

# Adoption: An Earth-Friendly Alternative

## Why is Quaker Earthcare Witness concerned with adoption?

**ADOPTION** provides a way for large numbers of children to find loving homes and an opportunity for potential parents concerned about population pressures on the planet to do something concrete about their concern. Parents raising one or two biological children can have more children through adoption without adding to the earth's population.

## What is Earth-friendly about adoption?

When chosen as an alternative to having biological children, adoption can slow the rate of world population growth. This can relieve pressure on fragile ecosystems, particularly in rapidly growing countries that are struggling to feed their populations. An adoptive family often can afford to increase the educational level of the child, which improves the chances that the child will choose to have a smaller family later in life.

## Will parenthood make me more loving?

While it is true that one can live a fulfilling life without the experience of raising children, there is nothing more challenging or more rewarding than being a parent. Nancy Whitt (Birmingham, Ala., Monthly Meeting), who adopted her daughter Vassilka, writes, "Spirit is connection—with the cosmos, with the earth, with the animals, with neighbors, with faith community. But the deepest, closest spiritual connection is with family, family by birth, family by choice. Emotionally there is interdependence. Vassilka is dependent upon me for love, physical support and emotional needs. I am dependent upon her for faith, innocence, insights into myself and others. I am stretched to meet the needs of someone else for love, affection, humor, companionship, and forgiveness. Day by day these are the deepest spiritual connections. I know, my growing edges."



*Daniel Gold-Hopton with his parents, who are members of Atlanta Friends Meeting. He was 3 months old in this photo and had just begun to laugh.*

## Are children available for adoption?

For many reasons, the numbers of babies placed for adoption in the U.S. is decreasing. There is better access to contraception, availability of abortion, and single parenthood has become more socially acceptable. Before 1973, 19.3 percent of babies born to never-married white women were placed for adoption, compared to only 1.7 percent between 1989 and 1995.

However, there are still thousands of children available for adoption ranging from infants to teens. More infants are available through adoption agencies or through private arrangements with an intermediary such as an attorney or clergy person.

In 1999 there were about 581,000 children in foster care in the U.S., 22 percent of which—127,000—were available for adoption, called "waiting children." Of these, only 46,000 were adopted, leaving 81,000 children still waiting, approximately 2,400 of whom were infants. Minority and older children are hardest to place, and many are waiting—living in one or a series of foster homes.

Many of these children have special needs because of physical or mental disabilities. Families who are considering adoption may need to receive counseling on particular difficulties they may encounter. Some children who are deprived of their parents at an early age may have difficulty bonding. There may be other emotional difficulties for children who have been abused, neglected, or deprived.

## Are children available from other countries?

Yes—the number of children from other countries adopted by U.S. citizens has doubled in the last 11 years to 19,237 in 2001. Half of these were infants, and 90 percent were under the age of five. One-quarter came from China, most of whom were infant girls. Others, evenly divided between boys and girls, came from Russia, South Korea, Guatemala, Ukraine, and many other countries.

In order to regulate intercountry adoption, the Hague Convention was drawn up on 29 May 1993 to ensure that the best interests of the child are met, that the child is adoptable, and that the prospective parents are suitable. Standards are set in regard to consents and payments.

In the U.S., international adoption is facilitated by the Child Citizenship Act of 2000. This provides that immigrant children automatically become citizens as soon as their adoption is final.

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## Some U.S. adoption statistics\*

- ❖ Approximately 1 million children live with adopted parents.
- ❖ 2 to 4 percent of families include a child who was adopted.
- ❖ 8 percent of adoptions are transracial.
- ❖ 16,396 international children were adopted in 1999.

\*Source: *Times 2003 Almanac*  
(Family Education Network, Boston, Mass.)

### What if the birth parents change their minds?

One of the greatest fears is that the birth parent(s) will contest the adoption after the adoptive parents have made an emotional investment in the child. In reality, less than 0.1% of adoptions are contested.

### What does it cost to adopt?

The least expensive adoptions available in the U.S. are through state foster care systems (\$0–\$2,500). Other adoptions through domestic or international agencies range from \$8,000 to \$30,000 or more. By comparison, the average cost of giving birth in the U.S. runs from \$6,000 to \$11,000, depending upon location.

Employers are increasingly paying the same or similar benefits as for a biological birth. New tax laws in the U.S. allow a tax credit for adoption and continuing credits for care of children with special needs. Continuing subsidies are available through the U.S. Social Security Administration for adoption of a special-needs child.

In Canada there are no fees for adoption through public agencies and, in addition, some private agencies and independent practitioners funded by the government and charities provide adoption services without charging fees.

### How can Friends Meetings help?

Chesapeake Quarterly Meeting has a population minute that includes the statement, "Meetings should make known the availability of clearness committees for couples who are considering additions to their family and want support in making a responsible decision." (Adopted 1992: 06.07)

*Prepared by: Population Concerns Committee  
of Quaker Earthcare Witness  
173-B N. Prospect St.  
Burlington VT 05401-1607  
802/658-0308*

*info@QuakerEarthcare.org; www.QuakerEarthcare.org*

### For further adoption information

Administration for Children and Families, 370  
L'Enfant Prom., S.W., Washington DC 20201.  
Adoption Advocacy, <[www.adoption.com](http://www.adoption.com)>.  
Adoption and Foster Care Reporting System,  
Children's Bureau, <[www.acf.hhs.gov](http://www.acf.hhs.gov)>.  
Child Citizenship Act, <[www.ins.usdoj.gov/  
graphics/publicaffairs/backgrounds/cbground.htm](http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/publicaffairs/backgrounds/cbground.htm)>.  
Dave Thomas Foundation, 1-800/FOR ADOPT  
<[www.adoptionfunding.com](http://www.adoptionfunding.com)>.  
Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 120 Wall  
St., 20th Fl., New York NY 10005; 212/269-5080.  
*The Future of Children*—a journal with articles  
about adoption, published by the David and  
Lucile Packard Foundation, 300 2nd St., Suite  
200, Los Altos CA 94022; 650/917-7110;  
<[www.futureofchildren.org/](http://www.futureofchildren.org/)>  
(Search for Adoption).  
Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption  
<[travel.state.gov/hagueinfo2002.html](http://travel.state.gov/hagueinfo2002.html)>.  
International Adoption Alliance; 800/375-5283  
<[www.i-a-a.org/citleghowto.htm](http://www.i-a-a.org/citleghowto.htm)>.  
National Adoption Information Clearinghouse  
<[www.calib.com/naic/stats/](http://www.calib.com/naic/stats/)>.

### Quaker Earthcare Witness Vision and Witness

WE ARE CALLED to live in right relationship with all Creation, recognizing that the entire world is interconnected and is a manifestation of God.

WE WORK to integrate into the beliefs and practices of the Religious Society of Friends the Truth that God's Creation is to be respected, protected, and held in reverence in its own right and the Truth that human aspirations for peace and justice depend upon restoring the earth's ecological integrity.

WE PROMOTE these Truths by being patterns and examples, by communicating our message, and by providing spiritual and material support to those engaged in the compelling task of transforming our relationship with the earth.

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# Adoption: An Earth-Friendly Alternative

*Do you want another child?*

*Do you have a lot of love to give to  
kids, but don't want to add to  
the earth's population?*

*Have you considered adoption?*



*Nancy Whitt with her daughter, Vassilka, whom she adopted from Bulgaria when she was 11 years old (Birmingham, Alabama, Friends Meeting).*

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