiplied by a 100 percent. It looked like this $(80+70+75)/300*100 = 0.75$ or 75 percent.

Question 10 was a theme on its own and responses are presented on a table by itself to show the PA services present in these churches. Examples of other themes include availability of post-adoption services for families and effectiveness of post-adoption services. An example of the final representation of the themes looked something like this:

Table 2. Example of the representation of themes from survey data

Themes	Percentages (%)
Theme 1	60
Theme 2	45
Theme 3	68

Lastly, the meaning of the results are interpreted on the basis of how the findings answer the research problem or question, comparing the findings to the literature base, and assessing the meanings of the findings from the researcher's perspective or personal experience. To provide validation of the findings (evaluate whether the information obtained is accurate), I used the Member-checking approach.[10]

Research Competency to Conduct the Study

This research study requires biblical knowledge and an understanding of the issues of adoption, especially post-adoption issues. It requires knowledge and understanding on how to carry out a descriptive case study research. Therefore I should be able to conduct an interview protocol in order to collect data and be able to find sources of documents that will provide the essential information to answer the research [11]question. I should also be able to analyze the collected data, know how to represent the results, interpret the meaning of the results, and be able to validate the process of the research to ascertain the accuracy of the research.

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[10]This is where the researcher takes the findings back to key participants in the study and asks them whether the findings are an accurate reflection of their experiences. Creswell and Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, kindle, loc. 2326.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

This descriptive case study uses qualitative data from interviews with post-adoption ministry leaders, documentation (the ministries' vision, efforts and accomplishments), and surveys from adoptive families (within these ministries) to determine the essential post-adoption services for the local church.

Five churches were selected to examine their different perspectives or approaches to post-adoption ministries, so as to provide a better generalization and applicability of the results of the findings. These are evangelical churches that have had some measure of success in orphan care through their participation in advancing the case of orphans, and particularly through their devotion to post-adoption ministry. Several churches were surveyed but only five were chosen. The goal was to provide an understanding of the essential post-adoption services for the local church, based on the findings of the selected five churches. These churches have orphan care practices and especially post-adoption support services, and they were chosen for this study to purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem. What follows in this chapter is the research protocol that was used to evaluate the data collected for this research. The data was collected through interviews from post-adoption ministry leaders, surveys from adoptive parents, and documents from ministry websites. The summary of the findings is presented in order to show developing themes in the accumulated data that

directly relate to the research question. An evaluation of the research design used for this project is presented last.

Compilation Protocol

The data collection process included interviews (face-to-face and over the phone), recorded on a recording device; survey data collected using an Internet-based survey collector (Survey Monkey), and documents collected mostly from the ministry websites. The researcher then used an Internet-based survey collector both for data collection and analysis. Afterwards, the analyzed data was downloaded and coded into themes. For the qualitative data of this study, interviews were recorded and transcribed onto a Microsoft Word document, which was later coded and analyzed using the QSR NVivo software. Documents were collected from ministry sites and entered into the QSR NVivo for analysis.

In the first phase of the project, more than ten recommended orphan care ministries were contacted via email to ascertain the existence of a post-adoption ministry at their churches. Seven churches said that they have a post-adoption ministry but only five were willing to take part in the research. Of the five churches that were willing to take part in this research only two of them had adoptive parents willing to respond to surveys. All of the documents collected from the ministry websites are documents referred to by the ministry leaders.

Summary of Findings

The primary question of this research was: what are the essential post-adoption services of the local church? In this section the findings will be presented in three main

parts significant to the research question. The first part will identify the post-adoption

services of the local church, the second part will describe some practices of these post-

adoption ministries, and the third part will substantiate the PA ministry efforts of each

church through documents, and show the effectiveness of the ministries to its adoptive

parents as determined by the survey results.

**Categories of Post-Adoption Services
for the Local Church**

**Crisis Management (Psychological/
Emotional/Spiritual)
Support Services**

These services, as understood by the respondents, are used to serve the

emotional, psychological/behavioral, and spiritual needs of adoptive parents and children.

Such services include counseling, support/small groups, mentoring, W.R.A.P. program

(Wrestle in Prayer, Respite care, Acts of Service, Promises of God/letters of

encouragement). Here is how the respondents explained how these support services work

in their ministries:

> One of the greatest services we offer as support is counseling. We have a strong
> counseling department at our church and they do a lot of work in providing
> counseling to families that have adopted, responding to their needs that way. We
> hope that a fostering or adoptive family is engaged within a small group (initial faith
> community); that will be the first place that we would want them to seek support,
> specifically support in terms of guiding them towards the gospel in hard situations
> and providing spiritual support. (Interviewee 3).

> We offer support groups--emotional support and encouragement, mentoring,
> W.R.A.P Program (Wrestle in Prayers, Respite, Acts of Service, Promises of
> God/letters of encouragement). (Interviewee 2).

> We also have the support group that is mostly made up of adoptive moms that
> regularly share what is going on with their kid and nothing is going to be too
> shocking for people. Also, the leader of our adoption ministry works closely with

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Dr. Karen Purvis and understands most of the adoption issues such that she is of much help to the families at our church. She makes herself willingly available to families to provide counsel for them as they face various issues or answer their questions. (Interviewee 4).

Funds are set aside to assist families for cost of therapy for their families, provide families with a mentor or one on one mentoring through the mentoring program. (Interviewee 5).

Our church has a counseling ministry where people can come and do an evaluation and receive financial help and also referral for counseling. (Interviewee 1).

In this section, respondents made it clear that managing the various issues of adoptive families takes different kinds of services because the parents and children experience varied issues.

Educational/Informational Support Services

These services equip adoptive parents and care givers, empowering them to address post-adoption issues of adoptive kids and providing them with an understanding of the issues facing adoptive families. They include conferences/training seminars, classes (trauma-informed care classes, kinship care classes), small group curriculum, Christian literature (books, blogs, brochures, resource library, etc.), networking, and study groups for adoptive parents. The following statements from respondents reveal the nature of these services:

Conferences and training mainly for adoptive families (these often address issues facing adoptive families and provide helpful resources for these families). We write a lot about it, we write curriculums, provide group (specific) training and also provide conferences (with speakers) to recruit parents and train them to lead and nurture their children in healing ways (especially in regards to research findings on developmental issues for their children, etc.). (Interviewee 5).

We just started two separate classes recently. One is a kinship care-based class for adoptive kinship care givers and the other is for foster/adoptive parents and even for volunteers working with foster and adoptive parents so that they can understand the

trauma and then also trusted parenting. We have a small group curriculum on DVD that anyone could use (like the Karen Purvis trust-based parenting curriculum. (Interviewee 4).

We offer a blog for adoptive families to have interaction with one another. We have schools for moms and dads. While the dads connect and share with one another, the moms have a book study. In the summer we do training for parents. (Interview 5).

We give them a book, we do PA brochure. In our bookstore we have a section of the bookstore with books (on adoption) that families can check out. (Interviewee 1)

We are working on a resource library with materials from Karyn Purvis, Empowered to connect, etc. We also do networking; share resources and information. (Interviewee 2).
We have what is called the foster-adoptive parent gathering and we host that about once a month. Usually it is a gathering for foster and adoptive families to come together and learn about a topic that supports them in their parenting. They also get time for fellowship with one another. We try to make this a regular opportunity for them to expand community and to find other parents who share their experiences, and to find out about their needs and how the church can support their needs. (Interviewee 3).

From these responses, ministry leaders seem to show that the educational and informational elements of post-adoption services are important for equipping parents to understand the unique issues of post-adoption/adoptive families and the correct responses for these issues.

Celebratory Services

Research participants understand that adoption is a glorious celebration and physical representation of what God has done for us in Christ. With this understanding, these ministries have designated services that celebrate this beautiful reality.[1] They understand that though adoption brings with it certain issues, they must not only fall back

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[1]These are services that enhance the adoptive families celebration of adoption and create community for adoptive families

to crisis management as a ministry but also celebrate adoption and what it stands for. As

one interviewee aptly states,

> We try to go beyond crisis management. So we try to do things to just make it doable and exciting, celebrated, and positive (so we do something fun). We do orphan care and often find that families that have adopted get involved and interact with each other. Adoptive families serve together and kids who are adopted serve within this context and interact with each other (Interviewee 1).

Services to encourage a celebration of adoption and to connect adoptive

families include events, retreats, camps, picnics, volunteer events, parties, and

conferences. Some participants emphasized the necessity of such services for their

ministry efforts. They explained it as follows:

> We try to help people create an adoption/foster community for these families (e.g., once a quarter we have a big event such as a Christmas party mainly for adoptive kids in particular), conferences, a summer camp or retreat for adoptive/foster families to continue to develop a sense of community. (Interviewee 5).

> We offer events for adoptive/foster families to be in community. (Interviewee 3).

> We do gatherings for adoptive families such as picnics. We hold an annual picnic every year where we try to make adoption normal for the kids, especially by meeting and interacting with other adopted kids. Especially meeting an adopted kid at the picnic, interacting with them and just celebrating adoption. We also provide other volunteer events through which families can connect with other adoptive families. (Interviewee 1).

Post-adoption services that encourage a celebration of adoption are expressed

as needed services that remind adoptive families of the unique reality that they portray

(the gospel of Jesus Christ). These ministries foster those services that celebrate the truth

of adoption and they regard these services as supporting for adoptive families.

Practical Services

These services provide the basic needs of adoptive families when they are in need of assistance, etc. They provide financial assistance, meals, groceries, yard work, babysitting/date nights, respite care, etc. Here is how it works in these ministries:

> We offer support by giving adoptive families a meal plan or coming up with some practical ways by which the church body can come along these families when they are in need. We offer the ABBA fund that helps to cover some financial things. (Interviewee 3).

> Foster Closet, Date Night, meals, yard work, etc. (Interviewee 2).

> Providing groceries for adoptive families is a great way for families in the church who are not able to adopt to support adoption and be involved in this process. We also provide practical needs and food delivery for families and we have a small adoption grant to get adoptive families started after they come home from adopting. (Interviewee 4).

> We do meals, give them a PA referral or financial help, adoptive moms' night quarterly, post-adoption counseling loans (we don't "advertise" this but provide to those in real need). (Interviewee 1).

> Funds are set aside to assist families for cost of adoption or therapy for their families. (Interviewee 5).

The practical needs of the adoptive families require practical/concrete services. These ministries suggest that services that meet the practical needs of adoptive families are necessary in various seasons of the adoption journey.

Table 3 below provides a representation of the various categories of PA services according to each church.

Table 3. Categories of essential post-adoption services

Churches	Church Size	Crisis Management Support Services	Educational/Informational Support Services	Celebratory Support Services	Practical/Material Support Services
Church 1	Over 600	Support group and counseling	Bookstore, PA brochures	Picnics, volunteer events	Meals, PA referral or financial help, adoptive Moms Night quarterly, PA counseling loans and other practical needs
Church 2	Over 245	W.R.A.P program (Wrestle through prayers, Respite care, Acts of Service), Support group, and Mentoring	Resource library, networking	Connect Groups	Foster Closet, Date Night, meals, and yard work.
Church 3	Over 2000	Counseling, support/small group	Training/seminars (Foster/adoptive parent gathering)	Events	Meals, financial aid, and other practical services.
Church 4	Over 5000	Support group and Counseling	Trauma-informed care classes, the kinship care classes, small group, curriculum on DVD, and blogs.		Meals, groceries, PA grant,
Church 5	Over 2000	Mentoring and therapy	Conferences/training seminars, blogs, classes, and study groups	Events, camps, retreats parties, conferences	Financial help

Foundational basis for PA practice. Respondents understood that the

church's mission or vision for the adoption ministry is biblically centered and driven,

such that its understanding of adoption and PA issues grows from an understanding of the

gospel: what God has done for us in Christ. This general understanding underlies the

vision and mission of the PA practices of the participating ministries. Here are some

examples of mission statements of these ministries:

> To spread the mission and passion of Jesus in the world even through adoption . . .
> (Interviewee 1)

> I would say that our church talks about adoption as it relates to the gospel and our
> own adoption into the family of God. (Interviewee 3).

> To show Christ (through F.A.C.E.S.) to orphans, vulnerable children, and those who
> come alongside them. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is
> this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained
> by the world. James 1:27. (interviewee 2).

> Adoption is doing physically for a child what God has done for us spiritually.
> (Interviewee 4).

Other respondents explained how their church's unique vision influences their

practice of post-adoption services, especially as it involves providing true community and

support for adoptive families and serving adoptive families through the unique gifts of its

church members.

> We understand that adoption is not the end of the journey, but rather an important
> part of the journey. Families need community and support. (Interviewee 5).

> It is only the church that can provide the orphan and vulnerable children with true
> community and family. The church is in a unique position to care for orphans and
> vulnerable children because of the gifts Christ has given to his body. In fact, it is

only the church that possesses the spiritual gifts necessary to meet all the needs of the orphan, vulnerable child and those who come alongside them. (Interviewee 2).

Our church is very supportive of adoption and of people who adopt. (Interviewee 1).

I think that the passion of our heart is to make sure that adoptive families do well. (We think that disruption is a tragic end to adoption that could hopefully be prevented through the services we provide.) (Interviewee 4).

We have a congregation with a huge heart for the orphan and people that really would like to do something. We exist to bridge the gap between the needs of the orphan and the people that choose to respond to God's call to 'Do Something' . . . Our church really opens their arms to the kids who have been adopted and supports the families. (Interviewee 2).

There seems to be an underlying element within the mission/vision statements of these ministries. The gospel is declared to be the motivation for why these ministries exist to do what they do. They suggest that for the local church's adoption ministries, the gospel drives or should drive all of its practices.

Understanding PA issues and customizing PAS to the families' needs. Ministry leaders talked about the fact that it is necessary for PA programs to seek to understand PA issues/needs of the adoptive families within their congregation: "the needs of adoptive families should be addressed by particular services" (Interviewee 5). Another expressed understanding of these issues according to their experience:

I think that one of the main things that we have seen and heard about adopting recently is the need for children who have been adopted to receive some additional support. Also, adoptive parents need some additional training on how to parent children that are coming from backgrounds of trauma. One of the things we promote in our ministry is the therapeutic model for working with kids that come from hard places, based on research by Karen Purvis. It is like a track base for helping in relational intervention and it focuses on, and ensures that, parents are trained to respond to children from traumatic background based on a deeper knowledge of understanding of their triggers or understanding of what may be behind their behaviors. (Interviewee 3).

Another revealed their belief in addressing specific PA issues:

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We believe so strongly in attachment because we know that these kids that are being adopted are always from some sort of hurt; the fact that they don't have that connection. We talk about child-based care and trauma informed parenting and we help parents understand the hurt that their child is coming into the relationship with so that they can parent them in a way that will help bring healing. (Interviewee 4).

Others noted that understanding the issues of post-adoption, especially those experienced by adoptive families within their congregation, means that they can customize their PAS to the adoptive families' needs:

We try to tailor our services to the needs of the families, not our own agenda. (Interviewee 2).

One respondent did specify the fact that their understanding of the needs of adoptive families' comes directly from the parents:

I think that our understanding grows directly from the parents and what their needs are after they've adopted. We have a large group of families who have adopted internationally, domestically, and through foster care. I think that typically our understanding grows as the parents share more of their story and talk about their needs (Interviewee 3).

Knowledge of the needs of adoptive families is important to the effectiveness of PAS. These respondents suppose that an understanding of the issues faced by adoptive families is necessary for tailoring services to address those issues and their needs.

Connecting adoptive families into community for support. A common practice of PA ministries commonly identified by each of these ministry leaders is to encourage connection and community support between adoptive families and the local church community in general. The following responses reveal their practice of creating connection and community support:

One of our main aims is to help people connect to something greater than them (when people face problems in adoption/foster care they often retreat). We don't

want people to retreat, we want people to be connected so that they can correct ideas such as how to help a hurting child. That is one of the main focuses of our conferences: to help people get connected. Families are engaged and connected to this community where resources are shared and information can be easily had as families interact with one another. (Interviewee 5).

We come alongside families to help them understand the process through a seminar called "Thinking about adoption or foster care" where ordinary adoptive families from our church share info and their experiences. (Interviewee 4).
We offer some practical events in which we connect families with community around them to support them. (Interviewee 3).

We connect people to families that have adopted children. (Interview 1).

The nature of the practice of connecting adoptive families in community indicates that it is essential for adoptive families to be in some kind of community where they connect with people going through similar situations. These connections are intended to happen in the community of faith, especially those directly involved in ministry to the needs of the adoptive families, and also to other adoptive families, where there is mutual understanding and support. For these connections to happen services must be planned or set-up for such purposes.

Ministry accessibility: set-up and procedures for administering services. The set-up and procedures of administering PAS are an important aspect of a PA ministry. The respondents understand that it is necessary for a PA program of the local church to set up procedures that will enable it to effectively minister to the adoptive families within its congregation:

We have struggled to meet with families especially those with older children. At one point we had a group that met but it is very difficult for people to come because it is difficult for them to leave their children. There are a couple of other things that we have tried out but at this point we have landed on the post-adoption brochure so to create awareness of post-adoption issues. We have thought of inviting someone to give a talk, because it will be well-received. But it is difficult because parents don't

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have time to read or attend a seminar because they are in the middle of it all. (Interviewee 1).

The steps for administering PA services can begin either when an adoptive family contacts the church or the PA ministry, or when the PA ministry contacts the adoptive families about their availability to serve them:

A lot of times somebody will reach out to the Tapestry ministry or will reach out to the church and are directed our way. (Interviewee 5).

When a family has a need they would hopefully contact FACES and we would assess the needs and make the proper connections or recommendations to our programs, resources or people who want to help. We also try to reach out to those who may not like to ask for help and let them know that is why we exist and that it's okay to not be a "perfect" adoptive/foster family. (Interviewee 2).

The family takes the first step if they need assistance. But when a family adopts, the church starts by first providing a meal for them, a post-adoption brochure and a book. Beyond that the church will have an assessment of the situation to figure out what they need and what needs to be done (it is kind of a triage thing that the church does to assist families), depending on what the needs are they make a determination for that. Sometimes when we know the needs we offer them assistance for counseling services. (Interviewee 1).

Some leaders identified communication as a challenge in effectively serving adoptive families within their congregation:

We are a big church, so communication sometimes is difficult. Sometimes they call the church office and are directed to my manager or myself. We would get them connected to a ministry counselor or direct them to a support group or one of our classes or all the above (it is a wrap around). (Interviewee 4).

Provided we know about their adoption, they will have to reach out to us about their needs. If we don't hear about their needs or know about them, then they have to reach out. (Interviewee 1).

Other ministries are set up such that they engage adoptive families from the pre-adoption phase and make their services known and accessible to them that way:

We like to get to know the families and get them into our programs before they foster or adopt, so that we can anticipate their needs and prepare our volunteers (Interviewee 2).

In terms of volunteers in connection to post-adoption services to parents, if we know a family is adopting we will form a team around the adoptive family that is in charge of buying groceries and other basic needs after the family gets home from adopting rather than just leave you isolated. (Interviewee 4).

Ministry accessibility, by adoptive parents, seems to be a challenge for some of these post-adoption support ministries. Communication seems to be a challenge in cases where there is a larger congregation. Respondents did acknowledge that it is necessary for the adoption ministry to make those efforts that bridge this gap of communication or accessibility of the PAS.

Partnering with external ministries and adoption experts. Ministry leaders expressed the common practice of partnering with experts or external ministries to provide those services that may be needed by adoptive parents yet may not be directly available from the church:

We partner with lots of organizations around the city of Austin that are doing work around adoption and foster care services. So if there is a service or a need that is greater than what we can offer as a church body, then we make sure to connect those families with where the resources are within the community. (Interviewee 3).

We work with the Post-Adoption Resource Center of Traverse City, MI who assists with supporting adoptions from the foster care system. (Interviewee 2).

Respondents referenced expert knowledge/curriculums as some external resources that provide ministry leaders and adoptive families with clearer understanding of the issues adoptive families may be facing, which may also help provide insight as to how to address these issues:

The leader of our adoption ministry works closely with Dr. Karen Purvis and understands most of the adoption issues, such that she is of much help to the families at our church. (interviewee 4).

It would seem that there is a need and also a benefit for post-adoption ministry to reach outside of the church to seek external help/assistance in understanding the issues of adoption and for supplementing the services that they lack.

**Summary of Documents and Surveys
Substantiating the Efforts and
Effectiveness of Participating
PA Ministries**

In this section summaries of documents will be used to substantiate the success of orphan care/adoption ministry efforts of these churches, and also their understanding of PA issues. The survey data will be used to demonstrate effectiveness of the ministries (Church 1 and 2) whose adoptive parents were able to respond to the survey questions.

Documentation

Church 1: Ministry efforts and understanding of PA issues. One church in particular is passionate about orphan care and adoption, and this can be seen through the ministry efforts of its adoption ministry to this end.

> Our Ministry seeks to love orphans at home and around the world in unique ways. We accomplish this through educating others on God's heart for adoption and orphan care, making them aware of the need for adoption and why to adopt, making others aware of the need to support orphans that will never be adopted and informing people on the process of adoption. We help orphans in need of families or that will never be adopted (through mission trips) and provide for child sponsorships for children at partner orphanages. For support, they come alongside those in any phase of adoption through information, emotional support, financial resources, and praying for families and children waiting to be adopted or who may never be adopted.[2]

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[2]Hands of Hope Adoption and Orphan Care Ministry, "Adoption and Orphan Care Goals," accessed February 8, 2015, http://handsofhopein.org/hands-of-hope-our-goals_6f28cd60.html.

They understand the issues of adoption and provide or recommend needed services for adoptive families facing these issues.

> Giving a child a forever home is one of life's most joyous endeavors . . . As your child begins to feel safe within your family, sometimes there are new revelations of his past, which may include neglect, deep emotional wounds or even physical traumas. These can manifest themselves through learning delays, inattention, poor social skills, and even anger-filled tantrums. Perhaps you are not quite prepared for the impact his past is having on his future and your family. This can be an exhausting and confusing time as you search for resources to help you and your child work through very real and unique challenges. Our Ministry desires to support your family with hope and compassion. We have put together this brochure of resources that covers a variety of adoption specific issues like bonding and attachment. We pray that this resource packet will be of help to you. There are additional resources on our website, including daily devotionals.[3]

The orphan care ministry efforts of this church, from educating others about adoption and the need to care for the orphans/foster children to its efforts of advocating for and caring for children who may never be adopted, shows a passion for orphan care and adoption at home and abroad. They understand the issues adoptive families face PA and the need to support adoptive families through various PA services, even those external to the church.

Church 2: Ministry efforts and understanding of adoption issues. This church is aware of the various needs of vulnerable children, and its ministry efforts seek to motivate its members to adopt and foster children around its city.

> The F.A.C.E.S.[4] ministry was developed as a result of an overwhelming awareness of the needs of the vulnerable children that live within our community and throughout the world. God has used us to spread the message of caring for the fatherless. We believe that the church possesses the spiritual gifts necessary to meet all the needs of the orphan, vulnerable child and those who come alongside them.

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[3]Hands of Hope Adoption and Orphan Care, "Resources," accessed February 8, 2015, http://www.gracehandsofhope.org/copy-Adoption-Resources_f67d98343ee5f.html

[4]Foster. Adopt. Care. Educate. Support.

We provide support grants and interest-free loans to motivate families willing to adopt. We provide informational meetings for those feeling God calling them to adopt, providing information and strategies for fundraising etc.[5]

Other ministry efforts include assisting foster parents.

We deal directly with foster parents, supplying them with the basic needs for the children in their care. This enables the foster parent to provide for the most basic needs of the child quickly, and helps ease the transition into their new foster home.[6]

They specifically employ the W.R.A.P. program to serve the needs of adoptive families within their congregation.

We understand that while not every family is called to adopt, everyone is called to care for the orphans and vulnerable children. We believe that the community of faith should come alongside adoptive families as they face various issues to wrestle in prayer, provide respite care (short-term or temporary care to provide relief for regular caregivers) and also to serve through several acts of service (cleaning, yard work, laundry, providing occasional meals etc.) and last but not the least, to encourage adoptive families through God's promises through notes, emails or calls (also known as the W.R.A.P. program). The foster and adoptive families need their church and community to surround and support them in times of joy and trials. When we do this we mirror our heavenly Father, who wraps His arms around us during times of joy as well as times of trial. Our goal through the W.R.A.P. program is to provide practical guidance and support to foster/adoptive families. Our ministry through support and connection groups provides the benefits of a collective voice, sharing, experiences and resources, gaining emotional strength, education on the issues of PA, etc.[7]

Church 2 fosters and cares for the vulnerable in its city and around the world. Their service to adoptive families shows an understanding of orphan care and the issues of adoption. They have set up their PA ministry to come alongside adoptive families as a community, serving these families through the various gifts within the congregation.

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[5] F.A.C.E.S. Adoption Ministry, "About Us," accessed February 8, 15, http://faces-ministry.com/.

[6] F.A.C.E.S. Adoption Ministry, "Foster Closet," accessed February 8, 15, http://faces-ministry.com/foster-closet/.

[7] F.A.C.E.S. Adoption Ministry, "W.R.A.P.," accessed February 8, 2015, http://faces-ministry.com/w-r-p/.

Church 3: Ministry efforts and understanding of adoption issues. Church 3

participates in orphan/foster care ventures through efforts like advocating for a foster

child in their local courts, or missions trips to assist orphans around the world:

> Caring for the orphan as God so sacrificially cared for us demonstrates and declares
> this love, this gospel to our city, to our nation, to our world and to ourselves. Each
> of us has a role; no one is exempt . . . Let's care for the orphan, for His glory. In our
> city, there are over 1,400 children in foster care. God has called us to care for these
> children, right here in our city. From advocating for a child in court, babysitting for
> a foster family, offering prayer and financial support, mentoring a teenager who is
> aging out of the system or becoming certified to foster-to-adopt a child into your
> home, there is a role and a place for everyone. Through child sponsorship and
> mission trips, we have an opportunity to help these orphans experience renewal and
> restoration wherever they live.[8]

They understand adoption and the PA issues and provide specialized care for adoptive

families. They describe their ministry as follows:

> Our counseling center (A.S.C.C.) provides specialized care for adoptive and foster
> families. Our staff is equipped with counselors that have been trained and certified
> in Trust-Based Relational Interventions (TBRI). This is an emerging family-based
> intervention model that is designed to assist families with biological, adopted, or
> foster children who have experienced relationship-based traumas. Our counselors'
> training in this model has equipped them well to serve struggling families and help
> them form healthy attachment between parents, and children, and siblings.[9]

From advocating the case of the orphan through adoption and mission trips, to advocating

for the foster child in courts and also through other services, this ministry shows a clear

understanding of the mission of the church; to care for the orphans and vulnerable

children at home and abroad. They particularly understand the issues of PA that have to

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[8]"The Austin Stone Orphan Care," accessed February 8, 2015, http://austinstone.org/orphancare.

[9]The Austin Stone Counseling Center, "Professional Care for Adoptive and Foster Families," accessed February 8, 2015, Ibid, https://theaustinstone.wufoo.com/forms/professional-care-for-adoptive-and-foster-families/.

do with adoptive families and the need to provide specialized care for these families'

needs.

Church 4: Ministry efforts and understanding of adoption issues. Church 4

provides meaningful ways/opportunities for its members to exert those efforts that are

geared towards orphan care, locally and abroad.

> God makes it clear that he cares deeply about the orphans of the world and expects
> His people to do the same. The orphan care program at our church exists to provide
> meaningful ways for every person to engage in caring for the orphans through the
> local church at home and abroad. To reach the vision of every child with a family of
> their own, locally and globally we work to help children remain in family, reunite
> with family, or regain a family through adoption. We train people through the
> Orphan Care Skills Training to learn simple and practical ways to end the orphan
> crisis. We exist to provide meaningful ways for every person to engage in caring for
> orphans through local churches at home and around the world.

> In our ministry there are several ways to volunteer and advocate the case of the
> orphan and vulnerable children, they include: blogging, writing, social media,
> supporting important Orphan Care legislations in the US House and Senate, help the
> church as we partner with the Rwandan government to empty the orphanages by
> promoting adoption, assisting newly adoptive families, and training lay social
> workers within the church in Rwanda.[10]

They also provide educative services that address the issues that adoptive families may

face:

> Most orphans and institutionalized children suffer from childhood trauma. Through
> our Trauma-informed care classes we provide understanding of the effects of trauma
> on attachment and what to do to promote attachment and trust with children from
> hard places and traumatic backgrounds. Our Trauma Informed Parenting Class is a 7
> week training, perfect for relative caregivers as well as foster and adoptive families,
> will help you and your family understand the effects of trauma on your child. Learn
> to understand your child's experience with attachment and acquire practical
> techniques for promoting trust and creating a safe environment for your child.

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[10]Saddleback Church, "Orphan Care," accessed February 8, 2015,
http://orphancareinitiative.com/getinformed/.

Join a community of families as we come together to be equipped with skills to create a tighter bond with your child and a healthier relationship.[11] We support meaningful orphan care initiatives that educate our community about the difficult conditions many foster children and their families face, equip individuals and churches to care for these children, and empower the families who have already brought children into their home. We help parents with the foster or adoption process, and we are looking for volunteers to help support these families.[12]

The Orphan Care Initiative ministry deeply cares about the condition of orphans at home and abroad by partnering with a nation to ensure that orphanages are emptied through adoption. They also believe in advocating for the case of the orphan through the laws of the nation. With an understanding of the issues that adoptive children and parents face, the Orphan Care Initiative provides necessary services to enlighten parents and care takers on these issues and to equip them to deal with them effectively.

Church 5: Ministry efforts and understanding of adoption issues. Church 5's PA ministry efforts go beyond helping only the adoptive families within their local church. Here is a document that explains their commitment to adoption and foster care:

During the past seven years Tapestry has been blessed to walk alongside literally thousands of adoptive and foster families. Locally, Tapestry is privileged to serve hundreds of families face-to-face through a variety of activities and events, including discussion-based small groups, large group educational events, parent training courses, family-to-family mentoring, outreach events, a summer family camp, and the annual Tapestry Conference. And thousands more families are served via Tapestry's website, through the distribution of our resources and materials, and through Empowered To Connect, a partnership between Tapestry and Dr. Karyn Purvis, author of The Connected Child.[13]

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[11]Orphan Care Initiatives, "Grow and Connect in our Fall Classes and Support Groups," Saddleback Church Orphan Care, accessed February 8, 2015, http://orphancareinitiative.com/blogs/main/?p=3.

[12]Saddleback Church, "Global Orphan Care," accessed February 8, 2015, http://saddleback.com/connect/ministry/orphan-care.

[13]Michael Monroe, "Finding Help & Hope for the Journey," Tapestry Adoption and Foster Care Ministry, accessed February 8, 2015, http://tapestryministry.org/finding-help-hope-for-the-journey/.

Tapestry is committed to helping raise awareness of the thousands of North Texas children in foster care, including nearly 1,000 children who are waiting to be adopted by a forever family. We have been blessed with a burden: a burden to love and serve the fatherless and to see more churches do the same. Scripture is clear that we, as followers of Christ, are called to serve and minister to the fatherless and the orphan. Tapestry takes this calling and this privilege seriously, and we want to be a resource for other church ministries who seek to establish and grow church adoption and foster care ministries.[14]

Tapestry is venturing in a new and exciting direction with a new venture called Beyond Adoption. This is a strategic global orphan care initiative that will allow us to serve children and communities worldwide. This effort is dedicated to providing tangible help and hope to orphans and vulnerable children through education, spiritual growth, medical care, and training, all while sharing and showing the love of Christ.[15]

They see adoption as a journey and understand the necessity to travel along the adoption road with adoptive families through several services, providing them with community and connection.

Tapestry is a ministry committed to meeting the real needs of adoptive and foster families, being in community with them, and supporting them through the highs and lows of the journey. Wherever the adoption or foster care journey leads, Tapestry will be there.[16]

The Empowered to Connect class is one of the ways that they train adoptive parents to understand the issues of adoption, especially from a Christian perspective.

Empowered to Connect (ETC) Parent Training is an interactive learning experience designed specifically for adoptive and foster parents. This training equips parents with holistic understanding of their child's needs and development, while empowering them with the tools and strategies to effectively meet those needs, build trust, and help their child heal and grow.

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[14]Tapestry Adoption and Foster Care Ministry, "Resources," accessed February 8, 2015, http://tapestryministry.org/resources/.

[15]Tapestry Adoption and Foster Care Ministry, "Beyond Adoption," accessed February 8, 15, http://tapestryministry.org/beyond-adoption/.

[16]Michael Monroe, "Finding Help & Hope for the Journey," http://tapestryministry.org/finding-help-hope-for-the-journey/.

This training is taught from a Christian perspective, and focuses on a wide range of topics and issues relevant to adoptive/foster parents, including helping parents understand the impact of their child's history, what they themselves bring to the parent-child relationship, the fundamentals of attachment, the impact of fear, and the importance of meeting their child's sensory processing, nutritional and other physiological needs. In addition to this, training participants have the opportunity to participate in an Attachment Assessment Interview provided by an experienced professional.[17]

Tapestry is an adoption ministry whose passion to serve the fatherless drives its ministry efforts to help adoptive families all over the country. They also seek to assist churches who want to understand and establish adoption/foster ministries within their local church. They understand adoption and the need for an adoptive community, and have created a web-wide community for adoptive families. They also understand the issues of PA and the need to educate adoptive families from a Christian perspective on the various PA issues facing adoptive families.

Summary of Survey

Ten adoptive families (five from each church) from church 1 and church 2 responded to the survey. Tables 4 and 5 provide a representation of the survey data according to two main themes.

Table 4 shows the types of PA services in the PA ministries of church 1 and 2. This theme is based solely on survey question 10. Out of the 10 respondents who took the survey only 9 of the respondents answered this question.

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[17]Tapestry Adoption and Foster Care Ministry, "ETC Parent Training," accessed February 2, 2015, http://tapestryministry.org/get-involved/etc-parent-training.

Table 4. Types of PA Services

Service	Responses	Percent (%)
Professional Biblical Counseling	1	11.1
Respite care	4	44.4
Educational services	4	44.4
Support systems through their local church (mentors, support groups, etc.)	7	77.8
Books from a Biblical worldview	6	66.7
Education from adoption professionals regarding post-adoptive needs	5	55.6
Date Night	2	22.2
W.R.A.P. program	1	11.1
All of the above	1	11.1
None of the above	1	11.1

Table 5 shows the availability of post-adoption services for families (based on survey questions 9, 11, 12), and effectiveness of the post-adoption services (based on survey questions 13 and 14).

Table 5. Availability and Effectiveness of PA Services

Themes	Percent (%)
Theme 2 (Availability of PA Services)	80
Theme 3 (Effectiveness of PA Services)	79.4

81

Evaluation of Research Design

The purpose of this study was to identify the key post-adoption support services of selected exemplar churches in order to describe these practices and to suggest what an effective post-adoption ministry could look like. The chosen method was a descriptive case study that used both qualitative and quantitative data to fulfill this purpose.

This study contained several strengths as well as a weakness. A main strength of this research was that a bulk of the data came from interviews with the ministry leaders of the PA ministries in several local churches. Also, the documents and surveys were used as data to substantiate the ministry efforts and understanding of the issues of PA, and also the effectiveness of these PA services as portrayed by their leaders in the interviews. The convenient use of an Internet based survey collector facilitated the collecting and analyzing of survey data in one place. However, a weakness was that there was very little response in some cases, and no response in others, from the adoptive parents. Though the researcher made several efforts to secure survey responses from adoptive parents, there was some setback in that adoptive parents in some of these ministries were not willing to take any surveys. Additional surveys would have served to expand on the data presented.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the key post-adoption support

services of selected exemplar churches in order to describe their practices and to suggest

what an effective post-adoption ministry could look like in a local church. Accordingly,

this chapter will give conclusions to the findings of this research by providing an analysis

of the results, showing the contribution of this research to the precedent literature, and

recommending essential post-adoption practices and services for the post-adoption

support ministries of the local church.

Analysis of Results

The results of the findings analyzed here are intended to help provide healthy

generalizations for application of the results to post-adoption ministries within the local

church. In chapter 4 the findings of this research revealed various examples of the post-

adoption practices/services for the local church. Table 3 of chapter 4 particularly shows

that there are various post-adoption services for the local church.

Concerning the effectiveness of the participating ministries, the surveys

collected show that both post-adoption ministries have been effective in their services.

Data and survey responses from churches 1 and 2 as represented in tables 4 and 5 lead to

the conclusion that parents acknowledge the presence and effectiveness of certain post-

adoption services within their local churches. Adoption experts have argued that for an approach of PAS to be effective, it should be based on known profiles of problems faced by adopted children and on the interventions that have worked best in mitigating the changes in the past.[1] This assessment is true. However, such a study will require information/details of the adoptive families' lives that they might rather keep private. In addition, most adoptive parents are so busy that anything that takes their time seems taxing.

From the documentation of ministry efforts, testimonials, ministry understanding of adoption, and the issues of adoption, it can be concluded that there is much that can be learned from these ministries about their post-adoption practices and services.

Practices of the Post-Adoption Ministry
of the Local Church

In this section I use the five main themes describing the practices of PA ministries of the local church (from chapter 4) to simultaneously analyze these practices and their essential services. All participating adoption ministries have transferable elements of their practices that can be critiqued and generalized. Therefore, I am going to use the five themes that best capture these elements.

The fundamental basis for PA ministry practices. Adoption is a gospel reality for the Christian and the local church in general. It is not just what we do but who

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[1]Richard P. Barth and Julie M. Miller, "Building Effective Post-Adoption Services: What is the Empirical Foundation?" *Family Relations* 49, no. 4 (2000): 454. See also, Mandeep K. Dhami, et al., "An Evaluation of Post-Adoption Services," 165-66, accessed October 2, 2013, www.sciencedirect.com. Laurie Kramer and Doris Houston. "Hope for the Children: A Community-based Approach to Supporting Families

we are. From the interviews and documentations of ministry efforts of the participating ministries, the PA practices of local churches flow directly from a biblical understanding of adoption, particularly as it relates to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, all practices of PA must be judged against this background. In essence, the PA practices of the local church are unique because of the identity of the people of God in Christ (1 Peter 2:9) and because of the direct mandate from God to care for the orphans and the vulnerable children (Jas 1:27). The local church is in a unique position to care for the needs of adoptive families because of the spiritual blessings it has received in Christ; we have been empowered for this mission (Eph 4:11-16).

Kovacs argues that in this mission, the church has to equip its members to care for the orphans and be concerned about the special needs of those who have committed themselves to bring the lost children into their homes.[2] Given the responses from the ministry leaders and the documentations of their mission and vision for adoption, it is obvious that the reality of who we are, as the Church of Christ, must be seen in the practices of our post-adoption ministries. This will result in an understanding of adoption as a journey and the local church will seek to meet the needs of adoptive families proactively (Interviewee 5 particularly talked about this).

Church 2 specifically understands the church's unique position to serve adoptive families. They utilize the W.R.A.P. program[3] as an important and effective part

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who Adopt Children." *Child Welfare* 78, no. 5 (Sept/Oct 1999): 611.

[2]Jason Kovacs,"Adoption and Missional Living," in *Reclaiming Adoption: Missional Living Through the Rediscovery of Abba Father,* ed. Dan Cruver (Adelphi, MD: Cruciform Press, 2011), Kindle, loc. 1099.

[3]"Wrestle in prayer. Respite care. Acts of Service. Promises of God."

of their practices of the PA ministry. This program could be easily transferable for use in any local church. In practice it includes members within the congregation who may not be able to adopt and are willing to come alongside adoptive families through prayer, providing respite care, acts of service, and promises of God/encouraging letters.

Understanding PA issues and customizing PAS to families' needs.
Adoption experts argue that those providing post-adoption treatment/care should be trained professionals who are knowledgeable about the unique needs of adoptive families.[4] This truth is reflected in practices of the adoption ministries that participated in this study. These adoption ministries understand the necessity for the post-adoption ministries of the local church to be well-informed as to the various post-adoption issues and the best help to provide for those facing these issues. They show that such understanding demands that these issues be addressed by particular services. As the ministry leader of church 2 has said, this means that the ministry practices and ministry leaders should not seek their own agenda, but learn about the needs of adoptive families within their congregation. Practices should be set up to serve the adoptive families from an understanding of their particular needs.

For example, the counseling ministry of church 3 has equipped its staff with counselors that have been trained and certified in Trust-Based Relational Interventions (TBRI), an emerging family-based intervention model that is designed to assist families with biological, adopted, or foster children who have experienced relationship-based traumas.

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[4]Michael Yates and Kristi Kulesz, "Supporting the Promise of Permanency: Post-Adoption Services for Children and Families," accessed September 2, 2013, https://www.adoptioncouncil.org/

Also, church 4's orphan care ministry has a "Trauma Informed Parenting Class" (a 7 week training) for relative caregivers as well as foster and adoptive families, which helps them understand the effects of trauma on the adopted child. The kinship care-based class, for adoptive kinship care givers and the foster/ adoptive parents (and even for volunteers working with foster and adoptive parents), can help them understand the hurts of adopted children and how to provide trusted parenting or care-giving.

The ETC (Empowered to Connect) curriculum is also a good and effective curriculum that takes into consideration the extensive needs of adoptive parents and their adopted children. It is training taught from a Christian perspective, which focuses on a wide range of topics and issues relevant to adoptive/foster parents, including helping parents understand the impact of their child's history; what they themselves bring to the parent-child relationship; the fundamentals of attachment; the impact of fear; and the importance of meeting their child's sensory processing, nutritional and other physiological needs. Seminars and classes for educating and equipping parents and volunteers to address post-adoption issues should be a constant practice of PA ministries.

Also, it is necessary for the church community to be educated on the uniqueness of the adoptive families. It could be noted from the interviews that even though there is usually an understanding of the issues of PA within the adoption community, there is a lack of a general understanding of the PA needs of adoptive families within the general congregation. The Church is one body and Christ has commanded us to "bear one another's burdens" (Gal 6:2). This should be taken seriously in this case. As some ministry leaders have noted (see chapter 4), not everyone should

publications/adoption-advocate-no-56.html.

adopt but everyone should seek to engage in this ministry of adoption. This means understanding the uniqueness of its needs and practices (pre- and post-adoption) so as to be an effective part of the mission. Therefore, the church should help its members to understand the realities of PA issues through seminars for volunteers involved in the PA ministry or by teaching about this reality from the pulpit. In all, the gap between the congregations' general understanding of the issues of PA and the adoptive families' needs should be bridged. Church 4 is an example of a church that educates its community about the difficult conditions that many foster children and their families face. It also equips individuals and churches to care for these children and empower the families who have already brought children into their homes.

Connecting adoptive families into community for support. An important factor of post-adoption practice, especially in the local church, is community and connection. Adoptive families, by their nature, will have experiences/issues that are unique to them, which make them seek to be understood and find others who share their experiences. It is therefore a necessary practice of the post-adoption ministry of the local church to aim to create community/connection for the adoptive families within their congregation. Services such as picnics, camps, conferences, support groups, interactive websites (blogs, etc.), and parties can provide venues for such connections and community to form.

Church 5, in particular, has this as one of its greatest strengths. It provides community and connection for adoptive/foster families around the country. Through their conferences and website, adoptive families have found connection, information and true community of like-minded believers who are seeking to disciple their children in the fear

of the Lord and to provide healing that is true and lasting. Not all churches can have such far-reaching influence, but all post-adoption ministries of the local church should seek creative ways to help adoptive families have community and connection.

Ministry accessibility: set-up and procedures for administering services. A PA ministry could either be effective or ineffective in administering services to adoptive families within its congregation, depending on the level to which their services are accessible to these families.[5] It can be concluded from the research findings that sometimes service accessibility can depend on how the program is set up, and the procedures necessary to effectively administer these services to the adoptive family.

In some of these ministries (e.g., church 4), due to the size of their church, communication of the availability of services or knowledge of the needs of adoptive families was a challenge. The set up and processes of communication for getting help from the post-adoption ministry should endeavor to be without too much bureaucracy. It is the practice of some of these ministries to try to reach out to adoptive parents within their congregations. Sometimes the process starts pre-adoption, so that the PA ministry can set up necessary procedures in case needs arise PA. For example, church 2 endeavors to get to know the families and get them into their program before they foster or adopt, so that they can anticipate their needs and prepare their volunteers to minister to them. Another solution could be (as noted by church 4) to form a team around the adoptive family to be in charge of buying groceries and other basic and practical needs. The local church must be creative in its approach to supporting adoption by taking into

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[5]See Yates and Kulesz on the 'Adoption Support and Preservation Model' used in Tennessee.

consideration the needs/realities and dynamics of adoptive families. The adoption

ministry should intentionally set up systems that assist adoptive families to make the

most of the services within their church.

Partnering with external ministries and adoption experts. Providing

comprehensive services is very necessary to the practice of post-adoption support

ministries. However, post-adoption support ministries of the local church are not

sufficient in themselves to meet all the PA needs of the adoptive families. Hence the

endeavor by some ministries in this study to provide lists or recommendations of external

services that might be needed by the adoptive parents within their ministries. Rick

Morton makes the suggestion that the church, especially its leadership, should be able to

assist adoptive families by identifying networks of relationships within the church and

even partnering with helpful organizations or adoption support services outside the

church so as to provide consistent and sufficient assistance and support for adoptive

families.[6]

The findings of this research are consistent with Morton's assessment.

Ministry leaders revealed that their churches reach out to external services, or

recommend adoptive parents to those services that they may not have within their

ministries, but that they know will best meet the needs of the adoptive parents. For

example, the manager of the orphan care ministry of church 4 works closely with Dr.

Karyn Purvis. Church 5 has a partnership with Dr. Karyn Purvis as well. Church 2 and

church 3 also mentioned that they work with external adoption ministries around their

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[6]Tony Merida and Rick Morton, *Orphanology: Awakening to Gospel-Centered Adoption and Orphan Care* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers. 2011), 123-24.

cities and refer adoptive parents to them.

Contribution of Research to the Precedent Literature

The needs assessment of adoptive families by adoption experts, in chapter 2 of this work, showed that adoptive families have issues that range from the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual aspects of human nature, and thus affect the entire person and relationships. As a result, experts have reached a consensus on how to determine the program elements that could be most related to the effectiveness of PAS. These elements have been categorized to provide a common language for the components of PAS. They include educational and informational services, clinical and health services, and material or concrete services.[7]

The findings of this research did confirm these categories and also added to them. The results show that in the local church there are particular needs/practices that arise from the local church's particular understanding of adoption and the issues of adoption. For example, the need for connection, community (fellowship), and celebration of adoption are significant to the effectiveness of the practices of post-adoption ministries. Also, the adoption ministries of the church are missional in purpose. That is, they seek to reach the orphans of the world by bringing them into Christian families for nurture towards Christ-likeness. As a result, certain aspects of the church's practice of post-adoption are different than other practices. A much-noted component exclusive to the local church is the practices/services that are meant to celebrate adoption. Thus, the components of effective PAS for the local church include Crisis Management

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[77]Barth and Miller, "Building Effective Post-Adoption Services," 450. See also, Kyle David Raque, "A Program for Post-Adoption Services" (Ph.D diss., Spalding University, 2006), 46-49.

(Psychological/Emotional/Spiritual) Support Services, Educational/Informational Support

Services, Celebratory Services, and Practical/Material Services.

Also, for the practice of post-adoption support ministry of the local church,

Kimber Graves has suggested that each local church must identify the needs of adoptive

families within its church community, and create a support system of services that

addresses these specific needs rather than adopting one "cookie cutter" post-adoption

program for all local churches. Such a process can be facilitated through a taxonomy that

forms a menu of services that will make the most sense in any given situation, and from

which custom solutions could be brought to bear.[8] Such a taxonomy could then provide

established categories for the church to form its thinking on post-adoption services.[9] The

recommendation of this work will provide such a classification to assist local churches to

know the necessary practices/services that are needed to establish an effective post-

adoption support ministry for their particular church. This classification will be able to

provide guidelines for practices and services for a local church seeking to provide a

system of coordinated services for the families within its congregation. This classification

will be provided in two sections; one section will show the essential practices of the local

church's post-adoption support ministry, and the other will provide the essential services

of such a ministry.

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[8]Kimber Graves, "Orphan Care Ministry: Becoming an Adoption-Friendly Church" in *A Guide to Adoption & Orphan Care*, ed. Russell D. Moore (Louisville: SBTS Press, 2012), 64-69.

[9]Leaders and staff should take initiative to educate themselves (or use an adoption professional) and members to understand the needs of these families (create a culture of awareness) that will lead to particular parenting styles. Churches need to be fully committed to knowing and understanding the realities and issues present in post-adoption for the adoptive families. Graves, "Orphan Care Ministry," 68-69. A taxonomy or identified existing categories could form some kind of a menu that makes sense for any given situation and could be customized for specific settings and needs.

Recommendations for Practice

**Practices of an Effective Post-Adoption
Support Ministry**

From the findings of this research project my recommendation for the practices

of post-adoption ministries in the local church will be a summary of the themes that

resulted from the findings of this work.

1. First of all, an effective post-adoption program should set those practices that
   understand the gospel as fundamental to the mission of adoption. As believers bear
   with one another in love and seek to serve one another within the congregation, the
   post-adoption ministry could make the most of the gifts of the members within its
   congregation to serve adoptive families. In fact, churches that do not yet have a post-
   adoption ministry could start by employing the present gifts within their congregation
   to set up a structure for their PA ministry practice and services. For example, if the
   counseling ministry, Christian education ministry or family discipleship ministry,
   etc., of your church is the strongest part of your church's ministry, use it as an asset or
   a starting point to begin to train volunteers on the needs of adoptive families and how
   to serve them.

2. An effective post-adoption ministry of the local church should endeavor to
   understand the issues adoptive families (within their church) are facing post-adoption,
   and seek to customize their PAS to the needs of adoptive families. A good place to
   start is to take an inventory of those who have adopted within your ministry and make
   contact with them to ascertain their needs (a survey could be used for this purpose).
   After that, the ministry leaders can strategize or map out first the services that they
   can readily provide, and then those that they need help with, perhaps externally.

3. An effective post-adoption program will encourage connection and community
   support for adoptive families. This is a very important practice so I will suggest that
   ministries start with casual events that bring adoptive families together and encourage
   interaction with one another. Events may include picnics, retreats, camps, volunteer
   events, etc. Also, all events should include all members of the family so that parents
   do not have to worry about babysitting. Also, you want to give adoptive parents and
   biological children, as well as the adopted children, a connecting experience. Think
   "CELEBRATION OF ADOPTION" when you plan services of this nature.

4. An effective practice of post-adoption ministries should make services accessible to
   adoptive families. Some services that can help with the aspect of accessibility include
   respite care and babysitting. These services encourage families to be able to access
   those services that require them to be away from their children or family for longer
   periods. They also motivate the parents to access and participate in those services that

are pertinent to their needs, especially services such as date nights, classes, study groups, etc.

5. An effective practice for the post-adoption ministry of the local church is also to recognize its limitations and supplement its programs through external partnership (with other ministries or services and adoption experts). This helps the ministry to focus on its strengths. This also ensures that the program is providing a comprehensive range of services for the needs of the adoptive families within its congregation. Advice for ministry leaders would be to do research on the post-adoption programs around their area so that they can confidently recommend the appropriate external services for the parents within their ministries. As to the criteria used to determine what services are best, ministry leaders should always consider the mission of adoption, and have a biblical/Christian perspective of healing and nurture of the whole person and relationships in adoption. Some elements necessary for this practice are educational materials (on the issues of post-adoption) from Christian adoption experts or expert advice (counseling in some cases), legal services, and some child educational/health services.

Overall, practices of post-adoption support ministries should be established according to the particular church's personality/gifting. Simply replicating whole programs is not effective.[10]

Essential PA Services for the Local Church

The following is a comprehensive list of services suggested by the ministries in this study.[11] Most of them have already been mentioned in the essential practices section as an example of the services that reinforce those practices. These services have been placed into four categories according to themes. These are the categories of services for the local church's post-adoption ministry. However, this is not to suggest that post-adoption ministries of the local church must have all of these services.

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[10]See Appendix 7 for the table on the "Taxonomy for implementing the essential PA practices/services in the local church.

[11]See Appendix 6 for table on the "Taxonomy of PA services for the local church."

Crisis management (psychological/emotional/spiritual support services. These are services that serve the emotional, psychological/behavioral, and spiritual needs of adoptive families of the local church. They include counseling/therapy, support/small groups, mentoring, and the W.R.A.P. program: Prayers, Respite, Acts of Service, Promises of God/letters of encouragement.

Educational/informational services. These services equip adoptive parents and care givers, empowering them to be able to address post-adoption issues of adoptive children, and providing volunteers with an understanding of the issues facing adoptive families. These services include conferences/training seminars, classes (e.g. trauma-informed care class, kinship care classes), small group curriculum, Christian literature (blogs, books, resource library, and brochures), and study groups for adoptive parents.

Celebratory services. These services result from the nature of the local church and its understanding of adoption. They enhance the adoptive families' celebration of adoption as a picture of what God has done for us in Christ, and create community for adoptive families. They include events (e.g., volunteer events), networking, retreats, camps, picnics, parties, and conferences.

Practical/material services. These are concrete services that provide for the basic needs of adoptive families when they are in need of assistance. These services include financial assistance, meals, groceries, yard work, babysitting, date nights, and respite care.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. How can post-adoption ministries in their practice of seeking to create community and connection for adoptive families serve the needs of adoptive families without further segregating them or making adoptive families an affinity group within the church?

2. Does the sustainability of post-adoption ministries within the local church or lack thereof, have to do with the leadership of the ministries?

3. What are the various continuums within which the range or level of effectiveness of post-adoption ministries within the local church can be determined?

4. Due to the nature of adoptive families and their sometimes overwhelming needs, what is the best way to effectively learn of their individual situations and analyze their various situations to provide best services and practices for them?

5. What can the local church do to raise awareness about the unique needs of adoptive families and to bridge the gap between the congregations' general understanding of the issues of PA and the adoptive families needs?

6. What ministry accessibility systems best assist (or easily discourage) adoptive families within the local church in making the most of PA services within their congregation?

Conclusion

This research answers the question on the essential post-adoption services for the local church. It also provides a description of the key practices of the post-adoption support ministries of the local church and recommendations for use. The missional purpose of the Church's adoption ministry will be made even more effective when local churches understand and act on the fact that adoption is a journey, and along this journey the adoptive families have unique needs that should necessitate the local church's action to come alongside these families through designated services post-adoption. As the Christians or the local church in this case, let us heed God's call to "bear one another's

burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ . . . and as we have opportunity, let us do good to

everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Gal 6: 2, 10).

APPENDIX 1

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION.
RESOLUTION 2: ON ADOPTION AND
ORPHAN CARE

This resolution is an example of a pledge by local churches to practice orphan care and adoption from a biblical perspective. In this document, the Southern Baptist Churches committed to minister to orphans as mirrored in the gospel and taught in the scriptures. It reveals the church's willingness to obey the command of God to care for the orphans and reach the lost and hurting children of the world through adoption. The Church is to make caring for the orphans a part of its mission with the church leaders championing and equipping laypersons for the work of this ministry. It also recognizes that orphan care ministries must include ministry to the needs of adoptive families pre-adoption and post-adoption.

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND QUESTIONS

Explanation of Research Purpose

This research is seeking to understand and to describe the various practices of an exemplar post-adoption support ministry. These interviews will seek to identify the nature of the post-adoption ministry of the church in question. Therefore, they will be administered to the leaders or coordinators of these ministries.

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the key post-adoption support services of your church in order to describe these practices and to suggest what an effective post-adoption ministry could look like. Emmanuela Nyam is conducting this research for purposes of collecting data for a thesis research. In this research, you will be asked to take a survey. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

By your completion of this interview, you are giving informed consent for the use of your response.

Interviews Format

The interview will be recorded in the following manner: First the time of the interview will be recorded, then the date of the interview, the name of the interviewer and the name of the interviewee, and the position of the interviewee at his or her church.

Time of interview:

Date:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of interviewee within the Church:

This research is seeking to understand and to describe the various practices of an exemplar post-adoption support ministry.

Demographic Questions

1. What gender are you?

2. How old are you?

3. Are you married?

4. How many children do you have (if any)?

5. Do you have any adopted children? If no, do you plan on adopting?

6. Do you know of anyone with an adopted child or children?

7. Where is your Church located?

8. What is your position in this church?
9. Are you personally involved in any orphan care ministry in your church? If yes, what is your involvement?

10. What do you think, is your church's mission and understanding of adoption?

11. Does your church get involved when individuals are seeking adoption? Please explain?

12. Are there any activities or ways in which your church particularly serves families post-adoption?

13. Have you personally received assistance from your church' post-adoption ministry? Please explain.

Probing Questions

1. Adoption experts recommend that adoptive families be provided with post-adoption services that address their particular needs/issues. What do you think about this recommendation?

2. Tell me about your church' understanding of post-adoption issues and services?

3. Tell me about how your church's adoption ministry is set up to assist adoptive families with post-adoption problems?

4. What happens when an adoptive family in the church needs assistance?

5. Generally, how would you say your church specifically helps families, post-adoption? Could you list some specific services that are provided?

6. Who will you recommend that I talk to in order to find out more about the post-adoption ministries in your church?

Thank you for granting me the privilege to interview you and for participating in this interview. I assure you that your responses and any potential future interview will be kept confidential.

APPENDIX 3

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Explanation of Research Purpose

This research is seeking to understand and to describe the various practices of an exemplar post-adoption support ministry. So, this survey is for adoptive parents (families) who have received post-adoption services from their church probably due to some post-adoption issues that they have experienced as individuals or as a family. Responders should rest assured that this survey is to be taken anonymously to prevent any sensitive information from being related back to the respondent.

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the key post-adoption support services of your church in order to describe these practices and to suggest what an effective post-adoption ministry could look like in a local church. Emmanuela Nsang Nyam is conducting this research for purposes of collecting data for a thesis research. In this research, you will be asked to take a survey. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your response.

Survey Questions

Please circle your response to each question. Space is also provided for any comments or clarifications you wish to make. This information will be held in strict confidence.

1. How old are you?
   a. 18-24
   b. 25-34
   c. 35-44
   d. 45-54
   e. 55-64
   f. 65 and over

2. What is your gender?
   a. Male
   b. Female

3. What is your marital status?
   a. Married
   b. Divorced
   c. Widowed

4. How many children do you have?
   a. One
   b. Two
   c. Three
   d. More than three

5. How many adopted children do you have?
   a. One
   b. Two
   c. Three
   d. More than three

6. How old are your children?
   a. 0-2
   b. 3-7
   c. 8-12
   d. 13-17
   e. 18 and over

   Comment:

7. Where is your church located?

8. Are you personally involved in any post-adoption ministry in your church?
   a. Yes
   b. No

   Comments:

9. Have you personally received needed post-adoption services from your church?
   a. Yes
   b. No

10. Which of the following services does your church provide? [Select all that apply]
    a. Professional Biblical Counseling
    b. Respite care
    c. Educational services
    d. Support systems through their local church (mentors, support groups, etc.)
    e. Books from a Biblical worldview
    f. Education from adoption professionals regarding post-adoptive needs

11. Are these services readily accessible to adoptive families?
    a. Yes
    b. No

12. Have you or your family received any of these services from your church?
    a. Yes
    b. No

    Comment:

13. Would you say the post-adoption services provided by your church (given your experience) are effective?
    a. Yes
    b. No

    Comment:

14. Are there any services that your family may need that your church does not provide?
   a. Yes
   b. No

   Comment:

15. Are there any journal entries or documented information that you might like to share with the researcher to help her understand how your church might have helped you through a difficult post-adoption situation?
   a. Yes
   b. No

   Comment:

16. Would you be open to an interview?
   a. Yes
   b. No

Thank you for taking time to answer these questions and for participating in this survey. I assure you that your responses and any potential future interview will be kept confidential.

APPENDIX 4

SAMPLE EMAIL TO POST-ADOPTION MINISTRIES

This appendix contains the email sent out to post-adoption ministries of local

churches to request their assistance and participation in this research.

 [TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN]

My name is Emmanuela Nyam and I am a student at The Southern Baptist Theological
Seminary in Louisville, KY. I am conducting a research in which I am looking to identify
(from churches with exemplar post-adoption ministries) the key post-adoption support
services for the local church. My goal is to describe these practices and to suggest what
an effective post-adoption ministry could look like in the Local church. I have heard
about your adoption ministry and it was recommended to me by Kimber Graves, that is
why I am seeking your assistance to identify what your church is doing for adoptive
families, post-adoption.

I wish to request your help and participation in this research through an interview by
phone or through Skype and also through a survey to be sent out to the adoptive parents
within your ministry. All questions will be sent to you at your request to help you decide
if you would want to be part of this research. The surveys will be anonymous and
participation in this process is totally voluntary. Also, you will be free to withdraw from
the study at any time if you have any concerns. You can be sure that in agreeing to
participate in this research any information you provide will be held strictly confidential,
and at no time will your name be reported or your name identified with your
responses. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to call me at this number 612-
616-2258.

It will be a great blessing to me if you will be willing and able to be part of this research
study. May the Lord bless you!

In Christ,

Emmanuela

APPENDIX 5

TRANSCRIPTS FROM PA MINISTRY LEADERS INTERVIEW

This appendix contains the full texts of the transcripts from the interviews used as part of the qualitative data of this study. These conversations were recorded and later transcribed by the researcher, yet only the raw data is contained herein.

Interview 1 – Suzy Roth of Grace Community Church, Indiana. Conducted by phone on June 24 at 8:33am.

1. What gender are you?

    Female

2. How old are you?

    45

3. Are you married?

    Yes

4. How many children do you have (if any)?

    4 children

5. Do you have any adopted children? If no, do you plan on adopting?

    1 adopted

6. Do you know of anyone with an adopted child or children?

    Yes, a lot of people.

7. Where is your Church located?

    Indianapolis (Anoka Indiana, 604 E. 1Grace Community)

8. What is your position in this church?

    Executive director

9. Are you personally involved in any orphan care ministry in your church? If yes,

    what is your involvement?

    Executive Director of Hands of Hope, which provides the PAS for Grace Church.

10. What do you think, is your church's mission and understanding of adoption?

They are very supportive of adoption and of people who adopt. The church's mission is to spread the mission and passion of Jesus in the world through adoption.

11. Does your church get involved when individuals are seeking adoption? Please explain?

    Yes the Church provides information, financial resources, connect people to families that have adopted children. Are there any activities or ways in which your church particularly serves families post-adoption? We have a couple of things, a meal to the family and we have something called the Post-adoption brochure and Focus on the Family has a hotline number they can call. We give them a book, we just started providing financial help for counseling (we have done one this so far).

12. Have you personally received assistance from your church' post-adoption ministry? Please Explain.

    We adopted 10 years ago and there was no post-adoption ministry, which is why I started this program.

13. Adoption experts recommend that adoptive families be provided with post-adoption services that address their particular needs/issues. What do you think about this recommendation?

    I agree.

14. Tell me about your church' understanding of post-adoption issues and services?

    At a broader level I think the Church's understanding is growing. With the Hands of Hope we have struggled to meet with families especially those with older children. At one point we had a group that met but it is very difficult for people to come because it is difficult for them to leave their children. There are a couple of other things that we have tried out but at this point we have landed on the Post-adoption brochure so to create awareness of post-adoption issues. We have thought of inviting someone to give a talk, because it will be well received but it is difficult because parents don't have time to read or attend a seminar because they are in the middle of it all. We find that it is a difficult time to do, but we do provide financial assistance for parents who need it. There is a general awareness within the adoption community but on a broader level I don't know if there is this type of awareness within the church community.

15. Tell me about how your church's adoption ministry is set up to assist adoptive families with post-adoption problems?

Our church also has a counseling ministry were people can come and do this evaluation and receive financial help and also referrer for counseling. They can come to them for help or come through the church.

16. What happens when an adoptive family in the church needs assistance?

The family takes the first step if they need assistance. But when a family adopts the church starts by first providing a meal for them, a post-adoption brochure and a book. After we do those three things, provided we know about their adoption and they will have to reach out to us about their needs. If we don't hear about their needs or know about them. Beyond that if they know about anything else then they have to reach out. Beyond that the church will have an assessment of the situation to figure out what they need and what needs to be done (it is kind of a triage thing that the church does to assist families), depending on what the needs are, they make a determination for that. Sometimes when we know the needs we offer them assistance for counseling services.

17. Generally, how would you say your church specifically helps families, post-adoption? Could you list some specific services that are provided?

We hold an annual picnic every year were we try to make adoption normal for the kids especially by meeting and interacting with adopted kids, especially meeting an adopted kid at the picnic interacting with them, celebrate adoption. We also try to go beyond crisis management so we try to do things to just make it doable and exciting, celebrated, and positive (so we do something fun). We do orphan care and often find that families that have adopted get involved and interact with each other, adoptive families serve together and kids who are adopted serve within this context and interact with each other.
We do meals, we give them a book, we do PA brochure, a PA referrer or financial help, we connect them with other families, we provide an annual PA picnic and provide other volunteer events through which families can connect with other adoptive families. In our Bookstore we have a section of the bookstore with books (on adoption) that families can check out.

Interview 2 – Karlee Philip of Community Reformed Church, Charlevoix, MI. Conducted by phone on July 19, 2014 at 1:48pm

1. What gender are you?

   Female

2. How old are you?

   30

3. Are you married?

   Yes

4. How many children do you have (if any)?

   4

5. Do you have any adopted children? If no, do you plan on adopting?

   2 adopted

6. Do you know of anyone with an adopted child or children?

   Yes

7. Where is your Church located?

   Charlevoix, MI

8. What is your position in this church?

   None/Volunteer

9. Are you personally involved in any orphan care ministry in your church? If yes, what is your involvement?

   Yes, F.A.C.E.S Orphan Ministry, (Foster. Adopt. Care. Educate. Support) Chair/Team Leader

10. What do you think, is your church's mission and understanding of adoption?

    Mission Statement: To show Christ through F.A.C.E.S. to orphans, vulnerable children, and those who come alongside them.

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. (James 1:27)

It is only the church that can provide the orphan and vulnerable children with true community and family. The church is in a unique position to care for orphans and vulnerable children because of the gifts Christ has given to his body. In fact, it is only the church that possesses the spiritual gifts necessary to meet all the needs of the orphan, vulnerable child and those who come alongside them.

11. Does your church get involved when individuals are seeking adoption? Please explain?

    Yes, as well as foster families. Support groups, information, WPAP program (model from Focus on the Family.) We are looking to expand this area to help with adoption funding.

12. Are there any activities or ways in which your church particularly serves families post-adoption?

    Yes. Foster/Adopt Closet-to help with material needs. Support Group-emotional support/encouragement, networking, sharing resources and information, etc. Date Night-Parents night out, free child care. W.R.A.P Program- Prayers, Respite, Acts of Service, (meals, yard work, etc.) Promises of God/letters of encouragement.

13. Have you personally received assistance from your church' post-adoption ministry? Please Explain.

    Yes. Our church has opened their arms to our family and have loved our foster, now adoptive children. We have benefited from each of the FACES' programs.

14. Adoption experts recommend that adoptive families be provided with post-adoption services that address their particular needs/issues. What do you think about this recommendation?

    We try to tailor our services to the needs of the families, not our own agenda.

15. Tell me about your church' understanding of post-adoption issues and services?

    It is an area that many people tell us they wish they had available to them when they adopted in the past. The support and the resources that we have available and have picked up from CAFO summit are amazing. We hope

that offering these services and having the resources available will make it more comforting to families considering adoption or foster care.

16. Tell me about how your church's adoption ministry is set up to assist adoptive families with post-adoption problems?

    We have a congregation with a huge heart for the orphan and people that really would like to do something. We exists to bridge the gap between the needs of the orphan and the people that choose to respond to God's call to "Do Something" like the song by Matthew West – the theme of our float in the Venetian Parade this year. ☺ Our church really opens their arms to the kids who have been adopted and supports the families. We also offer the Support Group & WRAP program. We are working on a resource library with materials from Karyn Purvis, Empowered to connect, etc. We also work with the Post-Adoption Resource Center of Traverse City, MI who assists with supporting adoptions from the foster care system.

17. What happens when an adoptive family in the church needs assistance?

    They would hopefully contact FACES and we would assess the needs and make the proper connections/recommendations to our programs/resources/people who want to help. We also try to reach out to those who may not like to ask for help and let them know that is why we exist and that it's okay to not be a "perfect" adoptive/foster family. We also like to get to know the families and get them into our programs before they foster or adopt so that we can anticipate their needs and prepare our volunteers.

18. Generally, how would you say your church specifically helps families, post-adoption? Could you list some specific services that are provided?

    WRAP, Support/Connect Group, Foster Closet, Date Night, Resources, Mentoring, etc.

Interview 3 – Katelynne Holte of Austin Stone Bible Church, Austin TX. Conducted by phone on December 19, 2014 at 12: 18pm.

1. What gender are you?

   Female

2. How old are you?

   27

3. Are you married?

   No

4. How many children do you have (if any)?

   None

5. Do you have any adopted children? If no, do you plan on adopting?

   None

6. Do you know of anyone with an adopted child or children?

   Yes

7. Where is your Church located?

   Austin

8. What is your position in this church?

   Manager of Foster Care Initiative

9. Are you personally involved in any orphan care ministry in your church? If yes, what is your involvement?

   Yes, my role as the Foster Care Initiative Manager, I help to coordinate events, recruit families and help to equip and support families that are fostering, and or adopting.

10. What do you think, is your church's mission and understanding of adoption?

I would say that our church talks about adoption as it relates to the gospel and our own adoption into the family of God.

11. Does your church get involved when individuals are seeking adoption? Please explain?

    Yes, we offer counseling and financial support through a fund called the ABBA fund, for those who are adopting or fostering and we also offer some practical events in which we connect families with community around them to support them.

12. Are there any activities or ways in which your church particularly serves families post-adoption?

    Yes we have what is called the foster-adoptive parent gathering once a month and usually it is a gathering for foster and adoptive families come together and they get to hear a word about a topic that supports them in their parenting or they then have time to have fellowship with one another and we try to make this a regular opportunity for them to expand community and to find other parents who share their experiences and to find out about their needs and how the church can support them in these needs.

13. Have you personally received assistance from your church' post-adoption ministry? Please Explain.

    No.

14. Adoption experts recommend that adoptive families be provided with post-adoption services that address their particular needs/issues. What do you think about this recommendation?

    I absolutely agree. I think that one of the main things that we have seen and heard about adopting recently is the need for parents who have adopted to receive some addition support and parents needs some additional training on how to parent children that are coming from backgrounds of trauma; like one of the things we promote in our ministry is the therapeutic model for working with kids that come from hard places based on research by Karen Purvis and it ensures that parents are trained to respond to children from traumatic backgrounds based on a deeper knowledge of understanding of their triggers or understanding of what may be behind their behaviors.

15. Tell me about your church' understanding of post-adoption issues and services?

    I think that our understanding grows directly from the parents and what their needs are after they've adopted. We have a large group of families who have adopted internationally, domestic, and through foster care. I think that

typically our understanding grows as the parents share more of their story and talk about their needs. We have a strong counseling department at our church and they do a lot of work in providing counseling to families that have adopted and respond to their needs that way.

16. Tell me about how your church's adoption ministry is set up to assist adoptive families with post-adoption problems?

    One of the greatest services we offer as support is counseling. We partner with lots of organizations around the city of Austin that are doing work around adoption and foster care services and so if there is a service or a need that is greater than what we can offer as a church body then we make sure to connect those families with where the resources are within the community. For example it may be a legal issue or something around the actual processes they need to get through for adopting (then that will be something we will connect them with the community services).

17. What happens when an adoptive family in the church needs assistance?

    If they need financial assistance then we will connect them to the ABBA fund. We hope that a fostering or adoptive family is engaged within a small group (initial Facial community); that will be the first place that we would want them to seek support whether is financial or tangible support in other ways and specifically support in terms of guiding them towards the gospel in hard situations and providing spiritual support.

18. Generally, how would you say your church specifically helps families, post-adoption? Could you list some specific services that are provided?

    We offer counseling, we offer the ABBA fund helps to cover some financial things, we offer events for them to be in community, we offer support of giving them a meal plan or coming up with some practical ways by which the church body can come along these families when they are in need.

Interview 4 – Ashley Eure of Saddleback Church, CA. Conducted by phone on October 2, 2014 at 1: 58pm.

1. What gender are you?

   Female

2. How old are you?

   27

3. Are you married?

   No

4. How many children do you have (if any)?

   None

5. Do you have any adopted children? If no, do you plan on adopting?

   No. Undecided.

6. Do you know of anyone with an adopted child or children?

   Yes.

7. Where is your Church located?

   Lake Forest, CA

8. What is your position in this church?

   Global Orphan Care and HIV&AIDS Initiatives Coordinator

9. Are you personally involved in any orphan care ministry in your church? If yes, what is your involvement?

   Coordinator

10. What do you think, is your church's mission and understanding of adoption?

    Orphan Care is one of 7 signature issues of Sadddleback, which means that it is an area where we are especially committed to as a church. We believe every child deserves a family of their own, and our mission is to help children

remain in their families of origin, reunite with family or regain a family through adoption. Adoption is doing physically for a child what God has done for us spiritually.

11. Does your church get involved when individuals are seeking adoption? Please explain?

   We come alongside families to help them understand the process through a seminar called "Thinking About Adoption or Foster Care" where ordinary adoptive families from our church share info and their experiences.

12. Are there any activities or ways in which your church particularly serves families post-adoption?

   Please refer to the interview (long answer).

13. Have you personally received assistance from your church' post-adoption ministry? Please Explain?

   No! Not as a consumer of it, only as a leader.

14. Adoption experts recommend that adoptive families be provided with post-adoption services that address their particular needs/issues. What do you think about this recommendation?

   We understand that in pre-adoption we should help families understand what they are getting into, we talk about going into the adoption with eyes wide open. We want to find families for the children that need them but we also want the right families 'not everyone should adopt but everyone should consider whether they are adopting to'. Post-adoption, we believe so strongly in attachment being in that and we know that these kids that are being adopted is always from sort of hurt; the fact that they don't have that connection. We talk about child-based care and trauma informed parenting and we help parents understand the hurt that their child is coming into the relationship with so that they can parent them in a way that will help bring healing.

15. Tell me about your church' understanding of post-adoption issues and services?

   As the orphan care ministry we are all about getting kids into families and helping those families learn to parent these kids; we believe that it takes special kind of parenting to heal a child who comes from this hard places and my director Elizabeth has worked a lot with Dr. Karen Purvis (CTU) who is a leading child psychologist and who works with kids who come from difficult places (adoption or foster). She has developed extensive and trusted parenting curriculum and teaching that we also do; we teach and we also

offer small groups curriculum on DVD's that people can do and answer questions in a group so that it is assessable. Our understanding is that we try to let more people know that we have this ministry at our church... We think it is so important and we see this traditional parent mindset that says 'I am looking forward to parent' which does not take into account a lot of the hurt that the children have and bring into the relationship.

16. Tell me about how your church's adoption ministry is set up to assist adoptive families with post-adoption problems?

A practical example we just started two separate classes recently; one is a kinship care-based class for adoptive kinship care givers and the another is for foster/adoptive parents and even for volunteers working with foster and adoptive parents so that they can understand the trauma and then also trusted parenting. We also have the support group that is mostly made up of adoptive moms that regularly share what is going on with their kid and nothing is going to be too shocking for people. Also, the leader of our adoption ministry works closely with Dr Karen Purvis and understands most of the adoption issues such that she is of much help to the families at our church, she makes herself willing available to families to provide counsel for them as they face various issues or answer their questions... I think that the passion of our heart is to make sure that adoptive families do well (we think that disruption is a tragic end to adoption that could hopefully be prevented through the services we provide.

17. What happens when an adoptive family in the church needs assistance?

My hope is that they would know that our ministry exists. We are a big church so communication sometimes is difficult but sometimes they call the church office and are directed to myself or my manager and we would get them connected to a ministry counselor or direct them to a support group or one of our classes or all the above (it is a wrap around). In terms of volunteers in connection to post-adoption services to parents, if we know a family is adopting we will form a team around the adoptive family that is in charge of buying groceries and other basic needs after the family gets home from adopting rather than just leave you isolated. Also, providing groceries for adoptive families is a great way for families in church who are not able to adopt to support adoption and be involved in this process.

18. Generally, how would you say your church specifically helps families, post-adoption? Could you list some specific services that are provided?

We have the trauma-informed care classes and the kinship care classes, we have a foster care and adoption support group, small group curriculum on DVD that anyone could use (like the Karen Purvis trust-based parenting curriculum), practical needs and food delivery for families, we have a small

adoption grant to get adoptive families started after they come home from adopting.

Interview 5 – Ryan North of Irving Bible Church, Irving, TX. Conducted by Skype on September 11, 2014.

1. What gender are you?

   Male

2. How old are you?

   38

3. Are you married?

   Yes

4. How many children do you have (if any)?

   6

5. Do you have any adopted children? If no, do you plan on adopting?

   Yes! 4

6. Do you know of anyone with an adopted child or children?

   Yes!

7. Where is your Church located?

   Irving, Texas.

8. What is your position in this church?

   Executive Director of Tapestry. Tapestry is the Adoption & Foster Care Ministry of Irving Bible Church.

9. Are you personally involved in any orphan care ministry in your church? If yes, what is your involvement?

   Yes, in addition to leading the ministry I teach trainings and organize other events.

10. What do you think, is your church's mission and understanding of adoption?

    We understand that adoption is not the end of the journey, but rather an important part of the journey. Families need community and support.

11. Does your church get involved when individuals are seeking adoption? Please explain?

    Yes, services are recommended depending on their need.

12. Are there any activities or ways in which your church particularly serves families post-adoption?

    Training, events, etc,.

13. Have you personally received assistance from your church' post-adoption ministry? Please Explain.

    Yes, we have been trained and supported well over the years by Tapestry.

14. Adoption experts recommend that adoptive families be provided with post-adoption services that address their particular needs/issues. What do you think about this recommendation?

    Yes, the needs of adoptive families should be addressed by particular services.

15. Tell me about your church' understanding of post-adoption issues and services?

    The church's understanding of supporting adoptive families, post-adoption, is low but growing. For a church that has as developed a ministry as the Tapestry ministry, its general understanding of the needs of adoptive families is very low.

16. Tell me about how your church's adoption ministry is set up to assist adoptive families with post-adoption problems?

    We write a lot about it, we write curriculums, provide group (specific) training and also provide conferences (with speakers) to recruit parents and train them to lead and nurture their children in healing ways (especially in regards to research findings on developmental issues for their children, etc), and funds are set aside to assist families for cost of adoption or therapy for their families, provide families with a mentor or one on one mentoring through the mentoring program.

17. What happens when an adoptive family in the church needs assistance?

    A lot of times somebody will reach out to the Tapestry ministry or will reach out to the church and are directed our way. Sometimes these families are not

just families from our church but people will seek for assistance through the Tapestry ministry and often do so during conferences.

18. Generally, how would you say your church specifically helps families, post-adoption? Could you list some specific services that are provided?

   We try to help people create an adoption/foster community for their families (e.g. once a quarter we have a big event such as a Christmas party mainly for adoptive kids in particular, conferences a summer camp or retreat for adoptive/foster families to continue to develop sense of community). We offer a blog for adoptive families to have interaction with one another. We have schools for moms and dad, while the dads connect and share with one another, the moms have a book study. In the summer we do training for parents.
   One of our main/greatest aims is to help people connect to something greater than them [when people face problems in adoption/foster care they often retreat]. We don't want people to retreat we want people to be connected so that they can correct ideas such as, how to help a hurting child. That is one of the main focuses of our conferences; to help people get connected.
   Families are engaged and connected to this community where resources are shared and information can be easily had as families interact with one another.
   Conferences and training mainly for adoptive families (these often address issues facing adoptive families and provide helpful resources for these families).

APPENDIX 6

TAXONOMY OF PA SERVICES FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

This table contains the essential post-adoption services for the local church as outlined in chapter 5.

Table A1. Taxonomy of PA services for the local church

Crisis Management Support Services	*Educational/Informational Support Services*	*Celebratory Support Services*	*Practical/Material Support Services*
Counseling/therapy Support/small groups. Mentoring W.R.A.P. program: Prayers, Respite, Acts of Service, and Promises of God/letters of encouragement.	Conferences/training Seminars Classes (e.g. trauma-informed care class, kinship care classes) Small group curriculum Christian literature (blogs, books, resource library, and brochures) Study groups for adoptive parents.	Events (e.g. volunteer events for adoptive families) Networking Retreats Camps Picnics Parties Conferences	Financial assistance, Meals, Groceries Yard work Babysitting Date nights for parents Respite care

APPENDIX 7

TAXONOMY FOR IMPLEMENTING THE ESSENTIAL PA PRACTICES/SERVICES
IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

This table is a representation of the essential practices and examples of

corresponding services for the practices of the PA ministry programs of the local church.

Table A2. Taxonomy for implementing the essential
PA practices/services in the local church

Post-adoption Practices	Recommendation for practice	Examples of some essential services for these practices
Foundational Basis for PA Practices	Understand the gospel as fundamental to the mission of adoption	Employ present gifts/ministries within congregation. E.g. Counseling ministry or support group ministries.
Understanding PA Issues and Customizing PAS to families' needs	Survey needs of adoptive families within the congregation and strategize on how to the meet needs.	Use educational/informational services such as brochures, Trauma-informed classes, kinship classes, seminars, etc.
Connecting Adoptive Families into Community for Support	Offer events and practices that bring adoptive families together and encourage interaction.	Use celebratory and educational services such as retreats, camps, picnics, conferences, etc.
Ministry Accessibility: set-up and procedures for administering services	Provide practices that encourage adoptive parents to access and part-take of those services pertinent to their needs.	Use practical/material services, e.g. date nights, respite care, babysitting, etc.
Partnering with External Ministries and adoption Experts	Recognize limitations of PA program and supplement its efforts through external partnerships.	Some Educational and Crisis management services such as; legal services, child educational/health services, expert advice and partnerships, curriculums, etc.

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ABSTRACT

ESSENTIAL POST-ADOPTION SERVICES
FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH: A MULTI-CASE STUDY

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The purpose of this study was to identify the key post-adoption support services (PAS) of selected exemplar churches in order to describe these practices and to suggest what an effective post-adoption ministry could look like in a local church. So, this thesis sought to answer the question: "What are the essential post-adoption services of the local church?" To answer the research question and provide generalizations of the results for post-adoption (PA) ministries in the local church, a descriptive mixed-methods study was used to show the different perspectives and approaches to this issue. This method utilized both qualitative and quantitative forms of data such as interviews, documents and surveys. Five post-adoption ministries of the local church were studied to determine this phenomenon and it was realized that the post-adoption services of these local churches have some essential practices and services necessary for addressing the post-adoption issues of adoptive families. Five main themes emerged that described the PA practices of these local churches. They included the fundamental basis of the gospel for post adoption practice, understanding the issues faced by adoptive families and customizing services to fit these needs, connecting families to community (both locally and nationally) for support, enabling ministry accessibility, and partnering with external

adoption ministries or adoption experts. Several services emerged from the results and were grouped into four elements of essential services. These components were crisis management (spiritual, psychological and emotional) support services, educational/informational support services, celebratory support services, and practical/material support services. For that reason it was concluded that these five categories of practices of the post adoption ministries of these local churches and the four components of essential services could form a general taxonomy for local churches to use for establishing an effective post adoption support ministry within their church.

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