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CHURCHES RISING FOR ADOPTION & ORPHAN CARE

Across America and Beyond, Christians Re-Earning Reputation as Defenders of the Fatherless

WASHINGTON, DC — A simple idea that began in Africa swept the U.S. in 2009 and 2010. Over the past two years, following an example set by Zambian churches, hundreds of thousands of American Christians have participated in local Orphan Sunday events. This year, Orphan Sunday will again be celebrated across America, and is also now echoing back across the seas to countries as diverse as Ukraine, Guatemala and Kenya.

On Orphan Sunday, churches and families celebrate God’s heart for the fatherless and how Christians can respond through adoption, foster care and global orphan initiatives. Locally-organized events last year ranged from sermons on how adoption reflects the Gospel story to fundraisers, community-wide rallies, concerts and prayer gatherings.

Taken together, the engagement spurred by Orphan Sunday has become a catalyst for what *Christianity Today* this month called the “burgeoning orphan care movement.” According to ECFA’s most recent “State of Giving Report,” three of the top four categories for increased giving over the past two years have been directly related to adoption and/or orphan care.

Although each Orphan Sunday event is organized locally, a coalition of more than 100 national organizations led by the Christian Alliance for Orphans have joined forces to help spur engagement by churches—from Family Life and Focus on the Family to Bethany Christian Services, Buckner International and Show Hope.

The website www.orphansunday.org serves as a hub for the campaign, offering event ideas, downloadable posters, bulletin inserts, videos and other free resources that can be used to hold local events. Families and churches can also participate in “The Orphan’s Table” by ordering a simple orphan meal package and discussion guide. The site also contains a map highlighting events worldwide as they are scheduled.

New for this year is a special focus on growing Orphan Sunday in other countries as well, with local movements beginning to sprout from Eastern Europe to Central America. In addition, individuals and churches from around the world will be able to join together in the “LIVE from Kansas City” webcast for an hour of guided prayer and worship for the fatherless.

Christian Alliance for Orphans President Jedd Medefind expressed, “Orphan Sunday isn’t just a cause. It’s about the blaze Christians create as they see and reflect God’s heart for the fatherless. When we live out what James calls ‘pure religion’ through adoption, foster care and global orphan initiatives, the world sees the Gospel made visible like nothing else.”

There are roughly 420,000 children in the foster system in the U.S. today, with nearly 120,000 waiting to be adopted. Globally, an estimated 18.3 million children have lost both parents. The Orphan Sunday campaign seeks to make Christian families and churches the answer to these needs.

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