

Adoption Month Program

FOR CONGREGATIONS



Thank you for supporting the adoption work of Children's Home Society of Minnesota (Children's Home) and Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota (LSS) by participating in an Adoption Awareness Program. The goal of this program is to bring awareness to issues surrounding adoption and offer resources to those with an interest in adopting and those who would like to support foster and adoptive families.

The material in this study will guide your community through a four-week conversation about adoption services through Children's Home and LSS (CH/LSS). The material for each week includes

- *Talk About It*: a TED-style talk, a Scripture passage and questions designed to inspire conversation.

- *Get Involved*: a project or activity to bring awareness to issues surrounding adoption or provide practical support for Adoption Services.

Each week also includes a prayer from Evangelical Lutheran Worship (an ELCA worship resource). These prayers can be used during worship, staff or leadership meetings, children and youth programming, existing small groups (Bible Studies), or any way that works for your community.

To learn more about Adoption Services, visit our website at chlss.org.

For additional National Adoption Awareness Month information, visit chlss.org/nationaladoptionmonth.

History and Mission:

The history of Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota begins with caring for children. In 1865, Pastor Eric Norelius and Vasa Lutheran Church in Red Wing, Minnesota opened its arms and doors to help care for four orphaned children. This local effort grew into the Vasa Children's Home, the oldest orphanage in Minnesota. Since then, LSS has responded to rapidly changing needs of children across the state.

Children's Home has been caring for children since 1889, with the establishment of the Children's Aid

Society of Minnesota as a response to children arriving in the Midwest on "Orphan Trains."

In 2012, Children's Home and LSS formed a partnership combining the experience and strengths of both organizations to secure loving families for children in innovative ways.

Week 1:

Adoption Education and Awareness

At Children's Home and LSS, we recognize the barriers to adoption. While families may have the desire to add a child to their family, they do not always have the resources available to meet the cost of adopting. These financial barriers exist both before and after the adoption process. The Adoption Support Fund helps to remove some of these barriers.



Talk About It: <https://bit.ly/1SVWwHm>

1 Corinthians 13:13: *And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.*

Discussion Starters:

- Is there a word or phrase that sticks out to you in this passage?
- What does it mean to love unconditionally?
- Are there any obstacles that stand in your way or prevent you from loving someone? (behaviors, habits, crime, etc.)
- What do you wish you knew about unconditional love or loving individuals with a difficult past?

Get Involved: Appreciation-Grams

Set up a table in the Narthex of your church where individuals or families can participate in writing an Appreciation-Gram.

Members can show their unconditional love for others in the community by leaving a note of affirmation. Consider hanging these notes around the Narthex or another common space where they will be visible to the wider community. Consider placing a basket on the table for a freewill offering for the Adoption Support Fund.

Prayer

O, God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son. Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred that infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and, through our struggle and confusion, work to accomplish your purposes on earth, so that, in your good time, every people and nation may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Week 2:

Foster Care and Adoption

Children in foster care have been removed from their homes for a variety of reasons and have been placed in the care of the state.

Children often enter into the foster care system with only what they can carry. It is common for these few possessions to be tossed into plastic trash bags to be transported to the foster home. This experience can only compound the trauma of the situation they are facing.



Foster families open their homes and their hearts to the children, usually with minimal information or time to prepare for the arrival of the children. The hurriedness of the situation often results in children arriving without all they need, including medications. This creates an urgent situation that often requires the foster family to cover the cost until they are reimbursed through a stipend provided by the state or county.

Talk About It: <https://bit.ly/2fSXc5m>

Isaiah 41:10: *Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Discussion Starters:

- Is there a word or phrase that sticks out to you in this passage?
- How does God's love help us prepare for the future?
- How has your faith helped you shape your own identity?
- Have you ever felt fear because of the unknown?
- What comforts you?

Get Involved: Community Closet

Consider collecting items from the wish list on our website at chlss.org/communitycloset for children in foster care.

Donations can be dropped off to the attention of Kristina Berg at our main adoption office: 1605 Eustis Street, Saint Paul, MN 55108.

Donations may be tax deductible, and an in-kind donation form can be provided.

For more information, contact Kristina Berg, 651.255.2203 or kristina.berg@chlss.org.

Prayer

Almighty God, with a parent's love and care, you have blessed us with the joy and responsibility of children. As we bring them up, give us gracious love, calm strength, and patient wisdom, that we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good, following the example of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

Week 3:

Domestic Infant Adoption

Open adoptions are one way to create families. Through open adoption, birth and adoptive families work together to plan a relationship that goes beyond the placement of their child. This relationship is ongoing and involves varying degrees of direct contact with each other.



Talk About It: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3AMhtHPKNk>

Esther 8:15: *Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes of blue and white, with a great golden crown and a robe of fine linen and purple, and the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced.*

Discussion Starters:

- Is there a word or phrase that sticks out to you in this passage?
- What can we assume about Mordecai from this passage? (Dressed in fine cloths, mention of the colors of royalty, etc.) Are first impressions always accurate? (Mordecai might appear as royalty, but he isn't).
- Have you ever assumed something about someone based on their identity, perceived or otherwise? (racial, sexual, political, socio-economic, etc.)
- What can we learn about first impressions and assumptions based on the passage from Esther and Angélica Dass's TEDTalk?

Get Involved: Luxury Fast

Set up a table in the Narthex of your church where individuals or families can pledge to give up a weekly luxury (coffee, shopping, eating out, etc.). Each person should write their name and their luxury on a piece of paper and pledge to donate their saved money to the "luxury fund." Consider a clothesline or accordion wall where members can hang up their pledge for others to see.

Prayer

Lord God of our ancestors, we thank you for what you have done and will continue to do with our children. Walk with them in life, and keep the evil one from obstructing their path. You see all; you know where the water is deep. Keep them from danger. Order their steps and guide their feet while they run the race of faith. May the good work that you have begun in them be brought to completion at the day of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Week 4:

International Adoption

Children's Home and LSS, work with partners in the United States and around the world to find loving families for children from countries such as; China, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, India and South Korea. Children waiting for families may have medical needs and developmental differences. Our staff works closely with families to determine their ability to provide for the needs of the child they hope to adopt.



Talk About It: <https://bit.ly/2TYSIH2> 1

John 9:1-3: *As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."*

Discussion Starters:

- Is there a word or phrase that sticks out to you in this passage?
- How can we continue to open doors for individuals living with a disability or other identified needs?
- How can we make our spaces (church, work, restaurants) more welcoming to individuals who may have different needs?
- Talk about a time when you experienced adversity.

Get Involved: I'm Thankful For...

Set up a table in the Narthex of your church where individuals or families can stop by to write down the things for which they are thankful.

Consider hanging these around the church similar to the Appreciation-Grams. You may also set out jars with labels on them such as "Family," "Friends," "Food," "Other," etc. Parishioners can contribute coins to the jars to signify what they are most thankful for.

Print the materials found below explaining International Adoption that may be placed at the table so that congregation members understand where their donations are going. Donations of any size are welcome!

Prayer

O God of all, with wonderful diversity of languages and cultures you created all people in your image. Free us from prejudice and fear, that we may see your face in the faces of people around the world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Thank you

Thank you for your community's participation in our adoption awareness study. Children's Home and LSS are grateful for your partnership and dedication to the work we share of loving and serving our neighbor. We look forward to continuing this work with your community in the future.



In-kind donations can be delivered to:

Kristina Berg
Children's Home Society of Minnesota
1605 Eustis Street
Saint Paul, MN 55108

Monetary Donations can be sent to:

Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota
Attn: Development
2485 Como Avenue
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55108

Please designate Adoption on the memo line on your check.

Any further questions regarding Adoption can be directed to:

Kristina Berg | Director of Programs
kristina.berg@chlss.org | 651.255.2203

For any questions regarding how your church can partner with LSS, contact:

Rev. Julie Wright | Director of Church Partnerships and Volunteerism
julie.wright@lssmn.org | 651.529.8855

