

## Knox Presbyterian Church's Adoption Fund Policy

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### Mission

*A father of the fatherless and a judge and protector of the widows is God in His holy habitation. God places the solitary in families and gives the desolate a home in which to dwell (Psalm 68:5-6a).*

*Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow (Isaiah 1:17).*

Orphans and Adoption at Knox (OAK) is a ministry team focused on prayerfully pursuing God's mandate to love and pursue justice for vulnerable children worldwide. Part of OAK's mission is to glorify God by encouraging and helping Knox couples to care for orphans through adoption. The Knox Adoption Fund exists to provide financial support to adoptive families for whom costs might otherwise be prohibitive.

#### Why An Adoption Fund?

As interest in adoption has increased among Knox members, so have questions about adoption costs, which sometimes seem prohibitive to couples who would otherwise consider this way of adding children to their families. (See costs of adoption, attached.) Some at Knox have asked about the possibility of creating a fund to offset the costs of adoption. Others have asked about the possibility of contributing to such a fund. We desire that couples called to adopt children would not turn aside because of a substantial short term financial burden. We also desire that couples who are not called to adopt have multiple ways within the life of the church, including financial giving, to participate in the blessing that comes through caring for vulnerable children.

The adoption of children often includes significant strain and stress. An adoption fund brings increased opportunity for conversation between Knox deacons, OAK members, and potential adoptive families. Those who are considering adoption will find themselves supported by the congregation in ways that will help them step out boldly in faith for the sake of orphans. Those who help administer the fund will share in the blessing of seeing orphans brought into safe, loving, godly families in the name of our Lord. Thus an adoption fund can help strengthen Knox both in inward community and outward mission.

The Knox Adoption Fund Policy borrows from the Lydia Fund, a financial aid ministry started through Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis. ([www.lydiafund.org](http://www.lydiafund.org))

## **Eligibility**

Who may apply? Married Knox members seeking to adopt may apply once per adoption

## **Application Process**

Those couples who have submitted an application to adopt with a licensed agency may apply for assistance from the Knox Adoption Fund.

Couples shall submit copies of the following:

- A copy of the application with a licensed adoption agency
- Most recent federal income tax return
- A notarized statement from the adoption agency which details the projected cost of the adoption.
- Information about employer adoption benefits if any.
- A signed statement that the applicants have read and understood this policy.

## **Fund Administration**

The Deacons will administer the Knox Adoption Fund.

The applications are confidential and shall be kept in a secured location in the Knox office.

After reviewing the application, the deacons will arrange for a meeting between the couple and a Knox representative.

The representative will be a Knox Deacon, Elder, member of the OAKs ministry team or former beneficiary of the Knox Adoption Fund.

The purpose of the meeting will be to get to know the couple, to introduce them to other adoptive families at Knox for support and to pray for the couple and the adoption.

The purpose of the meeting is not to formally determine the eligibility of the couple to adopt.

The deadline for applying is Sept 1. This will allow the deacons enough time to shepherd the applicants through the process. Applications received after Sept 1 will be considered for the following calendar year.

At the end of the calendar year, the Deacons will gather all the applications and compute the gift amounts based on this policy.

The funds will be disbursed on behalf of the applicants as soon as possible in the following calendar year. Ordinarily, funds will be paid directly for specific expenses (for example to the adoption agency)

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rather than paid to the applicants. In the event a planned adoption is cancelled, any unspent funds will be returned to the designated fund by the recipient.

## **Fund Raising**

Fund raising methods will be made under the direction of the Knox Session.

Funds given to the Knox Adoption Fund may not be earmarked for any particular family.

## **Fund Disbursement**

Here, we attempt to disburse the fund to each family according to their need. The following factors are considered when computing the amount of the funds distributed.

1. Adjusted gross income
2. Projected adoption cost (including travel expenses if applicable)
3. Employer benefits, if any.
4. Amount of the current federal adoption tax credit.

The net cost of the adoption is the projected cost minus the employer benefit (if any) minus the current federal adoption tax credit. The gift shall not exceed the net cost of the adoption nor shall it exceed \$5000 unless recommended by the Deacons and approved by the Session.

The cost to income ratio is the net cost of the adoption divided by adjusted gross income. The denominator is the sum of the cost to income ratios of all the families that apply by the deadline.

The weighting factor is the cost to income ratio divided by the denominator.

The amount of the gift is the weighting factor X the year-end balance of the adoption fund.

If the calculated amount of the gift is greater than \$5000, the amount in excess of \$5000 will be rolled over into the next year.

These criteria for the disbursement of the adoption fund provide for an objective and consistent method of disbursement. However, unforeseen circumstances may lead the deacons to the conviction that applicants should receive more or less than the formula indicates. If this happens, the deacons have the discretion to alter the policy for individual cases.

A member of the OAK committee will oversee and approve in writing the final disbursement calculations. In the event that an OAK committee member is applying for assistance from the Knox Adoption Fund, they cannot perform this service in the calendar year that they apply. Likewise, Deacons applying for assistance from the Knox Adoption Fund may not participate in the review of applications or the disbursement calculations.

**Example 1.**

Couple #1: Net cost of adoption is \$10,000. Gross income is \$60,000  
Cost to income ratio:  $\$10,000 \text{ divided by } \$60,000 = 0.167$

Couple #2: Net cost of adoption is \$12,000. Gross income is \$52,000  
Cost to income ratio:  $\$12,000 \text{ divided by } \$52,000 = 0.231$

Couple #3: Net cost of adoption is \$15,000. Gross income is \$85,000  
Cost to income ratio:  $\$15,000 \text{ divided by } \$85,000 = 0.176$

Sum of cost to income ratio of all couples applying (denominator): 0.574

Couple #1 weighting factor:  $0.167 \text{ divided by } 0.574 = 0.291$

Couple #2 weighting factor:  $0.231 \text{ divided by } 0.574 = 0.402$

Couple #3 weighting factor:  $0.176 \text{ divided by } 0.574 = 0.307$

The balance in adoption fund is \$12,000.

Couple #1:  $\$12,000 \times 0.291 = \$3492$

Couple #2:  $\$12,000 \times 0.402 = \$4824$

Couple #3:  $\$12,000 \times 0.307 = \$3684$

**Example 2**

Couple #1: Net cost of adoption is \$30,000. Gross income is \$60,000  
Cost to income ratio:  $\$30,000 \text{ divided by } \$60,000 = 0.5$

Couple #2: Net cost of adoption is \$12,000. Gross income is \$52,000  
Cost to income ratio:  $\$12,000 \text{ divided by } \$52,000 = 0.231$

Couple #3: Net cost of adoption is \$15,000. Gross income is \$85,000  
Cost to income ratio:  $\$15,000 \text{ divided by } \$85,000 = 0.176$

Sum of cost to income ratio of all couples applying (denominator): 0.907

Couple #1 weighting factor:  $0.5 \text{ divided by } 0.907 = 0.551$

Couple #2 weighting factor:  $0.231 \text{ divided by } 0.907 = 0.255$

Couple #3 weighting factor:  $0.176 \text{ divided by } 0.907 = 0.194$

The balance in adoption fund is \$14,000.

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Couple #1:  $\$14,000 \times 0.551 = \$7714$  but this is capped to \$5,000

Couple #2:  $\$14,000 \times 0.255 = \$3570$

Couple #3:  $\$14,000 \times 0.194 = \$2716$

Since the first gift is capped at \$5,000, the remaining funds (\$2714) will be rolled over to the next calendar year.

## **Policy Revisions**

This policy may be changed upon a majority vote by the Deacons and a subsequent majority vote by the Elders.

## **FAQ**

Why isn't family size a factor when considering the amount of funds disbursed to a particular family?

Historically, family size has not been a factor when determining the compensation for Knox staff. The Knox Adoption Fund has followed this precedent. Each family decides upon a target family size in light of their sense of God's call on their lives. The purpose of the Knox Adoption Fund is to defray the costs of adoption, but the fund is not intended to help families have more children than they otherwise would consider having.

Why are unmarried Knox members ineligible to apply?

The Knox church family is committed to nurturing and supporting unmarried Knox members in as many ways as possible. While we do not think it is generally wise to encourage unmarried members to make a commitment to single parenting, a single member of Knox who feels strongly called to adopt a child is encouraged to talk to elders and/or deacons for prayer and help with discernment.

Why are only Knox members eligible to apply?

Although there are many worthy couples outside the Knox family that could potentially benefit from the Knox Adoption Fund, we seek primarily to help those who seek to adopt within the context of our covenant community. Membership vows are important to establishing a Christian community where commitment to the fellowship of believers in Christ is taken seriously. We encourage non-members to first discern whether they can commit themselves to Knox by becoming members before asking Knox to make a financial commitment to their adoption process.

## Appendix: Range of Adoption Costs

Foster Care Adoptions	\$0 - \$2,500
Licensed Private Agency Adoptions	\$5,000 - \$40,000+
Independent Adoptions	\$8,000 - \$40,000+
Facilitated/Unlicensed Adoptions	\$5,000 - \$40,000+
Intercountry Adoptions	\$7,000 - \$30,000

<http://costs.adoption.com/articles/the-costs-of-adopting-a-factsheet-for-families.html>, accessed 5/19/08)

“Basic service charges included in U.S. adoption costs are: home study and parent education, post-placement supervision, attorney fees and court costs. Additional charges may be incurred depending on the adoption type pursued. With domestic adoptions -- private agency and independent -- fees may include: birth parent expenses, including legal representation and counseling, and birth expenses. In international adoption, additional costs include dossier and immigration processing and may also include for foster care, escorting, and medical care and treatment charges. Additionally, there are transportation and accommodation costs involved in travel to the country where the child resides. Other disparities in cost may be due to the range of services provided, the state in which the adoption is arranged, the amount of federal and state tax credits and subsidies, and the availability of employer adoption benefits and agency sliding-fee scales based on family income. A more detailed analysis of adoption fees can be found on the [National Adoption Information Clearinghouse](http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/FactOverview/costs.html) website.”

<http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/FactOverview/costs.html>, accessed 5/19/08)