

USA's Blessed Family Ministry Launches Offering Children Ministry (Adoption)

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The Blessing & Family Ministry has relaunched the Offering Children Ministry (adoption ministry) in America!

Our faith has a wonderful tradition of supporting couples who have difficulty conceiving a child through a practice known as Offering Children, where a couple feels called to offer a child to a couple for adoption, enabling them to experience parenthood.

Intent of the Ministry

True Parents have advised that offering a child to another couple should be arranged between couples based on a relationship of heart. This sometimes happens within a community where there is already a relationship between a seeking couple and a couple willing to offer. But for couples that do not have that opportunity, the Offering Children Ministry of the Blessing & Family Ministry would like to help facilitate relationships. This facilitation process will be done through a *prayer list*. Couples can request to be added to the prayer list by [contacting us](#), and their names and pertinent information will be added to the prayer list.

Families who feel called to offer can look at the list for potential couples to offer to.

Experienced Counselors

Couples who have already participated in this tradition have invaluable guidance to offer to this area of great sensitivity. One of the most important areas where these experienced couples can help is as *counselors* to both receiving and offering families. When a couple [contacts the BFM](#), an experienced counselor will connect with them and support them through the process.

The Blessing & Family Ministry will also facilitate networking and recommend best practices both internally and practically.

How to Make the Connection

When a couple contacts the BFM, either seeking to receive or offer, they will be contacted by a *counselor*, who will help them navigate the process.

Visit the Offering Children Ministry website to read important guidelines and to submit your information if you would like to be involved.

Offering Children Ministry

Mission

To offer support and resources for couples who have been unable to conceive a child and help facilitate relationships with those who would like to offer a child.

Introduction – Contributed by Claire Bowles

The Offering Children Ministry started officially in April 1989, in the kitchen of the Bowles family with a group of offering and receiving mothers. We wanted to make ourselves available as support for couples entering into an offering children arrangement. Because each couple is different and each offering is different your experience will be unique. I can't suggest that my way is the only way to do it. But we can be here to give a helpful hand, an open heart, and a listening ear to anyone who needs it.

We firmly believe that going the course of offering a child to another couple is not for everyone. Couples who do not offer a child are in no way lesser people because of this. No one should ever, in any way, hint to a couple or suggest that couples that do not offer a child are selfish.

The ministry wants to support the brothers and sisters who choose to offer as well as those who need to receive. Both offering and receiving parents have their unique challenges, and both need support and access to others who preceded them.

Claire Bowles

Offering Children Ministry Guidelines

Introduction

- Since family is of such fundamental importance in our core belief, couples who are unable to conceive a child have a lingering heartache. Our movement has a wonderful tradition to address this issue through the providence of “Offering Children”. This is a practice where a couple feels called to offer a child to the childless couple enabling the childless couple to inherit a Blessed Child.
- The guidelines offered here are just an introduction to this important area. On our website there are a number of testimonies from members who have received and offered Blessed Children. Please take some time to read these special stories to get a deeper understanding. And hopefully we’ll be able to include your testimony in the future.

True Father’s Guidance

- It is important to know that, although True Parents did not offer much guidance on this topic, they did make it clear that these should be offerings of the heart and not matches or suggestions made by the movement or leadership. True Father said that ideally the arrangement could be made among couples in the same trinity or, at least, by couples with a heartistic relationship. However, two couples who do not initially know each other, can come to know each other and form the bond of heart described by True Father.

Intent of the Ministry

- Arrangements are sometimes made within a community where there is already a relationship between an infertile couple and a couple willing to offer a child. But for couples that don’t have that opportunity the Blessing and Family Ministry would like to help facilitate relationships. This will be done through a prayer list. As we become aware of couples hoping to receive a child we will add their names and pertinent information to the prayer list. In addition to prayers for these couples, families who feel called to offer a child can look at the list and consider if there is a family they would like to offer a child to.
- Since there is a great deal of sensitivity in this area couples who have already participated have invaluable guidance to offer. One of the most important areas where these experienced couples can help is as counselors to both receiving and offering families. When a couple contacts the BFM an experienced counselor will connect with them and help them get through the process with the most fulfilled heart.
- The Blessing and Family Ministry will also facilitate networking, and recommend best practices both internally and practically.

Internal Guidance

Please note, this guidance is not a directive but based on experience and testimony from experienced families. These are suggestions to help families but each case is special.

- For couples making the offering please be sure that both the husband and wife are in agreement.
- No one should pressure a couple to offer a child. And as mentioned before, True Parents guidance is that offerings should not be arranged by leaders but made as a condition of heart between couples
- The relationship between the two families should be respectful and humble. It is important for the receiving family to try and understand the challenges of the offering family. A receiving mother has never been pregnant or given birth so she might not understand the level of sacrifice being made by the offering mother, or be sensitive to her needs. On the other hand, the offering family is offering the child on behalf and will want to be mindful of and seek to embody God’s heart towards the receiving family. The attitude can be “This is not *my* baby but I am carrying *their* baby”.
- Ideally a child can be conceived for another couple and carried for them (not just offered after pregnancy is already established). But this is not a rule.
- The receiving family should be supportive of the offering family, practically, emotionally and spiritually in prayer.
- Ideally, the receiving mother should be the caregiver from birth. Bonding is important both

emotionally and spiritually. Try to arrange in advance with the hospital to have the receiving parents present from the very beginning so that the new child can see the loving face of the parents that will raise him or her.

- The 8 day ceremony is a good occasion to make the offering formal. (A possible format for the ceremony will be available on the BFM website under the “Offering Child Ministry”

How to Make the Connection

- The Blessing and Family Ministry (BFM) will consolidate a list of couples hoping to receive a Blessed Child. In addition to prayer, families who feel called to offer a child can look at the list and consider if there is a family they would like to offer a child to. If you are hoping to receive a child or if you feel called to offer a child please go to the *Contact Us* page and enter your information.
- When a couple contacts the BFM, either a receiving couple or an offering couple, they will be contacted by a “counselor” who has experience in this area to help them navigate this process internally and externally.
- The offering family can communicate with the potential receiving family (the counselor can help with this as well if desired) and a relationship can begin.

Legal Issues

- Most adoption laws are different by state and in most cases require preparation and professional legal support.
 - It is important to understand the requirements so that advance preparations can be made. Please go to the “*Legal Issues*” section on this site where there is a testimony about the legal processes in one state and there are also a few links to helpful resources.
 - It is highly suggested that you contact an attorney who has experience in this area.
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Legal Issues

A receiving mother’s testimony concerning the legal requirements of adoption

Adoption: Stumbling block or simply a hurdle? The world may view our mode of adoption with eyes of contempt or delight. Our motivation may be understood or misread. But it is WE who must conquer the difficulties, and WE who must face the world. They do not place the same value on “FAMILY” as we do. But ultimately it is our responsibility to help educate them.

I have become quite concerned, maybe too concerned about the world’s legal requirements for adoption, but in preparing for this talk, I reflected deeply upon the fact that there are certain spiritual legal requirements, and we need to look at our adoption process with a spiritual perspective as well.

I want to talk today a little about the LEGAL aspects facing us when we adopt.

Legal Requirements

Legal Process

Though many adoption laws differ by state, here is an overview based on the experience of one family in New Jersey.

Lawyers will prepare affidavits. They cannot legally do anything until after the birth, but a lawyer can prepare some of the preliminary paperwork. These are then filed in county court, the court will notify you in writing as to your court date. Our court date was set for approximately 3 months after all papers were filed.

Prior to your court date, a social worker will visit you to conduct a HOME STUDY. This took place approximately 7 weeks before the court date.

One thing we need to understand is that the social worker is our child’s FRIEND. They are not out to “get” anybody, but want to provide the court with the most accurate record of what they observed to be the environment we provide for our child. They do everything possible to guard against child abuse, for their greatest duty is to protect the child.

Agencies find that many couples need counseling regarding their feelings toward adoption. They want to know how we, as adoptive parents, view adoption. They want to determine whether we are adopting because we want to welcome a child into our home, or do we feel it is a stop-gap measure, something to fill in until we can have our own biological children. This answer becomes very important to them.

1st Visit: Home Study

You may have to fill out a questionnaire prior to the social worker's visit.

Both husband and wife will have to answer many questions.

- **Thumbnail sketch of our lives**
 - how you met, married
 - your education
 - your basic job history
 - your family background; the feelings you had when you were growing up / how you were treated as a child
 - how you feel about your marriage
 - WHY you are adopting (your infertility and how you dealt with it)
 - your present job
 - if you are happy in your job
 - your debts
 - your health and life insurance policies
 - your attitude on child rearing, especially, discipline
 - how you were disciplined as a child
- **The Social Worker NEEDS legal papers:**
 - birth certificates
 - marriage license
 - tax return from last year and/or current pay statements
- **He/She WILL tour the house**
 - room for the baby
 - may look in closets and drawers
- **If both of you work or the wife has to go back to work, will ask your plan for DAY CARE**
- **How much financial support did you give to the birth parents, and for what purpose.**

A Couple of Example Questions & Answers

*** May ask your experience when you first received the baby:

For instance, I explained that I drove Claire (the offering mother) to the doctor for her weekly visits, that I met the doctor who was to deliver the baby, that I was present at the birth and that my husband further told her that we made a photo album from the first moments of our child's life which we periodically even now show her, and which will certainly become important to her later, allowing her to feel comfortable with the circumstances of our involvement in her birth.

*** May ask what you hope the child will be when he/she grows up. This seems to be an important question to them. The best type of answer is that you hope the child will be WHO or WHAT he or she

desires – that you are more than willing to encourage the talents you see emerge and allow your CHILD to choose the profession or educational goals best suited to his/her character.

Visit to Court

Our lawyer was with us.

The Judge will have the social worker's report and has the jurisdiction to accept or deny your petition to adopt the child. If he signs the decree, at that moment (in New Jersey), the legal rights of the birth parents are terminated. Then you will generally have a probationary time. In our case, it was 6 months.

At your court appearance, you have to swear on a Bible that your statements are true.

- your name
- your address
- your name for the baby
- the names and current address of the birth parents
- whether you gave \$, how much, and have you promised to give any more in the future?
- when was the baby was placed in your care (i.e., when mother was released from hospital)
- are you employed?
- name of employer
- do you feel the income earned by you and/or spouse is sufficient to adequately take care of the child's needs
- *** This shows that they are concerned that the child won't become ward of the state.
- do you realize that after finalization, the child is by law entitled to the right of inheritance of your property

Each of you will have to answer; the lawyer goes through the set of questions twice.

After our court appearance, we went outside the judge's chambers and THEN our lawyer said to us, "Congratulations mom and dad."

Supervisory Visits

The states are currently very concerned about the issue of child abuse, therefore, in New Jersey, for example, they assign an adoption agency to monitor or supervise the development of the child during the 6 month probation. During this time we found that the social worker, who was a different one, asked much more probing questions:

- Our experiences of being new parents – how did we feel about night feedings, etc. – wanting to determine how we were coping with the stress of the situation.
- Before you had the baby, you were free to do things as you pleased, but now you are much more restricted, time-wise. How does this make you feel?
- What do your family and friends think of your adoption? Do they give you much support?
- Do you have the chance to get out sometimes, and if so, since you have no family here, who baby-sits the baby?
- Are you going to tell the child that he or she is adopted? If so, how and when? This is a big question, and one which you will no doubt talk about during all the other visits.

We brought up the fact with this social worker that we had made a photo album; she was very happy and impressed that this was the type of preparation we were giving Brianna to understand her adoption; in fact, that is what many agencies now recommend as a practice for adopting couples, because they discover that it helps answer many of the child's concerns.

She told us:

When adoption agencies place children with couples, they look for people who feel that adoption is their CHOICE, and a happy one. The agencies want to be assured that the couple has exhausted their other options and that THIS is the best and most viable way for a child to enter their family.

We found that the supervisory visits, at least in New Jersey, were for the agency's benefit as far as monitoring the type of home in which the child was placed, but according to state law, home visits are a vehicle to EDUCATE the adopting parents.

- They offer information about local adoption groups/support groups
- They make available to you either titles or the actual books themselves of materials on the subject, such as: "Susan and Gordon Adopt a Baby," "Raising Adopted Children," "Dear Birthmother."
- They want to impress upon you that raising an adopted child, although in many respects is the same, it IS also different.

They want to field questions and concerns on both sides:

- So that you can understand what you may be facing later when your child asks about his or her circumstances of birth and about his birth parents.
- Because we talked openly and deeply with our social worker about the circumstances of being chosen by the Bowles to adopt this child, she was naturally curious about their family and about how much contact we still have. Were John and Claire planning to have more children. She, therefore, asked questions such as how many children they have, what their ages are, do their other children know, how much contact (and what kind of contact – picture, yearly letters, photographs, on birthdays and holidays) are we likely to maintain?

Our social worker has been trying to make us understand that our daughter may really question why HER, of all the children in the Bowles family, was SHE the one offered to us? She has told us that we may well have to deal with that issue, although she feels that it is not insurmountable. When we made it clear to her that they CONCEIVED the baby for us, she was much more content.

She felt that while our daughter may have problems with it, she will probably be able to digest it. And she also suggested that the same story Claire told to the Bowles children, we could tell our daughter as well about the fact that I couldn't grow a baby in my tummy. So Claire did that for our family.

She encouraged us to get a medical history from the birth parents of themselves and their parents, etc. One of the most difficult points in an adopted child's life is the uncertainty if he or she comes from a line of people affected by heart disease, diabetes, etc. If we can obtain a brief sketch from the birth parents, it will greatly help our child.

She encourages us to introduce the word/concept of "adoption" from early on, even in normal conversation, so that it does not become a looming issue. In working with adult adoptees, the agencies have found that if the children heard this word and began to understand its significance to them, it is much healthier and less traumatic than for the adoptive parents to pull the child aside and "explain" everything one day when he or she is a teenager, etc. Let it be natural and normal.

Of course for us to explain too deeply the whole circumstances of our faith and why we KNOW our adoptions have such a different foundation was something that she surely couldn't understand or grasp in an hour's meeting. Thus, we did not tell her.

One thing I might suggest is ask your SOCIAL WORKER questions:

- How have you found others best dealt with this? Etc.

We have one more supervisory visit to go.

What kind of TRUE FAMILY will we become once our legal adoption process is finished I think starts or is "conceived" as we began to make our foundation to receive our Third Messiah. It is in OFFERING to God, our condition of helplessness and our deep spiritual and physical need to parent a child.

When I think about all offering couples I cannot help but feel that on some level they have achieved the position of being TRULY parental – they have given a child. God gave Jesus. True Parents offered Heung Jin Nim. This is being truly parental. I have the highest respect and awe for any couple who has willingly offered a child to another.