Dear Friend,

I love to talk about adoption.

It’s a major emphasis here at The Children’s Home of Lubbock. So far this year, we’ve placed ten children in adoptive families!

Adoption is one of my favorite Bible studies too.

Joseph, engaged to Mary, was an adoptive father. He was called, not only to accept Mary as his wife, but to love Mary’s baby and raise him as his own.

That’s what “adoption” is, isn’t it? Accepting someone else’s child and loving that child as one’s own.

Today I want to share one of our beautiful adoption stories with you. It’s a wonderful picture of the way God loves us — and how He has adopted us as His children, with all our flaws and problems.

Listen to Stefanie, one of our adoptive mothers, as she begins her story.

On February 9, 2011, we got a call about a little boy and his sister who needed a home. The little boy was almost one year old, and the little girl was two months old. I asked the case manager to repeat the ages as I counted on my fingers how far apart they were. I had in fact heard her correctly: they were nine and a half months apart in age.
The little boy was behind in development. The baby girl was on oxygen, a pulse ox monitor and an apnea monitor and had a very serious chromosomal disorder. (Later Stefanie and her husband Dusty would discover that she had severe reflux and a heart defect as well.)

You know, that would have been enough right there to make most of us think twice about undertaking the care of these two little ones. Serious health problems, most of which would never be completely resolved, are a really big commitment.

Stefanie and Dusty needed to give the case manager a decision within a couple of hours. Listen to Stefanie’s recounting of their decision making process:

*With my heart pounding with excitement and nervousness, I called Dusty and told him all the information I was given. We talked and prayed as much as we could in the brief time that was given. We had feelings ranging from excitement, happiness, and anxiousness, but also fear that we would make the wrong decision. But the more we prayed the more peace we had. I called our case worker back and said we would love to take them.*

The baby girl was so tiny and only weighed 6 pounds — and a lot of that 6 pounds was hair! Her brother was almost one year old but could not even roll over, much less sit up. Stefanie and Dusty later learned that he had been born at just 27 weeks gestation, weighing only 2 pounds 7 ounces. At birth he had a grade four brain bleed and had been diagnosed with cerebral palsy. But even given his circumstances, he was a happy little boy who smiled, laughed and kicked his legs all the time.

But his sister — she was the opposite of happy and smiling and laughing! She only slept thirty minutes at a time, and sometimes it took close to an hour to feed her.

*We set up camp in the living room and would take shifts sleeping in the recliner. Dusty would take the first part of the night then we would switch so he could get a little rest before having to go to work. Staying up all* (continued on next page)

“*But the more we prayed the more peace we had...*”
night gave Dusty and I plenty of time to pray for her and her brother and for us to have the strength to survive. (Thankfully our parents were ready and able to help.)

Between the two babies, Stefanie and Dusty saw eleven different doctors and had at least twenty therapy appointments a month. Then a new crisis began.

On May 19, 2011, our little girl began to run fever. After a night of fever-reducing meds, we made the all-too-familiar hour and twenty minute drive to the doctor. We were sent to the hospital, just to be safe, but after a day or two, when our baby did not improve and in fact worsened, we were moved to the Pediatric ICU.

The next sequence of events was a fast paced blur. The doctors were forced to put our baby on a ventilator. While they did the procedure, I thought of Matthew 18:19-20 that says “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” We prayed and called our parents to inform them of what was going on, and they began to pray as well.

Nothing can quite prepare you to walk into a room to see your almost six-month-old daughter on a ventilator. As the evening and night went on, the situation got progressively worse. She coded three times. As Dusty and I stood at her bedside, it happened again. The alarms started going off, and the doctor yelled for more help. Our baby girl was no longer breathing and her heart had stopped.

As more people ran in to help, the doctor started doing chest compressions and a nurse was bagging her. My eyes kept going from the nurses and doctors to the monitor. All I saw in their faces was defeat and desperation. Finally after what seemed like forever the doctors and nurses said the best words I have ever heard: “She is back!”

After almost two weeks on the ventilator and multiple attempts to get her off, the day came to try again. I stood and watched as they took the breathing tube out and waited for her to take a breath. I prayed so hard for her to just breathe. Finally she took a breath! Cheers erupted and tears flowed from everyone in the room. I finally got to cuddle and hold and kiss her — and my heart was full.

For the first year Gabriella Elizabeth Stone was in the hospital at least once a month, sometimes for two weeks at a time. She has had a major surgery to fix some serious issues. She has had a feeding tube placed. And the hole in her heart has closed! At age two, “Miss Gabs” is crawling on all fours, sitting up and starting to pull up, smiling all the time. Christian David Stone is now three and a half years old and walking, talking more and more, still smiling and laughing all the time. He has surpassed so many of the expectations of doctors and therapists.

(Continue on next page)
To say that they are the biggest blessings in our life would be the understatement of a lifetime. This little boy and girl became forever our son and daughter. What we knew in our hearts since February 9, 2011 became legal on March 9, 2012. I feel so humbled that God chose these kids for us. I feel very undeserving that I get a front row seat to His love, grace, healing, and unconditional love. God never promised the road would be easy — but He promised to never leave us.

God saw these two babies, abandoned and unloved, and He gave them a family! He provided for them through case managers, doctors and nurses, two loving parents and four stalwart grandparents, a host of praying friends — and people like you. It is the generous sharing of people just like you with Gabriella and Christian through The Children’s Home of Lubbock helped make the Stones’ story possible!

This year as you celebrate the holidays, would you thank God especially for adoption? His provision for children who have been neglected — abused — abandoned — treated as “less than” — is a powerful statement of His abiding love for us all, and His adoption of each one of us as His child.

Your generosity at this time of year helps give our boys and girls a priceless gift — families. Foster families, adoptive families, houseparent families at The Children’s Home — God wants all children to be safe, cared for, and valued, so that they can know how much He loves them and values them. Please share as much as you can to help make it happen.

For the children,

Lynn R. Harms
President

Merry Christmas
from our family to yours!