

The LYDIA Fund



...to look after orphans...

- James 1:27

Let
Youths be
Delivered from
Institutions by
Adoption

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LYDIA Fund's Mission:

to encourage and enable Christian couples in greater Minnesota to adopt children from orphanages and similar institutions overseas by providing financial assistance for their overseas program fees and agency-designated in-country expenses.

LYDIA Fund Committee Members

Terry and Deb Bartlett
Rick and Delaine Gamache
Kyle and Sharon Hastings
Len and Jody Olson
Jeff and Sarah Owens

Christian Couples are Saving Kids from Institutions How Did God Make It Happen?

by Kyle Hastings, Director

Shortly after the demise of the communist eastern bloc in 1991, The Minnesota Baptist Conference (MBC) saw an opportunity to minister to the needs of Baptist churches in Ukraine and their surrounding communities. One such outreach ministry focused on the plight of about 200 children in an orphanage in the town of Chigirin, in central Ukraine. When it became apparent that many of the kids there didn't have shoes, or even toothbrushes, a couple at our church (a member of the MBC) created the Give-an-Orphan-a-Christmas-Gift-in-a-Shoebbox ministry.

Our personal connection came in September of 1996, when our family approached a table filled with pictures of beautiful, smiling, but disheveled kids from Ukraine. There we stood, Sharon and I, staring with wonder at the coy expression on the face of a little girl in one of the pictures. That little girl was Lydia (Lida, to her friends). We took her home and put her in a place of honor - on the fridge. There, together with Jeremiah 29:11, "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future,'" and Luke 18:27, "What is impossible with men is possible with God," we saw her smiling face morning, noon, and night. And so we prayed for her. A lot.

This was becoming more than a simple one-time gift of shoes to just any orphan, however cute. This was Lida. We knew her. We loved her. This was *our* orphan. This was *our* girl. Somewhere between those last two sentiments we realized God had taken us a quantum leap from our former lives. Something we had never talked about nor dreamed of presented itself as God's plan for our imminent future - adoption! And that revelation proved to be just the tip of the iceberg. Despite our meager means, He had big things in store. In a sermon about acts of faith and how crazy they can (and should) look to the world, He confirmed that He wanted us not only to adopt, but to adopt *two* children - Lida, and her sister, Sveta!

All this He accomplished by His strength working through our weakness. That it happened at all was a miracle of God's grace from its inception right through to its fruition. Sharon and I experienced the profound joy of God's grace at work in our adoption; we saw the unmistakable blessing it has been to the "adopters" as well as the "adoptees." This resulted in our deep desire to spread God's grace to as many others as possible, "so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God." - I Cor. 4:15 This has now become the mission statement for our family's life on this earth.

So we were prompted to form a ministry of some kind that could fulfill that mission. (See *Birth of LYDIA*, on p.4)

Our First Families

What Would You Do?

by Len and Jody Olson

What would you do if your biological children kept asking, "Why can't we adopt?" What if they saw other families adopting all the time? That was the case in our family. Our younger children had an especially deep desire to adopt and have a large family. What did we do? We encouraged them to pray!

What they didn't know was that our journey toward adoption began in 1989. That's when a local newscast aired a special segment entitled "The Iron Crib." It was a story about the plight of thousands of orphans in Romania. At that time we began praying about the possibility of adopting a child from Romania. But it was not God's time.

In the years that followed, adoption remained close to our hearts. By volunteering for two different adoption ministries we were privileged to be a part of over 150 adoptions.

Then, about a year ago we watched a videotape of a vacation Bible school at a Ukrainian orphanage. Our hearts were touched by the conditions in which these children were being raised and by their plight once it was time to leave the orphanage. Again our response was to pray actively about the possibility of adopting. This time, 10 years since we first began to pray, it was God's time for us to adopt!

In February of 2000 we received a call from our adoption agency asking if we would be willing to fly to Ukraine in six days to adopt a six-year-old girl living in Belgorad. One look at her picture was all we needed. In six days we were on our way! And now we are thrilled to have Abby in our family.

It is very exciting to see how God works through the whole adoption experience. From adoption expenses, to bedroom arrangements, to sibling bonding, to tough adjustments, God meets our needs!

God Worked to Bring Our Daughter Home

by Terry and Deb Bartlett

Our story started when we saw a photo of a Ukrainian preteen orphan named Natasha. Over the next 18 months it became evident to us that God had laid a path before us and placed this girl on the path! He put an unquenchable desire in our hearts to rescue her out of the orphanage and a dismal future. So on March 4, 1999, we formally began the adoption process.

As we prayerfully proceeded, problems would arise, but then fall away again. Then, in late October, we received bad news.

Natasha's older sister (who was too old to legally adopt) suddenly developed a very negative attitude toward the adoption, threatening to disrupt the court proceedings, and throwing a shy Natasha into confusion



and indecisiveness. Our adoption agency strongly recommended that we drop Natasha's adoption and look for another. The door now seemed tightly closed. We wrote a letter to the girls telling them that we loved them but that we couldn't come, under the circumstances. The letter was mainly to establish some closure. We didn't know if or when we would hear from either girl again. In our minds, three conditions would have to be met if there was to be any hope--a massive shift in the sister's heart attitude, a joint response from the two girls, and a specific invitation from Natasha to come for her. All this seemed so unlikely that we began to consider another girl. But we still somehow sensed that Natasha was the one.

Then, in early January, we received a startling letter written jointly by the two sisters! It contained exactly the things we needed to hear. Natasha's sister wrote that she now recognized that adoption was in Natasha's best interest and that she would be happy for her. It was also evident that the two sisters had talked and agreed together on this. And the letter closed with an invitation in Natasha's own hand asking us to come for her. Clearly God had changed hearts and knocked down a seemingly immovable obstacle!

Just 90 days later (a miracle in itself), Natasha became our daughter!

A Letter from the Editor

The Fractured Smile Behind the Frowning Providence

by Rick Gamache

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face.
--William Cowper--*

Thirteen days after a miscarriage, my wife showed me a picture of a Russian orphan. He looked a lot like my other children: blond hair, blue eyes, porcelain-doll skin. But Yaroslav's smile was broken by a cleft lip and palate. As I handed the picture back, Delaine looked me in the eyes and said, "I think we're supposed to adopt this boy." My reaction was typically abrupt: "Absolutely not!"

It took three days of incessant prayers from a resolute wife to transform my "absolutely not!" to "absolutely yes!" It struck me like lightning that orphans are a great concern to God, and he says that our religion--our faith in him--should express this concern with radical acts of compassion: "This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans" (James 1:27). That little word "visit" has massive and glorious redemptive overtones; when God visits his people he accomplishes salvation (Luke 1:68). So we set out to redeem Yaroslav.

But redeeming a Russian July 8, 1999, we met with Director of Reaching Arms she respond to the fact that were flat broke? Nila is faith in future grace. She money. God will supply all the money you need." And he did! I have before me an itemized invoice from Reaching Arms International that's stamped "PAID." Our family and friends donated almost all the adoption fees and travel expenses. Even now my heart is nearly bursting with love and joy and gratitude and hope and faith because of it.

"If you really believe [God's] promises . . . you are free you to live a life of radical sacrificial love."

orphan is expensive. On Nila Neumiller, Executive International. How would we wanted to adopt, but filled to the brim with said, "Don't worry about

Yari had two surgeries to repair his broken smile. Both went better than expected and recovery was shorter than the doctors anticipated. His smile is fixed. The frowning providence of an early-summer miscarriage gave way to the broken (now repaired) smile of a Russian orphan and a late-summer adoption.

Let me ask, do you believe these promises? God will work everything together for your good (Romans 8:28). Jesus will be with you by the power of his Spirit until the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). God will help you and strengthen you and uphold you (Isaiah 41:10). God will meet all your needs (Philippians 4:19). And he will bring you safely to heaven (Philippians 1:6). If you really believe these promises and more (there's a whole book load of them in the Bible) you are free you to live a life of radical sacrificial love.

So why not call Nila Neumiller (Reaching Arms International, 763-591-0791) or The LYDIA Fund (see panel on page 4) and say you want to redeem an orphan from Russia or Ukraine? No money? That's not a problem for God. You have brothers and sisters in Christ who have been set free by a glorious vision of a promise-keeping God to commit radical acts of sacrificial love. They care more about orphans than their checkbooks. Or maybe it's you who has been set free to help meet the needs of Christian couples embarking on this redemptive venture called "adoption" (see panel on page 4). And just think, you'll get to be (or participate in) a walking, talking parable of our adoption in Christ! That's why human adoption exists, to serve as an analogy of the adoption we have as believers. God makes us members of his family and enters into a personal relationship with us (Romans 8:14-17). He relates to us as a loving father (1 John 3:1) who understands us (Psalm 103:13-14) and takes care of our needs (Matthew 6:32) and gives us good gifts (Matthew 7:11), including a great inheritance in heaven (Galatians 4:7). We have been redeemed by adoption into the family of a gracious, promise-keeping God. Trust Him for His grace.

Congratulations!

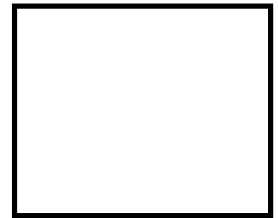
The LYDIA Fund has already been blessed by God to help these seven children get adopted into Christian homes: (Several more are in progress.)

Olga Abigail Olson	to Len and Jody
Natasha Caris Faith Bartlett	to Terry and Deb
Olga Christina Conner,	
Anastatia Naomi Conner,	
Katarina Agnes Conner,	
Ivan Benjamin Conner,	
and Dmitry Selman Conner	to Michael and Janice

God, pour out the blessing of Colossians 1: 9-20 on these families. Amen!



The LYDIA Fund
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(Birth of LYDIA, continued from page 1.)

We knew from experience what material and psychological barriers needed to be overcome in order for Christian would-be parents to even consider adopting kids from an orphanage overseas. And we knew we wanted to see God deliver these young people from institutional settings into Christian homes. When all the pieces of the puzzle came together the result was The LYDIA Fund, Let Youths be Delivered from Institutions by Adoption. LYDIA's mission is to encourage and enable Christian couples in greater Minnesota to adopt children from orphanages and similar institutions overseas by providing financial assistance for their overseas program fees and agency-designated in-country expenses.

Now we find that The LYDIA Fund is as dependent on God as we were in our own adoption. We are relying on Him for all our needs, financial, practical, logistic, strategic, every kind imaginable. Our prayer is that LYDIA will spread the blessing of God's grace to more and more people, parents and children alike, to the praise of His glory.

Participate, by all means, in delivering youths from institutions by adoption!

- Receive future quarterly issues of this newsletter.
- Pray for the LYDIA Fund.
- Adopt!
- If you wish to give, please contact us first.

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