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A THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF FOSTER CARE MINISTRY: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A CHURCH-BASED WRAPAROUND PROGRAM FOR FOSTER PATENTS

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A THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF FOSTER CARE MINISTRY:
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A CHURCH-BASED
WRAPAROUND PROGRAM FOR FOSTER PARENTS

By
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Dedication

I dedicate this project to my wife, Wendy, for having the vision to care for foster children when I did not. She is a leader with vision for the potential our family has to impact the world and how the church can do the same. She dreams big about what is possible and desires to see God glorified through those dreams. She makes me a better husband, father, pastor, and friend and has been the number one support to accomplishing my dreams.

Wendy encouraged me to pursue this project and sacrificed what has amounted to months of time being a single parent while I completed classes, reading, writing, and research. Ministry is about teamwork and God gave me the best teammate I could ever hope for in this journey of faith.
Acknowledgment

I want to thank Dr. Kent Ingle for always believing in me. He is someone that sees the best in others and connects them with what they need to be successful in accomplishing their divine design. He is a great leader, and a true friend.

In addition, I want to thank my mentor, Dr. Robby Waddell, for his enthusiasm on the topic of foster care ministry. The Lord has used Dr. Waddell to help me tremendously throughout this entire project. His New Testament expertise and ability to articulate the Gospel have been a blessing to me personally, professionally, and academically. He believes that caring for vulnerable children is at the heart of the Gospel and challenged me to discover that truth for myself.

I am also grateful for the personal example and teaching of servant leadership by Dr. Jim Vigil who offered excellent direction and wisdom throughout this program. He was encouraging with his devotional thoughts, personal insights, and pastoral heart for ministry. His humble and dedicated leadership approach has influenced me in profound ways.
Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a new foster parent wraparound program at Journey Church in Kenosha, Wisconsin. The need for this program was found to be in alignment with the mission of God as seen in Isaiah 1:17, Acts 6, Romans 8, and James 1:27. The New Testament Church has a history of leading the way with innovative solutions to rescue orphans, and today, the church once again has the opportunity to lead the way in foster care solutions.

When Kenosha County leaders in the judicial, legal, and social services sector were recently asked how the church could help with foster care, they agreed that recruiting and supporting foster parents were the two largest needs. Therefore, the CompaCare Compassionate Care System of support was installed and studied at Journey Church with pre-study and post-study surveys. The results seem to indicate that Journey Church used this system with positive results after twelve months of implementation and experienced a positive shift in overall satisfaction of the foster care ministry by 25%. In addition, the number of foster parents who were determined to drop out in the upcoming year was reduced from 14% to 0% after support methods were applied. These two data points suggest local churches can positively impact stability and retention levels of foster parents through the CompaCare System of Compassion.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Foster Care support is a significant goal at Journey Church. This congregation is located between the two international cities of Chicago and Milwaukee in the Southeast region of Wisconsin. Each weekend Journey Church is host to over 3000 attendees in three locations. The largest location is located in the city of Kenosha, Wisconsin and is where the church operates its foster care ministry. The American foster care system needs help caring for the approximately 500,000 children per year that do not have a permanent safe home.1 Kenosha, Wisconsin, has 197 of that total number, and 85 of those children still require placement into a foster home.2 Kenosha County is seeking more qualified families that can provide a temporary and safe place for foster children to live because it is currently unable to keep up with the demand for homes.3

The project exploration will evaluate the impact and theological alignment of foster parent wraparound activities. Many pastors surveyed by the Assemblies of God Compact Services reported that they would add foster care ministry into the top vision initiatives of their church if they only knew how.4 Similarly, the Christian Alliance for Orphans reported that 38% of churchgoers are interested in being foster parents, but only

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2. Ibid.
1% follow through with the process. In both cases, a significant gap exists between pastors and congregation members from which interest translates into action. This dissertation project will seek to learn more about how the local church can close those gaps with an effective compassionate care system. The dissertation project will evaluate the strengths of the CompaCare wraparound system, and the solutions it presents will be analyzed.

Specifically, the purpose of this project is to evaluate the effectiveness of the wraparound care ministry for foster families utilizing the CompaCare system at Journey Church in Kenosha, Wisconsin. The dropout rate for foster parents after one year without any wraparound support is perceived to be significant but its exact impact is unknown. Therefore, a healthy wraparound program offers the hope of substantially lowering the foster parent dropout rate at Journey Church. Nationally, the number of foster parents available fails to meet the demand which is referred to as a capacity issue. Additionally, the foster care system continuously faces struggles with a low rate of retention known as a stability issue. Solving this need for capacity and stability in foster care seems to require a more comprehensive approach than is currently being offered. Retention of foster families is an underlying issue that this project will explore because of the nationally high one-year dropout rate. Dropout rates significantly contribute to the lack of available care for foster children and make it difficult for agencies to keep up with the demand for quality homes on a year-over-year basis.

In James 1:27, God commands the church of Jesus Christ to care for the widows and the orphans. This verse does not tell us how, nor does it say everyone should bring a child into his or her home, but it does say that every Christ follower should do something to help the most vulnerable children in their community. Therefore, this researcher will seek to understand how foster care connects to the heart of God and how more of God’s people can participate. Also, the leadership of Journey Church will gain a greater understanding as to its capacity to be more effective in caring for the orphans of Kenosha. This congregation has recently become more aware of the foster care conversation and has the potential to influence others at a local level with systems that are found to be useful and effective. In this dissertation project, church leaders and volunteers will gain greater spiritual insight into the heart of God to help foster children. Understanding God's heart in this way will help move the church forward as it more clearly understands the desire of her King. When churchgoers gain clarity about the biblical implications of caring for foster children and how that is directly connected to their walk with God, they then question how. It is at this point that this project seeks to provide understanding as to how congregation attendees can practically live out the mission of God to the most vulnerable in their community. Both groups of people—church leaders and attendees—need to know the biblical directives and practical ways of how they can take more significant action so that the church of today can display God’s glory to the unbelievers by being the rescuer of children in need.
Relevance of Study to the Researcher

The researcher is an executive pastor at Journey Church in Kenosha, Wisconsin. In his role, he regularly preaches to the congregation, organizes community outreach activities, and oversees staff that lead various ministries of the church. This researcher has also developed several aspects of the foster care and adoption ministry by collaborating with staff to craft a vision that is in alignment with the overall direction of the church for this ministry. As a result, in 2015, Journey church leadership set a goal of helping 200 families become involved as a foster care or adoptive parent by the year 2020. A goal like this is significant because currently there are 197 foster children in need of a home, and more would be added to this total by 2020. Two hundred foster families would ultimately meet the foster care need in Kenosha County and most likely create an excess of families from which workers can choose the best placement. A list like this would be a compelling reversal to a trend that is currently leaving children without anyone to care for them. Currently, children without foster homes are placed in emergency care, relative care, or sent out of the county until a home can be located. When children are sent out of the county they are disconnected from friends, neighbors, and the school they attend. This removal is disruptive to their lives and adds to their trauma. A successful foster family support system aims to equip Journey Church with a system of compassion that will help meet the foster parent need. Furthermore, this project will strategically position the researcher to expand the impact of Journey Church into the local community with data that could influence other churches as well.

The researcher also founded a non-profit called 1Hope.community that aims to rally the churches in Kenosha, Wisconsin, together around a few strategic issues like
foster care and human trafficking. This organization comes from the heart of the leadership at Journey Church and desires to change the city by working together to offer hope. The data from this project will impact the scope of the CompaCare wraparound program expansion through 1Hope.community to the rest of the city. The researcher also serves as a volunteer representative for the Wisconsin / Northern Michigan District of the Assemblies of God (WNMD). The WNMD is a group of like-minded churches that will be able to use the time of the researcher to train their network churches in starting effective foster care ministry.

The theological knowledge gained from this research project will aid the researcher in helping his local congregation understand the heart of God for the most vulnerable in their community and how those children will grow closer to God as well. This theological skillset will assist him in connecting the practical ministry of foster care support with the mission of God for the congregation and church leadership.

Vignette of Researcher

Jonah was told to go to Nineveh, but he did not want to go, and fear held him back. The Israelites were also afraid when they found themselves ready to enter the promised land because the native people looked taller, stronger and dangerous. Moses is yet another example of someone afraid of the challenges ahead because he knew he would have to face Pharaoh when acting as the liberating agent for God’s people. His calling appeared very difficult, but that was God’s plan.

In all these scenarios God had a redemptive plan he needed carried out but those he selected resisted because the plan seemed too hard and the cost seemed too high. They
simply did not think they could do it without great pain. They felt the odds were too great and the suffering would not be worth the reward. They counted the cost and rejected the opportunity. But after some persuading, after some conversation, and after some struggling, all of these men in the Bible recognized God's calling and became a catalyst for God's saving work.

His redemptive story continues in our world today as God seeks to save those that are marginalized, weak, and unable to provide for themselves. Orphans are one such people group that need saving all around the world. But who will save them? Who will step up to care for them and invite them into their home? Who will do what Jesus is asking even if it seems hard? The answer to this question in one small way involves me. Several years ago, I met with county representatives in our city to learn what our church could do to help them. During this meeting, I learned that our city had 197 orphans and only 50 homes available to them. They also told me that 50% of these children were under the age of five, which I found very surprising because I always thought orphans were in the 10-15-year-old category. Therefore, I returned home and explained to my wife that our church could help them in the area of recruiting but that our family could also do something to help. We had the ability to foster at least one little boy or girl, but I remember feeling resistance as I contemplated the extra time, energy, resources and space that would be needed for an additional child in our home. Would I need to change a diaper again? Not a fun thought. I wanted to move on with my life and not go back to raising preschoolers again. My children were in grade school and middle school by that time, and life was just getting a little easier. So, I struggled. But finally, I listened to the
direction I sensed the Spirit leading in and picked up a foster care application for our local county.

Soon after, we had our first little girl in our home and cared for her for over 18 months until we had the opportunity to adopt. That was a big decision, but by that point, she was already a part of our family, and the decision made sense in many ways. We knew her life would be changed forever and that she would have an opportunity to see Jesus lived out in our lives. She would now be able to go to church regularly with us and hear about the Lord. This would provide her an opportunity to follow Jesus for herself one day and in so doing be adopted into the kingdom of heaven.

A fascinating observation my wife and I made was that our family had grown spiritually more in the last 18 months of being a foster parent than in any other time before it. We were seeking the things of God like never before as a family. We were on a mission together, and it was not about us. It was about Jesus. Our children embraced the mission of sharing our home, toys, rooms and time with someone new. They saw the big picture and loved the difference they were seeing in this little 2-year-old girl. The hardest part for me was simply saying yes and walking through the doors of foster care, but the greatest reward was also ahead of me. This journey was about exploring what we could do to help save a child in need and in so doing extend God’s redemptive plan to others in our world.

But then it happened again. We got another call to foster two more children. That would have been a total of six children in our home and much more work than I had originally bargained for. My wife and I talked it over and agreed to simply foster with no intention of adopting these additional children. It would be a short-term experience we
thought, and then we would be back to raising our other four children. Both of the new foster children, however, came to the point of needing to be adopted, and the state asked us if we were willing? Would we be the ones to answer this call? Would we take six children into our lives? It seemed like Nineveh for me because it was hard, it seemed long, and it was forever. What would we do? We prayed and prayed. I told God that my answer was going to be no unless he made it very clear in the other direction. Then, within 24 hours of that prayer, I received seven conformations that affirmed God was with me in this. Some of those conformations were small, and some were large, but mostly they were prophetic in nature like something we had never seen before. It was clear that God cared about this decision and that these two little lives mattered very much to Jesus.

Then his confirming hand moved again. God confirmed what he was doing at the end of the summer in 2016 when we finally decided to move forward with the adoption process of the two additional children. It was on that day that we contacted a man in our church that flipped homes on the side and told us that God had clearly spoken to him. He told us that he was supposed to help us in some way but did not know how or why. He told us simply to call him if we ever needed anything. So, we did. We called him and told him we did not have room in our home anymore for this new family size and wanted to get his thoughts about what we could do. He told us that just a few days earlier he bought a foreclosed home and almost called us six times to see if we would have any interest but never called. Then when we called him, he knew this was our house if we wanted it. He offered to make it happen for us with no additional costs except those associated with the foreclosure. Therefore, we were able to get a home with more space for the foster
children at the same price as what our current home cost. It was a pretty amazing opportunity. The problem was we still had to sell our existing home. But within 24 hours we had two offers on our house, accepted one of them and bought the new house. This was all without even listing our home for sale. It was quite an amazing transaction because without even trying, we had sold our house and God provided another home to meet our needs on the same day. God had done it again. Confirming he was on this journey once we submitted and committed to his redemptive plan for creation. Everything else fell into place after that.

I believe that the way God intervened in our lives through that situation illustrates that adoption, foster care, and helping orphans is not just a good idea but is at the heart of the gospel. Caring for orphans becomes a living testimony of God’s love and saving work for his people. Even if adopting these children turns out to be the worst decision I ever made it will still be the best decision I ever made because of its eternal purpose. My life has been changed, my walk with the Lord has been changed, and my family is more missional today because of adoption and foster care than ever before in our lives. It all started with a sense that we could make a difference if we were willing to do something hard for God and my prayer is that it ends with three little children being liberated from their sins and adopted as children of God.

**Contextual Scope and Limitations**

Foster children in Kenosha, Wisconsin, will benefit from this project as a result of increased recruitment and retention of foster parents over time. This will allow
recruitment efforts from local agencies a legitimate chance of catching up with demand. In addition, the agencies will benefit because the wraparound program will provide a first line of defense when foster families need immediate help. This means that case workers will be available to assist children in crisis instead of responding to needs that could be served by a local, well-trained volunteer. In this way, the agencies will be more successful at accomplishing their mission and meeting their goals for the community. The success of wraparound care will also benefit the foster families because they will be cared for, appreciated, and encouraged to continue the effort they started by helping a child in need. Foster families will be more fulfilled, equipped, encouraged, and more likely to recruit other foster parents themselves. The church of Jesus Christ will also benefit from a positive reputation because of successful wraparound care. Society has been searching for solutions to the gaps in foster parent support and has yet to offer a sustainable approach. God's glory will be displayed as his church lives out James 1:27 and answers the call to help orphans by recruiting and retaining higher numbers of foster parents. Wraparound volunteers are the key to meeting this need. These volunteers will bless the community with their efforts but also be blessed personally as they experience spiritual growth from living a missional life in this way. Regardless of age, marital status, or church affiliation, adult volunteers that attend Journey Church will be given the opportunity to interact with foster families and realize that they are playing a part in extending the gospel to a vulnerable sector of the population. In this way, the volunteers become more understanding and their compassion increases. When watching a foster child being placed with a family for the first time, a lesson of compassion can be learned that only that experience can teach. A wraparound care ministry can provide the
opportunity for Christ-following volunteers to experience God in a way they otherwise
would not experience.

The value of this research to the community is that once data are collected and
used to demonstrate the effectiveness of wraparound care in the local church, other
churches will have a foundation for doing the same. One by one, community by
community, churches can answer the call to help orphans, change futures, and impact
entire communities.

The limitations of this project are such that not all the previously mentioned
groups of people impacted by wraparound care will be in this project. The project will
evaluate the satisfaction levels of the foster families before and after the implementation
of a wraparound ministry at Journey Church.

The attendance of this congregation is approximately three thousand each week in
a community of 150,000 people. Kenosha is located between the two international cities
of Chicago and Milwaukee with the diversity and resources available to a region of this
nature. The pastoral leadership is supportive of foster care and speaks of it publicly from
the stage. The strategic plan of Journey Church has placed foster care near the top of its
five-year goal list and therefore receives more budget, promotion, and energy than
various other efforts at the church. The 20% of foster children in Kenosha that Journey
Church cares for will be included in this study.
Project Goals

1. Goal – Identify the biblical mandate and justification for a foster care ministry to exist in today’s American church programming.
   a. Objective – Research biblical examples of how God cares for the marginalized and seeks to rescue the quartet of the vulnerable (poor, widow, orphan, foreigner).
   c. Objective – Explore the role of the Holy Spirit in calling and equipping the church to provide for the orphans.

2. Goal – Understand the historical context of how the church and the state have attempted to address this issue in the past.
   a. Objective – Research how society has addressed this issue. These methods will be compared to those used in the faith community to help identify more clearly the goal and expectations of a church-based response to foster care.
   b. Objective – Research how the church has addressed foster care in the past and present. Explore how people of faith have responded to orphaned children throughout history will inform the reader as to the conversations that have been taking place for generations.

3. Goal – Evaluate the effectiveness of a wraparound foster family support program at Journey church after one year of implementation.
a. Objective – Measure the need for proposed support efforts. Evaluation will be done to determine which support activities are most valued by foster families. Measurement data provide wisdom and insight the program’s leaders can use to make better decisions. The goal of wraparound care is to leave the foster family supported; therefore, activities that fail to achieve this outcome may end.

b. Objective – Measure the overall satisfaction of foster families at Journey Church before and after they receive wraparound care ministry. Data will be collected about various types of support for foster families over a one-year timeframe. The objective in this step is to gauge the overall satisfaction level of each foster family after receiving support. This step will also gauge the level of their intent to continue with foster care in the next 12 months.

**Theological and Biblical Dimensions**

Isaiah 1:17 – Compassion Defined

Isaiah 1:17 includes orphans as people who need compassion. “Learn to do good; seek justice; correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless and plead the widow's cause” (ESV). This verse clarifies the significance of this issue to the heart of God and makes a connection between orphan care and the Christian life. There is much to learn from this passage of scripture as it illuminates the character of God and further describes what it means to serve him.
In Isaiah 17, God brings marginalized people to the front lines of the spiritual battle. He connects the way a nation cares for the orphan with the degree to which God's people truly know who God is. Only people that love the widows and the orphans know the heart of God. The irony of this statement is that God's people in the eighth century before Christ thought that, because they were the chosen ones, that they could live a life of wickedness as long as they just offered the correct sacrifice to God.

This passage commands followers of God to examine their worship and stop doing rituals meant to gain favor with God but instead help the marginalized in the community. It is those acts of worship that reveal an accurate understanding of God's heart and represent who he is to the world in need. God wants his people to help the orphans and widows. To overlook the fatherless is to overlook the gospel because God shows his love by rescuing those who have no provider. Put another way, the church can do many things, but if it overlooks the orphan, it overlooks God.

Acts 6 - The Church Responds

The local church began in the book of Acts, and it is in this book that we find lay leaders given the authority to carry out the work of helping the widows and the orphans that were hungry. The Bible says when speaking of the chosen volunteers, “These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them.”

It was at this point that the volunteer leaders took on this new task with the blessing of leadership. The fact that the apostles laid hands on them and prayed showed value in them and demonstrated that the work they were about to do with the widows was godly

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and spiritual work. These church leaders could have appointed the new men into service and moved on with their work, but instead, they chose to commission them through prayer. This simple yet necessary step demonstrated the apostle’s trust in this new team and validated the importance of the lay leader’s work to the Kingdom of God. It added value to the newly appointed team in the eyes of the Hebrew and Greek people moving forward. The mantle of leadership needs to be passed on by the leaders themselves for the people to respect the new structure. The new leadership team had a passion that continued even after their commissioning, and they witnessed for Christ like never before. This newly delegated authority did not weaken the ministry or the spiritual impact of the ministry in any way; it simply multiplied it.11 In the same way, the church of today can model this action by selecting volunteers that God will bless as they lead the effort of caring for foster children in the community. Acts 2:45 is another place the early church took action to help those in need. Christ followers helped the Christians around the table and all the people in their community that were in need. Their sacrificial actions of selling possessions and helping the poor set the tone for future generations to follow.

Romans 8 - The Spirit of Adoption

Romans 8 is a passage in which the pneumatology of Paul describes the Spirit of Adoption. The activity of the Spirit in this chapter will be analyzed in relation to adoption and its connectedness to foster care. A pneumatologically clear understanding of adoption

is valued in this study because children in American foster care may face this reality at some point in their journey. This analysis will be expository in nature in an effort to uncover the various aspects the Spirit plays in adoption theology.

James 1:27 - The Church is Called to Respond

The oppression and pain of those without a parent continued in the New Testament as the church is reminded “religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit the orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” This verse tells the church that it needs to help widows and orphans but is not specific about how. Therefore, while the methodology remains flexible, the mandate to care for orphans is sharp and clear. The church of every generation has the responsibility to determine how it will answer this call.

Issues from Related Contemporary Literature

Wraparound support volunteers can gain greater effectiveness with even the most basic of trauma-informed care education. Forbes and Post addressed the issue of foster care and adoption success in their book Beyond Consequences, Logic, and Control. Their goal for this book was to bring new methodology to those parents that commit to raising a child that has suffered abuse, neglect, or abandonment. Forbes believed that,

It is not about parenting “disturbed” or “hurt” or “unattached” children. It is not about stopping at every moment to "make" attachment a reality. Parenting a child with a traumatic history is about learning to interpret the child's reactions to past experiences from a place of compassion, understanding, and love. Love is enough
when it is in the absence of fear. It takes seeing the child for whom he or she is and meeting the child in their pain.\(^\text{13}\)

An interesting fact to note about this quote from Forbes is that she said that love is enough with the proper methods. The premise of her approach is letting go of control and fear in the name of love. Forbes encourages foster and adoptive parents first to be willing to feel the pain of the child and then take on that pain with the child. This aspect is similar to the love of Jesus and how he was willing to feel pain and take on the pain of sinners for the sake of healing and restoration. In this way, Forbes suggests the act of taking on the pain of the child is an extension of the Gospel. Her parenting methods are controversial to some because they are counter-intuitive.\(^\text{13}\) She believes that when the motive is love, the actions of releasing control produce healthy attachment, and that attachment soothes the soul, leading to improved behavior. However, releasing control takes courage because it seems irresponsible to forgive stealing, lying, and hoarding of food on the spot without any consequences. Common sense tells a parent to include consequences with wrong actions. However, instead of fear-based consequences, Forbes subscribes to the opposite. She teaches that traumatized children are seeking external ways to regulate internally.\(^\text{14}\) Since the child has trouble internally regulating themselves, their poor behavior makes them feel better. They get a good feeling from stealing or lying. It can be an addictive behavior because the body releases similar chemicals when lying as are released with heroin or cocaine.\(^\text{15}\) These negative behaviors make the child feel good, which is why punishments are not effective. Forbes says that if a parent

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14. Ibid., loc 49.
15. Ibid.
punishes a child for stealing, it is possible for the child to steal an item soon after because
the child is not stealing to be disobedient; the child is stealing to feel good. Repetition of
stealing and lying also creates a subconscious response to stress. When a child is feeling
stressed, they turn to what makes them feel good.16

Mary Frances Bowley and Jennifer Bradley Franklin wrote a book called Make it
Zero that presents many connected aspects contributing to adults that are dysfunctional
and vulnerable. The authors studied abused women and concluded that most of the
women in shelters of some kind as an adult suffered abuse or neglect as a child.
Therefore, the authors have set out to change the world one person at a time by inspiring
everyone to do something to help abused and neglected children.17 The big goal for this
book is to see all poverty, hunger, isolation, abuse, and trafficking reduced to zero. Her
simple plan is to inspire one person to start working with one more person to help
vulnerable children. She believes that as this cycle of working together continues; the
dream of zeroing out these problems is possible. The author wrote it this way: "I have
seen a common theme emerge most victimized adults were vulnerable when they were
children. It has been with this realization that if we correct the factors that lead to
childhood vulnerability, we can make a difference in the lives of those children and the
lives of the adults they will grow up to be."18

Russell Moore addresses the issue church leaders face when attempting to know
how to begin creating a ministry for orphans in the church. He writes a portion of his
book Adopted for Life: The Priority of Adoption for Christian Families and Churches

16. Ibid., loc 96.
17. Mary Frances Bowley and Jennifer Bradley Franklin, Make It Zero: The Movement to
18. Ibid., 16.
applying adoption theology to the local church and provides a possible roadmap for churches to use in beginning their adoption ministry. He first suggests that churches create a culture of adoption through preaching from the pulpit. Culture creation is vital because creating a culture starts with communicating the type of change a church wants to see. Preaching about adoption theology answers the question of "why" behind the actions that will follow. The people hear the heart of the leader on the subject as well as the voice of the God through the reading of the text. The Holy Spirit then uses this time of culture creation to stir the hearts of the people and align them with the will of God. The role of the communicator in preaching about adoption theology is ultimately to create an adoptive-missional church. There is a synergistic effect that happens when the local church begins to catch the adoptive vision for their community. Christians begin to make the connection of how reaching the world with the gospel and helping orphans are connected. Not every person can open their home to a child, but everyone can do something.

Kathryn Purvis, David Cross, and Wendy Sunshine collaborated to produce a book called *The Connected Child: For Parents that have Welcomed Children* that speaks of the power compassion plays in caring for orphans. "Compassion will help you be tolerant of a child's deep neediness, and to be forgiving when he or she does not understand something that seems so basic, like how to sit at a dining room table with a family, how to use toilet paper, or how to read people's facial expressions." Jesus had

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20. Ibid.
compassion on the marginalized of his time. He also has compassion for us today. It is compassion that allows us to understand what others have been through and empathize with others to the point of getting involved. Real compassion is not stationary and feel bad for someone but rather jumps into action to help someone in need. Kathryn Purvis puts it this way when speaking about neglected children:

The lives that many of them have endured were more difficult than we can fathom. With compassion, parents can look inside the child's heart and recognize the impairments and deep fear that drive maladaptive behavior—fears of abandonment, hunger, being in an unfamiliar environment, losing control, and being hurt.22

It is this compassion that aligns our expectations to a realistic level. We can express the fruits of the spirit when caring for children who do not trust adults or who have never had healthy attachment before. It is compassion that demonstrates love and compels us to be joyful and celebrate the moments when a child does the smallest thing right. Compassion puts others first and us second. It is compassion that spurs us on to be faithful when we feel like giving up or being kind when a child yells at us in frustration. “Deep down, these children want desperately to connect and succeed but don't understand how. As parents, it is our job to show them.”23 Compassion, as Purvis calls it, is our touchstone.24 It is love, and love is the thesis of God’s Word.

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22. Ibid., loc 265.
23. Ibid., loc 273.
24. Ibid., loc 250.
Research Methodology

The dissertation project will study foster parents during a 12-month window of time and evaluate the effectiveness of the CompaCare program from the Assemblies of God Foster Care Services at Journey Church in Kenosha, Wisconsin. CompaCare is a wraparound program that mobilizes churchgoers to support the foster families so that they stay in the foster care system longer and are more effective.

The subject of the study will be the current foster families that attend Journey Church in Kenosha, Wisconsin because these are the only families that will receive wraparound care. In the CompaCare model, family advocates are volunteers that assess the needs of the foster families and match up the volunteers to those families according to the ways they are able to provide care. Therefore, two family advocate volunteers will coordinate care for approximately four families total over the twelve-month period of this study.

By offering wraparound care and assessing its efficacy, the project will seek to improve the support foster parents receive in the Journey Church congregation and therefore improve the following aspects of foster care in Kenosha County:

1. Capacity: There are not enough foster families for every foster child.
2. Stability: The foster families are currently not trained and supported to the level needed for retention goals of the county.

The government has attempted to solve this problem with state and county programs throughout the nation, but they are failing to meet the objectives. According to CompaCare research, an extensive three-year audit of the state child welfare systems from the Department of Health and Human Services found that not a single state
complied with federal safety standards for children. In fact, sixteen states did not meet any of these standards, and not a single state met more than two of the seven standards.\textsuperscript{25} Wisconsin has identified five strategies to address performance gaps listed in its 2010 Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). The five areas are: (1) pathways to performance (2) family engagement (3) safety timeliness response (4) building service capacity, and (5) professional development.\textsuperscript{26} To make matters worse, even the foster families that are recruited often drop out after the first year. Forty to sixty percent of foster families drop out after the first year because of being overwhelmed by paperwork requirements, court dates, and visits by officials.\textsuperscript{27} This stability problem creates an environment that makes it even more difficult to address the capacity issue.

Each CompaCare church will set out to accomplish the 5/2/15 plan, which includes recruiting five foster families, two respite families, and nine other volunteers each year that would provide support. Therefore, a church that offers a CompaCare wraparound ministry sends the message that families will not do foster care alone. Recruiting five foster families is the goal for a church of 500 weekly attendees, but that ratio can be scaled down for a church of 100 attendees and still be effective. The number of respite volunteers, however, always needs to be two because of the need for overnight care throughout the year. The fifteen volunteers are people who cannot bring a child into their home at the current time but want to support others that care for foster children.

\textsuperscript{25} Hancock and Mostert, \textit{CompaCare Compassion Care System Manual: Helping Churches Minister to Vulnerable Children and Families}, 22.
\textsuperscript{27} Hancock and Mostert, \textit{CompaCare Compassion Care System Manual: Helping Churches Minister to Vulnerable Children and Families}, 26.
One volunteer is asked to be an advocate that would take on the responsibility of matching up the needs of foster families with the skills and interests of the volunteers. The role of connecting help with needs is crucial because this person becomes the family advocate for foster families. This family advocate must anticipate the needs of foster families because often those families will not speak up when they are struggling. Once the volunteers connect with the foster families, there is ongoing training for the volunteers to help them understand the trauma that foster children have and the type of support the foster families will require. The respite volunteers are also scheduled with the families to give them a break and a time of rest.

Each year the church using the CompaCare system will recruit new volunteers and foster families as well as support the foster families that are currently engaged. In this way, churches will address the capacity and sustainability issues in foster care and in part carry out their James 1:27 mandate to care for the orphans.

This researcher will also be seeking to understand how impactful and effective the CompaCare model is at Journey Church in retaining foster parents. Currently, the dropout rate is 60% at Journey Church after one year without any wraparound support program. Dropout rate improvement will be of interest to this project and is a key objective of the study. The dissertation project will be the first measurement of a program like this in an Assemblies of God church.
Evaluation

The researcher will survey the foster families in the wraparound program after one year of implementation. The pre-study survey will create a baseline of data before the support program begins at Journey Church. Then, a post-study survey will be done to provide data the researcher can evaluate. This data will be used to analyze the overall wraparound program effectiveness and offer suggestions for improvement.

The SurveyMonkey platform along with its included analysis tools will be used for consistency of analysis. This platform will provide both numerical results and graphical representations of the results. The researcher will seek to learn how effective the program is from an objective reading of the data from the survey results.

The survey will be used to evaluate the specific support activities and determine the level of helpfulness each activity has. One of the goals of this study is to improve the wraparound foster care ministry provided based on knowledge gained from an evaluation of the CompaCare system. Another goal is to evaluate the level of impact the support activities have on the overall satisfaction of each foster family to help reduce the dropout rate after one year.

The survey has been approved by the IRB on November 9th, 2017 by Southeastern University. This survey instrument was used to create a baseline data set and will be used again for evaluation after one year of CompaCare wraparound implementation (see Appendix 1).
Chapter 2

A Theological, Historical, Societal, and Practical Perspective of Adoption and Foster Care

Care in the Local Church

The purpose of this chapter is to explore various aspects that influence the foster care ministry of the local church. There are various voices that provide context to the way foster care has been addressed historically in the church, in society, and in the church today. All of these influences help provide a backdrop for the landscape of foster care in American culture and shed light on the current opportunity the church has to be the gospel in a way that is close to the heart of God.

This chapter will begin with a Theological and Biblical exploration of how God cares for vulnerable children and expects the church to care for them as well. Strong language is used by God to direct the church through the prophet Isaiah, Paul and James. Then, after God’s will in this matter in known, an overview of New Testament church history briefly looks at of how the church has addressed orphans in generations gone by. Next, a look at how society has addressed this issue is explored to gain a perspective of what has been accomplish and what has failed and possibly what still needs to change. Finally, methods of local churches, parachurch organizations and bridge organizations will be reviewed to gain insight on some of the ways todays Christian culture is attempting to care for the foster children every American community.
Scriptural Support for Foster Care Ministry

This section will highlight several passages of scripture that support and more clearly define the issue of adoption and foster care from a theological perspective. The following passages answer the question of why the church should prioritize ministry to vulnerable children and how caring for these children is at the heart of the gospel. Isaiah begins the conversation with a strong word for the church in the Old Testament that continues into the New Testament. These passages follow the canonical order found in the Biblical text and demonstrate God’s heart for those needing rescue. They also show how this message carries forward to the first century church and to every Christ follower in the future through the words of Paul and James. This theme of caring for the vulnerable can be seen throughout the law:27

- Warning not to mistreat any fatherless child (Exodus 22:22).
- God requires Israel to be on guard and speaks of a curse to come on anyone who tries to hurt those in need of justice (Deuteronomy 24:17; 27:19).
- Agricultural leaders were required to leave produce in fields for the hungry (Deuteronomy 24:19-21).
- Every third year, the marketplace would give a tithe to the poor (Deuteronomy 26:12-13).
- God is the Father to the fatherless (Psalm 68:5).
- God requires justice for the fatherless (Psalm 82:3).

The conclusion of this section provides a brief theological overview of themes such as compassion, rescue, and adoption. The theology of adoption is key to informing the basis for Christian efforts in the modern-day foster care movement. This overview also provides a backdrop for the purpose of ministry to vulnerable children and is a beautiful vision for how the love of God redesigns us all.

**Isaiah 1:17**

“Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows” (Isaiah 1:17 NLT). The modern world has not escaped the need to care for orphans as illustrated by the over 500,000 children without a parent to care for them in the U.S. alone. This segment of the population is at high risk of incarceration and human trafficking after high school if a permanent home is not identified. Therefore, since the need for orphan care is still real today, who should be addressing it? Should it be government programs, private group homes, or medical facilities designed to address this population? What about Christians? Does Isaiah 1:17 imply that every Christian should be involved? The following study will explore Isaiah 1:17 as it relates to caring for orphans and will seek to understand how important this issue is to our relationship with God and explore the connection between orphan care and the Christian life using Isaiah 1:17 to gain perspective. There is much to learn from this.

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passage of scripture as it illuminates the character of God and further describes what it means to serve him.

The book of Isaiah is significant because it sets the tone for themes of prophecy that are repeated in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Chapter one is a review of the literary, historical, and theological scope of the whole book. The prophet Isaiah and God go into detail and exercise great patience with the people of Israel as they call out sin and ask the people to turn back to God. R. Clements believes that the first chapter of Isaiah is an introduction of different messages throughout the prophet’s ministry. Others like John Hayes and Stuart Irvine believe that chapters 1-6 represent the early part of Isaiah’s ministry when Juda’s wickedness had not yet brought destruction. Either way, Isaiah presents two pathways for the nation of Israel: the wrong way that will lead to separation from God and the right way that leads to blessing. Interestingly, the right way is described in chapter one verses 16 and 17. The Israelites think that as long as they participate in offerings to God that they are entitled to his favor. They learn, however, from the prophet Isaiah, that it is the person that acts like God that knows God and not merely someone that makes offerings to him. The evidence that a person knows God is found in their ethical behavior toward the oppressed.

32. House, “Isaiah’s Call and Its Context In Isaiah 1-6,” 208.
33. Ibid., 209.
35. Ibid., 78.
36. Ibid.
One issue at this time in history was that religious symbols represented the condition of the heart; therefore, if the heart of the people was not aligned with what mattered to God, their offerings of worship meant nothing.\textsuperscript{37} Karl N. Jacobson points out that “Isaiah is more than simply prophesying or prediction, it is deep in teaching, warnings, and encouragement.”\textsuperscript{38} Isaiah 1:17 is a verse that calls Israel to radical repentance.\textsuperscript{39} There is a sense of urgency in the first chapter of Isaiah to warn the people of their separation from God and the impending disaster to come if they do not repent. Isaiah says that the Israelites have been reduced to a level even lower than animal status because “even the ox knows its master”\textsuperscript{40} (Isaiah 1:3). Their behavioral tendencies away from justice indicate they no longer know the Lord.

The Lord is a God of justice, and because justice is the character of God, the Prophet Isaiah strongly calls the nation of Israel to be a just nation.\textsuperscript{41} The idea of justice is exemplified by how a culture decides human relationships should exist between members of the community and therefore is a social concept.\textsuperscript{42} Since justice is a social concept, it is helpful to understand that Israel was a kinship society that placed a focus on ancestral and generational structures. As a result, the extended family was assigned the role of rescuing a member of the family if they fell into debt, lost a husband, or were forced into slavery.\textsuperscript{43} A sojourner, the widow, and the orphan were people that did not have a family unit to

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 80.
\textsuperscript{39} Laird R. Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, \textit{Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament} (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1999), 863.
\textsuperscript{40} Hassell C. Bullock, \textit{An Introduction to The Old Testament Prophetic Books}, updated ed. (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2007), 161.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
care for them and as a result were the most vulnerable of society. The orphan had no parents alive to care for them, and the widow had married into a home where the husband had just died most likely from battle.\textsuperscript{44}

Susan Niditch contends that the structure of Isaiah chapter 1:4-20 is that of a sermon because of the style, tone, and the way in which the speaker addresses the audience.\textsuperscript{45} She makes the point that Isaiah uses these verses to preach like a poet would use a poem.\textsuperscript{46} As in many sermons, a strong warning is issued in Isaiah 1:2-20. The people of Israel were warned and then compared to Sodom and Gomorrah because of their disobedience and lack of justice.\textsuperscript{47}

Isaiah 1:17 is located in a book of the Bible that was written to warn and guide God’s people back to him. Isaiah was the prophet assigned by God to tell the people of their wrong and wicked ways in hopes that they would avoid disaster and return to a life of blessing and protection. Chapter 1 of Isaiah spends the first 15 verses explaining wrong ways of living and what will happen if the Israelites do not turn back to him. It is interesting to note that verse 16 tells the people to stop and only one verse tells the people what they should do instead, which is found in verse 17. God could have told them to do many things that were just, but he chose care for widows and orphans as the focus of his compassion because it is his nature to rescue those lost and in need of saving.

The tone of the words used in verse 17 are mostly that of command and infinitive producing a strong suggestion that a change in behavior will lead to a better tomorrow.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 128.
\textsuperscript{45} Susan Niditch, \textit{The Composition of Isaiah} (Amhurst, MA: Amherst College, Department of Religion, n.d.), 509.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{47} Marvin A. Sweeney, Carol A. Dempsey, and Gale A. Yee, \textit{The Prophets: Isaiah 1-39}, study ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2016), 676.
The encouraging tense is hard to grasp in a straightforward reading of the text because of the strong command tone, but it is precisely that sense of encouragement that gives the verse its power and vision of the future.

**The Empowerment of the Church in Acts**

The New Testament echoes the teachings of Isaiah and empowers the church to help the marginalized in the book of Acts. This passage was selected because of the impact it has had on the mission of Christ to those who are poor as well as the example it presents for church leadership today. This study will attempt to shed light on how the early church practically handled the tension of meeting needs and serving others with unity, seeking to understand more about the role of serving the poor as the body of Christ. The importance of this passage can be seen in how the church today struggles to meet the overwhelming needs of the community through volunteer service using limited resources. The pressure is high for the 21st century church, yet there is an example set by the 1st century church that is applicable for today.

The implications of this passage have the potential to be motivational in the life of the church and the life of the Christian today because, as more understanding is gained about how Christ wants believers to live, the possibilities for empowered living becomes far greater.

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John talk about the life of Christ in a way that describes Him as a seed that has died for our sins and has been placed in the ground. Christ then was raised from the grave, and the next chapter of human history
began. The book of Acts describes the fruit that is then produced from this spectacular part of the story (John 12:24). We see Jesus going first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles, and eventually producing a movement that influenced Rome.48

Acts is called the Acts of the Apostles and describes in the first chapter the commissioning of the disciples to be witnesses of what Christ had done for them (Acts 1:8). Then, the following chapters outline an account of the Holy Spirit empowering people to witness about Christ. During this time, the early Church expanded and showed God’s love to many new parts of the world.49

Luke was a traveler and often wrote about places he visited in his Gospel. For example, he wrote about Mary and Joseph and the inn (Luke 2:7). He also wrote about the Samaritan who helped the wounded Jew at an inn (Luke 10:34–35). In Acts, Luke clearly explained Paul’s travels including details such as the last small island. Luke wrote about how Jesus ate with people and told parables with them over dinner. He did this more than any other writer. Luke also had a strong concern for the oppressed and the poor. He noted unfair treatment of people groups like the Samaritans and eunuchs. He also pointed out people with limited opportunity and privileges. Luke was outspoken about the rich and their failure to help those in need when the need was clearly in front of them.50 There were socioeconomic class divisions, and slavery was normal. Approximately two percent of the population was wealthy, and half of the people lived at or below the poverty level for portions of their lives.51

Acts and the Poor

“In Joppa, there was a believer named Tabitha. Her name in the Greek language was Dorcas. She was always doing good and helping poor people” (Acts 9:36 NIRV). Tabitha was an example of a believer that helped the poor and was loved by widows. When she died, many widows specifically gathered around her and were weeping. Her excellent deeds had blessed them over time. This scripture points out that she was "always doing good" and through her acts of love to the marginalized, she gained favor, trust, and love in return.

The majority of the first-century Palestinian world was made up of two people groups: the rich and the poor. The religious and socially wealthy could also be categorized into two main groups: the observant Jewish leaders and those associated with the Herodians and Romans who were accepted for their power but made outcasts for their lack of morality.52

It is particularly interesting that Luke is writing to his generation as well as future generations about the importance of following Christ, and as he does, he writes more about the rich and poor than any other writer in the New Testament. It is equally interesting that at the time of Luke (approximately 80-90 A.D) there were only two classes: the rich and the poor. This speaks to Luke's theology of the poor and how vital it was for people to understand how Jesus viewed them. The writings of Luke were being read by predominantly poor and marginalized people. This theology of Christ that gives hope to the poor is precisely what was needed to connect with the people of that day as well as the people of future generations. There is a message of hope and a message of unity to all socioeconomic classes.

Since Luke is the author of both Acts and the Gospel of Luke, it is worth noting that he spends a considerable amount of time teaching about the poor before he gets to Acts. For example, in Luke 5:30-31 Jesus answered them, “Those who are healthy don’t need a doctor, sick people do. I have not come to get those who think they are right with God to follow me. I have come to get sinners to turn away from their sins” (Mark 2:17 NIRV). Other times in Luke we see teaching that leads us to live a life with compassion towards the poor. This can be seen in the beatitudes (Luke 6:20-26), the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-27), and the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18-23). Dario Lopez Rodriguez in his book *The Liberating Mission of Jesus* points out that there is a recommended path to reaching people for Christ seen in the book of Luke.

First, we should look at the story of the Good Samaritan as an example of the heart needed to serve others and in so doing gain their trust. Serving others and caring for them even if they are different demonstrates the type of Love Jesus preached about.

The second step is generosity. This was seen in the Good Samaritan story as well. Generosity is a part of serving or may happen directly after someone is helped. This demonstrates love differently. It is one thing to give time to help someone, and it is another to give of your resources. That is a one-two punch to open their heart.

Third is the relational step of befriending sinners: talking to them, accepting them for who they are, and getting to the point where they will call us friends. This culminates with an opportunity at some point to share the good news of God's love and forgiveness to them because their heart is open to listening.53

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All three of these steps can be seen in the foster care process. Serving, generosity, and relationship building are part of caring for a child and increase the opportunity for discipleship. Furthermore, the depth of relationship that can be developed between a parent and child offers incredible opportunity for evangelism that is difficult to achieve through less committed relationships.

Acts 6:1-7 provides a vivid example of how the early church empowered people to serve the poor with generosity and loving relationships. “As the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food” (Acts 6:1, NLT). The early church was not very organized and did not have the structure, buildings, and systems it has today. The government of the church was strongly democratic, and people gave voluntarily to help the poor. Eventually, people got jobs and provided for themselves, but the widows were unable to work. They were a people group left behind and in need.54

There was a conflict that arose in the body of Christ between the Greek-speaking Jews and the Hebraic Jews. This conflict was centered around the widows of each culture within the newly formed Christian Church because they were not receiving the same type of care that should have been given to all. The idea of overlooking the widows because of cultural differences was a huge problem for the Jerusalem church, and this was a critical moment for the leadership to decide how they would address it. Conflict can be used for good, unifying groups and helping them to find common ground. It can also be used for harm and division within families, organizations, and the church. In this case, the

disciples were faced with a decision about how to equally and fairly take care of the widows in both cultures. The way they handled this problem had a long-lasting impact on the future of the church because at this point it was growing in number, influence, and resources. The impact the church was having could continue to grow or be set back depending on how this situation was handled. The following is a breakdown of the scriptures around Acts 6:6 intended to explore the actions of the disciples from an exegetical point of view.

Acts 6:2

“So, the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said we apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program” (Acts 6:2 NLT). The disciples responded to the tension of the situation by reminding the people of their primary task. They were called to preach the word and pray. This was their gifting, and they did not want to get off task for other good and necessary things that needed to be done. So, the disciples started with purpose and reminded the people of what their purpose was in the big picture. They did not focus on the complaining attitude toward leadership and become defensive. There was a real problem, and they wanted to see it fixed. They called a meeting with the people and started by stating the vision to remind the people what the Apostles role was in the church. It is worth noting that, when faced with a crisis, the first leaders of the church led with vision. They did not dismiss the importance of caring for the poor but sought a solution that would free them to do what
God had called them to do while still helping those in need. The apostles listened to the people and began problem-solving as is seen in the following verse.55

*Acts 6:3*

“And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility” (Acts 6:3 NLT). The disciples did not look down on the widows but instead took the matter very seriously. They formed the first volunteer leadership team in the church and delegated responsibility to them. These leaders were not asked to preach or be professional speakers but instead to be servants. As leaders, they were asked to serve in practical ministry to widows, and seven men were selected, most likely consistent with the Jewish practice of setting up boards for specific duties. There were three qualifications for these men, but we do not know how they were selected. The qualifications were similar to those in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Once selected, the disciples turned the work over to them. This implies full empowerment so that they were released to take ownership of the ministry and make decisions.56

*Acts 6:4*

“The then apostles can spend our time in prayer and teach the word” (Acts 6:4 NLT). The purpose was again put before the people so that they knew why this decision was being made. It is evident in this verse that the heart of the Apostles was to keep the

mission clear and the task on course. They did not want to sacrifice the role they had been
given. It is also clear that the tension behind this conflict was significant. It required the
stating and restating of why this decision was made. This was not being done because
they did not care or did not want to help the widows themselves but because it would pull
them away from their primary purposes. They were not saying that they were better than
others because they preached, and others should do less critical work, but instead they
were restating their primary calling and the desire to stay true to it. Paul describes his
ministry in Acts 20:34-35 as doing other things than merely preaching and praying. The
disciples served others in a variety of ways but chose this situation to reorganize and
create a new structure to care for the growing needs.57

Acts 6:5

“Everyone liked this idea, and they chose the following: Stephen (a man full of
faith and the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of
Antioch (an earlier convert to the Jewish faith)” (Acts 6:5 NLT). All seven of these men
seem to be Hellenists. The prevailing thought is that it was wise for them to choose men
that were from the culture that was feeling overlooked. In doing so, these new leaders
were able to connect best with the culture they were asked to minister to. It also seemed
to show respect for the Greek Speaking Jews and in so doing addressed the felt disrespect
that was causing the tension to begin with. The overall result was that both sides agreed
to the decision and unity prevailed. What was once a point of confusion and possible
division had become a unanimous point of unity.

Acts 6:6

“These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them” (Acts 6:6). It was at this point that the new volunteer leaders were commissioned for a specific task. The fact that the Apostles laid hands on them and prayed showed a value in them and demonstrated that the work they were about to do with the widows was Godly and spiritual work. These church leaders could have appointed the new men into service and moved on with their work, but instead, they chose to commission them through prayer. This simple yet necessary step demonstrated their trust in this new team and validated the importance of their work to the Kingdom of God. It added value to the newly appointed team in the eyes of the people moving forward. The mantle of leadership needs to be passed on by the leaders themselves for the people to respect the new structure. It was true then, and that principle remains true today. The new leadership team had a passion that continued even after their commissioning and they witnessed for Christ like never before. This newly delegated authority did not weaken the ministry or the spiritual impact of the ministry in any way. It simply multiplied it.58

Acts 6:7

“So, God’s message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too” (Acts 6:7 NLT). This verse seems to say that God blessed this decision and fruitful ministry was the result. The fact that the church was very multicultural at this time was the source of

the tension but also its greatest strength. It was able to reach more significant numbers of people because of its diversity, and now that this conflict had been successfully settled there was a unity that fueled the growth of the church. Also unusual about this verse is the inclusion of the priests who were converting as well. Most of the priest were Sadducees and did not believe in the resurrection, so this fact was a breakthrough for the growth of the church. This conversion of the priests meant that the Gospel had now reached every segment of Jerusalem society. The role of the Spirit can be seen in the wisdom of the Apostles’ decision to appoint these seven men full of the Spirit and set them free to accomplish the work of Christ. This evidence of the Spirit’s empowerment to organize the church further multiplied the people and set off a new wave of growth.

The Greek word *euxanon* was used in this verse and means "was increasing" and "kept growing."

These seven passages of scripture are presented in a narrative form and as such tell a compelling story of the Spirit’s work in the early church. It is interesting to see how the storyline of the Spirit follows the Apostles and then at this juncture changes direction. It seems as though the story begins to follow those that were doing the work of helping the widows like Steven and Phillip. They were empowered by the Holy Spirit to be witnesses for Christ and ultimately died for that cause. However, even the death of Steven was critical for the scattering of the saints and the continued spread of the Gospel. Many others in the body of Christ began preaching the Gospel other than the Apostles,

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and there may be something to be said for the Spirit’s storyline here. Organizing
volunteer Christ followers to more effectively serve the vulnerable people in society was
consistent with what Jesus asked his people to do before he left the earth. Serving others,
therefore, is an activity close to the heart of God because it is the first step in spreading
the Gospel. God’s blessing is in our acts of service and God will bless our acts of serving
the community in the same way today as he did in the book of Acts.

Moreover, this exploration of scripture is the validation of the Pentecostal event
earlier in Acts 2:4. The disciples were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to witness
about Christ. They were average people that were given supernatural power and gifts to
advance the mission of Christ. The promise at Pentecost was for every believer, every
member of the family, and every class of citizen. It was an event that brought equality to
all people to share the Gospel. Therefore, we see the seven men selected to lead the
ministry to widows as a continuation of this new move of God's Spirit. Average people
that were believers in Christ were filled with the Spirit and empowered to carry out the
vital work of the church as volunteers. This example brings hope and excitement to the
modern church today because volunteers can expect the same possibilities, calling, and
results from the power of the Holy Spirit.

Another application of this text has to do with the poor and marginalized because
of the direction of the storyline. Once the decision was made to empower volunteers into
serving, the storyline of the Spirit follows those that were serving the poor as Christ had
asked the church to do. When Christ was on earth, he told the disciples to serve others,
and he demonstrated this with his life. Christ began his ministry to the poor in Galilee
and taught about the hope found in Him for those who had no hope. His message hit
home with this group because at that time there were really only two classes of people, the rich and the poor.

Jesus Himself declared that he was the fulfillment of the Isaiah 61 prophecies and therefore had come to set the captives free. It was his stated purpose from the beginning and therefore is in alignment with the powerful move of the Spirit we see in the verses following this decision to minister to the poor. Therefore, it is apparent that ministries to widows, children, and the marginalized are at the very heart of the Gospel.

External evidence supporting this claim can be found in *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Forward Answers, Stronger Faith* when Ted Cabal says “The book of Acts stands at the heart of the New Testament.”62 The link is the fact that Luke wrote more about the rich and poor than any other writer and highlighted this purpose as central to the work of Jesus and the disciples. Therefore, if Luke focused on the mission of Christ to set the captives free through the power of the Holy Spirit, and his writings were at the heart of the New Testament describing the new covenant, then it is reasonable to see a theology of the marginalized as central to the message of the gospel.

*The Bible Guide* points out that the Jews were used to caring for the orphans and widows together. They fed the orphans with two meals a day as well as caring for the widows with weekly baskets and daily trays of food.63 As a result, of the Spirit’s move through this new team of volunteer leaders the church grew. Many of the priests even began to follow Christ because they saw the church helping the poor and caring for people in need.

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It can be concluded, therefore, that serving the poor widows was critical to living out an authentic faith and winning over hearts to Christ. God's blessing was there, and the results were beyond anyone's imagination. This text demonstrates the wisdom of empowering Godly volunteers with the work of the church and the blessing of God on the ministry to the poor. It is a beautiful picture of what the church can look like today.

**Romans 8 – The Spirit of Adoption**

Paul believed that the love of God was displayed and made available through Christ to all the world by adoption into God’s Kingdom, being made one with Jesus through the Spirit.\(^\text{64}\) Paul describes the spirit of adoption in Romans 8 and makes the case that it is through the work of the Spirit that people are driven to love one another. Put another way, it is because of God's adoptive love for us that we are compelled to love others.\(^\text{65}\) There are five times that the Apostle Paul uses the term adoption (\textit{huiothesia}):

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature draws you to do, for if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God (Romans 8:12-14 NLT).

Verse 14 speaks explicitly to the way the spirit of adoption functions as a core feature of God and lays the groundwork for the hope described a few verses later in the chapter:

For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from


\(^{65}\) Ibid.
the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God (Romans 8:19-21).

Through the spirit of adoption, there is hope that the children of God will participate in freeing people from the bondage and corruption of this world through Christ. The Spirit of adoption is a new start, a new beginning, and a new hope for all people including foster children who need a loving, stable home. The goal of Paul is to make the case that adoption is relevant to each believer, because it is through spiritual adoption that we gain our inheritance from God. According to scripture, it is not readily apparent to us that we have a great inheritance waiting for us. We need some reminding. “We walk this path to maturity, the path Jesus walked before us.” “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear,’ Paul tells the church at Rome, “but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons” (Rom. 8:15 ESV). Paul had to remind the believers that there indeed is an inheritance waiting for them because sometimes it is not obvious. In this way, the spirit of adoption is gospel because it tells the believer who they are in relationship to God. The spirit of adoption is also our mission in life because it compels us to help the marginalized and fatherless. The believer in Christ is free to offer love and acceptance to others even at a great cost because they already have everything, they need in the life to come. The foster care and adoption connections here are powerful because, unfortunately, Christians can sometimes lose sight of this. We can be prone to live our lives in ways that suggest we have forgotten who adopted us. Furthermore,

66. Ibid., 49.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid., loc 205.
believers are prone to keep striving for significance and material balance even though we already have all we need the moment we are spiritually adopted in Christ. Russel Moore says it very simply, “As Christians; we need to live like children and not like orphans.”

As we become more aware of the spirit of adoption, we begin to understand the gospel more. Therefore, when the church embraces foster care and adoption as a missional activity, it demonstrates what Christ did for each one of us on a spiritual level. In this way, the church will live out the life of Christ to our world.

The unified, agape love language that Paul uses in Romans 8 is in stark contrast to the cultural language of today. By some, foster children are referred to as not being one of the “real” children of the family. It is assumed that couples consider adoption only after they could not have their “own” children. The spirit of adoption is a paradigm shift in how to define family. No longer is the biological line the primary connection, but rather it is the spiritual line that makes us family.

The spirit of adoption can also be seen in the illustration of water baptism. For instance, Romans 6 describes the connection of sin, salvation, and baptism and then in Romans 8 the concept of becoming a child of God is presented. The similarity is that baptism brings together the relationship between children, parents, and community because the Father adopts us into His Kingdom and makes us His children in the presence of the community. Therefore, we see that "Foster, adoptive and biological care of

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71. Ibid., loc 710.  
72. Ibid., loc 224.  
74. Ibid., 439.
children are seen in the same theological light of baptism, as one in which God entrusts the care of children to family and community.”  

Hoekema describes God’s adoption as “an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.” Justification happens when God as our Father in heaven adopts us as his children. There is a redemptive action to adoption, and because the mission of God is to redeem his creation unto himself, the act of spiritual adoption is the motive to redemption. The following scripture in 1 John restates what Paul is saying in Romans chapter eight with an emphasis on being in God’s family.

How great is the love the Father has given us so freely! Now we can be called children of God. That is who we are! The world does not know us because it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God. He still hasn't let us know what we will be. However, we know that when Christ appears, we will be like him. We will see him as he is (1 John 3:1).

The connection of spiritual and physical adoption to God is that he uses adoption to establish an intimate relationship with his people. Salvation according to Romans 8:15 and 1 John 3:1 is based on God adopting people into the Kingdom of God through Jesus Christ and saving them from sin. After this adoption is final in the hearts of people and God, there is power that comes from the Holy Spirit to change the world. In the same way, the body of Christ continues God’s saving work by adopting children into their physical family. This act of love models the same act of love that God offers his people through Jesus and in this way, adoption is not just Biblical but part of God's redemptive plan for creation.

75. Ibid.
Then, in Romans 8:23 we see Paul connect our sonship and spiritual adoption to an eschatological concept. There is a deposit of the Spirit in verse 23.

And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us (Romans 8:23, NLT).

Paul is saying that spiritual adoption is something that we have today but is also something we will have when we die. Being a son or a daughter of God means waiting for the full inheritance that will be given to us one day in heaven. It is only because of our adoption into the family of God that we can eagerly wait for this day. David Dockery in the *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* calls this day “God’s plan of redemptive suffering moving toward fulfillment at the end of the age.”

According to Katerina Westerlund in her article, *Adoption as Spiritual Praxis in Individual Times*, the theme of adoption would benefit from more theological exploration. Traditionally, it has been focused on justification, sanctification, faith and calling, but recently there has been more research on adoption as an independent theology of Christian living. This theology is a practical perspective that comes from the Hebrew Bible as its origin and calls for the care of orphans as well as the whole community of faith. She goes on to explain how if God is seen as all controlling, then human beings will view him as a competitor for control. Likewise, if God is omnipotent and seems hidden in human life, then people will seek to make their own order. However, adoption

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77. Dockery, *Holman Concise Bible Commentary*, Romans 8:23.
is the best of both extremes because God is seen as needed for freedom and acting in love to make freedom a reality.  

The concept of adoption can be found throughout both Old Testament and New Testament books. Christ followers are clearly commanded to care for orphans as they live out the gospel of Christ. The Mission of God, as stated by Michael Gorman in his book, *Becoming the Gospel*, says through many different chapters of exploration that the mission of God is to redeem the world from sin. Therefore, it is conceivable that by doing the saving work Jesus is asking us to do in caring for orphans, we are at the very heart of his redeeming work. Orphans are a people group who are marginalized and in need of being saved. They need a voice, and Jesus declared that he had come for that very mission when he began his ministry in Luke 4:17-21. There, Jesus unrolled the scroll of Isaiah 61 and read from it, claiming to be the one who was sent to proclaim good news to the poor, restore sight to the blind, and set the captives free. He then began his ministry in the city of Galilee where a majority of the Jews were poor. His message was to follow him and be a child of God with all the rights, privileges, and inheritance granted as an adopted member of the Kingdom of God.

**Adoption of Moses**

The historical argument for adoption can be traced as far back as the story of Moses. Kenneth Ngwa presents the idea of Exodus 2:1-10 as being more than merely a story about the adoption of one child. Moses represented the Hebrew people and was a

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79. Ibid., 329.
young man. This dual representation offers interpretive insight into the greater Exodus story. He was rescued just as God would rescue the nation of Israel. Secondly, Moses being Hebrew was accepted into his Egyptian family despite vast cultural differences, similar to God accepting Israel as his adopted son.

Additionally, the adoptive mother mimics the actions of the biological mother in caring for Moses. This foreshadowing suggests an inside-out change where the nation followed God's people. The princess goes down to the place of the child, hears the cry of the child, and with the help of the local ethnic culture, adopts the child. There is also a similarity, according to Ngwa, in the consistency of how there is usually a middle person involved when adoption is concerned. There is a child or nation to be saved, a God doing a saving work, and someone with compassion willing to step in the middle. We see this when families foster or adopt a child. We also see this when Jesus stands in the middle for us, so God also can rescue and adopt us. A father and son relationship is intimate, stable, and the forever family God had in mind. Adoption is full of dignity and worth pursuing if a child needs rescue. There are several Biblical characters, including Moses and Jesus himself, who were adopted and used by God to save his people.

_Spirit of Adoption: Redefines the Family_

Mark 3 adds a second profound layer of purpose to adoption theology with a statement from Christ about who his family actually is. Not only is adoption the way we all have a relationship with God, and therefore worthy of replicating towards others in need, but being a part of the body of Christ is a new kinship. It is a new order of the

family that places the brotherhood of believers higher in value and eternal in nature than human physical bloodlines. That means that when a child is adopted, a new family order is created, and if that child decides to accept Christ someday, he or she will be a part of the eternal body of Christ. The adoptee will indeed be a child of God and part of his forever family. The traditional biological family in any society may fear becoming more complex, messy, and disorganized after adopting a new member of the family. What if the child does not get along well with the existing family? What if the adoptee is difficult to raise and discipline? What if life is harder as a result of this decision? These are all legitimate questions families need to work through, but when viewed through the eyes of Jesus, we see things differently. He accepted us with all our imperfections, and we should do the same for others. There is always a chance life could become more complicated, but the experience of thousands of adoptive parents and faithfulness of God suggest that life could also be more purposeful and rewarding. In God’s eyes, this new family order receives his full blessing just as a nuclear family does, and in that we have much to anticipate.

Dan Cruver also talks about how a spiritual family is a part of who God is in his article *Equipping the Generations: Adoption is bigger than you think*. He describes how there is a father and son relationship that existed long before the universe was ever created, and the Holy Spirit is the bond in that relationship. Cruver describes the father and son relationship with Jesus that God gives to us on earth when he says, "Simply put, the universe came into being out of a great love story. In the virgin's womb, this love touched down in the midst of our darkened broken world. The incarnate God showed his
sacred face in the infant Jesus so that we could now enter this love. He tasted the sorrow of this world so that we might be taken into the joy of the eternal love of the Father and the Son.”

In this, we see the model of father and son as the basis for a healthy, loving, long-term family relationship. Cruver adds that when God created the world, he expanded his family by billions of children through a work of adoption. The surprising fact of this work is that the participants are empowered to participate in the mission of God and are not merely taken over by it. Jesus gives significant purpose to orphan ministry because it was his mission to redeem creation and that includes “the removal of the word orphan from the human vocabulary.” The pursuit of this mission is the central objective of orphan ministry.

Equity of the Poor - James 1

The book of James has an emphasis on the equity of the poor. The context of James reveals his belief that the outward actions of our lives demonstrate the reality of our faith. James 5:1-6 speaks of not only the condition of the heart that does not care for the poor but also the compounding effect that selfish living by the rich continues to have on those under them economically.

83. Ibid., 73.
His teachings, however, connect a variety of topics together that include humility, liberty, self-control, and poverty. Helping the poor then becomes an outward result of a holistic life well lived for Christ. It is not possible to separate service to the poor from the authentic Christian life.

James lived in a patriarchal system where the loss of a father meant that a child was an orphan even if the mother was still alive. Therefore, with no man alive to care for the child or the mother, they were the most vulnerable in society. We are reminded further by James that it is only God’s perspective that matters in life and that perspective includes a deep concern for the poor. As long as there is an economic disparity, there will always be a need to love others as ourselves. Therefore, when a need is identified, James believes that it is essential to be quick to act. Words of empathy are not enough for James because people in need require real, practical, and rapid help.

The second half of James 1:27 is also crucial to the point James in making because helping the poor without a life of purity to God does not bring glory to Him. It speaks to our identity with Christ, because any group of people claiming to love the Lord Jesus must understand that he sees us as functional parts of His plan to help the poor. It is part of our identity as Christ followers. Loving the world is a mindset that is opposite of God’s heart and feeds the desire for wealth, luxury, envy, and selfish ambition. The church is called to “return to its prophetic role as the outworkers of God’s vision of

88. Ibid., 17.
feeding the poor, housing the homeless, visiting the sick, and clothing the naked.”

What makes a Christian community like the Church authentic in its claims is when a definition like James 1:27 is lived out to the world because faith and then practice send the message of love.

**Pneumatology of Foster Care and Adoption**

The definition of a prophet is someone who brings an alternative narrative to the dominant Influence of the culture. Foster and adoptive parents are prophetic when they open their home to a child they do not know from the community. The dominant philosophy of culture is to gain privacy, personal wealth, and freedom. The more comfortable life is, the more successful a person is perceived to be. Therefore, in many ways, foster care and adoption threaten that possibility because they cost extra time, money, and emotional energy. The Spirit, therefore, can be seen moving in the lives of parents as they become a tangible living example of the gospel through foster care and adoption. This offers the world another way to live that is in alignment with the heart of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Pentecostal theology stemmed from the first half of Acts chapter 2 where the disciples were filled with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit for evangelism. It is important to note, however, that the second part of Acts 2 shows what this group of empowered Christ followers did with their passion for Christ. They served and gave to those in need to demonstrate the love of Christ. Verse 45 says, “They sold property and

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possessions to give to anyone who had a need” Acts 2:45 (NIV). The Holy Spirit empowers us to care for each other. Today, a passionate approach to helping those in need is to demonstrate God's love in the same way. This is in alignment with what it means to be led by the Spirit of God, as first demonstrated in Acts 2 where we saw compassion as an immediate response to the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Today, the church is being called to once again make bold decisions with our possessions, ministries, and lives to help the most vulnerable in our communities.

A follower of Christ sees the gifts of the Spirit operating in harmony with the fruits of the Spirit. When the two are operating together, there is power and witness to Christ. Children without a safe home need to see the fruits of the Spirit displayed and encounter the Spirit of God through the believer for themselves. They can see and touch Christ in us as we walk in the Spirit with them every day they are in our homes. Many abused children have never seen a man be patient or kind. They have never experienced someone speaking a positive prophetic word over his or her life, seen someone healed, or had a reason to be drawn closer to Christ, until they have come into a relationship with a believer in Christ. This is similar to how, in Exodus 28:31-35, Aaron wore bells with pomegranate fruit in-between to soften the sound and draw the people closer to the Temple to listen more intently. The connection here is that the fruit and the bells worked together to draw the people closer to God. The bells represented man's moving into God's presence, and the fruit made that presence soothing. It is readily apparent that there is great potential for community transformation if every believer would recognize their true identity in Jesus as someone who is on mission when helping children who need a stable loving family.
Not only does the identity of abused and neglected children need to change, but also the identity of Christ followers. For example, in Matthew 14:26-33, when Peter stepped out of the boat, he was afraid of the figure coming towards him. He was not sure it was the Lord, and therefore tested the situation by putting his life in danger. What Jesus is asking of every believer today is not to be afraid when a situation that seems confusing or unclear presents itself. That situation could be Jesus calling. It could be the very mission Christ has for His people, and he merely wants His followers to step out of the boat of their comfortable lives. The better we know Christ and His mission, the better we will recognize Him when he approaches us. We might recognize a foster child as someone who represents Jesus and His mission. The more we know the heart of the gospel, the more we will recognize it when we see it. Inviting an unrelated child into our lives may seem like a frightening situation, but we are told in scripture that when we help a child, we are helping Jesus himself (Matthew 10:42).

We cannot give up, even when the winds begin to blow. As believers, we have the power to live lives of peace, kindness, joy, and long-suffering, even when the winds of frustration come against us. We see in the story of the disciples in the storm (Matthew 8:23-27) that even when they were traveling with Jesus, they were still crippled with fear. The decision to foster or adopt may be one we are willing to do at first, but then challenging winds inevitably begin to blow. Believers of Christ can be encouraged that they have the gifts and the fruits of the Spirit to calm or ride out the storms of life in the power of the Spirit. If we, like the disciples, invite a child into our homes and the winds blow, we can have confidence that Jesus is in our boat, so we do not need to be afraid. Unfortunately, many people are telling themselves a fear-based story. They are speaking
a false narrative over themselves that says they will fail. False statements people tell themselves include thoughts such as: we will never be able to let the child go home; we cannot afford it; our family will be hurt and damaged in some way if a foster child is a part of it. They may even tell themselves that they will foster sometime in the future after they have “kids of their own,” therefore missing the opportunity God is setting before them. There are kids in need today that we are called to help who could be a part of our spiritual family through salvation as we live the gospel in front of them every day. The true narratives are there, waiting to be fulfilled. In many cases, the fear people experience is merely a manifestation of a false narrative that needs to be transformed by the truth of the gospel.

Compassion

The concept of compassion flows throughout scripture and is an essential part of how Christians respond to orphans in their community. "Compassion will help you be tolerant of a child's deep neediness, and to be forgiving when he or she does not understand something that seems so basic, like how to sit at a dining room table with the family, how to use toilet paper, or how to read facial expressions." Jesus had compassion on the marginalized of His time. He also has compassion for us today. It is compassion that allows us to understand what others have been through and empathize with others to the point of getting involved. True compassion does not just sit on the couch and feel bad for someone, but rather jumps into action to helps someone in need. Karyn Purvis puts it this way when speaking about neglected children:

The lives that many of them have endured were more difficult than we can fathom. With compassion, a parent can look inside their child's heart and recognize the impairments and deep fears that drive maladaptive behavior—fears of abandonment, hunger, being in an unfamiliar environment, losing control, and being hurt.95

It is this compassion that moves our expectations to a realistic level. We can express the fruits of the Spirit when caring for children who do not trust adults or who have never had healthy attachment before. It is compassion that demonstrates love and compels us to be joyful and celebrate the moments when a child does the smallest thing right. Compassion puts others first and our concerns second. It is compassion that spurs us on to be faithful when we feel like giving up or being kind when a child yells at us in frustration. “Deep down, these children want desperately to connect and succeed but don't understand how. As parents, it is our job to show them.”96 Compassion, as Purvis calls it, is our touchstone.97 It is love, and love is the thesis of God’s Word.

Compassion identifies and cares for those who have literally or metaphorically been beaten up, stripped, and left for dead, as the traveler in the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). It encourages Christ-followers to extend God's grace by helping tangibly. Compassion is not merely feeling sad for those in need; it is acting with love and provision. The scriptures call us to clothe ourselves with compassion, because the need cries out for more than just emotional attachment98 (Colossians 3:12).

Children are a blessing from the Lord, and Christ followers are encouraged to be intentional in protecting children from foolishness, rebellion, and a life of sin (Proverbs

95. Ibid., loc 265.
96. Ibid., loc 273.
97. Ibid., loc 250.
98. Hancock and Mostert, CompaCare Compassion Care System Manual: Helping Churches Minister to Vulnerable Children and Families, 32.
22:6). With the help of a loving church family, children can lead healthy, long, protected lives\(^99\) (Exodus 20:12). The need and the call reach far beyond our biological children and into the lives of the most vulnerable among us.

*God has Compassion: Rescue of Israel*

God’s heart for rescuing the weak can be seen in Deuteronomy when the people of Israel are delivered from slavery, and the love God has for them is demonstrated by freeing them from a life of bondage. Israel was on a journey through the wilderness to redemption in the Promised Land.\(^100\) The nation of Israel teaches us much about our journey as we read about theirs. Additionally, the instructions from God as he interacted with the Israelites inform us on how we should live and respond to Christ today.\(^101\) For example, Achtemeier says "In Deuteronomy 7:6-11, Israel was chosen as God's people. Not because they were the strongest or the greatest nation. She was a nation of a mixed multitude, not wise, not powerful and not noble at birth. However, that the world would see them released from Egypt was by God's hand and not theirs."\(^102\) God chose to save a people that needed saving and demonstrated his love and his power at the same time.

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99. Ibid., 33.
101. Ibid.
102. Ibid.
Historical Status of Orphans

To understand the calling of the church in helping orphans today, it is helpful to gain perspective on how orphans were cared for in a historical context. What seems clear when looking at the biblical narratives is that foster care and adoption are carried out in a very different manner today than they were in ancient times.\textsuperscript{103} Despite these differences, there are undergirding theological principles that transcend time and culture. For example, when it comes to the idea of foster care, adoption, or biological parenting, the concept of caring for children in Christian theology comes from the belief that we are made children of God.\textsuperscript{104}

The Hebrew culture of the Old Testament does not have a specific word to describe foster care or adoption in the way we use these terms today.\textsuperscript{105} The relationship of a child legally was never changed in this culture because of the strong connection to the creation story. Therefore, if an orphaned child needed care, an extended family member would enter into an informal agreement that looked similar to the modern-day foster care structure because adoption was not thought to be as pleasing to God as being fruitful and multiplying. In this scenario, the biological parents continued as the legal parents, and extended family members provided care.\textsuperscript{106}

In the New Testament, however, there was a new order introduced by Christ. Salvation through Jesus provided the mechanism of spiritual adoption as a way for people to enter the Kingdom of Heaven and paved the way for orphan adoptions to be accepted.

\textsuperscript{103} Swinton and Brock, \textit{A Graceful Embrace: Theological Reflections on Adopting Children}, 41.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 42.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 43.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 45.
and encouraged by the church. The early church now believed that adoption was pleasing to God and began to fight the trends of culture that were destroying orphaned children.

During antiquity, the early church was vocal in their stance against abandonment because the Romans viewed adoption as an event impacting wealth and power. The word adoption comes from the Latin phrase "to choose for one's self" and was initially considered a legal proceeding to determine an heir.\textsuperscript{107} Greek and Roman cultures were known for legal proceedings to assign rights for the passing down of property. The cultural norm was to assume that if the biological parents did not hold a newborn child, the child was to be abandoned. However, if a family desired to adopt a non-biological child, they would use the same procedure of holding the child during a legal ceremony with biological parents usually present. This process assumed that the biological family would stay in contact with the new caregiving parents.\textsuperscript{108} However, history has shown that this has not always been possible or desirable.

In the Roman culture of the second to fourth centuries, infants that were not viewed as having a healthy future were placed out in the elements where they would typically die from exposure and neglect. Many times, these were girls or infants that had a congenital disability. The Romans would typically do this in the first few days of life so that it was viewed as more humane. This was widely practiced by Roman culture but was opposed by the Stoics as well as those following Christianity. Disapproval seemed to grow over time as the Christians continued to oppose this practice on a moral basis.

Moral lines are often crossed in culture when proper justification has been identified for a controversial issue. We see this in the second and fourth centuries when

\textsuperscript{107} Swinton and Brock, \textit{A Graceful Embrace: Theological Reflections on Adopting Children}, 42.  
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 43.
the Roman culture allowed the killing of newborn babies and called it infant exposure. Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25 warn us that there is a way that seems right to man, but its end is the way of death. Infant exposure may be considered a way that seems right to humankind but is opposed by God. "Anthropologists have collected a considerable amount of material which shows that infanticide was a common phenomenon of primitive community life." This practice was intended to control the population growth in a family by placing their newborns out in the elements to die or to be adopted by another family. It is interesting to note that this practice can be found even farther back in history than Roman times and was also associated with the ancient Greeks. The following text illustrates the position of the Greeks:

In his “Life of Lycurgus,” the Greek historian Plutarch (48-122 A.D.) records that in Sparta in ancient Greece, the Spartan elders examined all newborn babies and ordered that any who were not well-built and sturdy be killed by leaving them in the bush at the foot of Mount Taygetus: “Offspring was not reared at the will of the father, but was taken and carried by him to a place called Lesche, where the elders of the tribes officially examined the infant, and if it was well-built and sturdy, they ordered the father to rear it, and assigned it one of the nine thousand lots of land; but if it was ill-born and deformed, they sent it to the so-called Apothetae, a chasm-like place at the foot of Mount Taygetus, in the conviction that the life of that which nature had not well equipped at the very beginning for health and strength, was of no advantage either to itself or the state.” Such newborns starved or froze to death or were eaten by wild animals.

This type of thinking continued to be passed down through the generations and made its way into the Roman culture because the laws supported the notion that parents had paternal power over the newborn and could decide to do what they felt best with his


or her life. Tertullian said that this practice was openly performed in Rome until it was made illegal, and even then, it was done somewhat in secret. Parents would use infant exposure for several practical reasons. First, it allowed the poor to reduce the number of mouths to feed. Second, if the child was a girl, it reduced the poor from the dowry responsibility later in life. Third, children with disabilities were exposed to relieve the parents from the burden of caring for them with no hope of future contribution to the family’s economic situation. The Twelve Tables law of that time required babies that had deformities to be killed by drowning. In fact, “Malformed newborns were not regarded as human infants and were usually killed immediately after birth.” This was a well-known and common practice. Fourthly, it allowed the social status of families to remain intact when illegitimate children were conceived. Finally, it preserved the inheritance of the rich for their children by limiting the number of times it was divided.

For all these reasons, it is believed that infanticide accounted for up to 50% of all births.

Specific characteristics were identified to guide parents in deciding what children they should keep or expose:

115. Ibid.
116. Ibid.
120. Oblanden, “From Right to Sin,” 57.
Soranus of Ephesus taught in Rome in the 2nd century CE: ‘The infant who is worth rearing will be distinguished by the fact that its mother spent the period of pregnancy in good health, for conditions which require medical care, also harm the fetus. Second, by the fact that it was born at the due time, best at the end of nine months, and if it so happens, later; but also, after only seven months, also by the fact that it is perfect in all its parts, members and senses … And by conditions contrary to those mentioned, the infant not worth rearing is recognized.'

Obviously, many children did not meet these criteria. They were then exposed in the wild areas, by a mountainside, where people rarely traveled. This would, of course, lead to almost certain death. There was another option in the exposure process that would give a more hopeful outcome. This second option was a location where parents could place their children which was much more visible. One such location was called the lactoria columna and was a place anyone looking to adopt a child would go in hopes of finding a new addition to their family. Parents that would abandon their children here would leave a token to indicate the family status from which they came in hopes of encouraging others to adopt their child. They also used these tokens as a way of identifying them later on in life. If the exposed child had clothes, it meant the parents wanted them to be adopted, but if they were naked, they did not want their child to survive. There were many, however, that would take these exposed children and sell them into slavery.

121. Ibid., 59.
123. Ibid.
125. Ibid.
prostitution, or the life of a gladiator.\textsuperscript{127} This rescuing of a child was motivated more out of a desire for profit than out of mercy and love.\textsuperscript{128}

The concept of abandonment and harm had different meanings. "Abandonment is the voluntary and permanent relinquishing of control over children by natal parents, whether leaving them, selling them, or signing them over to others."\textsuperscript{129} Infant exposure may have been viewed as abandonment, but not to the point of imposing harm in the minds of these 2\textsuperscript{nd}-century parents.\textsuperscript{130} The word \textit{expositio} implied removal, offering, or separation but did not specifically reference harm.\textsuperscript{131} It is possible that the choice of this word was strategic in supporting this practice because it did not imply wrongdoing by the parent. If harm was to come to the child, it was thought to be an accident. Harm during exposure was viewed as accidental because the intent was thought to simply separate the child and if the public did not adopt the child in some way, then the disastrous outcome was not the fault of the parent. Their hands were clean with this line of thinking. The irony is that each child when exposed to climate, animals, and neglect, was subject to harm and death.

Many Christian writers expressed their opinion about the issue of exposure. Collectively, they helped turn the tide by addressing a social justice issue with a moral argument. Tertullian in his writing “Ad Nationes,” described the way the pagan culture treated newborns in the years 150-220 A.D. when he said they were evading the law by not killing the newborn directly but instead setting it out to be exposed to the cold and

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{127} Oblanden, “From Right to Sin,” 60.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{129} Boswell, “Expositio and Oblatio,” 12.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
wild beasts.\textsuperscript{132} By presenting these thoughts, Tertullian was connecting infant exposure to a much crueler death than simple infanticide.

Another writing that put infant exposure in the spotlight was when Clement of Alexandria (150-212 A.D.) wrote "Instructor," and referred to how absurd it seemed that Roman women seemed to care more for their pet birds than they did for children.\textsuperscript{133} “And though maintaining parrots and curlews, they do not receive the orphan child; but they expose children that are born at home, and take up the young of birds, and prefer irrational to rational creatures.”\textsuperscript{134} There was a contrast in how the Christians viewed their newborns versus the way the Greeks and Romans did. The Jewish and Christian cultures would treasure and value their children because of how they saw them through the lens of God.\textsuperscript{135} Children were viewed as a primary purpose of marriage and sex instead of a burden or an embarrassment. The church as an institution opened the monastery to exposed infants and children as a way of saving them from almost sure death. These children would then be brought up in the monastery without further control of the parents.\textsuperscript{136} Parents would often have to pay a fee to the monastery to take their children, and that decision was irrevocable. The poor, however, could not make a payment, but the monastery took them in any way. The result of this compassion was that monasteries were overrun with children and struggled to care for them well.\textsuperscript{137} On the positive side, monasteries were many times the only escape for children that would

\begin{footnotes}
\item[133] Ibid., 4.
\item[134] Ibid.
\item[136] Boswell, “Expositio and Oblatio,” 17.
\item[137] Ibid., 20.
\end{footnotes}
otherwise be sold into slavery or killed.\textsuperscript{138} The Monastery solution was again one small step forward but not the full answer to infant exposure. It was, however, a way for the church to participate in social justice.

There was no systematic objection to infant exposure before Christianity except for the embarrassment that was recorded from wealthy families regarding the way they were viewed socially.\textsuperscript{139} Christians pointed out that infant exposure was a sign that the family had engaged in illicit sexual relations and broken the union of marriage.\textsuperscript{140} This further fueled the movement to stop infant exposure. The Christian church was advocating for a cause that was both a social justice issue as well as a theological one. The two issues were in alignment and thus were met with favor by the culture over time because the ancient Romans did care about their children at the core.\textsuperscript{141} Nevertheless, they did not have a system of beliefs, laws, or public opinion that supported them.

Constantine was the first Roman Emperor who became a Christian and changed a law, making it illegal to expose infants in the year 374.\textsuperscript{142} Then, hospitals that were for poor children and orphans were created by St. Ephraem, St. Basil, and St. John Chrysostom.\textsuperscript{143}

George Muller Bristol lived from 1805 -1898 and was the founder of the Ashley Down Orphan Homes in Bristol, England. He was world-renowned for his strategy of merely praying for the material needs of orphans and then watching how God would

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., 28.
\textsuperscript{142} Gill, “Exposure of Infants Was Near Universal,” 1.
provide. He wrote many stories about how he never asked for anything but only prayed, then the material needs were met for the orphanage. His influence led to the development of orphanages in Great Britain, North America, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe.  

As early American society began to take form, the beliefs and treatment of the poor were influenced by migrants from England who helped establish the laws in U.S. institutions for years to come. In many ways, the systems used to care for the poor in America and England were very similar. Orphanages were built in America and modeled after those in England to meet the missing need that existed in society for orphans. They were primarily privately funded at the beginning but gained public funding as they became more developed. While the experiences of the children varied in these institutions, many children did well and thrived because of the stability they provided.

The Catholic orphan asylum organized by Sisters of Charity was built in 1817. This facility grew to 350 children by 1825 and did so with all private funding. This infrastructure became challenging to scale, however, when the Cholera outbreak in New York began in the early nineteenth century. As a result, the increased numbers of orphans that needed help strained the support available from the Catholic community. This burden of care influenced the expansion of orphanage development west as far as Kansas.

146. Ibid., 377.
148. Ibid., 49.
For example, in 1867 the first Catholic orphanage west of the Mississippi was opened but soon experienced opposition by protestant groups that did not want their orphaned children cared for by the Catholic leadership. To facilitate this desire, the Protestant leaders received public funding to open their orphanage as well.\(^{149}\)

Then, in 1871, the Martin Luther Orphan’s home was established by the Lutheran community of believers to continue the effort and desire to care for the poor as an act of their faith.\(^{150}\) Volunteer staffing for this type of institution was a challenge but did find that single women and widows were in an ideal stage of life to offer service to this effort.\(^{151}\) These homes, therefore, marched forward with their mission for years to come.

The growing population of children in orphanage communities, however, arrived at a point in the early twentieth century that required new and innovative solutions for care.

From 1800 to 1900 the number of orphanages in the U.S. had grown from 7 to 613 that housed 50,000 children. In 1853 Charles Loring Brace, a Methodist minister, formed the Children’s Aids Society in New York. He was an American minister and early social work pioneer. He had an innovative idea to place poor and needy children in families out west instead of in big institutions in the city. To accomplish his idea, he embraced the cutting-edge transportation of his time – the steam locomotive. Trains were state of the art that time, and the orphan trains were the beginning of our current foster care system. This new idea was a way of addressing the failures in capacity, quality, and sustainability of the orphanage model. He is considered a father of the modern foster care movement.\(^{152}\)

In the 1970's, a high number of foster children were sent to mental health facilities because of federal funding which was made available. Some foster children needed this

\(^{149}\) Ibid., 115.
\(^{150}\) James Fremont Richardson, “A Mission for Orphans in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod A Brief History of the Martin Luther Orphans’ Home at Brook Farm, West Roxbury, MA (1871-1945),” *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (1994): 185.
\(^{151}\) Ibid., 188.
\(^{152}\) Hancock and Mostert, *CompaCare Compassion Care System Workbook*, 1.
care, but approximately 50% did not. Therefore, they were inappropriately housed in an institution rather than in a safe, loving family. The 1980's brought a reaction to this type of care called the “preservation movement” because thought leaders began supporting the fastest path to a permanent family. This permanency trend has continued in a variety of forms and is still impacting the foster care system today. As a result of this shift in focus from institutional care to outplacement family care, the foster care system has been provided with a federal budget that in 2016 was an estimated 60 billion dollars.\textsuperscript{153}

Researchers, however, continue to seek answers about foster care effectiveness because funding is only a resource. The question still remaining is how effective is that funding being used. As greater numbers of children enter the foster care system each year the methods of care are continuously under review. What is the best way to care for the orphans in American society today? The church is positioned to be that answer.

It seems logical then, that the Christian church would be in the middle of the foster care chaos because it claims to have the answer that brings peace. The Prince of Peace does not only want to be found in peaceful places but also where peace is needed most. This means that the local church will need to participate in conversations where brokenness is found and outcomes of forgiveness, peace, and hope are desperately needed.\textsuperscript{154}

The foster care crisis across the county is experiencing the type of chaos that needs a voice of peace. More children need homes in America than are available. Thus, church has an opportunity to step into this messy situation and bring peace by standing in

\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 18.
\textsuperscript{154} Mark Deymaz, \textit{Disruption: Repurposing the Church to Redeem the Community} (Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 2017), 659.
the gap for children in foster care, social workers, and biological families. Together, church families can bring hope and peace to a part of the community that otherwise sees very little hope.

**Current Status of Foster Care**

The following section will provide an overview of the problem in foster care, concerns for vulnerable child, and how successful reunification can play a significant role in restoring balance to a child’s life.

In 2014, the national statistics showed 51% of foster children were reunited with their biological parents, 21% were adopted, 9% aged-out, 9% went to live with a guardian, 7% went to live with a relative, and 2% had other outcomes.\textsuperscript{155} The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, cost avoidance brief of 2013, stated they did further research on foster children that left the system and identified some areas that needed improvement. They found that more than 20% of foster children became homeless after age 18. Additionally, 25% had contact with the justice system within two years of exiting the foster care system and 71% of women who had been in foster care became pregnant before age 21.\textsuperscript{156} These numbers seem to tell a story of how the current system needs to improve and strengthen its level of care so that foster children are better prepared to enter society as adults. They also stated that even with a large state and federal budget, only

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{155} \textit{Ibid.}, 22.
\textsuperscript{156} \textit{Ibid.}, 18.
\end{footnotesize}
half of the children accomplish the goal of reunification. The other half lean on the help of the community or face the uncertain future of aging-out.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation publishes a booklet each year with data about the well-being of children in each state. Overall, they believe that "When communities are safe and have strong institutions, good schools, and quality support services, families and their children are more likely to thrive." In this statement they are asking for the people in each community to work together to make things better for kids in need.

Neil Postman writes his book about how childhood, as we know it in America, is only about 150 years old. He believes that the printing press was the catalyst for creating a culture that defines childhood as the time spent under 18 years of age. During this time, social, emotional, and educational development are prioritized over working to provide a living. He believes that, in the same way the printing press redefined modern childhood expectations in our culture, current electronic media outlets are contributing to making it disappear. For example, young girls are seen in music videos and television programming with and adult identity, clothing, and vocabulary. He hopes that the distinction of Childhood will not disappear but believes that American culture is "Hostile to the idea of childhood." He points out that celebration of the American child’s birthday only began a recently as the late eighteenth century, and that in 1890, 93% of children 14-17 years old were not in high school but rather in the adult workforce.

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159. Ibid., loc 76.
160. Ibid., loc 91.
Things did change for the better, but if America is not careful, the author suggests that childhood will once again be forgotten and disappear.

Postman believes that children are a “living message that we send to a time we will not see.”\textsuperscript{161} It is possible he says for society to exist without an identity for children. This is what he believes is happening today in American culture. The author points to evidence of this such as crime increasing for children under fifteen years old, media models twelve to fifteen years old, and the distinctive types of dress that children wear at younger and younger ages.\textsuperscript{162} The author states that the timeframe of 1850-1950 is the high point of what is called the distinction and value of childhood.\textsuperscript{163} This is the period when the current stereotype of the American family was formed. However, ever since then it has been in decline. Postman uses additional examples in his books such as childhood increases in drug use, alcoholism, and sexual activity as proofs for his theory that childhood is on the decline. He points to a physiological pattern as well:

It has been claimed that the onset of puberty in females has been falling by about four months per decade for the past one hundred and thirty years, so that, for example, in 1900 the average age at which menstruation first occurred was approximately fourteen years, whereas in 1979 the average age was twelve years.\textsuperscript{164}

Postman also points out that in today's media, children are hard to find on TV. Shows are mostly for adults with adults as the characters. Families are not as interesting in media any longer. He points out various Hollywood movies in his book that show children with habits and preferences no different than adults.\textsuperscript{165} Disney is also losing its

\textsuperscript{161. Ibid., loc 81.}
\textsuperscript{162. Ibid., loc 132.}
\textsuperscript{163. Ibid., loc 1084.}
\textsuperscript{164. Ibid., loc 1893.}
\textsuperscript{165. Ibid., loc 1953.}
definition of what a child is to the works of Judy Blume and others that make teen literature more adult.\textsuperscript{166} Therefore, it is suggested that those who are not in alignment with the moral majority of culture to, at this point, borrow from some of their memories.\textsuperscript{167} In other words, Postman highlights the essential role that religious moral conservatism has in valuing the innocence of children and that the passing-on of these values to the next generation will be critical in avoiding further moral decline in our culture.

\textit{Impact of Poverty}

Other concerns for vulnerable children stem from the impact of poverty in America. Mary Frances Bowley writes about the risk factors that increase the chances that children will be subject to abuse, neglect, and abandonment.\textsuperscript{168} Her research has found two common trends in troubled adults that trace back to childhood. Careful consideration of these factors is critical to understand the challenges associated with caring for vulnerable children.

Poverty is one area of need in America that puts children in a vulnerable environment. “In 2013, 46.6 million people lived in poverty in America, and a third of these individuals were children under the age of eighteen. Also, in 2013, 31 percent of America’s children (23,101,000) had parents who lacked secure employment.”\textsuperscript{169} The author believes that stopping poverty can only happen when young mothers find

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{166} Ibid., loc 1969.
\item \textsuperscript{167} Ibid., loc 2318.
\item \textsuperscript{168} Mary Frances Bowley and Jennifer Bradley Franklin, \textit{Make It Zero: The Movement to Safeguard Every Child} (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2016), 24.
\item \textsuperscript{169} Ibid., 22.
\end{itemize}
employment that will support them. This belief is founded on the belief that every mother with gainful employment will provide their vulnerable children with a secure financial foundation to build on. This employment can be accomplished through programs that promote self-awareness, skills development, resume writing, career matching, and professional dress. When one person helps a child, they can be the one who sets that child down a completely different path. When one-person mentors a woman towards greater self-awareness and skills development, they also point them in a better direction in life.

Hunger affects one out of five children in America. It is another factor that puts children in vulnerable environments. “A young woman who has been living in the worst kind of slavery—right here in this country—tells her story and it includes ‘I trusted him because I was hungry, and he was the only one who offered me anything to eat.’” Not only is being hungry frustrating, sad, and painful, but it puts children in a vulnerable state of mind. They are open to following people they usually would not. They are vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation because they simply are starving. Hunger is similar to other problems in society in that it is hidden. People cannot tell someone is hungry. It is an unseen issue.

Hunger is trauma, and when food has been scarce, the after-effects can last a lifetime. It creates a survivor mentality, one that can manifest in food hoarding and distrust. Hungry children often exhibit emotional, developmental, and educational delays. They are disadvantaged in the classroom, which hurts their development during the critical years in school. Hungry children are often labeled with a learning disorder when the heart of the issue could be undernourishment. Education is the single greatest path out of generational poverty, and yet it is nearly impossible for children to latch on and make the most of it when they cannot focus on anything else but the loud growl of hunger in their bellies.

170. Ibid., 40.
171. Ibid., 89.
172. Ibid., 98.
However, when this need is met, children have a chance to develop. When a child has this basic need met, they are standing on solid ground. They can make better decisions and are not as vulnerable to those looking to use them in harmful ways. Fighting hunger addresses the vulnerability of children and also provides a way for the community to help. Providing food is a way to build relationships, bridge gaps in the community, and open doors for connecting people to employment opportunities.

Reunification

The child welfare response to improved care for vulnerable children has recently embodied the belief that reunification should be the ultimate goal whenever possible. Adoption is, of course, a welcome solution for broken families who are not able to be reunited but the general position of the Kenosha County Child Welfare Agency is to, whenever possible, help children remain with their biological families. Interviews with the Kenosha County District attorneys' office, Kenosha County Juvenile Judge’s office, and the Kenosha County supervisor's office at the Department of Health and Human Services, all consider reunification as the most desirable option for the child in most cases. Don Browning is a theologian who has spent many years following research that shows "Children generally do better when they are placed with intact families along the lines of biological models." This perspective highlights the caution needed in viewing adoption as a superior and first choice solution when the Glory of God can also be

displayed through healing and reunification of families as well. As believers, we need to be on the front lines in helping families remain intact whenever possible.

Lisa Cahill echoes the warning of overvaluing adoption at the expense of other critical biological family preservation efforts. She writes about adoption from a Catholic perspective as she points out that adopted children often feel disconnected from their biological ties. Just because a child was adopted does not mean their desire to be connected with their natural birth identity disappears.  

This philosophy is what fuels advocates for open adoptions, the concept of adoptive parents staying connected with birth families as much as possible.

The pressure to place a child with an adoptive resource or return them home to their biological families is significant because the outcomes of children aging out of the welfare system are often tragic. Mathew M. LeClaire studied the likelihood of aged-out foster children to be engaged in criminal activity in 2014. He found that without stability and support structure these children became young adults who were more likely to be homeless, drink alcohol, and experiment with drugs than other children their age. It is interesting to note that even though this group of aged-out foster children is a relatively low number overall, they are a very high percentage of the people represented in the criminal justice system.

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174. Ibid., 444.
176. Ibid.
Culturally Appropriate Care

Another voice of caution when aggressively promoting adoption comes from lessons learned from a study in New Zealand, according to Erica Neman in her article *History of Transracial Adoption*. There were significant differences between the way Europeans approached adoption and the way the natives of New Zealand approached the same issues. This led to the 1881 Adoption of Children Act and the learning of many guiding principles for adoption across social platforms. The natives of New Zealand had close family structures and did not see it acceptable to have strangers raise their children. Instead, they had relatives who would help raise their children in their absence or if they were unable. The nuclear family worked with the extended family to meet the needs of orphaned children. In this structure, the children kept their identity strong, and the relatives took on this responsibility with pride. This model had one primary concern: that the child was able to maintain their primary identity and retain knowledge of where they came from. The results were positive, but the motivating factors were misplaced. The natives believed that if their children were placed with strangers, they would be mistreated, and that was rarely the case. Then, as history unfolded over the years and adoption became more accepted, another law was passed called the 1955 Adoption Act. This legislation made adoptions closed, and case files sealed. Children were not encouraged to seek out biological parents, and this is still the current law of the land. As was predicted, natives of New Zealand opposed the closed adoption system and were successful at creating a new open adoption system that was supported by the government for the placement of native children within their cultural family structures. The lesson

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learned was that the closed adoption system that was effective in other parts of the world was harmful to the natives of New Zealand. Therefore, globally, the unique characteristics of cultures should be considered when attempting to rescue a child from the broken situations in which they live.178

**Trauma Informed Care**

If children are to be reunited with their biological family, training for foster parents helps them successfully understand the needs of abused and neglected children. The foundation for this effort is the belief that improved training and expectation will translate to higher quality care for the children. Jane Schooler writes about the impact foster and adoptive children have on the families that have committed to care for them. She describes in her book various aspects of trauma and how proper expectation can help families be successful in the long run. "One of the first expectations that must change in Schooler's opinion is how fostering or adoptive families assume love will be enough for a child who has suffered trauma. They assume that if enough love and care are provided all the behavioral issues will melt away. The reality, however, is that love needs to be paired with practical knowledge of what to expect from a child who has experienced trauma."

The children being placed for adoption today arrive with multiple traumas, developmental delays, and challenging behaviors that may stretch their new family, sometimes to the breaking point.179 For this reason, families need to understand some of the signs of trauma and how to appropriately respond. The good news is that "Healing

178. Ibid., 250.
begins as parents see their role as external regulators for their children, working to increase pleasure and enhance attachment.”  

It can be hard because the stress of past trauma can stretch a family beyond parenting skills used in the past, but the reward for sticking with it is that healing is activated as healthy attachment begins. Healthy attachment ensures safety, and when that aspect of their lives is solid, all other aspects of development can take place. Schooler says that loving a traumatized child means embracing a love like no other. “It is love lived out every day in new and unfamiliar ways.”

There is great hope that being a foster or adoptive family can change a child’s life. For example, “It is estimated that 50 percent of who we are is inherited. The other half is formed through experience.” This hope was woven throughout Schooler’s book with stories of real people who experienced challenges in adopting or fostering children at the beginning but pushed through and saw amazing change over time. It is this aspect of time that Schooler emphasizes in various chapters because the reality is that trauma takes time to heal. Parents may want to see change faster that it happens, but it is happening according to the author. Patience and commitment are needed to see complete healing in a child’s life because traumatized spirits are fragile. Even if the child is doing much better in a daily routine, there can be relapses connected to the trauma they experienced from time to time. Often these relapses are unforeseen and take everyone by surprise. They could be triggered by merely taking a promotion at work which requires moving to a new home. This move could be especially hard on the adopted child because it triggers the

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180. Ibid., loc 109.
181. Ibid., loc 863.
182. Ibid., loc 236.
183. Ibid., loc 911.
fears they had every time they moved around in foster care. The following are a few underlying feelings that can lead to behavioral relapses even after great improvement has been made.

Kids that have experience trauma tend to:

1. Experience themselves as inadequate and incomplete
2. Have a limited and fragmented sense of self and autonomy
3. Experience deep, obscure, and overwhelming shame
4. Have intense feelings of rage without an easily identifiable threat
5. Feel overwhelmed with pervasive anxiety, but without an identifiable threat
6. Experience overwhelming despair

This list illustrates the broken framework of a child that has experienced trauma, abuse or neglect. Random events or situations that seem reasonable in everyday life can trigger a behavioral outbreak even after strong attachment has occurred. Foster and adoptive parents should be prepared for this eventuality and not be discouraged. It is a regular part of the healing process. Despite persistent challenges, as healthy attachment is developed, the child will increasingly find comfort and healing in the security of their loving parent.

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184. Ibid., loc 2889.
Katarina Westerlund wrote about the motive of adoption in our culture and said that the way we understand and relate to children has profoundly changed over time. She pointed out a noticeable shift that has occurred, from children as a source of meaning in the lives of parents in previous centuries, to one of individualism and autonomy in the twenty-first century. Sheryl Ryan cited that in 2004 the rate of inter-country adoption was at its peak of 40,000 adoptions worldwide to help the 13 million global orphans who had lost both parents in their lives. After this point, however, inter-country adoptions decreased by half because of three issues. First, countries in Africa, East Europe, and Russia and China started to push back against their children being removed from their culture and language. Second, sex trafficking was taking place under the guise of finding better homes for children. Third, as adoptions decreased, the Chrisitan Alliance for Orphans (CAFO) became a major roleplayer in the USA to promote the adoption of tens of thousands of children in foster care who were available for adoption. This led to books, films, and conferences aimed at motivating Christians to take up the cause of adoption and foster care once again in the American communities of faith.

In 2015, there are 427,910 children in the American foster care system and another 111,820 waiting for a home. The children waiting for a home are held overnight in emergency care, asked to stay with unlicensed relative care, or sent out of their communities to another city, according to Kenosha County, Wisconsin social

services representatives.\textsuperscript{188} These children often do not have a parent, relative, or friend that is able or willing to care for them. They need a safe place until a foster home can be identified. Once a foster home is found, these children wait until permanence can be accomplished. For some children, they return to their biological parent, while others find permanence through adoption. However, for others, they never find permanence and turn 18 without any family to call their own. These children have a 45\% chance of becoming incarcerated and a 60\% chance of becoming victims of human trafficking.\textsuperscript{189}

The need is great, but statistics are showing the majority of Protestant churches in America are not engaging this issue. For example, a survey was recently done by LifeWay Research which found that 60\% of churchgoers reported their churches were not involved in foster care or adoption ministry in any way during the past year.\textsuperscript{190} This meant that not even one person at their church was involved or talking about the issue in the past year. One person is all it would have taken to put their church on the list. To make matters worse, only 12\% of churches reported having leadership that spoke of it from the platform.\textsuperscript{191} There are children in our country and around the world who need a safe home, but the majority of local churches are not even in the game. The culture needs the church. The church needs to help.

Foster care is a critical stage for vulnerable children because it is at this point that they may be separated from their family forever or be reunited with a grand celebration.

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\textsuperscript{188} Sirena Simpson, interview with Kenosha County Wisconsin Social Services, January 31, 2018, Kenosha, WI.
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid.
It is also the point in their lives that families of faith have the opportunity to influence broken lives and fill them with discipleship opportunities 24/7. If the church says yes to this opportunity, doors open to breaking generational cycles and identity begins to be shaped for children as to who they indeed are in Christ. Also, biological parents often open their hearts to the foster family for discipleship as well, because a relationship begins to form as a child is lovingly cared for out of love for Christ. Jesus came to bind up the brokenhearted. This is our mission, and the Holy Spirit has empowered us to make it a reality.

*The Church as the Solution*

The church seems uniquely positioned in today’s culture to have an answer for what James 1:27 calls us to when we read that true religion is to help the widows and the orphans. This is not an option. It is not a suggestion. It is a command that demonstrates love. When the early church cared for the orphans, they were caring for widows as well because in Biblical times the two were often found together. Today, we often see single mothers at risk of losing their children because of substance abuse. Therefore, a case can be made that single moms and foster children are the widows and orphans of today in America. This argument can also be connected to the problematic reality that America has many programs and funding for the elderly but very little for the care of a single mother. What is also interesting is the fact that James 1:27 calls every Christian to care for the orphan but does not call every believer to bring a child into their home. The call is for everyone to do something. Therefore, the opportunity for the church today is to
facilitate ministry that promotes, supports, and invites more people to support the care of vulnerable children.

Even secular studies have shown that religious teaching in the lives of the poor leads to more productive living. Most researchers have found that religiosity reduces substance abuse, increases self-control, health, education, and social connectedness in those living in poverty.\(^{192}\)

Put another way, when the lives of children are disrupted, torn apart, and neglected, they need someone to help. When their parents are hurting, frustrated, and confused, they also need help. Ephesians 3:8-10 describes God's plan for a holy nation, a royal priesthood to come to their aid. The church of Jesus Christ is designed and positioned to help the broken-hearted and the vulnerable in every community.\(^{193}\) This response not only provides answers to those foster children and biological parents in need but also demonstrates to a skeptical world that God loves them.\(^{194}\)

Church leaders have an opportunity to play an influential role in the foster care and overall orphan care conversation. To learn what pastors of Assemblies of God churches across the country know about the issue, The Assemblies of God Family Services Agency surveyed church leaders in 2013 and found that only 49% of pastors were aware of the foster care crisis in America.\(^{195}\) Some encouraging news, however, was


\(^{193}\) Hancock and Mostert, *CompaCare Compassion Care System Manual: Helping Churches Minister to Vulnerable Children and Families*, 41.

\(^{194}\) Ibid., 46.

\(^{195}\) National Foster Care and Family Restoration Ministry Model (Hot Springs, AR: AGFSA and FaithBridge Foster Care, February 2013), 8.
that 47% of the pastors surveyed indicated they would be willing to prioritize orphan care ministry as one of the top three ministries in their church if they only knew how.\textsuperscript{196}

Russel Moore suggests that churches create a culture of foster care and adoption through preaching from the pulpit.\textsuperscript{197} This is key because creating a culture starts with communicating the type of change a church wants to see. Preaching about adoption theology answers the question of "why" behind the actions that will follow. The people hear the heart of the leader on the subject as well as the voice of God through the reading of the text. The Holy Spirit then uses this time of culture creation to stir the hearts of the people and align them with the will of God. The role of the communicator in preaching about adoption theology is to create an adoptive-missional church.\textsuperscript{198} There is a synergy that happens when the local church begins to catch the adoptive vision for their community. Christians begin to make the connection between reaching the world with the gospel and helping orphans. Not every person can open their home to a child, but everyone can do something. When people adopt a child from Russia, they gain a heart and burden for the people of Russia. Likewise, when a family fosters a child or adopts a child from their local community, they develop a burden and a heart for the people of their community. When Christians develop a love for a group of people, the potential to impact them would seem very high.\textsuperscript{199}

Moore also describes an effective orphan care ministry consisting of the following components: 1. A local church could organize meals for adoptive parents. 2. Parent

\textsuperscript{196} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid. \textit{Adopted for Life: The Priority of Adoption for Christian Families & Churches}, loc 220.
\textsuperscript{198} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{199} Ibid., loc 2825.
classes could be created that address adoptive parent challenges. 3. Child care could be provided for adoptive families or new mothers to free them up for other activities. 4. Baby dedications could be augmented to now be called child dedications, thus allowing adopted children to be celebrated as well. 5. Local businesses could be contacted to donate funds to an adoption fund to make it easier for families to take the next step in the adoption process. 6. Lists could be provided of agencies available, home study specialists, and ballpark costs involved with different types of adoptions. 7. Prevention classes could be organized for pregnant mothers to provide options and hope they otherwise are without. 8. Lists of attorneys that offer free services for adoption cases could be prepared and made available as needed. 9. Prayer teams could be assembled for the entire adoptive process.200

These ideas are practical ways the local church could make an impact and make adoption and foster care a priority in the community. All of the ideas outlined by Russell Moore can be done for foster parents as well. They need all the same levels and aspects of support. This proposed model of orphan care is formed out of a theology that views adoption and foster care as the gospel as well as missional.

Local churches of today promote foster care and adoption because the church can provide children with a bridge to the world of the potential foster care or adoptive parent. They need someone to show them the right way by modeling good behaviors. Purvis describes our opportunity to help a child heal when an adverse scenario occurs. She says, “You have a unique opportunity to change that scenario by building a bridge to the world for your at-risk adoptive children. You and the rest of your family can become a safe-

200. Ibid., loc 2834.
haven and an ally, eager to share their concerns.” Helping change the life of a child can be as simple as creating a safe place for them that allows for attachment to occur.

Another study that supports the potential impact the church can have on foster care and adoption was carried out in 2015 by Mathew Scott Thompson. This study revealed that supportive religious communications and personal relationships with adoptive families ranked highest as factors influencing new families to adopt for the first time. The rankings for both tied with a score of 88.9 percent out of a possible 100. These results would suggest the church has a relevant and timely voice in speaking to the foster care crisis of American culture today.

_A System of Care for the Local Church_

CompaCare is a system from the Assemblies of God national office designed to equip churches with a plan to care for all the orphans in the United States. Jay Mooney, Dr. Joan Mostert, and Bill Hastert are all part of the development team that has launched this effort. Their goal is to train representatives for each state that can begin training individual Churches. As their program gains traction and popularity, they plan to freely and openly train as many denominations as possible until all the foster children in the country are cared for. It is a goal that God gives the church in James 1:27 and the CompaCare plan is designed to make it a reality by improving the lack of capacity and stability in foster parenting across the county.

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In the CompaCare model, a local church leader is asked to evaluate the landscape of foster care in their community and create a ministry plan that suggests a variety of action steps for the upcoming year. It is assumed that because each church will have a unique ministry context it will be best served to evaluate and apply ministry solutions accordingly. The following are suggested areas of focus that could be addressed:


   This resource includes many domestic and international organizations, podcasts, and campaign ideas for local church leaders looking to do something to help children in foster care.

   a. Orphan Sunday: This syndicated campaign organized by the Christian Alliance for Orphans is recognized by churches each year to promote awareness for foster care and adoption in their local church. Churches invite social services in to talk about the need in the community and answer questions after a service to interested families. Small focus groups can be formed with friends in the church to answer questions and be a support in the decision-making process. For example: Journey Church in Kenosha, Wisconsin, started this focus seven years ago with a volunteer who had a heart for orphans within the church, and over the years, it has blossomed into a wave of momentum influencing 26 families to become foster and adoptive parents. Also, 35% of the pastoral staff in 2015 opened up their homes to children in need as a result.
2. Service Projects: Churches may find meeting physical needs of foster parents an easy place to begin. Project examples might include packing backpacks for social services to give foster parents at the time of placement or clothing donated through a local foster closet organization. Families might also find simple tasks like writing thank you cards for foster parents especially rewarding and easy to do. Just letting a foster parent know what they are doing matters and that they are appreciated will have a significant impact.

3. Recruitment: Some organizations focus on this step of the process by helping to recruit foster families and point them to agencies for licensing. A few of these organizations would include: www.backyardorphans.org or http://www.cherishkids.org/

4. Volunteer Management: At this step volunteers are organized to support various aspects of the foster care cycle from prevention to adoption when it becomes available.

   a. Prevention - Safe Families (https://safe-families.org/) works with churches to help prevent children from entering foster care. Local chapters work with social services to help families before they cross the lines that require the foster system to become involved. Safe Families was founded in Chicago in 2003 and is primarily supported by the effort of volunteers. Today, the ministry has expanded to 70 cities in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. The approach of Safe Families is to create an extended family support system for families going through a crisis. The extended family is
made up of mostly Christ-following people who are trying to keep children safe and families together through mentoring relationships. There are many factors contribute to families falling into crisis including: financial pressure, unemployment, domestic violence, and substance abuse. In these situations, churches and people of faith can partner with Safe Families to help for short periods of time to help when no one else can.  

b. Foster Parent Recruiting and Retention – CompaCare

(http://compactfamilyservices.org/ministries/compacare) This organization offers a compassion system that trains churches how to wraparound foster parents so they stay in the process longer. This 17 step system develops three levels of volunteers that work together to care for the foster parents in local churches.

c. Adoptive Support - Project 1:27 (https://www.project127.com/)

Churches can also use this Denver-based ministry called Project 1:27 to support the adoptive family when a child reaches this point in the process. In this ministry, adoptive families can receive care and support before and after the adoption process, making it more successful in the long run. They work directly with government agencies as well as foster and adoptive families. The ministry takes its name from James 1:27, where Jesus defines true religion as caring for the widows and the orphans. Project 1:27, along with the Colorado

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Department of Human Services, has helped lower the number of children waiting to be adopted from 800 to 365 in a two-year time frame.\(^{203}\)

5. Case Management: This is the highest level of professional care for foster children because it requires formal social work. Counties, agencies or non-profit organizations can be contracted to provide the recruitment, training, licensing, and case management required by the state. Many faith based denominations provide solutions in this way including, for example: Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Catholic, and the Assemblies of God.

**Conclusion**

The exploration of this chapter has provided a framework and context for the future details of this study. History has been recounted, passages have been explored, and practical theology has been reviewed. It seems clear that throughout history, God has used the church to be an agent of rescue for the vulnerable children in society. When the church obeyed the Word of God and helped the fatherless children, the world took notice. Similarly, today, the church is on mission when it cares for the most vulnerable children of our communities.

Isaiah made a strong point that a church does not know it’s Master if it does not care for the poor and the vulnerable. Acts chapter 6 demonstrates that the Christian

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church has been empowered by the Spirit to take action in this direction and care for the widows and orphans of our time.

We see God redefining the family by placing a higher value on spiritual connection with God rather than earthly bloodlines. The mere fact that God allows all people to be made one with Him through a spiritual adoption process sets the stage for Christians to be that same gospel to broken children by opening their homes for a season or for a lifetime. Christian foster families are Jesus to foster children because they are an extension of what Jesus has done for each believer. This is an opportunity the Church has to influence the culture today through love.

Society has also attempted throughout history to find solutions for orphaned children. The results, however, have produced mixed reviews. Today there is a new approach called wraparound ministry that offers hope to foster care in every county and every state through a church-based program called CompaCare. This program organizes wraparound care for foster parents that shows them what they are doing matters to the church and to the heart of God. There is now an opportunity for the church to provide a way for all Christians to obey James 1:27 and serve orphans with collective impact like the early church had in Acts chapter 2. Furthermore, there is an opportunity today for the church to show the world that it knows its Master by caring for the poor and broken children of our day. The CompaCare program is designed to take advantage of these opportunities and position the Church as the global leader God intended for it to be. This local church-based program will be the focus of the field study in chapter three that seeks to determine the level of satisfaction foster parents are receiving from the CompaCare wraparound program at Journey Church in Kenosha, Wisconsin.
Chapter 3
Addressing Strategic Gaps in Foster Care

Field Study Narrative

The orphan care crisis has been addressed by the Christian community in recent history in large part through international and domestic adoption awareness campaigns. While adoption is a critical component of addressing the crisis by providing permanent families to children who need them, it should be considered the last resort in helping a child when all other options have been exhausted. Therefore, this project intends to focus primarily on how the church can further engage in the step that comes before adoption in the United States: foster care. The church has a mandate from God to care for the orphan and vulnerable child, and the foster care system has reunification of families as its goal. This shared value presents an opportunity for the community of faith to stand in the gap for a foster child while the biological parent re-establishes a home that is once again safe for raising children. Many churches have responded to the need for more foster parents with considerable recruiting efforts, and these efforts must continue to fill the large gap in the number of families needed. The lack of underlying support for these new foster families, however, often leads to high dropout rates that negate a considerable amount of the recruiting efforts. Therefore, this project aims to highlight the impact a foster parent wraparound ministry could have in retaining more of the heroic volunteers that open up their homes in response to the call of James 1:27.
This research project will focus on the evaluation of the foster parent support system at Journey Church in Kenosha, Wisconsin, because of the biblical mandate to care for orphans and the expressed need for help in this area by community leadership. Journey Church averages approximately 3000 people each weekend and possesses the potential to impact the city by connecting 200 families to the foster care system over the next several years. This study is also relevant to other churches not yet involved in orphan care because even though many of today’s lead pastors do not know how to care for orphans, 48% said they would put it in the top three priorities of their church if they knew how to do so.²⁰⁴

The health of Journey Church as an organization must be briefly assessed to bring additional context to the foster care ministry of the church. This evaluation is critical because it will serve as the backdrop for the ministry and be the environment within which it will function. This assessment will seek to determine if the goals of the foster care ministry at Journey Church are aligned with the overall vision of the church as a whole.

A survey will be used to gather data about how effective the wraparound ministry is at supporting foster parents before support is intentionally organized. The goal of the data collection is to create a baseline that can be used to measure ministry effectiveness as it develops over the years. The survey is based on an existing survey from Faith Bridge Foster Care that measured similar outcomes and could be used as a longitudinal study in the future. If the results of the study suggest that this ministry is productive and

²⁰⁴ Bill Hancock, “Assemblies of God CompaCare Training” (Training, Compact Family Services, Hot Springs, AR, September 25, 2017).
demonstrate effectiveness at the county level of foster care, then this model could be expanded throughout the state and nation.

**Journey Church as the Focus of the Study**

When children need to be removed from a home, the department for Children in Protective Services (CHIPS) opens a case. A child may be removed from his or her home and placed into Out of Home Care (OHC) due to safety concerns that cannot be controlled in the family home. If the Child Protective Services (CPS) worker determines that a child needs to be placed in OHC to ensure his or her safety, the child is placed into OHC via a court order or through a voluntary placement agreement. Children placed in OHC through a court order are required to meet all permanency planning standards set forth by Wisconsin statute.²⁰⁵ It is at this point in the process that Journey Church can help local agencies by recruiting more foster parents and helping to retain them through ministries of support.

Journey Church is a multi-site church that has a multigenerational and multiethnic vision. They average 3000 people in attendance each weekend between three campus locations in Northern Illinois and Southeastern Wisconsin. They also have a fourth campus located in Lithuania that is currently being launched. The central campus is located in Kenosha, with the other two regional campus locations in Burlington,

²⁰⁵ Ibid.
Wisconsin, and Beach Park, Illinois. The vision of the church is to add two more locations by the year 2020: one location to the north of Kenosha and another to the East. It is the largest Assemblies of God church in the state of Wisconsin and has the largest Christian school in the region. Therefore, the influence of the church in the region is large in scope.

In 2017, the ethnicity of the church consisted of 76% Caucasian, 12% Hispanic, 8% African American, 1% Asian, and 3% other,\(^\text{206}\) as seen in Appendix 2. While 49% of the church is between the ages of 40-60, the missional target of the church is targeted at head-of-household age thirty (see Appendix 3).\(^\text{207}\) This target has been in place for five years and represents 19% of the current congregation.\(^\text{208}\)

The Mission of the church is “Making it easy to find and experience God.” This mission has four purposes that include: Passionate Worship, Enthusiastic Service, Authentic Community, and Offering Hope. The church leadership believes that each one of these purposes are functions of the organization, and if one of these purposes were to be removed, the church would be failing at its mission. Therefore, primary strategies were developed to accomplish each purpose. These include:

1. Weekend services designed to create an environment where people can passionately worship God.

2. Life Groups designed for people to do life together.

3. Spiritual gift discovery to help people know where to serve.

\(^{207}\) Ibid.
\(^{208}\) Ibid.
4. The practice of sharing personal stories of life change.

These four strategies are taught in a growth track class for new guests and are given priority regarding resources and focus.

The church has sixteen pastors on staff and fifteen additional directors and administrative assistants. There are one lead and four executive pastors that together oversee the aspects of the church operationally. The church leadership team is divided into three levels: the executive team, the pastoral leadership team, and the team of directors. These teams offer leadership and direction to the volunteer teams that participate in strategic ministry execution each week.

Journey Church in Kenosha, Wisconsin, began to ask how they could help in supporting foster care five years ago when they were developing their current strategic plan. They decided to study the community to find the largest and most pressing needs, in hopes of being more effective in their efforts. As a result, a significant discovery was made in discussions with representatives from the State of Wisconsin and the City of Kenosha. A gap was identified in the support foster families received after a child was placed in their homes. This need was highlighted as a primary concern and, therefore, Journey Church took action.

The shortage of foster parents was an issue Journey Church had been addressing for several years before this, but the high one-year dropout rate was not being adequately addressed. A strategy, therefore, was needed to provide this support and to create the systems needed for sustainability. A key issue revolved around how churches could connect people with the agencies that placed foster children in homes and to provide support to foster parents in those homes.
In 2015, Journey church leadership set a goal of recruiting 200 families to become foster or adoptive parents by the year 2020. At the time there were 132 foster children in need of a home; therefore, 200 foster families would completely meet this need in Kenosha County. If this goal were to be realized, it would represent an amazing reversal to a trend that was leaving children without anyone to care for them for decades.

During these recruiting efforts, a community of those involved in foster care at Journey Church needs to be strengthened and cultivated. Foster parents will be invited to a foster care support social media group to facilitate communication about needs, events, and solutions. Current and previously involved foster families that attend Journey Church will be invited to this group. According to Jason Johnson from the Christian Alliance for Orphans, this first step of community building, however it is accomplished, is key to a successful orphan care ministry in a local church. Never before at Journey Church have people that do foster care been invited into a comprehensive system of care. This strengthened community will be the core from which this ministry can grow. Connecting those who are a foster parent in the church helps caring for them become a possibility in larger and more sustainable ways.

The adoption and foster care ministries at Journey Church were started because of the felt need to recruit and support foster and adoptive families. These families often have children with behavioral expressions that required them to adapt and flex in order to meet the needs of their newly placed children. The ministry began at Journey Church in large part due to a few faithful families leading by example and inspiring others to follow in the same way. Since 2010, this new ministry has seen over 500% more adoptive and foster families involved than when the ministry began eight years before. The focus of
this study is on the expansion of this ministry to help more foster families through wraparound care.

**Community Interviews Conducted**

Leaders of the foster care movement were contacted by phone to gain an understanding of what is working well and what needs still exist in the system that the church can address. These interviews helped create a focus on what aspects of foster care ministry Journey Church can employ to best carry out its biblical mandate to help the orphans in its city. These interviews brought first-hand research credibility to the programmatic direction Journey Church chose in caring, supporting foster parents. Some of the targeted interviews included leaders at local adoption agencies, judges, and the district attorneys that work with cases every day. State agencies and elected officials were interviewed to discover the goals, laws, and issues that are important to them as well. This portion of the study aims to gain clarity on the opinions of significant stakeholders in the Wisconsin child welfare system. This process intends to discover open doors for the church to walk through that displays extravagant love to children and sees God glorified.

**State Representative Interview**

Samantha Kerkman is a State Representative in the 61st District of Wisconsin and responded to an email request for updates about foster care legislation in the following
manner: First, she pointed out that the State of Wisconsin formed a task force in 2017 to address the foster care need more effectively. According to the State Task Force website, "Our bipartisan committee is tasked with developing ideas to improve the child welfare system. Our most recent numbers report that more than 7,000 children were placed in foster care in 2015. That is 300 more children than the previous year. If that trajectory continues, we could have 10,000 children in need of homes by 2023." This State website that Kerman referenced made several additional conclusions about the condition of foster care in Wisconsin that included a theory as to why the increase is occurring at such an alarming rate. They concluded, “The 71 counties other than Milwaukee had an increase of 6%. Nationally, the opioid epidemic is driving the increase in the number of children being taken out of their homes and placed in the foster care system.” They also found that “The two largest age groups in Out of Home Care are children aged 2-4, which accounts for 20% of all children in OHC and children aged 14-16, which account for 17.3% of all children in OHC.” The Task Force also discovered that 54.4% of the children in foster care in Wisconsin are Caucasian, 35.5% are African American, 7.3% are Native American, and 1.2% are Asian.

One finding stands out as especially tragic. “Neglect, defined as alleged maltreatment including failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter or care, is the most prevalent reason for removal and accounts for 64.1% of the reasons children are

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210. Ibid.
211. Ibid.
212. Ibid.
removed from their home.” The table in Appendix 4 shows all of the other known reasons children enter the foster care system.

Representative Kerkman also outlined the proposed legislative agenda in her email correspondence: Of the thirteen legislative proposals, LRB 4925 and LRB 4929 are of particular interest because they propose funding for nonprofits that provide prevention solutions and care for the foster parents in the state (see Appendix 5). These proposals are proof that the need for supporting foster parents is a growing issue throughout the state of Wisconsin.

*Juvenile Court Judge Interview*

On January 19, 2018, Judge Jason Rossell was asked to answer a few questions during a phone interview. Judge Rossell was responsible for making child welfare decisions for Kenosha County. The first question was: what critical elements of your work do you feel the local church needs to understand as they recruit foster families? He answered that biological families have complicated lives and the children are going back to homes that are usually not as stable as their foster family. In his opinion, this is acceptable, because there is greater trauma done to the child if they are permanently removed from their biological family than if they stay with a more socioeconomically successful family in the community. His view is based on the belief that children continue to have an identity with their biological parents even after being placed with a foster family that is in a better socioeconomic situation.

213. Ibid.
Another example of this is how missions’ trips from churches to foreign countries cannot fix the underlying causes of problems in a country. It is the same for a biological family because a preferable solution is not merely removing the children from their parents but helping the parents be better at parenting and living life. The issue of foster care is one of safety. Judge Rossell believes the church exists to be salt and light, but they may not be in a position to rescue every child. It is important not to judge the biological parent, he said. A church congregation can do well to engage with the biological parent in a non-judgmental manner. Judge Rossell went on to say that integrating faith-based programs is not that hard in the judicial system and is often seamless. The challenge, however, is in organizing leaders that are not from the Department of Child and Family Services. This is where tensions can arise because contracts can be an issue.”

The judge encouraged the church to support biological parents and the concept of reunification, emphasizing the desired win of seeing the child back with a stable biological parent as soon as possible.

When asked further about how the church could help specifically with the foster care crisis, the answer from the judge was especially interesting to Journey Church and the Assemblies of God, because he linked recruiting success with meeting the needs of the foster parents already involved. He stated that the church could help most by supporting the current foster parents in the system. This retention strategy is called wraparound care in the foster care industry and is what the CompaCare system from the Assemblies of God is aimed at addressing. The CompaCare program screens foster

parents to discover their needs and then recruits volunteers to meet those needs at different levels of support.

Social Service Supervisor Interview

Michelle Lang is a social services supervisor for Kenosha County, Wisconsin, and was interviewed on March 2nd, 2018. During this phone interview, she thanked Journey Church for all it has done in the past few years to promote foster care in the congregation. According to Lang, Journey church has been a force in the community and developed a strong pool of excellent foster parents that have made a real difference to hurting families. She went on to say that there is an ongoing need for further recruitment and that one of the best things the church can do for them is to make foster care visible and real by talking about it, promoting it and doing it. Sometimes foster care seems invisible and suffers from lack of awareness, Lange added. Making it visible is a key to addressing the problem. When it comes to helping the division of health and human services the most, Lang said that fostering teens is the greatest need because there is a view that teens are harder to handle and therefore take much longer to get placed in a home. She also mentioned that other counties like Milwaukee have teen mentoring programs that have produced positive results.

When asked about the reasons people hesitate to be foster parents, she answered that the thought of the child returning home was a primary concern. Lang believes that people are usually not prepared mentally with the correct mindset that views foster care as a temporary solution leading to reunification. Reunification is why adults should get into foster parenting in the first place. Lang's final comments had to do with the need for
biological parents to establish stronger relationships with the foster parents. She said, “when we see this happen, it makes for healthy progress in the parents’ life and a smooth transition when reunification becomes a reality.”215

**District Attorney Interview**

Michael Graveley is the District Attorney for Southeastern Wisconsin and has worked in that region for many years. He has experience with the judicial system and a working knowledge of how the community lives and moves on a daily basis. He understands the strengths and weaknesses of society. He knows who works together and who does not. He understands the political landscape and the dynamics of what it takes to see things change for the better.

When asked to describe how the foster system works and what improvements could be made he offered this thought, "Foster families don't have control, and the District Attorney's office feels like the state needs to do a better job of sharing that big picture."216 His point was that foster families could be empowered more effectively to understand the bigger context as it relates to the child they are caring for. Many times, there is behavior that could be managed better if the foster family was more informed about the background of the child. Not every detail can or should be disclosed, but according to the District Attorney, more information could be provided if state authorities agreed to do so. This improved context would also be helpful for foster families in understanding the relational dynamics that previously and currently exist. Many times,

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foster families are asked to interact with and even encourage the biological families without any understanding of the background, challenges or tendencies that exist. This information is currently not available to foster families but could be a powerful asset to trained foster families.

Michael Gravely says that "Foster families help restore biological families because something has been profoundly broken. The first mission is to restore the broken family and the second mission is to help the broken children thrive. Sometimes, those two missions are on the same path, but sometimes they feel like they go in opposite directions." This can be a tricky situation to navigate because sometimes the process stretches out for years, and the longer that timeframe is extended, the cloudier reunification goals can become. However, the District Attorney suggests a few steps that can be taken to improve the flow of information for foster families even in the current system:

1. The most effective method to increase awareness about the foster system, options, and the process is for foster families to support each other in dramatic ways. Graveley did not offer a specific way to create a support structure but suggested this would keep many more foster families in the game much longer and help them to be more effective.

2. The foster care system can be scary and intimidating. It is important to find people that can be known and trusted by the foster parents. Therefore, the District Attorney suggested calling his office and asking questions, because

217. Ibid.
the more people learn, the more equipped and confident they are to advocate for a child that needs care.

3. Advocacy in legislation is another powerful way a foster family can make a difference and improve the system. Graveley suggests that privacy legislation may need to change to allow foster parents to gain a bigger picture. State representatives like Samantha Kerkman and Peter Barka would have an open ear to this issue. Social services and the District Attorney work together to introduce bills for consideration each year and work with the Madison Association that advocates for children’s rights.

When asked about how the local church can help the District Attorney's office, the topic of recruitment was front and center. There is a need for more foster families in the city of Kenosha as well as the State of Wisconsin. According to the Social Services of Kenosha County, the number of children in the foster care system increased 18% in 2016, and on any given day there are 132 children in the Kenosha County system. Churches can help with this effort by partnering together with churches like Grace Lutheran and the Bradford (CUSH) Churches United to Serve Humanity. This group has a reputation for advocacy by lobbying state and local leadership for change that helps the marginalized. It is the opinion of the District Attorney that this group is effective in its efforts and would have some common ground with even conservative church networks. The Executive Director would be open to a conversation on how more churches could network together. Graveley believes that Journey Church in Kenosha, Wisconsin, is a conservative church that has a true mission in the community for change. He believes Journey is a living example of how positive conservativism can be and what it can do
with a clear vision. He values foster care personally as an eight on a scale of one to ten and feels a city is judged by how it cares for the most vulnerable.

When asked about the strategic nature of placing children into the homes of families instead of using a group home model, he responded by recalling the movement in our country to close orphanage group homes in the 1960s and 1970s. He said that when children are placed in a safe home, they receive the care and attention needed to heal and thrive. Graveley felt that foster parents are true heroes and he was passionate about that point. He went on to say, "The world is full of people that will talk a good game, but it is foster parents truly that walk the walk."

*Assistant District Attorney Interview*

Mary Hart is an Assistant District Attorney in Southeastern Wisconsin and handles many of the Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) cases that come to the state from various counties. Similar to the District Attorney, she believes that the foster care system can be improved, and foster families are at the heart of the reunification process. Her number one goal for the church community would be to help with recruitment, because, according to her, they see a large amount of attrition. For every foster family they recruit, another family drops out. The attrition she speaks of can be for various reason including relocation, changing season of life, medical limitations, or the finalization of an adoption. However, many foster parents just drop off because they are overwhelmed and under-resourced. This, according to Hart, is where the church comes in.

218. Ibid.
again. If the church can support active foster parents and cheer them on, the odds of retention improve dramatically.

When asked if her office would prefer families to foster or adopt, she said permanence is preferred every time. “Permanence is the goal, but a temporary home is more likely.” Ultimately, the first goal is to see reunification as the place that permanence occurs, but roughly 25% of the time adoption is the preferred permanency plan. So, that begs the question of what happens to children that do not have a foster home and do not have an adoptive home? Hart said that sometimes they stay overnight in relative care, hospitals, or an emergency home. These options are not desired, and the state makes every effort to avoid them if possible, but Mary Hart told of a time when a social worker had to take a child camping so that legally they could reset the time clock that allows a child to be placed in these temporary housing options. The situations can be dire, and sometimes the options are few. For the children that are older in foster care, the potential for permanence becomes less likely as each year passes, because they are viewed as having more baggage, more complications, and more risk. Kenosha has what is called shelter care for children ages 12-17 which only lasts 60 days. This shelter holds a maximum of eight children and is only for children that are repeatedly rejected by foster homes for poor behavior. This is the last option but is all too often a necessity.

Hart described that the number one reason that people do not want to be foster parents is that they cannot imagine sending the children back to their biological families after they have formed a bond and seen significant progress. The idea of the kids going back to a situation that is worse than the foster home is almost unbearable to think about.

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220. Ibid.
for them. This thinking may be one of the reasons why so many families stay on the
sidelines of foster care.

Mary Hart believes that Journey Church has taken a leadership role in recruiting
and has been very helpful to the process. She encourages more churches to spread the
word and communicate to social services any names of interested families. Hart believes
that there needs to be a place for former foster families because so many of them want to
help and know how to help but are now out of the system. One way she feels that could
help would be for former foster parents to participate in wraparound care efforts through
the local church. The Assistant DA went on to say, “Foster parents need support to be
successful.”

Group Interview with Social Services

Wendy Griffith is a foster parent in Kenosha County who organized a focus group
listening session with foster parents at Journey Church on September 13, 2017. This
focus group was to be a platform to share suggestions with social services leadership.
The meeting was organized at the request of the Director of Social Services to dig deeper
and learn more about what can be done to support foster families more effectively.

There were 25 people present that represented foster families in Kenosha County, and
one by one they shared various frustrations that they hoped could be addressed. The
following is a list of issues that were raised in the two-hour meeting.

1. Guardian ad Litem (GAL’s) sometimes seem not as involved as they could be.
2. There is a sense that not enough information is given to foster parents about
cases to be effective.
3. Some barriers exist that complicate the process of taking children to therapy.
4. There is a need for follow-up and appreciation for foster families.

221. Ibid.
5. Foster parents expressed that they don’t feel like they have a voice in court.
6. Turnover of Social Services staff is sometimes an issue that leads to a lack of consistency. Greater communication was requested.
7. Supervised visitation could be increased in quality.
8. Improvements in communication with foster families were expressed.

As a result of this meeting, the immediate feedback was that the District Attorney was shocked at the perceived ineffectiveness of the guardian ad Litem. A possible solution was for the foster parents to contact the GAL’s directly and ask them to visit rather than waiting for them to initiate visits. Another issue that came up repeatedly was the need for the childcare payment process to be improved. Many times, foster parents needed childcare for appointments they had in other areas of their life, and the paperwork process did not allow for this to happen in the time needed. The Social Services leadership agreed but said that this was a state issue to be addressed with leaders that oversee statewide administration. The issue was tabled but noted by social service for further review.

The Department of Children and Family Service took thirty days to process the feedback from this focus group and produced the following action items. This list of actions is now being called the Foster Care Model of Care for Kenosha County:

1. Thank-you letters will be sent to foster parents regularly.
2. Steps were taken to share more information with foster parents.
3. Care4kids is helping with therapy: this is a way Kenosha County can ramp up care. The county cannot pay for therapy on their own within the existing budget.
4. The Handle with Care program will integrate the following service: DCFS, Crisis response, Law enforcement, Kenosha Unified School District, and county schools. Some states have done this, and they found it to be effective
5. Trauma training is needed at professional services.
6. Updated placement folders will include all checklists and subsidy information.
7. Added four full time and two part-time staff to make visitation higher quality.
8. Follow-up with foster families was increased after three days of placement.
9. Wisconsin Coalition is developing a Champion program for recruitment.
10. More Facebook notifications will be sent out regarding subsidy information about Royal Family Kids Camps.
11. The county now has social media pages for the first time.
12. A report card was created to be filled out after visitation about the care of children.
13. New organizations like the Foster closet were recommended that provides free clothing to foster families.

This focus group stands as a significant milestone in Kenosha County reform in recent history because of the volume of changes that resulted. Staff were added, policies refined, and systems were created as a result of this meeting.

Each Interview described how churches can help most with foster care by recruiting and retaining foster parents. Support for foster families was expressed as the area of need that was not currently be addressed and is strongly needed. The Study, therefore, will focus on the evaluation of the Compare Program because of its mission to empower the local church to support foster parents.

**CompaCare Foster Parent Support**

CompaCare is a system that provides a framework for churches to use in providing wraparound care to foster families. The CompaCare organization dedicates its efforts to the wraparound church leadership system. This system is designed to train church leaders about the foster care problem and puts forth a plan for congregations that reduces the dropout rate of foster parents through practical levels of support.

Ted Stackpole is a U.S. Missionary for the Assemblies of God working as a representative for Compact Services in Hot Springs, Arkansas. He provides training,
support, and resources for churches that are interested in starting a foster care wraparound program. Stackpole believes that it is important for churches to start where they can and not lose momentum. The first step, according to him, is to recruit a family advocate that can do the job of matching up foster family needs with volunteers who are willing to support and serve them. He recommends one family advocate volunteer for every 3-4 foster families in the church. This will enable them to provide the focus they need to provide quality advocacy for each foster family. A natural place to look for these advocates is in the list of volunteers that sign up to help support foster families. Some of them may be equipped already to play the role of an advocate. He suggests asking for a one-year commitment to provide the consistency needed and establish relationships over a more extended period. This starting point for wraparound care puts a church in a strong position to focus on the neediest foster families that they have. This will help keep the families at the highest risk of dropping out to stay in the game. The key, Stackpole says, is to “Start now and start supporting foster families because they have many more people in their lives than a typical family.” Once churches have volunteers and family advocates recruited, they can begin support group meetings for the foster families that have training and sharing opportunities at each gathering. Stackpole has seen these steps be successful at many other churches around the country and believes they are reproducible at any church in the country that wants to make a difference in foster care.

The Problem: Lack of Foster Parent Stability

From the years 1900 to 2000, the number of foster children in America grew from approximately 50,000 to 500,000. In 2017, that number rose to 660,000.223 The same three problems that existed during the founding years of our nation still exists today:

1. Capacity: This is a problem today because there are not enough foster families for every foster child.
2. Stability: The families who foster are not adequately trained and supported.
3. Quality: Children are not thriving in the current system.

The government has attempted to solve this problem with state and county programs throughout the nation, but they are failing to meet the stated objectives. According to CompaCare research,

An extensive three-year audit of state child welfare systems was conducted, and the Department of Health and Human Services found that not a single state complied with federal safety standards for children. Sixteen states did not meet any of these standards, and not a single state met more than two of the seven standards.224

To make matters worse, even the foster families that are recruited often drop out after the first year. About 40-60% of foster families drop out after the first year because of lack of support, training, paperwork requirements, court dates, calls, and numerous visits by officials.225 This stability problem creates an environment that makes it even more difficult for the capacity issue. In fact, “The national average for a successful child placement after one year is only 34%.”226

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224. Ibid., 22.
225. Ibid., 26.
226. Ibid., 27.
The Solution: The Church

The church can be the solution. There are roughly 60,000,000 evangelicals in the United States and 600,000 children in foster care. That means there are about 100 evangelical Christians for every foster child in America. This means that there are more than enough evangelicals to meet the foster care need, and these evangelicals are required in James 1:27 to provide support because caring for the vulnerable is at the heart of the gospel.

The Plan: Systemize Support

Each CompaCare church will set out to accomplish a four phase, 17 step management plan. Part of this plan is a formula for success referred to as 5:2:15. Each year they are asked to recruit five foster families, two respite families and fifteen other volunteers that would provide support. The message then becomes: if someone decides to start providing foster care at a church with an active CompaCare ministry, they will not do it alone. Recruiting five foster families annually is thought to be possible at a medium-sized church, but that ratio can be scaled down to a smaller church context. The number of respite volunteers needs to be two per foster family because of the need for overnight care throughout the year. The fifteen volunteers would be people that cannot bring a child into their home at the current time but do want to support others that care for foster children.

One volunteer is asked to be a family advocate that would take on the responsibility of matching up the needs of foster families with the skills and interests of

the volunteers. This is a very key role because this person becomes the go-to person for foster families. They need to anticipate the needs of foster families and make sure they are supported. Once the volunteers have been matched up, there is ongoing training for the volunteers to help them understand the trauma that foster children have and the type of support the foster families will require. The respite volunteers are scheduled with the families to give them a break and a time of rest.

Level one volunteers are asked to provide support in simple ways. For example, they might write a thank you note to a foster parent that encourages them and lets them know others want them to succeed. Email or text messages can be used as simple ways to reach out to the foster parent and offer to pray for them. Other volunteers might provide a gift card to a foster family or donate some well-needed supplies that the foster family usually must buy on their own. Level one volunteers can also offer the professional skills they have at a discounted or donated basis for foster families to show their support and help them care for the foster children in their homes for a more extended period. Examples of this might be free oil changes from a mechanic that attends the church or free lawncare by a landscaper that goes to the church and wants to help foster parents with what he or she does best. These are all simple ways everyone in the local church can do something to help children in need.

Level two volunteers require a background check because they provide regular support that involves direct involvement with the foster children. Transportation to and from appointments is often a big help to foster families and would be in the scope of what a level two volunteer would offer. Babysitting and overnight respite care is another way a level two volunteer can make a significant impact. These support efforts are desperately
needed but are not asked for by foster parents because they often feel they need to make everything work on their own. The CompaCare system trains its volunteers to anticipate the needs of the foster families and be there for them when they need it most.

Each year the CompaCare ministry will use the system so that new volunteers and foster families are recruited, and current foster families remain supported. In this way, churches will address the capacity, quality and sustainability issues in foster care and carry out their James 1:27 mandate to care for the orphans in their community.

CompaCare will be the primary intervention studied in this project. The feedback from state and local officials about the current landscape of foster care indicated the need for someone to support foster parents because a support system of that kind did not currently exist in the social services sector. Therefore, the CompaCare system at Journey Church in Kenosha, Wisconsin, will be evaluated on the satisfaction level of support they received before and after the CompaCare system was installed.

Suggested Outcomes

The conclusion of this study will draw some connections between the effectiveness of the foster parent wraparound ministry at Journey Church and its value in the practical theology of orphan care. Faith is lived out in practical ways, and God uses many different people to work together for his purposes and his Glory. The research in this study seeks to not only shed light on what the secular world is attempting to do for foster children but also how the faith community is currently deploying resources and
strategies to address the same need. The beauty of a study like this is that it seeks to find authentic ways the church can help the unchurched world accomplish something they have not been able to do by themselves up to this point. It may be a new day for the church if state and local leaders begin to not only listen but also work with the church to care for the forgotten in their communities.

The implications of possible success in this area by Journey Church could be far-reaching in scope because of the influence this church has within various communities. First, the successful implementation of foster care wraparound ministry will serve as a feeder to the adoption and foster care efforts the church already has put forth. Those children that need permanency would finally find it with more Christian families responding to the need. A new wave, however, could also emerge, because as Journey Church discovers effective ministry to foster children, other churches will see how they too can make a difference with their congregations. When churches work together in this way, the need for foster homes will be met, and the door will open for other churches to follow suit. Church leaders in every state could follow this blueprint of ministry and develop their custom plan to carry out true religion themselves. Historically, the church has responded to children in need over the centuries in different ways, but this study will seek to identify how the culture and the faith community can support foster care today.
Chapter 4

Evaluation of Survey Data

To help accomplish the project goal of evaluating the satisfaction level of the Journey Church foster parent wraparound ministry, a qualitative survey method was used first to create a baseline of satisfaction that could be used for comparison after the ministry was in place. The hypothesis for this study was that when additional care and support were applied to existing foster parents, their levels of satisfaction and retention would increase. The survey was designed to determine if this underlying assumption was correct, and if so, to what extent. Another desired outcome of the survey was to identify the specific areas of support foster parents most appreciated and found helpful.

Database Development

In order to create a foster parent wraparound ministry, a database of active foster parents at Journey Church first needed to be created. A church-wide survey was sent out to 2500 people in December of 2016 for the purpose of populating a database and understanding the landscape of foster care activity in the congregation. 183 people responded to the survey which represents 7% of the total possible respondents. The survey informed the church of how many people were involved in foster care, adoption,
and respite care. After completing this survey, several relevant data points were discovered:

1. 155 of 183 respondents provided their phone number for future contact
2. 100% of respondents provided their email address
3. 79% of respondents have considered involvement in foster care or adoption
4. 30% of respondents have been foster or adoptive parent in the past or present
5. 83% of respondents would be interested in foster parent support groups
6. 40 families have become involved in foster care or adoption the last five years while 143 have considered involvement during that time

**Pre and Post-Study Survey Development**

With a database of active foster families created, new survey questions were formulated to learn more about the possible value of a wraparound foster parent ministry. This new pre and post-study survey became the focus of this project study.

The questions utilized in this survey were taken from a previous research instrument designed by Bill Hancock who founded FaithBridge Foster Care in Alpharetta, Georgia. During a phone interview, Mr. Hancock provided the framework for this research apparatus as it was used previously. FaithBridge is a professionally managed foster care agency that used these same questions to assess the satisfaction level of foster parents they served on an annual basis.

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A SurveyMonkey branded survey was used for data collection because of its ability to quickly distribute, collect, and tabulate results for the researcher. Data was then exported from this software and included in the study appendix. This software provided summary information as well as comprehensive breakdowns of reported results, percentages, and independent comments from respondents.

The respondents of this survey were all active foster parents licensed with a local agency in Kenosha, Wisconsin. They were also all attendees of Journey Church in Kenosha at the time of the survey. The foster parents were adults who have all participated in state training to be foster parents in the state of Wisconsin. Detailed demographics of the respondents were not determined to be relevant to the desired outcomes and therefore were not collected.

**Questionnaire Design**

The first question was posed to authenticate that each respondent was an active foster parent at Journey Church. The second question was meant to create a baseline satisfaction level for the overall foster care ministry before the wraparound program was implemented. The next two open-ended questions were asked to capture support method suggestions that the researcher may not have been aware of. This was followed by several questions that addressed the popular support areas of respite, babysitting, and transportation as identified by the FaithBridge Foster Care agency professionals. The survey ended with several questions about the top support needs, professional agency satisfaction, and the likelihood of retention in the upcoming year.
In total, 14 questions were designed to take under seven minutes to answer and were worded in a conversational tone to help facilitate high comprehension. An email was sent out to all the respondents with a link to the survey. This email included a paragraph that explained the purpose of the survey and the benefits that could be gained from the data generated by their invested time.

Pre-Study Survey Results

The Journey Church foster parent wraparound pre-study survey was conducted in October of 2017 before the ministry began its operation on January 1st, 2018. This pre-study survey was sent out to 27 active foster parents in the church to create a baseline for further comparison, and 14 surveys were completed, representing a >50% response rate. Of the 14 respondents, a variety of interesting results were identified from this baseline research. First, it was noteworthy that without a formal program in place, 0% of the respondents ranked the effectiveness of church support at the highest level of a five on a 0-5 scale. 79% of respondents ranked church support of foster parents a three or lower. This, however, would seem appropriate at this stage of foster parent support because there was no formal program in place. The fact that some level of support was perceived among most respondents was encouraging.

Within this control group of 14 foster parents, 14% reported having no likelihood of returning when asked about their intent to continue being a foster parent into the next year and 36% reported having decided or considering the end of their service in the next
year. This rate is very close to the 40-60% national drop-out rate for foster parents after one year and signals a need for help with retention among the foster parents at Journey Church.\textsuperscript{229} The goal of the CompaCare system is to significantly lower this drop-out rate with a systemized support program in the local church (see Appendix 6).

This baseline pre-study survey also indicated that respite care topped the list in an open question format that asked for support suggestions from foster parents. To further illustrate this need, the survey showed that 100% of respondents had not received any respite support in the previous 30-60 days. This lack of respite care stood out as an area of support that was needed but not provided.

Additionally, in a question that ranked all known popular support methods from least to greatest, it was babysitting that was said to be the greatest need. Unfortunately, even though babysitting was the stated top need, it also was not being provided in most situations. Of the respondents, 93% reported not having received any babysitting support in the past 30 days. It is also interesting to note that even though respite was voluntarily suggested by respondents as very important, it was babysitting that respondents chose as their top need from a list that included respite as one of the choices. Babysitting is offered during the day while respite care is offered when a family watches a child overnight. One possibility of this response inconsistency could be that respite care is considered a bonus level of support and babysitting is considered core to sustainability.

Despite the ranking of needs, there was a small half-point variance between the top four needs (3.0 – 3.6 average score) of babysitting, family mentoring, respite, and transportation. All four were high on the list of responses. These questions were assessed

\textsuperscript{229} Bill Hancock, “Assemblies of God CompaCare Training.”
with a weighted score in a matrix question on the survey that used a 1-5 scale from least
to greatest for each category. This survey was re-issued to the same control group just
over one year later to determine what effect the CompaCare foster parent support
ministry had on this group.

Training was conducted during the first half of 2018. Volunteers were recruited
and completed phase one of the CompaCare training. These training steps and
motivational events continued for six months for the 50 recruited volunteers and included
trauma-informed care, leadership training, and program-specific training. Not all the
volunteers, however, completed the required training, which left a pool of 33 wraparound
volunteers who were ready to engage in this ministry.

Post-Study Survey Results

In August of 2018, the wraparound ministry officially began as the first of its kind
at Journey Church. To those who had benefited from the newly formed foster parent
wraparound ministry, the satisfaction survey was re-issued after one year of activity.
This post-study survey was resent to 15 foster families specifically receiving support by
the 17 active wraparound volunteers in January 2019. Nine foster parents completed the
post-study survey that was identical in format to the pre-study survey completed just over
a year earlier.

In the same way, these nine foster parents attended Journey Church at the time of
the survey and were licensed by the state for foster care with a child placed in their home.
It was interesting to note that the church did not do a foster parent recruiting push in 2018 which means the data was not infused with a large number of new, optimistic foster parents. This control group had been serving for over a year with only a few new foster parents added to the group during that time.

The post-study survey reported 22% of foster parents ranking the overall Journey Church foster care ministry at a four or five on a 1-5 scale. This response appeared to align with improved retention goals because the number of foster parents that said they would drop out in the upcoming year was 0%. Put another way, all the respondents indicated some chance of returning as foster parents in the upcoming year. However, 33% of foster parents did report they were considering the end of their service in the next year but had not yet decided.

In measuring the types of support offered, 56% of respondents reported receiving babysitting with 71% of foster parents ranking babysitting as the greatest need in this follow-up survey. Furthermore, 22% of respondents received transportation help and 12% ranked it as the greatest need (see Appendix 7).

**Pre and Post-Study Comparison**

Before the wraparound ministry began, 36% of respondents reported a satisfaction ranking of 0-1 on a 5-point scale with 5 being the highest rank. That was a large percentage of foster parents ranking the ministry as ineffective but was appropriate considering the ministry was not yet implemented. This score did improve after the
wraparound ministry was installed because the post-study survey showed the same 0 and 1 ranking only given 11% of the time. Therefore, 25% of the respondents shifted their overall satisfaction of the wraparound ministry from a 0-1 to a higher ranking after one year of the program being installed. The new satisfaction score would seem to indicate that the wraparound ministry had a positive impact on a percentage of the respondents and that the lowest level of satisfaction significantly fewer respondents.

Open-Ended Questions

The pre-study survey showed a repeated use of the word “respite” in both open comment question sets. Respite care was a repeated theme in the first survey but did not get the same level of focus the second time the survey was issued. There was much more of a general sense of support asked for in the post-study survey with the word support being used most often. This reoccurring response could be because the idea of respite was perceived as critical before the ministry began and before respondents knew exactly what the ministry would focus on. However, after implementation was complete, the respondents understood that respite was a central goal of the ministry and therefore did not feel the need to call it out on the second survey.

Greatest Support Needed

Babysitting was listed as the greatest need in both pre and post-study surveys. The score for babysitting ranked higher in the post-study survey than it had ranked earlier. The average score for babysitting in the pre-study survey was 3.60 and increased to 4.14 in the post-study survey. It is unclear as to exactly why this increased in perceived value,
but we do know from the data that more foster parents received babysitting once the program began than they did before. Of the respondents, 56% reported receiving babysitting support in the previous 30 days after the program was installed compared to only 7.1% in the pre-study survey. One possibility is that since more people experienced the value of having babysitting support, they ranked it higher on the list of perceived needs. This area of support appears to be the single greatest area of improvement for the ministry in one year.

While babysitting was identified as the greatest need on both surveys, encouraging notes, and supplies took the number two and three spots for greatest needs identified after the program was installed. The one significant outlier was marriage mentoring because it dropped from the number two overall perceived need in the pre-study survey all the way to last place in the post-study survey. Again, it is not clear why this was the case, but further follow-up could be done to gain a deeper understanding. One possibility for why encouraging notes, meals and supplies may have moved so far up the rankings of perceived needs is because these services were being provided regularly by the ministry. Therefore, once the respondents received these support resources, they valued them much higher than before. If this is true, then the study may be reflecting a relationship that exists between services provided by wraparound care and the perceived value of those services by the foster parents.

**Respite**

In both pre and post-study surveys, none of the respondents reported receiving respite support. This response is an interesting finding because the answer was that 0% of
respondents received respite care at either time the survey was conducted. Therefore, respite care seems to be an area of support that could be improved, and with even a small improvement it would make a significant impact considering it consistently ranked in the top three needs each time the survey was issued. This area of support will need to be evaluated as to how respite could be made more accessible. Respite care was offered but not utilized and it is unclear as to why. This area of support seems to offer the most significant room for improvement.

**Transportation**

Both pre and post-study survey results ranked transportation support in the middle of the pack, but there was engagement in this area of support during the six months the ministry was installed. The pre-study survey reported none of the foster parents receiving transportation help compared to 22% of respondents in the post-study survey. While this improvement in support is marginal, it does represent awareness, training, and delivery of support needs that consistently ranked in the top four greatest needs each time. This area of support shows improved scores over pre-study status because of the wraparound ministry, but more work can be done to improve the scale of transportation help in the future.

**Professional Case Management**

At the time of the pre-study survey, 54% of respondents reported feeling supported by their professional case management company in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Approximately one year later, that support level dropped to 25% in the post-study survey.
Case management companies provide training and various hotlines to the foster parents but do not have a formal support program like the CompaCare system aimed at meeting emotional and practical needs. It is not known why the level of perceived support dropped in this control group over this one year, but it is known that the number of children entering the foster care system has been increasing at a steady rate within the past 24 months. It may be that this increase in demand is making it more difficult for professional case management companies to provide the level of support they did in the past.

*Likelihood to Continue*

The pre-study survey reported 14% of foster parents saying there was zero chance they would continue being a foster parent in the upcoming year. After program implementation, however, that percentage dropped to zero among survey respondents. Stated another way, none of the foster parents said they would be dropping out in the upcoming year after the program was installed. This result would seem to be a measured victory for the efforts of wraparound care ministry at Journey Church because all of the active foster parents that responded to the survey reported that there was some level of likelihood they would continue in that capacity into the next year.

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Survey Contribution to the Ministry

Overall, the results of the pre and post-study survey were informative in many ways. The ministry leadership was able to see that the impact of wraparound care had a positive impact on retention levels and ministry satisfaction levels after only a relatively short time of providing support. This short-term impact offers hope that with more time, training, and evaluation the ministry has room to improve its satisfaction levels even more significantly. They also were able to see the areas of strength such as babysitting, encouraging notes, meals, and providing supplies. Transportation and respite care support were seen as areas that needed improvement.

This survey could also be used as a catalyst in the future to compare the effectiveness of professionally managed volunteers in the church setting to the results from a professional agency context. It may be possible that the church can provide similar services as professional agencies at a fraction of the cost to the taxpayer and gain favor with local and state authorities as to how the mission of the church benefits the whole community.
Chapter 5

Conclusion

Throughout history, there have always been children who have tragically found themselves without parents to care for them. Each culture has addressed this need in a variety of ways. Today, we wrestle specifically with how to serve the approximately 500,000 children in the United States who are in this situation.231 Foster Children are a high-risk population who are often victims of human trafficking if permanent homes are not found.232 Therefore, since foster children are a vulnerable segment of the population, and since scripture clearly admonishes Christ followers to serve and love the marginalized to demonstrate God’s love to a hurting world, helping these children is at the heart of the Gospel.

This study set out to understand more about the practical theology of foster care ministry and to evaluate the satisfaction of the Journey Church wraparound ministry in Kenosha, Wisconsin, in particularly. Three goals were established for this study, and the following are conclusions drawn from each goal.

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Goal 1 - Biblical Mandate

Vulnerable children need to be cared for by the church. Children in foster care are a population who are marginalized and in need of being saved. They need a voice, and Jesus declared that he had come for that very mission when he began his ministry in Luke 4:17-21. When the church aligns itself with the mission of Christ and meets the needs of these poor children, the prophetic words of Jesus become a reality. Children are saved because Jesus came to earth, died, and began the church through his Holy Spirit. There is an excellent purpose in foster care ministry because it was the mission of Christ to redeem creation, and that includes “The removal of the word orphan from the human vocabulary.”

Rescuing people that are hurt and broken is in alignment with the character of God, and we see this when the church was instructed by the prophet Isaiah and the Apostle Paul with powerful language. James was also vocal about the connection between compassion and the gospel, because helping others in need is critical to the mission of Christ. When the church loves vulnerable children, the world sees the power God has to change the lives of people forever through His beautiful love.

Therefore, there is a right way and a wrong way for the church to go in the eyes of God. This issue is not gray in the book of Isaiah but rather clear in the directive. The right way leads to blessing and is presented in Isaiah chapter 1:16-17, when Israel is called to repent and display God’s glory by caring for the oppressed. The wrong way leads to

233 Cruver, “Adoption Is Bigger than You Think,” 73.
234 Oswalt, The NIV Application Commentary: Isaiah, 78.
separation from God because the church is seeking favor with offerings and rituals instead of helping the most vulnerable in society.

God tells his people through Isaiah clearly and boldly that neglecting the poor and vulnerable was not acceptable. The neglect by Israel had proven they no longer knew the Lord (Isaiah 1:3). Isaiah strongly stated that the Israelites had been reduced to a level even lower than animal status because even the ox knows its master. This wrong way of behaving as God’s people was promised to end in disaster if it was not corrected.235

God cared so much for the poor and the vulnerable that when he had an opportunity to direct the way the church displayed justice, he chose widows and orphans as the focus of his compassion. This was because they were the most vulnerable in society. Isaiah spoke in a way that offered hope for a better tomorrow when the people of God met this need. Our mandate today is no less compelling.

Luke highlights the power of serving others in his teachings as he spends considerable time speaking about the poor. He describes how the hearts of people are more open to the gospel after they are shown compassion and love. Serving those who are different from us demonstrates the love Jesus exemplified. This is the way God expects the church to function today.

When the church serves those in need like it did in Acts 6, it puts the gospel into action, thus connecting those actions to a commanded blessing from God. The promise at Pentecost was for every believer, every member of the family, and every class of citizen. It was an event that brought equality to all people to share the Gospel. The Acts 6 storyline of the Spirit follows those who were doing what Christ had asked the church to

do in serving the poor. Therefore, the church today has the same potential to affect change as the early church did because the same Holy Spirit empowers it with the same calling.

The writings of Luke are considered to be at the heart of the New Testament, because it was the point at which the Holy Spirit formed the church. In his writings, Luke focused on the mission of Christ to set the captives free. Therefore, if Luke’s writings were at the heart of the New Testament, and he indeed focused on the marginalized, then one could conclude that serving the vulnerable children in our society is at the heart of the gospel.

Paul taught that God’s mechanism for a restored relationship with him was spiritual adoption through Jesus Christ. In the same way that we are accepted and adopted into the Kingdom of God through Christ, a child can be accepted and made part of a new earthly family through the adoption process. It is because the church has been adopted into the Kingdom of God that they may be compelled to extend the gospel in the same way to a child through foster care or adoption. Both are done in love and come with the promise of an inheritance. The spirit of adoption is not only the way each person arrives in heaven, but it is also the Christian mission in life to love those in need. Even if there is a cost to helping the fatherless and marginalized, the church can serve freely, knowing that they already have all the riches in heaven they could ever want waiting for

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236 Swinton and Brock, A Graceful Embrace: Theological Reflections on Adopting Children, 46.
237 Ibid.
them in the future. Consequently, as the church becomes more aware of the spirit of adoption, they begin to understand the gospel more richly.

Additionally, the book of James brings clarity about the value of the poor. Helping the poor is an expression of a life lived for Christ and is what makes a Christian community like the Church authentic in its claims. When the mandate in James 1:27 is lived out before the world because of faith in Christ, a powerful message of love is sent that brings glory to God. It is a message of love, and love is the thesis of God’s Word.

Goal 2 - Historical and Church Approach

The Hebrew culture of the Old Testament would look to extended family to care for a child who did not have parents in their life. Families mainly viewed the function of a child at that time as survival. Gender determined economic value and children were abandoned to control the impact of the family inheritance. This was a cultural norm in Greek culture as well and continued into the first century. Finally, after Pentecost in the time of antiquity, the church became vocal about equality of human life and stood up to care for the children who were abandoned. This stance eventually impacted culture and made the abandonment of children illegal for the first time. It is reasonable to conclude that Pentecost resulted in the rescue of vulnerable infants for generations to come. In this

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239 Ibid., loc 710.
240 Ibid., loc 224.
244 Ibid.
way, the church changed the culture by working together on a cause they knew broke the heart of God.

The New Testament church has impacted the way the world helps poor children. It has done this by adopting abandoned infants, establishing orphanages, conceiving innovative outplacement solutions like the orphan train at the turn of the 20th century, and championing global adoption campaigns. These efforts and countless others have revolutionized the world’s approach to addressing the orphan crisis throughout history.

Today, however, only 12% of protestant churches report having talked about foster care or adoption over the past twelve months. It is clear that on this issue the church has been increasingly inactive despite the strong missional connection to the heart of the gospel. When the other 88% of churches get involved, the potential to reverse many devastating trends will be enormous. For example, every foster child that is reunified or adopted is one where human trafficking, homelessness, incarceration, substance abuse, and teen pregnancy are prevented. The New Testament church has a history of leading the way in helping vulnerable children and is positioned to rise together once again. The church is the solution to the foster care crisis in America, and the CompaCare model of wraparound care provides a strategy for advocacy, service projects, recruitment, and volunteer management so that everyone can do something.
Goal 3 - Evaluation of Wraparound Ministry

The local church and foster care agencies in America both have something in common: they both care about helping vulnerable children. Agencies have the systems and churches have the people. Therefore, together, they have the potential to meet the growing needs of foster families in America. The main reason the local church is positioned to be the answer to the capacity and stability problem in foster care is that helping vulnerable children is in alignment with its mission and the character of God.

A ministry system called CompaCare has been developed that aims to empower the local church to take action against the lack of capacity and stability among foster parents nationwide. Journey Church used this system with positive results after twelve months of implementation and experienced a positive shift in overall satisfaction of the foster care ministry by 25%. There was also a 14% reduction in the number of foster parents who were determined to drop out in the following year. It is interesting to note that while retention goals were improved, capacity was not increased during the wraparound ministry implementation period. This lack of focus on foster parent capacity building led to natural attrition and a smaller pool of foster parents from which to support. The CompaCare system suggests that both capacity and retention be addressed together for the highest level of effectiveness.

The pre-study and post-study surveys were useful in the evaluation of wraparound support methodology and provided ministry leadership with various ideas on how to improve. Overall, it was clear that babysitting was the greatest need followed by encouraging notes and age appropriate supplies. It was also revealed that respite and
transportation support were the areas needing the most improvement and would require more focused attention if they were to make a more significant impact in the future.

A key area of improvement for this project would be to add a demographic question to the survey to help evaluate possible patterns. This could bring increased clarity to the answers provided. Another improvement would be to use a 10-point scale instead of a five-point scale to help better gauge response impact and the interpretation of data.

The post ministry survey included only nine respondents, and therefore the results could be considered statistically insignificant. Put into perspective, however, this is a relatively large number of foster parents to evaluate at any single church over a twelve-month timeframe. The positive change in perceived support that these families experienced indicates that efforts to further enhance wraparound care are important.

There are several key implications from this study. The first is that the wraparound program was found to have a positive impact on the stability of foster parents that attend a church with this ministry. Other churches may be able to expect similar results when applying the same system in their congregation. For example, a smaller congregation than Journey Church could expect increased retention levels of foster parents but may only have two foster families active in their church. The results, in this case, maybe similar overall, but the ratios will likely adjust to fit the size of each church. Another implication is that babysitting was found to be the greatest need overall. This outcome will generate much analysis of how babysitters are trained, organized, and reviewed. If babysitting is the strength of the ministry, then it will be promoted more and receive greater attention.
Provided that this wraparound ministry increases capacity and retention rates of foster parents, it has an opportunity to be one of the ways everyone in Journey Church can do something to help orphaned children. The project could also have state and national implications, because foster care agencies report numbers back to the state. This possibility means that when churches in a city like Kenosha work together using the CompaCare system, the likelihood of meeting foster care needs by the body of Christ go up dramatically. This outcome would likely draw attention from other counties in the state as well as from statewide administration.

**Recommendations**

This researcher would recommend a longitudinal study on the satisfaction of foster parent wraparound care over a ten-year time period that would evaluate retention, satisfaction, and recruitment levels. This time frame would be expected to more accurately measure the long-term effects of the program. Additionally, various methods of support could be evaluated over that time with a greater variety of respondents. It would be recommended that this longitudinal study be conducted in a variety of states, cities, and counties across the country to provide a balanced pool of results.

Further development of this dissertation could be done by creating a book and presentation that summarize the narrative of this project for an American church leadership audience. Another way this project could be applied in the future would be to communicate the positive impact of the CompaCare program at Journey Church to other
churches in the Assemblies of God fellowship. The fact that the CompaCare system had successful results at a large multisite church offers hope to smaller churches that they could also expect similar results by adjusting the system to fit their particular context.

**Personal Reflection**

This project has impacted me both professionally and personally. As a pastor, this project has provided me with both a theological and practical framework from which to address various types of needs in our community in the future. The application of this study was targeted to foster care ministry, but the heart of God for the poor and vulnerable applies in many different settings. The theological study of this project opened my eyes to how strongly God expects the church to serve those in need. My perspective coming into the project was that serving was important for the church, but now I see it as mission critical to the identity of Christ followers. The world should know that the church is committed to helping those in need. It should be our brand. It should be our tagline.

Professionally, the process of connecting with local, state, and national leaders about the needs of foster care ministry energized me when I became aware of the universal need for foster parent support. It was stated as a gap in the system by everyone I spoke to at every level. Therefore, the chance to meet that need with the CompaCare system was exhilarating and fueled this project from start to finish.

Personally, this project changed the trajectory of my life. In the time it took to complete this study I fostered and adopted three children. Currently, I have six children
and can testify that opening our home to the community through foster care has taught everyone in our family more about the gospel than we have ever known before. My older children serve God and their community every day by helping to love our adopted children. As parents, we see the reward in the sacrifices made for our now adopted children in the way they have grown and developed over the years.

I have also been reinvigorated by the future power potential of the church. This study has shown me how the New Testament church has led the way in serving those in need for generations. It was amazing to comprehend that the words of the Bible have power because when children were set out to die in the first century, they were rescued by Christ-following adults. It was also fascinating to learn how the Catholic church was so committed to making a safe place for the orphans that lived in America during its early years as a nation. These examples inspired me about what the church in America can do in the future when it works together on an issue so close to God’s heart. Together, as Christ’s love compels us, we can reach out in compassionate care through actions motivated by the gospel, showing a skeptical world who God is. We love because he first loved us.
Appendices

Appendix 1

Copy of Current State of Journey Church Foster Care/Adoption Support

The purpose of this survey

The goal of the Wrap-Around Foster Care Ministry is to make it easy for everyone in the church to help the foster children and orphans in our community as described in James 1:27.

If you attend Journey Church and are a foster parent, the wrap-around system of support sends the message that you will never foster a child alone!

The purpose of this survey is to measure the effectiveness of the wrap-around program and COMPARE how you feel today versus how you felt before the program began. Do you feel more supported? Less supported? or the same? With this data, we can evaluate the effectiveness of the support that will be offered in the upcoming year.

This information will also help the National Assemblies of God movement to promote foster care ministries in churches all over the country. They are very interested in your answers as well because we are one of the first Assemblies of God churches to apply this system to our church vision.

Thank You!
Pastor Bob Griffith, Pastor Dan Remus, and Tammie Capito (Director)

* 1. Are you currently a foster parent?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

2. Based on providing you with volunteer support services, how would you rate the current effectiveness of our Foster Care and Adoption Ministry?

   0 = poor  
   5 = excellent

   ○ 0  ○ 3
   ○ 1  ○ 4
   ○ 2  ○ 5

3. As a foster parent, what do you need to feel supported by your friends and local church family?
4. What are your CORE needs as a foster parent?

5. Have you had access to babysitting from a church volunteer in the last 30 days?
   - Yes
   - No

6. If yes: How would you rate the quality of babysitting on a scale of 0-5 (poor-excellent)?
   - 0
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5

7. Have you received respite (overnight childcare) support from a church volunteer in the last 30-60 days?
   - Yes
   - No

8. If Yes, how would you rate the quality of respite (overnight childcare) on a scale of 0-5 (poor-excellent)?
   - 0
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5

9. Have you received transportation support from a church volunteer in the last 30 days?
   - Yes
   - No

10. If yes, how would you rate the quality of transportation on a scale of 0-5 (poor-excellent)?
    - 0
    - 1
    - 2
    - 3
    - 4
    - 5
11. Have you had access to babysitters, respite families, and transportation from church volunteers over the past 60 days...BUT... did not want or need it?

- Yes
- No

12. How supported do you feel from the case management agency you work with on a scale of 0-5 (poor-excellent)?

- 0 3
- 1 4
- 2 5

13. How likely are you to continue being a foster parent in the upcoming year on a scale of 0-5 (poor-excellent)?

- 0 3
- 1 4
- 2 5

14. Please rank the following support services based on your greatest need.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Least</th>
<th>Helpful But Not A Huge Need</th>
<th>Helpful When Available</th>
<th>Very Helpful</th>
<th>Greatest Need</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Babysitting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respite (Watching the kids overnight for a few days)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meals and Supplies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging Notes and Calls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage and Family Mentoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2

Journey Church Survey 2017

Q17 We care about the ethnic diversity of Journey Church. Please select the ethnicity that best describes you.

Answered: 341  Skipped: 0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER CHOICES</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>7.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>75.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>12.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3

Journey Church Survey 2017

Q18 We also care about generational diversity. Please select the group in which you belong.

Answered: 341  Skipped: 0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER CHOICES</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14 - 17</td>
<td>1.76%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 - 24</td>
<td>4.69%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 29</td>
<td>5.57%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39</td>
<td>18.77%</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49</td>
<td>23.79%</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 59</td>
<td>29.22%</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 - 69</td>
<td>15.54%</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 - 79</td>
<td>4.89%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80+</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18 / 21
Appendix 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFCARS Removal Reason</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>% of Total Removal Reasons</th>
<th>% of Children who have Removal Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>3,167</td>
<td>40.1%</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child behavior problem</td>
<td>1,017</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caretaker drug abuse</td>
<td>951</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incarcerated caretaker</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caretaker inability to cope</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate housing</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caretaker alcohol abuse</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abandonment</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child disability</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child drug abuse</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relinquishment</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caretaker death</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child alcohol abuse</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Removal Reasons</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,889</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>-</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 5

1. LRB 4466 - This proposal would make changes to the requirement that the judge or jury to establish that there is a substantial likelihood that the parent will continue to fail to meet the conditions established for the child to return safely to their home for the next 9-months, based on the period a child has been in placed in out-of-home care.

2. LRB 4468 - The proposal would create a process for continuity for licensed foster parents and children placed or pending placements when the county or child protection agency no longer will be issuing foster care licenses. It would also allow that licenses to be general in specific circumstances, so the licensed home would not have to be relicensed to accept another placement of a child.
3. LRB 4576 - This proposal would provide funding to the 2-1-1 Wisconsin human services “warm line,” a statewide call-in service where individuals can speak with a trained specialist and be directed to appropriate needed services within their communities (examples: food pantries, homeless shelters, free diaper services).

4. LRB 4582 - The first part of this proposal would allow for schools to receive formal notice of permanency plan reviews or hearings to provide written testimony to the administrative review panel or the court. The second part would make minor changes to the requirement regarding school districts being notified when a foster home is licensed and when a child is placed in out-of-home care. The last portion would speed up the process in which a school must transfer the records of children in out-of-home care from five working days to one working day.

5. LRB 4562 - This proposal would grant tuition remission for former foster youth who attend an in-state university or technical college. The remission would be granted until a student is awarded a diploma or degree for the program, or turns 25, whichever occurs first.

6. LRB 4564 – This proposal would require that any notice of intent appeal a TPR decision include the signature of the attorney and the respondent parent.

7. LRB 4645 - The goal of this proposal is to provide legal representation to biological parents, so they can follow the Court's orders at the initial hearings and not cause delays if the case proceeds to termination of parental rights.

8. LRB 4764 - This proposal would define ordinary dental care in the statute, giving both the legal custodian (foster parent) and the provider the clarity they need to adequately provide these critical services for children placed in out-of-home care.

9. LRB 4766 - This proposal would give mental health care providers the flexibility to discuss with foster parents and out-of-home care providers any relevant mental health information that they believe is necessary to properly care for the child.

10. LRB 4767 - This proposal would create a committee to examine current caseloads for Wisconsin social workers and make recommendations for implementing lower statewide standards.

11. LRB 4850 - This proposal would stabilize and expand the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program.

12. LRB 4925 - This proposal would create a matching grant program that counties, non-profits, and tribes could apply for and use to expand existing prevention programs or create new programs designed to keep families out of Child Protective Services (CPS) and children in their homes.
13. LRB 4929 - This proposal would create a grant program that counties, non-profits, and tribes can apply for to fund initiatives that support foster parents as they strive to provide normalcy for Wisconsin's foster population.

Appendix 6 – Pre-Study Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current State of Journey Church Foster Care/Adoption Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q1 Are you currently a foster parent?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answered: 14     Skipped: 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 3 and 4 were editorial
Q5 Have you had access to babysitting from a church volunteer in the last 30 days?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q6 If yes: How would you rate the quality of babysitting on a scale of 0-5 (poor-excellent)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q7 Have you received respite (overnight childcare) support from a church volunteer in the last 30-60 days?

**ANSWER CHOICES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q8 If Yes, how would you rate the quality of respite (overnight childcare) on a scale of 0-5 (poor-excellent)?

**ANSWER CHOICES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
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<td>0.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Current State of Journey Church Foster Care/Adoption Support

Q9 Have you received transportation support from a church volunteer in the last 30 days?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER CHOICES</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current State of Journey Church Foster Care/Adoption Support

Q10 If yes, how would you rate the quality of transportation on a scale of 0-5 (poor-excellent)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER CHOICES</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Current State of Journey Church Foster Care/Adoption Support

Q11 Have you had access to babysitters, respite families, and transportation from church volunteers over the past 60 days...BUT... did not want or need it?

Answered: 13  Skipped: 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER CHOICES</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>23.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>76.92%</td>
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Current State of Journey Church Foster Care/Adoption Support

Q12 How supported do you feel from the case management agency you work with on a scale of 0-5 (poor-excellent)?

Answered: 13  Skipped: 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER CHOICES</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
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<td>23.08%</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>38.46%</td>
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Q13 How likely are you to continue being a foster parent in the upcoming year on a scale of 0-5 (poor - excellent)?

Answered: 14  Skipped: 0

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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>57.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEAST</th>
<th>HELPFUL BUT NOT A HUGE NEED</th>
<th>HELPFUL WHEN AVAILABLE</th>
<th>VERY HELPFUL</th>
<th>GREATEST NEED</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>WEIGHTED AVERAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Babysitting</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respite (Watching the kids overnight for a few days)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>18.18%</td>
<td>45.45%</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meals and Supplies</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging Notes and Calls</td>
<td>57.14%</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marriage and Family Mentoring</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>9</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Follow Up Journey Church Foster Care/Adoption Support

Q1 Are you currently a foster parent?

Answered: 9  Skipped: 0

Yes 100.00% 9
No 0.00% 0

Q2 Based on providing you with volunteer support services, how would you rate the current effectiveness of our Foster Care and Adoption Ministry? 0 = poor 5 = excellent

Answered: 9  Skipped: 0

0 0.00% 0
1 11.11% 1
2 33.33% 3
3 33.33% 3
4 11.11% 1
5 11.11% 1
TOTAL 9

Question 3 And 4 were editorial
Q5 Have you had access to babysitting from a church volunteer in the last 30 days?

Answered: 9  Skipped: 0

<table>
<thead>
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<th>ANSWER CHOICES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>55.56%</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>44.44%</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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Q6 If yes: How would you rate the quality of babysitting on a scale of 0-5 (poor-excellent)?

Answered: 6  Skipped: 3

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>RESPONSES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>15.67%</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>83.33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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</table>
Q7 Have you received respite (overnight childcare) support from a church volunteer in the last 30-60 days?

Answered: 9  Skipped: 0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER CHOICES</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q8 If Yes, how would you rate the quality of respite (overnight childcare) on a scale of 0-5 (poor-excellent)?

Answered: 3  Skipped: 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER CHOICES</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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</table>
**Q9** Have you received transportation support from a church volunteer in the last 30 days?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER CHOICES</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>77.78%</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Q10** If yes, how would you rate the quality of transportation on a scale of 0-5 (poor-excellent)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER CHOICES</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>75.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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</table>
Q11 Have you had access to babysitters, respite families, and transportation from church volunteers over the past 60 days...BUT... did not want or need it?

**Answered choices**

- **Yes**
  - Responses: 44.44% (4)
- **No**
  - Responses: 55.56% (5)
- **Total**: 9

---

Q12 How supported do you feel from the case management agency you work with on a scale of 0-5 (poor-excellent)?

**Answered choices**

- **0**
  - Responses: 0.00% (0)
- **1**
  - Responses: 12.50% (1)
- **2**
  - Responses: 25.00% (2)
- **3**
  - Responses: 37.50% (3)
- **4**
  - Responses: 12.50% (1)
- **5**
  - Responses: 12.50% (1)
- **Total**: 8
Q13 How likely are you to continue being a foster parent in the upcoming year on a scale of 0-5 (poor - excellent)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER CHOICES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>11.11%</td>
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<td>11.11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>55.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>LEAST</th>
<th>HELPFUL BUT NOT A HUGE NEED</th>
<th>HELPFUL WHEN AVAILABLE</th>
<th>VERY HELPFUL</th>
<th>GREATEST NEED</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>WEIGHTED AVERAGE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Babysitting</td>
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<td>25.00%</td>
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<td>25.00%</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
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<td>2.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meals and Supplies</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
<td>37.50%</td>
<td>37.50%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encouraging Notes and Calls</td>
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<td>37.50%</td>
<td>37.50%</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>3.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marriage and Family Mentoring</td>
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<td>25.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.75</td>
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Bibliography


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