

THE SAM AND ELLIE ADOPTION FUND

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21

The Sam and Ellie Adoption Fund was established through Families of Promise, Kentwood Community Church's own Orphan and Adoption Ministry, for the purpose of inspiring the people of KCC to pursue adoption and helping them to proceed with the process financially.

Applicants may apply for:

- \$1000 matching grants
- Applicants may qualify for interest-free loans through Life International, the organization that administrates the Sam and Ellie Fund

Basic requirements to qualify:

- Must be regular attendee/s of KCC for 1 year
- Must have a completed home study from a licensed adoption agency
- Must complete the application process, which will help determine financial need

For more information or to receive an application for the Sam and Ellie Fund, contact Joni or Jodi at (616) 455-1740 ext. 3242. Or, visit Families of Promise on the web at www.familiesofpromise.org for more on this and other ways to make adoption affordable.

The Sam and Ellie Adoption Fund History

In the spring of 2003 we went to an ultrasound, so excited to find out if our third child was a girl or a boy. We were thrilled to learn that we were expecting Ellie. She looked perfect to us and in a few short minutes it felt like our world had turned pink. Those minutes are precious to us, as they are the only memories we have of Ellie that are not clouded with the weight of uncertainty and grief that marked the rest of our journey with her. Quickly, we learned that Ellie's body was slightly swollen and that that meant something was seriously wrong. Initially doctors told us to expect that she would not survive pregnancy. But as the weeks and months went on, and as all of the typical tests returned negative, and as we prayed and prayed and prayed, Ellie continued to grow. Her birthday was a day of painful hope. The verse God gave us for Ellie is "This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it." (Psalm 118:24) We were only given 6 days with Ellie. Because of His presence, we were also given peace to be able to hand her to Him, comfort for all our tears and most amazingly, joy.

Several months later, we were expecting a new baby. We were shocked to learn at our first ultrasound at 16 weeks that Josh had already gone to Heaven.

Because our first two children were born perfectly healthy, and because doctors were not able to find a cause of death for Ellie or Josh, they, and we, hoped we would go on to have another healthy child. This was the desire of our hearts and we felt God's blessing.

Sam's first ultrasound was perfect, as was his second, third and fourth. But, at seven months it was discovered that Sam suffered the same symptoms that Ellie had. Sam was delivered early. Doctors worked tirelessly and friends and family cried out in prayer with us. There was hope for Sam. The hospital staff talked in terms of "when" we would take him home, not "if." We couldn't find rest in medical hope, however, but did find it in the verse God gave us for Sam. "The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me." (Psalm 138:8) After a couple of weeks of praying over him, kissing and holding him the best that we could in NICU, God whispered to our hearts that He was coming for our son. All of Sam's 17 days are precious to us.

God has provided for us in countless ways. He has changed us, grown us, helped us and most importantly, He has held us close. One of the ways He cares for us is through the care of loving family members, friends, church members, even strangers. Many of them have given money to the church in memory of Sam and Ellie. Our children's lives were and are His, as are the gifts that were given in their memory. It is our hope, and we believe it is God's desire, that those gifts will be used to start this fund to help bring orphans into the homes of loving KCCers.

A friend once gave me this verse: "Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage." (Psalm 84:5) Our journey didn't end with the death of our loved babies. As I write, we are waiting to travel to pick up our daughter from the other side of the world. It would take another page to tell you the wonders God has done to arrange for that blessing in our lives—the miraculous heart changes and the amazing ways He has guided and provided for us.

You have a story too. Perhaps you have traveled heartbreaking roads or you're just intrigued about the miracles and wonders God can work through adoption. We would love to hear your story and encourage you as you pilgrimage.

If you are considering adoption and are looking for financial assistance, please call Families of Promise, the KCC adoption ministry, at 455-1740 x3242. Or, if God is not calling you to adoption, but has given you a heart for orphans and families, will you consider making a donation to the Sam and Ellie Fund? We are eagerly awaiting your call!

May God bless you!
Love,
Dan and Joni Johnson