



REFLECTIONS by Scott Rosenow

Reflections

IN THIS ISSUE:

FAMILY SPOTLIGHT
The Millers...p2

WHAT WAS LOST
...page 3

OUT FROM THE
NATIONS
...page 5

FEATURE ARTICLE
TSC Banquet...p7

NEWS ITEM
TSC Prayer Needs...p8

I'm going to talk a bit in this column about a topic I haven't addressed before, and one that hasn't really been tackled—not formally, that is—by The Shepherd's Crook. The topic is that of the need for adoptions from the continent of Africa, and to a lesser extent, the challenges facing those trying to adopt from Africa. I feel this topic is timely because of the magnitude of the problem and because of the truth contained in our repeated challenges to Believers, to see the question of adoption from God's perspective and to pursue it with an energy commensurate with God's concern for the orphan.

The number of orphaned children in Africa has grown dramatically in recent years, owing largely to the combination of civil and international war in many parts of Africa and the HIV/AIDS epidemic that has been ravaging the continent for more than two decades. It is estimated that, as of 2005, more than twelve million children have been orphaned in sub-Saharan Africa due to AIDS alone, and that number is expected to rise to close to sixteen million by the year 2010. And the consequences of the multitude of military and paramilitary conflicts, while not equaling the numbers of resultant orphaned children, may prove to be—at least on some levels of consideration—even more devastating. The decade of the nineties, in particular, brought war and violence and bloodshed to one African nation after another. In examining the causes and effects of these wars, one British analyst commented that the wars “were all remarkable for the brutality of the tactics (ranging from mass murder and ethnic cleansing, to amputation, starvation, forced labour, rape and cannibalism) used by belligerents to secure their strategic objectives.” In many of these conflicts, children as young as seven years old have been conscripted into armed service, often through threats made against the child's family. And this is still going on in some areas, despite the stipulations of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, passed in 1999, which prohibits the recruitment and use of children under the age of eighteen as combatants.

So, we see that Africa has a large number of orphans, and that the reasons for this are tragic. But why devote a column to the topic? Other areas of the world have greater numbers of orphans, and the reason a child becomes an orphan is bound to be tragic, whatever its particular description or manifestation. What's so special about Africa? As is so often the case, the answer is both “much,” and “not so much.” The “not so much” is fairly self-evident: any orphan, from any country, is a child who needs a family and who needs to hear the truth about God and His love. In that sense, there's nothing remarkable about the orphans of Africa; however, the fact that the situation is not remarkable is not a reason to ignore it. I hope in the future to do similar articles on the orphan situation in other areas of the world. As to the “much,” let's take a look at some ways in which adoption from Africa presents unique, or at least peculiar, challenges.

The first way in which Africa stands out from most of the areas we talk about is the

Continued on Page 4

THE MILLER FAMILY by Elizabeth Mock



Many times in this life, we stop and discover that we are in a place we never intended to go. We look back and are amazed at where we find ourselves and the journey that brought us there. Yet, in this life, God sometimes leads us through dark, desolate valleys, not to bring us to the mountain's peak, but to the glade hidden on the other side. While in those valleys, we move toward the mountain that we assume is our goal, because we can see it, so tangible, in front of us. Our goal seems unmistakable, obvious. As we move closer to the mountain, however, the path begins to veer. The goal we assumed we were working so hard to reach is now moving further away, and it becomes clear that what we pursued as our goal was only a part of the journey, not the destination. Being led through these valleys is one of the hallmarks of living a life captive to God's will. Thomas and Fransene Miller have experienced the frustrations and the blessings of actively living within one of those journeys.

Thomas and Fransene have

been married for fifteen years and always had the desire for a big family. But more than just having the desire for a big family, the Millers felt strongly that it was part of God's calling for their lives. However, after their daughter, Victoria, was born, they experienced the tragedy of multiple miscarriages. "Still the years rolled on with no sign of more children,"

Fransene reflected. "During those years, God worked in our hearts, changing our focus from our own desire for children to a desire to open our hearts and home to any child God chose to place there. We took care of other people's children, and waited for what God had for us. Victoria regularly prayed for siblings. Isaiah 54:2-4a became God's Word to us, and though we weren't sure exactly how it applied to our family, our vision was to prepare our marriage and family relationships so we would be ready when God moved." The passage from Isaiah Fransene cited is as follows:

"Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes. For you will spread out to the right and to the left; your descendants will dispossess nations and settle in their desolate cities. Do not be afraid; you will not suffer shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated."

Through the testimonies of other

Christians and a magazine article about the Rosenows' story, the Millers began seriously to consider special-needs adoptions. Adopting those who have no home and little hope of finding one seemed to be the answer to the Millers' prayers. The path, however, does not always lead where we expect. "When we found TSC Web site, it didn't take long for us to feel a tug about little blind Marius in Romania, and after confirmations from the Lord, we got rolling. Just when it appeared that we would be bringing him home shortly, Romania closed down. In the process, we had quickly started the adoption of Alex, also in Romania, hoping to 'rescue' him before it was too late with that country. Of course, several years later, neither of them has come home to us yet."

Despite the frustration and pain of having two children far from them in Romania, the Millers continued to pursue adoption. "When it felt like time to move on, in spite of the hanging Romanian adoptions, we were drawn to a little three year old girl in Kazakhstan with such a very sad face and minor CP [cerebral palsy]. We just wanted to hold her and give her a reason to smile. It seemed impossible because of the huge expense and length of time necessary to travel for this country, but God kept bringing us back to Valerie, as we named her. God miraculously provided every penny less than a month before our travel time, and made it possible for us to be gone over nine weeks and keep Thomas's small landscaping

Continued on Page 9

WHAT WAS LOST – “I will seek **what was lost** and bring back what was driven away.”

The following children have come home since our last issue:

BRADEN



Before: In a Korean foster home.

After: In his Wagoner, OK home.

ELLA



Before: In a Colombian orphanage.

After: In her Waxahachie, TX home.

JORDAN



Before: In a Chinese orphanage.

After: In his Tecumseh, MI home.

KADEN



Before: In a Korean foster home.

After: In his Russellville, AR home.

OWEN



Before: In a Chinese orphanage.

After: In his Dover, DE home.

JUDE



Before: In a Guatemalan orphanage.

After: In his Amelia, VA home.

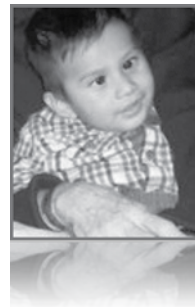
KASSIDY



Before: In a Guatemalan foster home.

After: In her Austin, TX home.

SETH



Before: In a Guatemalan foster home.

After: In his Pickton, TX home.

MADDIE



Before: In a Chinese orphanage.

After: In her Phoenix, AZ home.



ANNA GRACE



Before: In a Guatemalan foster home.

After: In her Helena, AL home (no picture available).




REFLECTIONS *Continued from page 1*

fact that very few countries in Africa are even open to adoption. And those that are open allow relatively few adoptions each year. Of the top ten nations from which Americans adopted during 2006, only two African countries (Ethiopia and Liberia) made the list, and only three (Ethiopia, Liberia, and Nigeria) appear on the list of the top twenty. The combined total number of adoptions from these three countries during 2006 was 1,147, compared with 6,493 from China, 4,135 from Guatemala, and 3,706 from Russia, the top three on the list. The simple truth is, adopting from Africa is still relatively rare. We at The Shepherd's Crook have for several years dreamed of beginning an Africa program, but the lack of staff and suitable connections has thus far prevented our doing so. We pray that God would provide us the means and opportunity to begin our Africa program before very much longer, and in the meantime, we trust in His timing and we wait.

The second distinguishing feature of adopting from Africa has to do with the impact upon the children of the culture of violence bred by the ubiquity of war. Many of the children who are adopted from Africa or are candidates for adoption from Africa have been witnesses to, if not victims of, unspeakable horrors. Such experiences inevitably leave their marks on the child, marks not easily eradicated. I do not say this to suggest that we who have been called by God into the field of special-needs adoptions should shy away from potential African adoptions, but to highlight the impact of tragic circumstances upon the "neediest of the needy." The fact that these children, or any other children, have been scarred by man's sin is merely additional impetus to provide for them all of the love and acceptance and security a Christ-centered home can and should provide. But I also advise all adoptive parents to heed Christ's admonition to "count the cost" when embarking on so significant an undertaking. Be aware of what may lie ahead and be prepared to provide for the child's needs when he or she comes home.

The bottom line in all of this may be as follows: there is not much any one of us can do to change the pattern of adoptions from African nations; there is little we can do, individually, to assuage the cataclysmic impact of either the HIV/AIDS epidemic or the runaway pattern of war and violence; but we can pray. We can and should pray for the continent of Africa and her many problems, and especially for her victimized children. Pray that God would open your eyes to the need and, if it be His will for you to adopt one or more of the children who are available, that He would clearly lead you to that conclusion and give you no rest until you yield to His leading. Think of the impact these terrible circumstances are having, both short-term and long-term, on the people of Africa and, consequently, the world at large. But also think of the impact you could have on the life of one of those children whose parents and whole world are gone. Think of the ways in which you can be God's hands and feet and voice in extending His love to this lost and hurting world, even if only one child at a time. In all of this, we pray God's leading and blessing, and we pray that His name would be glorified in and through our work.

Thank you, Father. Amen. n



OUT FROM THE NATIONS

“I will bring them **out from the nations** and into their own land.”

The following adoptions have been started since our last issue:



ASHLEY

Waiting: In China.

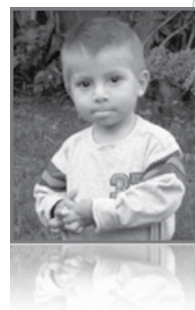
Coming home: To Colorado Springs, CO.



BENJAMIN

Waiting: In China.

Coming home: To Ballwin, MO.



CARLOS

Waiting: In Guatemala.

Coming home: To Dayton, OH.



FU BAO

Waiting: In Korea.

Coming home: To Singapore.



JACOB

Waiting: In Guatemala.

Coming home: To Tecumseh, MI.



JONATHAN

Waiting: In China.

Coming home: To Hudson, OH.



JONATHON

Waiting: In Guatemala.

Coming home: To Lindale, TX.



JOSHUA

Waiting: In China.

Coming home: To Troy, OH.



KATHRYN

Waiting: In China.

Coming home: To Ann Arbor, MI.



KENNET

Waiting: In Guatemala.

Coming home: To Springdale, AR.



LUDWIG & ANA

Waiting: In Guatemala.

Coming home: To Hudson, OH.



NATE

Waiting: In Russia.

Coming home: To Richboro, PA.



ANTHONY &
BRAYDON

Waiting: In Guatemala.

Coming home: To Byron Center, MI.



LUCAS

Waiting: In Guatemala.

Coming home: To Pickton, TX.



ETHAN

Waiting: In Guatemala.

Coming home: To Fairfield Township, OH.



JESHUA

Waiting: In Guatemala.

Coming home: To Coralville, IA.



SARAH

Waiting: In China.

Coming home: To Deer Lodge, MT.

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES - IMMEDIATE URGENT NEEDS

Daniel was part of TSC's October '04 Ma Jia Le Surgery trip. He suffered some post-operative complications and wasn't expected to live for very long. Hope Foster Home in Beijing (www.hfh.org) kindly agreed to take Daniel in and care for him until his death. Following a subsequent shunt replacement by Dr. Jorge Lazareff, Daniel surprised us all by recovering and improving; Daniel is now doing amazingly well and has been thriving under the love and care of the staff at Hope. However, Hope is set up for short-term care only, so we have been searching for a new place for Daniel to live. God graciously heard our prayers, and on January 24 Daniel was transferred to Agape Family House in Lang Fang, close to Beijing (www.agapefamilyhouse.com). Daniel will be greatly loved and will receive excellent care at Agape, including physical therapy and much-needed dental care. As before, The Shepherd's Crook has happily agreed to cover Daniel's foster care at his new home, but we do not currently have the funds available for this. **We need \$300 a month to cover Daniel's foster care. Any portion of this will be greatly appreciated. Also, should anyone want make a one-time donation of \$3600 to provide a full year's support for Daniel, that would be wonderful.**



Most of you probably remember little Ali in Romania. TSC was honored to be able to arrange for two heart surgeries for him—the most recent in March, 2006. Since then, we have been underwriting foster care for Ali in Timisoara, Romania. The sponsor who has been meeting this need is no longer able to do so. It is critical that we continue this support or Ali will be moved to a state institution. This would be devastating for him physically and emotionally. Ali's foster care is \$200 a month; we have two new sponsors who are able to provide half of this. **That leaves us still needing \$100 a month. Please pray about helping with this need. As in Daniel's case, a one-time gift of \$1200 to cover half of his support for a year would also be wonderful.**

Checks for either of these two sponsorships should be made payable to **The Shepherd's Crook Ministries** with a notation on the memo line that the donation is either for **Daniel – China** or for **Ali – Romania**. You may also donate on-line via PayPal through our Web site, www.theshepherdscrook.org/donations.html; please indicate that the donation is either for **Daniel – China** or for **Ali – Romania**.

These are but two among the millions of children who—barring miraculous intervention from God—will never have a chance to be adopted; but you can have a very real impact in their lives by helping us provide for them. You can make a difference.



THE SHEPHERD'S CROOK MINISTRIES

CELEBRATION BANQUET

*NOTE: Our last newsletter was too full to include the following article on our 2006 Annual Celebration Banquet, so we are including it in this issue. **Our 2007 banquet is now set for June 30.** Please watch our website and email updates for current information and pray about attending this year. We can promise that you will be blessed.*

One night a year, The Shepherd's Crook family takes the time to stop, reflect, and to celebrate God's goodness over the last year. On June 24th, 2006, The Shepherd's Crook Ministries reached a milestone—the fifth annual Celebration Banquet. The evening was filled with good food, beautiful visual presentations, laughter, tears, and, most importantly, children. No matter where you looked there were children laughing and playing.

The evening began with Dick Shaw asking God's blessing on the banquet, and God, as always, proved Himself faithful. After eating a wonderful meal and watching a slide show of TSC children who are now home with their forever families, Scott Rosenow gave the State of the Ministry. Scott's reflections on the previous year revolved around the central question: How do you measure success? As he presented encouraging stories about Bella Moorhouse and little Ali from Romania, he concluded that no matter how many children are adopted, receive medical treatment, or how many hospitals and orphanages receive necessary supplies, if these are not done for the glory of God they are in vain. The ministry's many "successes," like Bella and Ali, of the past year have not been by our own efforts, but by God's faithfulness.

Responding to God's faithfulness, Daryl and Wanda Fulp spoke about their call to leave Daryl's pastorate in Troy, Ohio and to travel the country giving presentations for The Shepherd's Crook Ministries. Daryl and Wanda felt the call during their adoption of their daughter Kimmie from Korea.

In the midst of all the talks and presentations, TSC took the time to acknowledge Radu Mocanu, an attorney from Romania who has been fighting to lift that country's ban on inter-country adoptions. Before the ban, only one TSC child's adoption was completed, Carlin Rosenow's. Carlin presented Radu with a gift from The Shepherd's Crook for all the fighting he has done and will continue to do on behalf of special-needs orphans in Romania. At the end of the presentation, Thomas Miller led a prayer for God to intercede on behalf of these children so that they will one day be able to come home to their forever families.

After the State of the Ministry, Susan Schetcher discussed a quilting ministry, Pedal Pushers. Several years ago, they inquired if they could receive a list of TSC children for whom to make quilts. The women, who meet to quilt once a week, receive five or six names at a time, along with some information about the children, and they send the completed quilts directly to the families. A few of the quilts were displayed during the banquet.

Of all the traditions that have been established in the last five years—the b'affle, the State of the Ministry, the Looking Back presentation, and the children singing and signing—the two that always leave the room in tears are the Looking Back presentation, designed by Allan Rosenow, and the children singing and signing. As always, the Looking Back presentation eloquently showcased the children who had come home, the children who are still waiting to come home, and those who have gone to their eternal home. Shelby Knapke and the TSC children performed "Child's Prayer" beautifully, summing up everything that the ministry represents in a simple song.

The night began to wrap up with Lars Wagner singing "Spare an Angel" by Chris Rice, to remind us of the focus of The Shepherd's Crook. The night concluded, however, with the most treasured tradition of the banquet: the children signing Ray Boltz's song "Thank You." There are few who could leave the banquet unmoved by that conclusion. Looking back at the banquet, I think it is safe to say that it was, indeed, a success.

To see more about our fifth annual Celebration Banquet, including pictures and video of the night's events, go to <http://theshepherdscrook.org/banquet06>.



News Item PRAYER NEEDS

Please join us in thanksgiving for the following Praise Items:

Our communications director, Daryl Fulp, has been able to purchase an RV to use during his family's travels as they visit churches and groups in many states to spread the word about TSC and God's heart for the fatherless. They are spending the month of January in sunny Florida. You can access a schedule of their speaking engagements by going to <http://www.theshepherdscriook.org/events.html>. Thank you for praying for this need.

Please continue to pray for the following needs for The Shepherd's Crook Ministries and notify us at info@theshepherdscriook.org if you would like to help with any of these needs financially:

1. All TSC kids and the families who will come forward to adopt them.
2. Funding for the operating expenses of the ministry, including salaries for the Director and for Daryl Fulp, our Communications Director. Our monthly income is currently not enough to cover these expenses. We received a large cash donation last year, and we had a pretty large surplus from our banquet last year, and those cash reserves have carried us through this year; we dip into those reserves to meet our expenses every month—including salaries—and those reserves are just about depleted.
3. Additional monthly funding to permit us to hire an administrative assistant. This has been a pressing need for quite some time now, and the need is becoming urgent.
4. That we will once again be in a position to award financial grants to our adoptive families, as we have been privileged to do in the past. This, too, requires money, on top of everything else we need.
5. For Daryl and Wanda (Fulp) to be able to sell their house so they can move to the Cincinnati area to be closer to "the ministry."
6. Office facilities: this is a bit indefinite, but we ideally would like to have office facilities connected to the Rosenow house—with office space for four or five staff members. It would be really cool if we had a large piece of land on which to put this house/office complex, with additional space for TSC's various uses. (This would be a joint Rosenow family/TSC answer to prayer!) This is one of those "open-ended" dreams, in which we want to dream as big as we can so as not to limit God in any way.

business afloat. We knew we were in the Lord's will.

"So when we were in the tenth day bonding with dear little Valerie, and we were suddenly told that we could not adopt her after all, it seemed very unreal and confusing. The next several weeks became a blur, and we were forced to accept the fact that our Valerie was being adopted by someone else locally and there was nothing we could do. In her place, the orphanage presented us with a beautiful, healthy nine-month-old baby girl whom we named Danielle, meaning 'my God is Judge.' Our Judge had definitely ruled differently than we had expected, and had led us to pursue Valerie, so He could place a child in our home whom we never would have met otherwise. As our emotions slowly adjusted, we were able to experience great joy in receiving Danielle as a special gift, in spite of the great pain of losing our beloved Valerie and seeing her suffer by being torn mercilessly from us."

Though Valerie seemed to be the destination, the mountain, for the Millers, God had tucked away their true destination. Had they not moved toward the mountain, they would never have reached the treasure on the other side—little Danielle. As they brought Danielle home, God had another surprise on the Millers' journey. "Soon after we got home with Danielle, we discovered the incredible truth that we were expecting a baby! What a blessed journey we have found ourselves upon. Our son, Tommy, was born when Danielle was eighteen months old, and it is such a blessing to see them now playing together and enjoying each other. Especially, after Victoria had to grow up with no siblings until she was ten. Our Heavenly Father loves to bring us great surprises. Our home is noisier and more chaotic, and we are loving it!"

At times, following God's will is confusing and it hurts. We feel foolish. It seems like God leads us toward something, just for it to be taken away. This is the perspective of one who is still within the valley and can see nothing but the mountain looming in front of him. We are limited. We cannot know God's plan. But we must rest in the knowledge and promise that God will never abandon or forsake us. For, "[a]ll the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies." (Psalm 25:10, ESV) Though we may not understand the path of the journey, we must trust that where He leads is for our good, not our destruction.

Even as the Millers experienced the trial and heartache of disappointed hopes, they were not dissuaded from the call God had placed on their lives. They continued on the journey, following the path God presented before them. Looking back at their journey, Fransene said, "We have a greater trust in our God, who provides all our needs and has plans far superior to ours, even when it seems He may have forgotten us. Our world is bigger and our focus has become more eternal. [We have seen] the thrill of a Muslim-born [child] being placed and raised in our home to be saturated with the love and knowledge of Jesus! Perhaps some day she will return and share the Gospel with those in her birth-land, who now have no hope, like Valerie—whom we pray we will some day see in heaven."

E-MAIL UPDATES

Did you know that in addition to these thrice-yearly newsletters, we also send out updates via email about once a week or so? These updates include important and timely information about children in urgent need of families or medical care, new projects within TSC, TSC families' travel news, and many other pieces of information. If you aren't already on this list and would like to be added, please notify us at e-mail-add@theshepherdsrook.org, or you can just write us at info@theshepherdsrook.org and ask us to add you to our Regular Email Update List. Please be sure to clearly indicate the email address you want us to use.



P.O. Box 773
WEST CHESTER, OH 45071

THE *Shepherd's Crook*
MINISTRIES



We would love to hear your
IDEAS OR SUGGESTIONS
for our newsletter.



E-mail our Editor at
newsletter@theshepherdscook.org

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Editor: Scott Rosenow
Design and Layout: Allan Rosenow
Contributing Writers: Elizabeth Mock
Deb Amend
Photo Editor: Rachel Whitmire

The Shepherd's Crook Ministries
P.O. Box 773
West Chester, OH 45071
www.theshepherdscook.org