Reviving the church

How God is using an adoption fund to bring life to His body

By Nick Lyndon

February 2005, in a small community nestled along the northern coast of Maine, Cutler United Methodist Church was discussing whether to close their doors for good or to borrow more money in order to pay their bills. Though beautifully situated with a picturesque view of Little River Bay and Cutler Harbor, with only 11 people in the pews and over $20,000 in debt, the outlook was in reality very bleak, and perhaps only a miracle could turn things around. Fast forward two years: now this little church in a tiny lobster fishing town has experienced its own mini-revival, boasting

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Pastor David Arruda helped “turn around” the dormant congregation at Cutler United Methodist Church with some assistance from Shaohannah’s Hope.

Raising adopted children

Steven Curtis and Mary Beth Chapman discuss life as adoptive parents

Q: How has raising adopted children differed from what you expected?

MBC: I honestly was preparing myself to feel differently about my adopted girls than I do my biological children. Imagine my surprise when, not once, not twice, but three times these little treasures captured my heart, and I love them as much as if I had given birth to them. It’s an amazing miracle that God allowed me to experience.

SCC: We have seen so many miracles through our adoption; we are not speaking lightly when we say adoption is a miracle. It truly is.

See INTERVIEW on page 2
Show Hope: a God idea

By Scott Hasenbalg, Executive Director

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” – Hebrews 11:1

My Wife and I decided some time ago that life is too short and full of too many responsibilities to invest in every good idea that comes our way. As for God ideas, we do not want to miss those and are willing to sacrifice much in order to be a part. In church work and “ministry” there seems to be an innumerable “good ideas,” but they often accomplish far less good than is anticipated. Such cases remind me of God’s words through the prophet Haggai, “You have planted much, but harvested little.” Why? Where did the Israelites go wrong? They were busy building their own paneled houses (individual ministries) and not building up God’s house, allowing Him to be the architect. Far too often we, in the church, invest in things that seem good but are not best because they are not of God. Still, we foolishly wonder when the dust settles why God did not empower our plans and work.

Showing hope... through faith

The Lord is our Shepherd, so we need not worry about our path as long as we are willing to follow Him and “do” for His name’s sake. What does this look like? God recently reminded me that “without faith it is impossible to please God,” and that the very definition of faith is “the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.”

In other words… Faith is hope shown! Showing Hope is a God idea and has been in His mind before the foundations of the world. God calls His children to reveal the authenticity of their faith through obedient and loving actions to a needy world. Did not Jesus Himself show us the way to walk?

So if we are to “show hope,” we must first ask ourselves what are those things for which the Word calls us to hope: the hope of glory, the hope of restoration and redemption, the hope of the weak becoming strong, the lame becoming whole, the poor becoming rich, the hope of joy replacing tears, the hope of a heavenly home…

How are we to show those truths to the world?

- Show hope of your heavenly inheritance: Give your money to the poor.
- Show hope of the marriage supper of the lamb: Feed the hungry.
- Show hope of forgiveness in Christ: Forgive your enemies.
- Show hope of God’s justice: Seek justice for the oppressed.
- Show hope of God’s mercy: Be merciful to others.
- Show hope of your heavenly citizenship: Welcome a foreigner.
- Show hope of freedom from captivity: Visit those in prison.
- Show hope of the resurrection of your risen bridegroom: Bring joy to widows.
- Show hope of your heavenly adoption: Adopt a child.

Keeping perspective... through prayer

We must always remember that these actions are to flow out of a continual, daily walk with Christ — a relationship founded on prayer. Prayer maintains our perspective; only in light of our heavenly hope does our work on this earth make sense, remain sustainable, and have eternal value. To walk in the good works that God has prepared for us is ongoing. We are tired; we are not strong, the lame becoming whole, the poor becoming rich, the hope of joy replacing tears, the hope of a heavenly home…

How are we to show those truths to the world?

- Join us in prayer. Fill out the enclosed response form or sign up online to receive weekly email prayer updates: www.shaohannahshope.org/showhope

INTERVIEW, continued from the cover

Q: What have you learned through raising your adopted children?

SCC: How utterly undeserving I am of God’s love and grace unto salvation. These three little people that we adopted were orphaned, with no home and no name. They didn’t “do” anything to deserve our love, our home, our inheritance. They just were. The forgotten and abandoned orphans now have a home.

MBC: And I am no different. I too was orphaned without a home, without a name, without an inheritance. I didn’t “DO” anything to deserve God’s love, yet He died for me. Now my name is Daughter of the Living King, and my inheritance is eternal life with my Heavenly Father.

SCC: We get to see that reality lived out in front of us every day. Adoption is the visible picture of salvation.

Q: What are some of the challenges you have faced?

MBC: Adopted children, in my opinion, have little holes in their hearts. They carry with them a bit of sadness that they don’t even identify with… yet. The challenge in raising these precious treasures is helping them understand adoption and how biblical and how right it truly is.

SCC: Adoption wasn’t our Plan B. It was the Chapmans’ Plan A all along. We long to show these girls how they are completely our children and how we love them unconditionally. This issue keeps us on our knees seeking wisdom from the only One who can heal their hearts.

Q: What are some of the surprise blessings you have found?

SCC: The biggest is a blessing that is ongoing. We are tired; we are not young any more; we are stretched beyond measure with all that God is doing with our family. Emotionally and physically there are days that we just don’t feel we can take another step. And then we realize again the absolute peace that we have about growing our family and obeying James 1:27. So we get up and keep going.

MBC: It’s the whole upside down kingdom thing. For Steven and me, the fact is that it is hard… a lot, but we truly feel blessed when we are in the middle of all this “stuff,” serving where we have felt called to serve. The hard things and the challenges of parenting six children, including these three little people to whom God called us to give a home, are the very things that teach us the most about God and ourselves. We are far from the “perfect” family. There are too many sinners in our home to attach the word perfect to us. However, we absolutely love being together. Hopefully the journey on which God has taken Steven and subsequently our family will end in countless orphans finding their forever homes on earth and a forever home in eternity. At the end of the day… to God alone be the glory.

“The hard things and the challenges of parenting... are the very things that teach us the most about our God and ourselves.”

up front
‘What you need to know...’

Those touched by adoption speak out on what their journey has taught them.

Lana McCann
Lana and Chuck adopted Addisyn from Guatemala.

When God was leading His people out of Egypt and into the Promised Land, “God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter... God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea” (Ex 13:17-18). The most obvious way to Canaan was through the land of the Philistines. It seemed impossible and ridiculous for God to lead them by way of the “wilderness of the Red Sea.” Guess what—that’s exactly what God did then and often does now.

We were so excited starting the adoption process because we knew that at the end of this journey we would hold our child in our arms; the road ahead seemed insignificant. However, a year down that road, with a completed dossier and the sudden news Russia was closing their doors temporarily; we were devastated! We had been given clear direction from God that Russia was the path to our child. However, after the long ride, there was a “Road Closed for Construction” sign!

But, God had a plan, like He always does. There was a small “Detour” sign just ahead, so we followed unsure of where it would lead us. We found ourselves on the path to Guatemala, and there we found our precious daughter, Addisyn. We knew the final destination was right; it was just a long journey to get there. I would never have thought the path to Russia would lead us to Guatemala, but somehow, by God’s glorious leading, it did. So for those who are confused and frustrated, keep your hand in God’s hand and He will lead you there.

Paula Holsberry
Paula and her husband Ken have two biological sons and are waiting for their daughter from China.

My advice for others who are in the adoption process is to continue living as usual. Don’t put your life on hold while waiting, because you may be on hold a long time! This may sound funny, but at first when we were starting our paperwork, every second of my day seemed to be absorbed in adoption, whether actually working on the paperwork or thinking of my daughter or watching for that ever elusive piece of paperwork in the mail. For me, this was exhausting emotionally, and it had to stop. I was miserable and was making everyone around me miserable.

Now, I would tell others starting the adoption process to spend the necessary time working on the adoption, but continue to build friendships, work on the relationships with your spouse and children, have fun, and enjoy the journey. That is a key factor that I didn’t realize at first. This is definitely a journey, not something that can be checked off of your “to do” list at the end of the day (or week, or year).

It is sometimes too easy to get angry at someone else (social worker, agency, governments, etc), but that will just make you a bitter person. Remember that God is in control, and no one else.

Send us your adoption advice: contact@shaohannahshope.org

adoption Quiz

Q: Which part of the world has the most orphans?

A. Asia   B. Latin America   C. Sub-Saharan Africa   D. Central and Eastern Europe

Answer: A. In 2003, though Asia is still the home to the highest proportion of orphans, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) estimated that Asia had 87.6 million orphans. In contrast, Latin America had 12 million, Sub-Saharan Africa had 43 million, and Central and Eastern Europe had 28 million orphans. Of these, 15% of orphans in Asia are also estimated to be orphaned due to AIDS. (UNICEF)
Pastor David Arruda with members of Cutler.

Children line up for the second Advent Challenge to hang shoes and represent the millions of waiting orphans.

**CUTLER, continued from the cover**

three times the average attendance of two years ago as well as an adoption ministry with a vision to reach the local county, the nation, and the world.

The story of this transformation began a few years ago as David Arruda was sitting in the audience at a Steven Curtis Chapman concert. For some time, David had considered giving up his life in the business world and going into the pastoral ministry. “I had fought the call for a number of years and changed my mind several hundred times,” David explains. “Finally I prayed, ‘God, you’re going to have to show me an absolute sign that you want me in the ministry.’” The night of the concert, Steven Curtis Chapman came out for the second half of his show and shared his heart for ministry. David recalls, “After talking about ministry, Steven started singing, ‘For the Sake of the Call,’ and I heard that little voice say, ‘OK, is that good enough?’ On the way home I made the decision to go into the ministry and since then it’s been a whirlwind.”

Pastor David describes his particular brand of ministry as “turn-around” or “transformational” ministry. He locates churches that are in trouble and “turns them around” through the radical following of Christ and by finding the unique ministry of the church. After identifying Cutler United Methodist as the pilot church for the 11th Hour Church Program for his new ministry, David began his weekly 800-mile round trip commute to pastor the dormant congregation.

Hands and feet

Pastor David knows that one of the important facets to a congregation’s life is their outreach and ministry. “When we talk about a body, you don’t really talk about the extremities,” explains David. “Mostly we’re talking about the trunk, or the body itself. But to be an effective body, you need to have hands and feet — some way of doing work.”

David began talking to the congregation and seeking God as to the appropriate channel for their ministry. “There are a number of older folks in the community, so we weren’t going to get them up fixing roofs, but children are a major portion of the life of the entire town. God laid it on my heart that if these folks want to be grandparents, and children are so important, why aren’t we doing something for kids in the area of adoption?” David then went straight to the Shaohannah’s Hope website, and with further dreaming, the Advent Challenge was born.

**A challenge for the church**

The Advent Challenge is a 5-year program for Cutler United Methodist that creates a fund to assist Christian families to adopt children. The fund-raising starts on the first Sunday of Advent and ends the second Sunday of Easter. Everyone in the church is challenged to raise money by: 1) Matching the amount they spend on Christmas and giving that to the fund; 2) Asking others to give money to the fund in lieu of a Christmas, birthday, anniversary, Easter or Valentine’s present; or 3) Accepting money for the fund from others through active fund-raising.

For the first year, the money will be given to Christian families in the local county. “I wanted the congregation to be able to connect with the ministry,” David said. “If families in the county got help from the church, the church would be able to see it, and be more interested in doing it further. It would be more than a check-writing ministry, they would have some involvement and contact with it.”

**To the ends of the Earth**

However, the vision doesn’t stop there. In the second year, the money will be available to any Christian family in the state of Maine. The third year will cover the New England Conference of the United Methodist Church, and for the fourth and fifth years the fund will be available to any Christian family adopting in the United States. “The church can relate to it,” David says. “They love their children, they love their grandchildren, and children are a major part of the community. They also can do some very simple things and reach out.” In the first year, this small congregation raised over $2,500, which qualified them to receive a matching grant of $2,500 from Shaohannah’s Hope. Now, this year, they hope to raise the full $5,000 on their own. They have 25 pairs of shoes hanging around the sanctuary, with each shoe representing 3 million of the orphans waiting around the world. By selling the shoes for $100 each, when they’ve sold all 25 pairs, they’ll have $5,000.

“The church has responded in an amazing way,” relates David, and it is clear that some very inspirational stories have come from these efforts. In fact, the first $100 that came in for the fund came from a 3-year-old named Ryan. When Ryan first heard about the needs of the orphans and the fact that he could make an impact, he asked his parents not to buy him a Christmas present and instead to put the money toward the adoption fund. He asked the same thing again this year. Jean Bergeron, a member of Cutler United Methodist, testifies to the
impact of this ministry: “I know that God had a hand in the announcement of the Advent challenge because it came on the same day that my son let me know that he and his wife were adopting a baby from China. Now, with the kind of fund that we have started, maybe prospective adoptive parents won’t have to consider finances when deciding whether to adopt.”

“The adoption ministry is a way for these folks on the northern coast of Maine to put a face on Christ without having to leave their little town to do it,” Pastor David says. “Even though they are meeting every Sunday in Cutler, through the body of the church they are reaching way out into the world and making a difference.”

Miracles happen

This would be an amazing achievement for any church, but it is even more impressive considering this particular church was in debt and on the brink of shutting down two years ago. “The more the church stepped out, the more their needs were met,” said David. During the time it took them to raise the first $2,500, the church was able to take care of their $20,000 debt, send out additional funds to help in the rebuilding after Katrina, and tithe 10% of their donations to another struggling church. Currently, the church is tithing to help two other churches, and the youth group has raised hundreds of dollars to buy livestock for an orphanage overseas. All this with only 32 people in the congregation. Even now, they are not willing to limit their vision: “The dream for certain members in the church is to help other congregations accomplish similar miracles by teaching them to do the same thing we’re doing,” explains David. “The church is very interested in the multiplication of what is going on here.”

Cutler United Methodist Church is not alone in this desire. Shaohannah’s Hope has teamed up with FamilyLife and Focus on the Family to help churches across the country start orphan care and adoption ministries. In November, they launched an awareness cam-

Little River Bay and Cutler Harbor provide a beautiful backdrop for the little miracles of Cutler.

PHOTOS: DAVID ARRUDA

The youth organized a spaghetti supper to raise money for an orphanage.
The Lord’s perfect time

By David Winters

Though we have two biological daughters, we wanted more children and had considered adoption for several years. We dealt with fear and uncertainty to some extent, but the biggest obstacle was how to finance the adoption. My wife, Christine, and I knew we must simply trust the Lord. After finally deciding to learn and earnestly pray about adopting, Christine went to buy some books on the topic. When the clerk who took my wife to get the books saw the subject, she explained to Christine that she was adopted and was very grateful for that. Then Christine went to one of the many cashiers, and surprisingly the cashier had also been adopted and was so thankful. We believe God heard our prayers, and He answered in His time and in His way.

After going to an adoption orientation in April, we worked through all the paperwork and were ready by October to receive a child into our home. The Lord put it in our hearts to seek a trans-racial adoption, partially as a result of several mission trips we had done in urban America. We were trusting the Lord would provide the money if this adoption was truly from Him, and I often prayed for the Lord to knock down the financial barriers. Receiving the grant from Shaohannah’s Hope was a tremendous encouragement and blessing for us.

On the afternoon of April 5, 2006 we received the news that a birthmother had chosen us. They prepared our hearts to love this boy in the midst of the waiting. Then, on June 10, we received the news that a birthmother had chosen us. They prepared our hearts to love this boy in the midst of the waiting. Then, on June 10, we received the news that a birthmother had chosen us. They prepared our hearts to love this boy in the midst of the waiting.

We had to cancel our vacation and lose a deposit, our anniversary got no attention that year, and we made many other changes. However, it came at the Lord’s perfect time. We weren’t concerned about the waiting once we held our boy. Then, in the hospital, a nurse said the ultrasound had predicted a due date of June 10, the exact day of his birth, but somehow the adoption agency never knew this fact. But we know the Lord knew, and He decided we should wait. We believe the Lord prepared our hearts to love this boy in the midst of the waiting.

Thank you again Shaohannah’s Hope and supporters for your gracious gift in enabling us to adopt Isaac Andrew. Your ministry and love for the Lord are inspiring and encouraging. We will always remember how you blessed our family.

Kathy McKinney
Grant Manager, Shaohannah’s Hope

Q: Where did you grow up?
A. Fort Worth, Texas.

Q: Are you married? Do you have children?
A. Jerry and I have been happily married for 32 years; we have two adopted children, Sarah, age 19, and Sam, age 24.

Q: What is your favorite book?
A: I have so many favorites, but I especially like these four; Blue Like Jazz, The Secret Life of Bees, To Kill A Mockingbird, and The Hiding Place.

Q: What is your favorite memory?
A: One of my favorite memories is swimming with the dolphins off the coast of Florida.

Q: What Bible verse has meant the most to you?
A: Hebrews 11:6 encouraged me to “diligently seek God” in faith and live expectantly while I waited for children. This verse became especially meaningful to me when we faced infertility early in our marriage.

Q: What is the best part of your job?
A: I love the team that God has assembled at Shaohannah’s Hope. Each team member loves Jesus deeply and desires to serve the least of the least with the unique skills that God has given him or her.

Q: What does your job involve at Shaohannah’s Hope?
A: I receive and process the adoption assistance applications and serve the families who apply for financial assistance. Daily I am dependent on God’s direction and wisdom. It gives me joy and builds my faith to see how God is working in the families who are providing loving homes for orphans around the world.

“We believe the Lord prepared our hearts to love this boy in the midst of the waiting.”
—DAVID WINTERS
This fund-raising tip really worked

Initially, I was too “prideful” to fund-raise for our adoption finances. But while lying in bed one night, I realized that God was asking us to step out in faith and trust Him for the finances. The next morning I went to a website that included creative ideas for fund-raising (www.affordingadoption.com). I sent out an email to my Bible Study, and each gal wrote back with an idea and a willingness to get involved. We started with our first fund-raiser called “Bottles of Love.” My dad donated 20 baby bottles, and we printed up a flyer that let people know how they could help us bring our little girl home by filling the bottle with loose change. Through fund-raising with baby bottles and making wooden and clay ornaments, we collected about $700 in the first week alone. We have arranged fundraisers for each month and have asked our family and friends to help by taking on one of the fund-raisers. The families that have joined have felt very blessed by what God is doing, and we hear wonderful stories from parents who have been so encouraged watching their children donate change to the bottles. – THE DALRYMPLE FAMILY

Why is church unfulfilling for so many?

By Kerry Hasenbalg

In much of the American church today there is a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of fulfillment, particularly among the youth, and I believe this is due in large part to how many of us have missed a major ingredient of Biblical Christianity: caring for the Least. Throughout Scripture and throughout the history of His people, God has called His chosen ones to spend themselves on behalf of the poor, the oppressed, the orphan, the widow, the prisoner, and the stranger in the land. Because many in the church have turned inward, ignored the outworking of their faith, and have forgotten the poor and needy, our knowledge of God is to a large extent merely intellectual, and hence our faiths often appear more dead than alive. This certainly is not true of every church, every believer, or every mission, but it is true enough because it was true of me. I was afraid to be like those who were trying to earn their way to heaven with good works because I rightly knew that salvation is by God’s grace through faith alone. But out of this fear, I, like many others, stopped working all together. Somewhere along the line, I unconsciously began living a lie which says that learning about God, singing about God, and speaking about God is more important than walking like Him.

Like so many well-intentioned Christians before me, I had thought I could live out my Christianity in church buildings, in Bible studies, and among friends. I had anticipated a comfortable future of growing and learning and discussing and growing some more. But as I took small steps of obedience, God kept leading me into the fields of the fatherless and the widow, the needy and the marginalized.

The call to follow Christ and the path of the crucified life is difficult, requiring self-sacrifice and obedience, and God has given us a social context in which to live out these truths and walk in His love. Much of the evangelical church is longing for a deeper experience of God, and the irony is that it is among those we too often ignore and avoid, the orphans, widows, poor, sick and oppressed, where God said He would be, and where we would experience Him – see Him, touch Him, and walk with Him.

Visit www.voiceoftheorphan.org to learn more about how the church can get involved in orphan care and adoption, and to read more devotional blogs from Kerry Hasenbalg.

“As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.”
– JAMES 2:26
Building bridges for orphans

Do you ever wonder if your giving is truly linked to life-changing results?

Well, in a little over two years, Stevey Joy Club members have collectively assisted over 500 adoptions! That’s 500 children from all over the globe who went from being an orphan to becoming a son or daughter, and now each one will hear the good news of Jesus Christ. For a minimum commitment of $20 a month you too can join the Stevey Joy Club and make an eternal difference.

We are all familiar with the wonderful opportunities to sponsor children, but what about sponsoring adoption? How can people of all income levels be a part of the transformation that mirrors what God has done for each of us through adoption (Eph 1:5)? When you care for someone, you want to meet that person’s greatest need, and for children without parents, the deepest cry of their heart is to belong to a family. The Stevey Joy Club allows you to become a part of the miracle of adoption.

Help us build a home for special needs orphans in China

LOUYANG, CHINA – Orphans with physical disabilities often do not receive the medical attention they need, severely diminishing their hope for a future. Shaohannah’s Hope has committed to building a four-story Foster Home in Luyoung, China, which will provide the necessary love, care and hope to over 90 disabled orphans of all ages. We are seeking funding partners to join us in making an eternal difference for these neediest of orphans; help make this a reality. Use the enclosed response card or email questions to contact@shaohannahshope.org.

Each orphan in the world has a name, a story, and a life that needs and deserves a family. Sometimes the immense number of orphans can overwhelm us, but we can start right here, not with the millions upon millions of orphans, but with one child.

Today, pray for Jose, who is waiting in the U.S. foster care system. He is a good-natured child who is gentle and patient and is shy until he warms up. He has made great strides in overcoming his chaotic life prior to foster care. Jose is a friendly child who respects and value relationships. He says that he wants to be adopted and to have his own new Mom and Dad.