

Now in its sixth year, the OATH ministry continues to grow as it reaches out to help adoptive families in their quest to give orphans and abandoned children homes of their own. Orphans Awaiting Their Homes began in Fairhope, Alabama, as a fundraising organization in 2002, after Dan and Cindy Lippincott brought home their second adopted child, a Haitian daughter. Trevor, their fifth child, had been adopted domestically at birth from Ohio in 1993.

Responses from friends and acquaintances often included comments such as, “We would love to adopt if we had the money. It is so expensive. Why does it cost so much?” Another influencing comment was, “If you Christians think abortion is wrong, what are you going to do about it?”

Lippincotts came away burdened after seeing the huge need in Haiti, knowing that these children desperately needed someone to represent them. Dan never wanted an adoption to be hindered due to finances, so in honor of his 50th birthday in 2005, he requested an adoption fundraising banquet. This was the start of the annual OATH event and more serious endeavor for OATH.

Through phone calls and letters, OATH became a greater support to adoptive families emotionally and financially, as it helped educate others. OATH presentations at churches and conferences across the country informed individuals of the needs: many orphans in need of love, food, and medical attention; orphanages lacking supplies; and orphanage directors needing prayer and help.

Two churches have supported OATH on a regular basis, while gifts have come from all over the country. In the last five years, close to \$40,000 has been donated to adoptive families in the following states: Michigan, Wisconsin, Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Virginia, North Carolina, Indiana, and Pennsylvania. The 53 children OATH has helped have come home from Ethiopia, Liberia, Haiti, the Ukraine, Guatemala, and China, while two were domestic adoptions. Many of them have had special needs including: down's syndrome, cerebral palsy, caustic ingestion, three and four children in a sibling set, and one newborn missing a leg and fingers, with severe cleft palate, needing surgery in order to survive.

The deacon board of Grace Bible Church, the advisory board for OATH, attempts to make wise decisions in its donations, considering the family's income and need. In the first quarter of 2008, over a dozen requests came in for financial assistance. At this time OATH is not large enough to make substantial gifts, but even small gifts have been an encouragement. Donations have ranged from \$100 to \$1500 depending on need and the number of children being adopted.

In 2006, Dan and Cindy Lippincott traveled to Haiti once again to bring home their adopted son. Christfel's head had been burned as a baby by an oil lantern and the injury had been left untreated. After eleven months, his father

had taken him to God's Littlest Angels orphanage, since he could not care for him any longer. That is when the injury which had healed over, got needed attention and was debried. Several months later, since the wound was not healing on its own, a volunteer from GLA arranged for him to have skin grafting done at Shriners Hospital. During that two month stay in the states, Lippincotts were called about adopting Christfel. At eighteen months old, he stayed in their home for five days before he was taken back to Haiti to complete the adoption process. It was another eighteen month wait till they would be able to bring him home for good.

“Now to Him that is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we ask or think.” Ephesians 3:20 became real to Lippincotts during their first adoption, but as God keeps blessing this ministry it becomes even more meaningful. In the Gospels we see that Jesus loves the children and says, “Permit the little children to come unto Me. Whosoever, therefore, shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.” He also taught, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” He was referring to feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, giving clothing to those in need, helping the sick or visiting prisoners. He continues this thought when he tells believers to take care of the widows and orphans in Paul's epistles.

The spiritual battle with these adoptions is evident, as the adoption directors struggle with government officials to let these children go to their homes even after they are officially adopted. Papers sit on desks for months. UNICEF is actively seeking to stop or slow down adoptions from third and fourth world countries, believing the children are better off staying in their own countries. Is that best for the children though, as some eat one meal every other day and suffer malnutrition? Many are left to be street children as young as six.

The Lord created this ministry and keeps it alive, bringing new needs into focus regularly. The desire of OATH is for others to pray, to give financially, to donate supplies, to help with medical needs, to give of their time to volunteer, or to even adopt. The purpose is to give another child a home!