

Philosophy of Ministry: Adoption and Foster Care

Assemblies of God U.S. Missions
Compassionate Missionary Council

The four-fold mission of the Assemblies of God values the demonstration of compassion as an integral part of our fourth Reason for Being. This is lived out in our core values to proclaim Jesus; to invest in the next generation, to plant churches, to resource our constituency, and to pray. In response to James 1:27, U.S. Missions and the Compassionate Missionary Council seek to implement our core values by resourcing our U.S. missionaries in each of the Seven Windows of U.S. Missions as their ministries engage with the local and national community efforts, including local churches, to address needs and provide tangible solutions to the ever-growing population of children and families impacted by foster care.

The demonstration of compassion is best served by restoring the more than 400,000 children and youth in the foster care system to the Biblical model of "families". At the heart of the Christian faith is the "adoption" of believers into the Kingdom of God: being grafted into a family to obtain a new identity in Christ and acceptance into a new family. We believe the restoration of the family should be provided by the local church and based upon the model in Matthew 25, "To the extent you did it unto the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me." The demonstration of compassion is lived out as the body of Christ becomes the solution to the 80% of foster youth becoming homeless or imprisoned within a year of "aging out" of the system, to end the practice of sending these vulnerable teens out with their belongings in a trash bag and instead enable them to transition into healthy interdependent living. Compassion moves the Church to provide resources lacking in the lives of foster children and families as they journey through this system of government care.

In many states, Child Protective Services has reached out to the faith community, to partner with them in meeting the current crisis of foster care. The U.S. Missions Compassionate Missionary Council will provide a three-fold model to Engage, Equip and Empower the local church to answer this call:

- * **We engage** churches by helping them see the orphan crisis in their own backyard and on the other side of the world.
- * **We equip** the church and business community by walking them through our best practices that prepare their leadership and families for the calling of orphan care.
- * **We empower** select churches to lead and seed other local churches to take up the orphan cause and provide valuable resources in their community to children in care.

Orphan care ministry opportunities will include foster & adoption, serving as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), group home outreach and visitation, community supply drives and distributions, seasonal outreach events, local transition success centers and transition life coaching for foster youth, parent/family support groups, and focused prayer partnerships. Opportunities may also exist to serve through other ministries, such as human trafficking awareness or the homeless, focusing on the risks encountered by foster children aging out of the system, or to work with legislators to stay abreast of local, state, and federal changes in law or policy, especially regarding the increasing numbers of unaccompanied minor immigrant children entering the system.

Within the framework of the Seven Windows of U.S. Missions, orphan care ministry response will be based upon the assessment of expertise, proper training, and outreach strategies to ensure a consistent compassionate response respecting the intersection of public, private, faith-based, non-profit, and governmental roles as we collaborate together to address the need and provide solutions in our local communities. To maintain a common approach, language, and long term sustainability, all U.S. Missionary Associates and Missionary Candidates should complete a comprehensive training before launching their individual foster care ministry.

Equipping U.S. missionaries, interested churches, the business community, and individuals with resources, and increasing the awareness of the crisis of foster care in the USA and around the world, will help strengthen the local church's response and help build prevention and restorative strategies. Toward that end, links to approved foster care ministries, educational materials, and training opportunities are posted on the US Missions' Compassionate Missionary Council's website, www.agusmresources.ag.org. Connecting US Missionaries, trained staff, and government child welfare staff will provide the expertise, guidance, support systems, and open doors to launch a successful and sustainable orphan care ministry in the local church.