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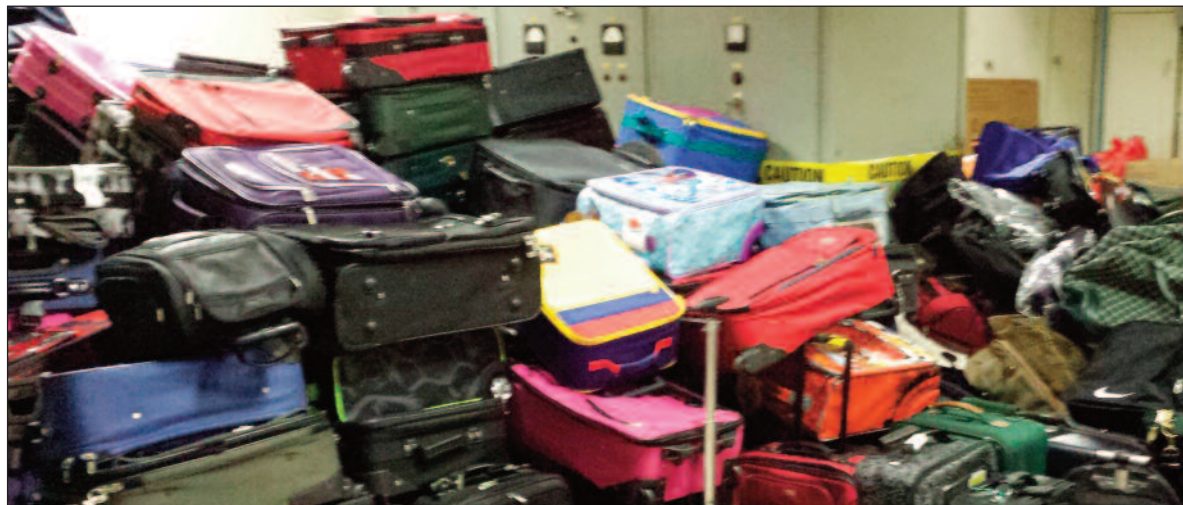
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# Kansas City churches answer the call to help children in foster care

Churches throughout the Kansas City metro area have been actively engaged in helping children and families involved with the child welfare system, including thousands of youth who have experienced abuse and neglect and are in caring KVC foster families.

Westside Family Church in Lenexa, recently donated over 500 suitcases and duffel bags for children in foster care. Instead of moving their clothes in trash bags, children and youth will have the opportunity to select a piece of luggage and move their belongings with dignity.

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Other churches across Kansas have opened their doors to provide space for TIPS-MAPP training, which is a program that prepares new foster and adoptive parents to care for children in foster care. Faith communities have also provided space for support groups and ongoing trainings for resource parents. West Haven Baptist Church, located in Tonganoxie continues to host ongoing trainings for foster parents and supports families with clothing and other necessary items.

Families of faith can also assist with healthy spiritual formation in children by giving them an opportunity to be physically, emotionally and socially healthy, on target intellectually and to be morally and spiritually healthy.

How is your family community being called to help? Learn more about at [kansas.kvc.org](http://kansas.kvc.org)



# Faith, patience helped complete Cooper family

by Josh Cooper

My name is Josh Cooper. My wife, Jaclyn, and I live in Topeka with our four “minis” (as we like to call them), and this is our adoption story. Jaclyn comes from a large family - that is, large compared to mine. I grew up in a household of four. Jaclyn, on the other hand, not only has two biological siblings, but two adopted sisters from the Philippines. Jaclyn’s biological sister also adopted a girl from Guatemala

nine years ago, so adoption was a familiar and accepted part of Jaclyn’s life.

The idea of adopting was something we were both open to from the earliest days of our relationship. But it wasn’t until after our youngest, Abigail, was born in 2009 that we felt it was in our best interest not to have more biological children due to increasing difficulties related to pregnancy. This was a tremendously hard decision for us to make, because we both knew in some way that our family was not complete.

Through a combination of things happening in our lives – sermons we heard, books we read, meeting other adoptive families – we felt as though God was both “pushing” and “pulling” us to adopt. The push was to take greater risks to advance God’s kingdom on earth while the pull was a tug on our heartstrings as we learned more from friends caring for orphans in Lesotho, Africa. In July 2011 we went for it! We decided to move forward with adopting a boy from Lesotho, Africa.

To make a long story short, after 18-months of waiting for a referral, something unexpected happened which forced us to choose between what we thought were two bad options. Lesotho was temporarily closing adoptions to America in order to reform its international adoption process. We could choose another country or we could wait, but possibly never re-

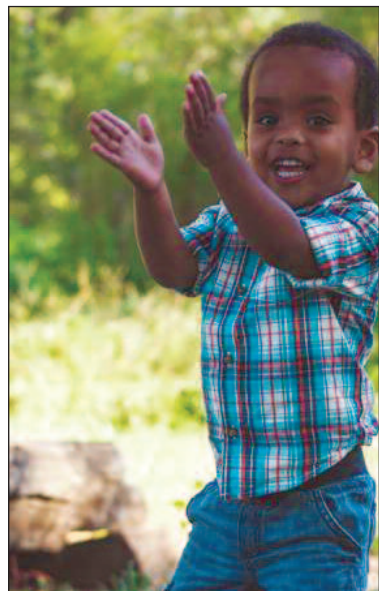


ceive a referral. We were trusting God with the right child to be matched with us at just the right time and after many conversations and prayer, we walked away from our investment in a potential match in Lesotho. But God never walked away from us or from our future son.

We started over from scratch with a new adoption agency and a new country - Ethiopia. We were the 47th family on the official wait list with an estimated 9 to 12-month wait to receive a referral. Slowly over the next 18 months we would climb up the wait list before we received “the call” from our agency.

But then, much to our surprise, the call

■ See COOPER page 17



## Families Make the Difference

**Every child deserves to grow up in a safe, nurturing environment. When a child’s family is not able to provide for that child, a foster or adoptive family can. You can make a difference by becoming a “family” for a hurting child. You can also make a difference by providing support for foster or adoptive families.**

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He came through the gate angry. The activity-get their horse into the round pen without a halter. Task accomplished quickly, arrogantly expressed he was first-Luke just stood, ignoring Journey-waiting in his anger.

Journey began to nibble on Luke and his attention seeking progressed to a little pinch. Getting jabbed with an elbow, Journey walked off -rejected. What happened next was an amazing picture of Luke's heart struggle. Another horse stepped towards Journey and a challenge began-Journey, filled with the frustrating anger of Luke. Either horse could have walked away- but they choose conflict. Nipping at faces, rearing up in bullying dominance. Luke watched-did he know the emotion of the challenge?

He then chose to finish well in the round pen-struggling heart-frustrated horse. Deciding good. This decision pushed anger away. Journey, forgivingly standing by Luke, both breathing the release of anger.



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lives of children in need. Make a difference in a child's life!

Although there are many reasons why children or youth are placed in foster care in Kansas, the most common is physical neglect and abuse (Kansas Department for Children and Families, 2013). Once a child is placed in foster care, KVC assigns a case manager who works with the family

to identify family members and other interested parties who form a group to strategize, create a plan and coordinate care for the child, with the ultimate goal of achieving a safe and permanent home. Our foster parents play an important role in helping children maintain relationships with their families so they can eventually reunite.

You can make a positive difference by fostering a child or teen through KVC. By becoming a foster parent, you are opening your home to a child in need and providing a dependable, nurturing environment. This can be a challenging task, so KVC goes to great lengths to provide families with resources and training necessary to successfully integrate a child into your home.

For more information, call (913) 499-8100 or visit [www.kansas.kvc.org](http://www.kansas.kvc.org)

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■ See CFS page 9

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# Much more to adoption than simply transferring parental rights



**CAROLINE BAILEY**

Supervisor with  
Missouri Baptist  
Children's Home

**muchmore**

Adoption: The act of transferring parental rights and duties to someone other than the adopted person's biological parents (Concise Encyclopedia/Merriam Webster)

I ran across this definition of adoption when doing some research. It seems so simple; too simple. It doesn't take into account the emotion, waiting, persistence, patience, grief, giving, receiving, love, and joy that travel along the way toward adop-

tion, and it certainly doesn't describe life held after adoption. It is so much more than just transferring parental rights.

Adoption is hope. It is commitment. It is patience. It is waiting. It is grief. It is joy. It is giving. It is love. It is receiving.

I gave myself away to my children before they were legally mine. I did not wake up the morning of their adoptions and discover new-found love based on transfer of parental rights. I dreamed of them. I yearned for them. I grieved for them. My soul grasped for them. My imagination sculpted them. Truthfully speaking, I loved them before I even met them.

In return, I received so much more than the legal status of being called mom. I

have been given the chance to push a little harder to make the world better for them. I have been awarded the opportunity to imprint their lives with love. I have received living, breathing, laughing, joy.

I have received those moments of feeling full well the Lord's penmanship of my life. I see the Lord in my children's eyes. I feel Him in their embrace. I hear Him in their wonder of the world. I still remember being that girl who didn't know when or if I would ever be healed from the pain of barrenness. I still think about her and who she used to be. I still grieve at times for what she went through and for the pain she carried through the years. But then....I look at my children, feel His

presence, and know full well that I am healed.

Adoption deserves so much more than a legalistic definition. It is defined by the path that one walks – whether birth parent, adoptive parent, or adopted child. It is shaped by the loss along the way. It is refined by the waiting. It is colored by the emotion and highlighted by the joy. It is enhanced from the giving, and humbled by the receiving. It is love in action, hope in process, and life lived in the full awareness of Him.

Yes...adoption is so much more.

*Caroline Bailey is an adoptive mom and supervisor with Missouri Baptist Children's Home.*

## CFS

continued from page 8

lies. Adoption is a life-changing event and often a frightening prospect when not much is known about it. Birth-parents are always treated in a non-pressured, warm and supportive manner that respects the tough decisions they are facing and honors their commitment to make a good plan for their baby. If adoption is the choice they believe is best, they can choose and meet the adoptive parents and decide what type of ongoing relationship they want.

Caring support to birth parents doesn't end at placement but continues long after if desired.

To adopt a child also requires much



consideration. Fears are normal but with education and support and reminders that God is ultimately the designer of their family, adoptive parents can safely navigate their journey to

parenthood as well. CFS received Hague accreditation in 2012 and this allows us to provide home studies and post-placement supervision for international adoptions as well. Many families have listened to the call to care for the orphan and have seen

God enrich their families with children from the United States but also all over the world.

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# RETHINKING ADOPTION



**D.C. JEANES**  
Metro Voice  
columnist

## ourstory

We found out, recently, we are closer to finalizing our adoption than we thought. While currents of excitement shot through our household, and we joyously shared the great news with our family, friends, and co-workers, it became increasingly clear I had no real idea what to expect.

Kristie and I have been married almost two decades, as of October. We talked early on about children; how many we'd want to have, how far into our marriage we wanted to have kids, whether we wanted to adopt or not. It was clear, early on, we both had a desire to adopt. It was also "obvious," early on, we'd never be able to afford such a process. Funny how God can turn our wisdom on its head. It's also funny how He can take some of the most difficult times in a person's life and mold them into the most precious.

We were married for about seven years when we came to a realization birth children may not be a possibility. We were young, emotional, and found ourselves lost in the woods of doubt. We visited doctors, we prayed, and we waited. Finally, we talked – for the first time in a very long time – about adopting. We decided, perhaps, this was what the Lord had in store for us, after all. Ironically, about a month after going to our first adoption agency meeting (just to get details and learn more about the possibility), we were told we could expect our first biological child in nine months. Wow!

Now, ten years later, and after having number two a few years after our daughter, we are finally nearing the end of the next long journey we've been on for the last five years; finalizing our adoption. We are awaiting news about another brother and sister; a pair we get to speak with every week, via modern technology (sometimes modern technology really is nice).

The oldest is a teenager. The younger is only about two weeks older than our biological daughter. We have made mistakes along the way, and we've eaten some long-dead crow making amends, but we believe it was worth the struggle. From mistakes we learn new lessons.

This brings me to the realization I do not know what to expect. We've done the classes, we've gotten training, we've even spent a lot of time the last few years in a small country in Africa; the country our children are coming from. It's been amazing, scary, emotional, and challenging. It is a beautiful country, with beautiful people, but it's also had a bloody history and the culture still reflects this. Our kids have lived in an orphanage most of their lives, run by Christians committed to allowing them to know the Gospel and live in a more civilized environment. At the same time, they live



in a third-world country, surrounded by other children; some of whom have been abused in ways I don't want to think about.

Am I ready for this? Are we, as a fam-

ily, ready for this? No.

I hear people mention often God selects special people to raise special children. Our firstborn, our daughter, was

■ See JEANNES page 17



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The Missouri Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission and *The Pathway*, the official newspaper of the Convention, are proud to work side-by-side other Missourians in the effort to promote adoption and foster parenting.



## COOPER

continued from page 7

came. Our agency gave us great news. They had a referral for us for an 11-month old baby boy! Our case worker wasted no time telling us as much as she could about the boy who would become part of our forever family and us a part of his. Within minutes we had pictures of our new "mini," Dawit.

Dawit is Amharic for "beloved." And that he is! Beloved.

But, our journey didn't get any easier after that day. It wasn't long before we were facing the impossible. There was a chance

Dawit would not meet the criteria set forth classifying him as an orphan, thereby making him ineligible for adoption even though all the policies and procedures were followed. For the next nine months we would work tirelessly with our agency to provide further evidence verifying our son's orphan status.

This was going to be an enormous obstacle to overcome. So we rallied the proverbial troops. We hired an Ethiopian investigator to assist us in confirming the details of Dawit's story and attempt to locate his birth mother. We contacted our state representatives and senators hoping our legislators would be able to make

some inquiries on our behalf, and we began conversations with a top-notch immigration lawyer to assist us in bringing Dawit home.

But then, God happened.

The very next day Jaclyn called our case officer in Lee's Summit hoping against hope for some good news. "Oh yeah," the officer said, "I think I just approved your case. Let me check." (Pause.) "Yes, I sent your case to my supervisor this morning for approval."

Only God.

Less than a month after that phone conversation, Jaclyn and I packed up and boarded a plane for Ethiopia to meet our

sweet boy for the first time. We spent 19 wonderful days in Ethiopia sightseeing, enjoying Ethiopian hospitality and culture, and cherishing every moment with our sweet boy.

Life at home has been good. Dawit is adjusting surprisingly well to his new home and family. I often joke that he's adjusting much better than we're adjusting to being parents of four minis! Dawit is fun and energetic toddler. He has an inquisitive spirit about him. He's in to everything and he's extremely bright. He loves hugs and kisses (and cars), and he brings so much joy to our lives. We are extremely blessed to be part of his story.

## JEANES

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diagnosed with a form of autism when she was about five. For five years, we wondered about this adorable little angry child. Why was she so mad? Why wouldn't she breastfeed? For five years, I struggled with my own anger toward this small bundle of noise and confusion. I honestly do not feel as if God got this right some days. Through this, however, He has shown me strength I never believed was possible; He has shown me grace beyond my own ability. She can be a tough nut to crack, but I'll never give her up.

Likewise, bringing two children from a foreign country with a violent history, and one of them already a teenager? Oh, man. I've gotten to know them a little bit, though, and I've grown to really appreciate what they have to offer. I have a strong feeling they will be very excited to come to America; at least for the first week or so. Eventually, though, they will begin missing their homeland; they will begin resenting us for taking them away from what they've known their whole lives prior. They will find themselves in a land of more 'pumoi' (an African language, for "white person") than they have ever been around. Heck, they may even see us as ignorant westerners, thinking we are somehow "saving" them.

You know what? That is okay, because even after struggling with an autistic child, we've grown to love her more deeply, and to understand Christ's love and sacrifice for us more intensely than if our children were all completely healthy and perfect, and never came from broken homes. We love these kids, too, as deeply as we can from a distance. And, while I'm not ready for them, yet, our Heavenly Father is, and that's all I can ask for.

Adoption isn't for the faint of heart; nor is parenting. I should know, I'm faint of heart! We serve an amazing Father, though, whose heart loves far beyond our fears, and whose grace overflows in our lives. I cannot wait to be an official father of four. No idea what to expect, but God has shown me I don't need to know; He'll be there with us.

### From the Editor

Metro Voice has received wonderful feedback from our Annual Adoption and Foster Care Guide which we publish each October and November. Through this yearly effort we pray that we might connect the hearts of prospective adoptive and foster families with the children that are searching for their "forever" family.

While many of the stories are provided to us by the organizations that sponsor the section, other touching testimonials are recommended to us by other adoptive families and our volunteers. One such testimonial was that of Tracie Loux. Her story appeared on the website of her employer, a Georgia-based adoption consulting firm. We set it aside for possible publication with the intention of contacting Tracie through the organization to reprint it. On press day, the story was included at the last minute before we received approval. By waiting we would have found out there was more to Tracie and her family's adoption journey.

Our apologies for our oversight to Tracie and her employer.

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