

Thank you for your interest in the Champions for Children initiative sponsored by Bethany Christian Services. The world is in the middle of an orphan crisis unlike any before, and there are no easy answers. However, we know that God has called the Church to engage the world in bringing hope to the hopeless.

Our desire at Bethany Christian Services is to give you and your church the tools and resources to help you address this worldwide crisis. One person cannot solve this incredible problem alone. However, if we each do our part, we can make a positive difference.

As you review this information, we ask that you prayerfully consider the level of involvement that you and your church would consider.

## What is the goal of the Champions for Children program?

When a person becomes a Champion, he/she is agreeing to partner with Bethany Christian Services and his/her church to meet the needs of children without families, whether those children live around the corner or around the world.

Each Church Champion will approach this goal differently. Some will create a full range of opportunities for church members to participate in this ministry, while others will focus on just a few ways to engage their congregations.

There are also three different levels of commitment from which to choose—and *each level is of equal importance*. Individual circumstances will dictate at which level an individual or church can become involved. Over time, a person can move to other levels, as circumstances change.

### Level 1

#### *Praying and Sharing Information*

**Prayer:** Bethany Christian Services will e-mail you information regularly about special situations that will need prayer. Sometimes the situation will be private, and we will ask you *not* to forward this request to anyone else via e-mail. However, we do encourage you to share this information verbally in Sunday School classes, prayer groups, or prayer services at your church.

**Sharing Information:** Bethany Christian Services will be offering seminars and ministry opportunities that are uniquely designed for churches. You can be an advocate for children by sharing this information with the members of your church. You can also encourage your church to use the bulletin inserts in January (Sanctity of Human Life Sunday) or November (National Adoption Month).

**Meetings:** Your local Bethany Christian Services office will share with you a schedule of meetings. These meetings will be as short as possible to be respectful of your time. At these meetings, you will receive information about the latest news concerning Bethany's services plus have the opportunity to network with other Church Champions.

### Level 2

#### *Praying, Sharing Information, and Giving*

**Giving:** Giving does not necessarily mean money. A common phrase used in churches to describe giving is, "time, talent, or treasure." Some examples of giving are:

- *Volunteering at a local Bethany office.*
- *Taking a special offering given to Bethany Christian Services.*
- *Planning an event for a Bethany office (e.g., an annual cookout for foster families).*

- *Hosting adoption information seminars in your church for your Bethany office.*
- *Including Bethany in your missions/church budget.*
- *Child Sponsorships through Bethany.*

### Level 3

#### *Praying, Sharing Information, Giving, and Starting or Working in an Orphan/Adoption Ministry within a Church*

If your church already has an existing Orphan/Adoption Ministry, we would ask you to become actively involved in that ministry (if you are not already doing so). This would make you a Level 3 Champion. If your church does not have a formal Orphan/Adoption Ministry, we will help you begin one and give you the tools to maintain the ministry. Contact your local Bethany office and ask about FamilyLife's book and DVD, *Launching an Orphans Ministry in Your Church*.

### What are the advantages of having an Orphan/Adoption Ministry?

There are three advantages to having a formal ministry in your church:

1. **Publicity:** Ministries within churches are usually trying to get promotion for their events and activities. Churches usually give priority in publicity to the established ministries within the church. You will have a much better chance of promoting the needs of children and families if you have an established ministry.
2. **Scheduling:** Churches are usually busy and many people are asking to use its resources. Churches usually give priority in scheduling to the established ministries within the church.
3. **Budgeting:** Most churches plan their budgets according to the ministries of the church. You will want to have money for advertising, meetings, and service projects. A formal ministry will have a "seat at the table" when budget preparations are taking place.

### What could an Orphan/Adoption Ministry include?

An Orphan/Adoption Ministry does not need to include everything listed below. Your church may focus on one or two of the following areas. Every church is different. The size, culture, and climate toward the following issues will determine to a great degree how much you do in your ministry.

1. **Child Sponsorship:** Bethany Christian Services and other organizations have Child Sponsorship programs in many countries. Because so many orphans will never be adopted, sponsorship allows believers to enhance the lives of these children as much as possible.
2. **Foster Care:** You can promote Foster Care in your church by inviting agencies from your county to your congregation to explain the need and process for foster care. Some churches have set goals as to the number of families that they would like to see become foster parents. You will need to work with the youth and children's workers of your church to prepare them for the special circumstances that a foster child may bring as the child is integrated into the life of the church. Remember, for some children who spend part of their childhood in foster care, being placed in a Christian home may be their only exposure to the Gospel. Foster children may look back and see that those were the greatest few months of their lives. Your church will have a unique opportunity to minister to children at a time in their lives when they need it the most.
3. **International and Domestic Adoptions:** You can help dispel the myths of adoption in your church. So many people have differing ideas and opinions concerning international and domestic adoption. Information meetings and seminars, support groups, and good literature can help people understand the truth.
4. **Support Groups for Specialized Needs:**
  - a. Infertility

- b. Families with special needs children
- c. Interracial Families

*\* Support groups are not meant to be professional counseling groups. These groups can be designed to meet once a month for sharing stories, struggles, encouragement, and prayer.*

5. **Play Groups for Adopted Children:** Play groups have been popular in many areas across the country. With the number of international children who have been adopted, a play group can be a very effective way of allowing the children to continue spending time with others who have similar life experiences. A group can be set up focused on one race (e.g., Asian or Hispanic children) or encompass a multi-ethnic approach. A play group will be much like a support group for the parents who attend.
6. **Informational Meetings:** Bethany will provide you with seminars to be used to promote the different opportunities there are to help children. We suggest that your ministry use these DVD seminars at informational meetings to draw interest and attention to the ministry. These are also a great way to provide a first step for church members who are even considering becoming involved
  - a. Hold a meeting for one of these seminars at least once per quarter. Even though you may not have high attendance at these meetings, the publicity about the meeting itself reminds the congregation of your ministry.
  - b. Try different meeting strategies. The meeting does not have to be in a large room at the church. You might try hosting the meeting in someone's home. This will give it a less formal feel and will be a comfortable setting for discussions.
  - c. Involve other churches in these meetings. If you are a part of an association of churches, you can notify the other churches about these meetings. You can also work with the other Champions in your area to schedule these meetings together.
7. **Adoption Mentoring Families:** The process of adoption can be long, demanding, and discouraging. Consider having someone who has been through that process become a partner with a new couple just getting started. For instance, if someone is going to adopt a special needs child from China, contact a family who has already adopted a special needs child from China. Ask them to encourage, pray for, and answer any questions possible for the family in process.
8. **Start an Adoption Scholarship Fund at Your Church:** One way a church can support adoption is to help their members with the costs involved in adopting. Not everyone is called to adopt, but most church members can help make adoption a reality for those who are.

There are countless ideas when it comes to these ministries. You will be able to log on to the Champions for Children Online Community to read other people's ideas and to share your own.

### What support can I expect from Bethany Christian Services?

1. **Regular Meetings:** Local meetings at least twice per year will be held to give you the latest information concerning Bethany's services in your community. It will also be a time for you to network with other Champions to learn from them what is happening. You will receive a report on the status of your local office and special prayer requests from the staff.
2. **Monthly E-Newsletter:** The monthly e-newsletter will come to you from our national headquarters in Grand Rapids, Michigan. We will keep you abreast of the latest news in Bethany's services as they relate to the local church.
3. **Champions for Children Online Community:** The online community is created to give you access to the ideas of churches all across the country. You will see what other churches are doing to minister in the area of social services. As you discover new ideas, you will be able to submit them for posting in the online community as well. This database of best practices will give you the tools you will need to keep your ministry fresh and vibrant. You can access this community at [www.bethanychampions.org](http://www.bethanychampions.org)
4. **DVD-Based Seminars/Information Meetings:** The latest DVDs will be available at your local Bethany Christian Services office. You may see a complete listing of available DVDs at Champion for Children's Online Community.

5. **Literature for Distribution:** Bethany Christian Services has a multitude of information packets and brochures that we would love for you to make available in your church. Just contact your local branch for more information.
6. **Stepping Stones Newsletter:** This can be used for distribution in your congregation. Stepping Stones is a national Christian infertility ministry with an online forum community Web page.
7. **Counseling:** Many pastors are approached by their members with concerns about infertility or unplanned pregnancy. Your Bethany office is a phone call away with help to alleviate these burdens from pastors. Your pastor can feel confident knowing that a trained Bethany counselor will always counsel the birthmom to choose life and then consider whether parenting or adoption would be better for her and her child. Infertile couples can benefit from Bethany's Stepping Stones ministry (see above).

### What are the qualifications for becoming a Champion for Children?

1. Be an adult in good standing with your church.
2. Have a passion for helping vulnerable children and families.
3. Have some knowledge about Bethany and be willing to receive training for achieving the goal described above.
4. Be willing to speak positively about Bethany's ministry. However, Champions do not have to be "public speakers."
5. Be willing to keep Bethany informed about the activities and efforts you engage in as a Champion for Children.
6. Have an e-mail address that you use regularly.

### What do I need to do to get started?

1. Pray about which level of Champions for Children is best for you.
2. Fill out the commitment card and deliver it to your local Bethany Christian Services office.
3. Log on to [www.bethanychampions.org](http://www.bethanychampions.org) for ideas and links to other websites to give you more ideas to effectively minister in your church.
4. If you are trying to begin an Orphan/Adoption Ministry, please contact your local Bethany Christian Services office for more resources and helpful information.
5. Start praying and get busy!