



Support. Education. Local Events.  
*for Adoptive Families*



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The PARC newsletter is published quarterly. Please direct questions and comments to [parcnewsletter@bethany.org](mailto:parcnewsletter@bethany.org)

Bethany Christian Services is a nonprofit, private social services agency with more than 115 offices located in 36 states. In addition, Bethany offers social services to children and families in 15 countries.



**[www.bethany.org](http://www.bethany.org)**

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## Great Holiday Expectations!

In this issue, we'll take time to review the importance of the holiday traditions we enjoy and that help us connect as a family. However, sometimes outside expectations (*and what can sometimes feel like scrutiny*) are draining the family, and can steal all the fun.

Extended family usually means well but, often, can't understand the pressures adoptive families face. That being said, it's okay to adjust boundaries to keep everyone healthy and happy. For unsupportive or pushy family members, keep encounters and conversations about the kids brief. I remember early on trying to explain everything to everyone. Most of my family couldn't understand what we were going through and I usually wound up sounding defensive.

If you are challenged in your parenting during the festivities, be firm in your decision(s) and inform family that it isn't open for discussion. You don't have to be rude, but you can be clear, especially with pushier family members. Don't feel bad for being the parent your child needs.

For those who only want time with your family, find new ways to meet their need but still keep your family rested and emotionally healthy. Too much travel, gift-giving, or extended family time can be a setup for meltdowns with the kids. Our family liked the freedom to decide when the visits were over so we chose to travel to other homes to keep that freedom.

In the spirit of the holiday, give the gift of grace to extended family and love them, even if they don't always understand. But give the greatest gift of grace to yourself and your adoptive family. You've earned it.

## Family Feedback

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*Great help with all that has been done! Staff is empathetic, kind, and helpful!*

*I am so grateful to all of the women who work at PARC. They help me so much!*

### Working with your adoptive family:

- Support of a PARC specialist in your home
- 24-hour crisis availability
- Short-term emergency intervention
- Family-centered plan
- List of supportive regional resources

### Connecting you with community services:

- Liaison for adoptive families to other service providers
- One-on-one assistance accessing services
- Comprehensive resource guide

### Getting you the information you need:

- Daily phone access
- Timely responses with information
- Connection to resources

### Supporting your family:

- Monthly group experiences
- Quarterly training

### Sharing even more:

- PARC website with recommended books/articles on adoption
- List of community resources
- Calendar of adoptive parents' events and trainings
- Adoptive family newsletter



## Fun Facts

**The average snowflake falls at about 3 mph.**

**Ten inches of snow will melt down to only 1 inch of water.**

**All snowflakes have six sides.**

**A single snowstorm can drop 39 million tons of snow.**

[facts.randomhistory.com/winter-facts.html](http://facts.randomhistory.com/winter-facts.html)

## Keeping Cabin Fever Away

When the days become short and the weather drops below freezing, snuggling on the couch and watching movies might sound like a cozy, relaxing way to spend your day. However, too many days spent at home indoors can make you and your energetic kids start to go stir crazy. Here are some ideas of fun winter activities you can do with your kids to beat cabin fever.

### Do a puzzle

### Play a board game

Play shadow puppets in a dark room with a lamp or flashlight

### Color in a coloring book

Attend a free children's craft/building clinic at Lowe's or Home Depot

Play a card game or build a house of cards

### Visit your local library and check out books

Play trash can basketball with an empty trash can and paper wads

### Watch old home movies

### Build a blanket fort

Make your own bowling pins with paper towel rolls. Then find a ball and bowl

### Make your own scavenger hunt

### Play hide and seek

Make cards to mail to grandparents or friends

### Play Charades

### Play Simon Says

### Play Pictionary

Make and fly paper airplanes

[stephaniesmommybrain.blogspot.com/2011/02/100-free-or-cheap-family-activities-for.html](http://stephaniesmommybrain.blogspot.com/2011/02/100-free-or-cheap-family-activities-for.html)

## Building a Bond

Your kids will love this Marshmallow Snowman craft that is even more fun to eat! Great activity for snow days and long winter days at home. Use candies and baking supplies to add details and let your kids be creative.



### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- large and/or jumbo marshmallows
- pretzel sticks
- cinnamon red hots
- chocolate chips
- mini peanut butter cups
- rolos candy
- white icing
- black food coloring

Let your kids get creative with other candies and baking supplies and just have fun!

### INSTRUCTIONS

Use the jumbo marshmallows for the adult snowmen and regular large ones for the little snowmen. Using icing as glue, paste three marshmallows together and let dry. Paint eyes and mouth with black food coloring and a toothpick. Use a dab of icing to attach chocolate chip nose and make hats. Make pretzel stick arms and paste on buttons.

From [www.martysmusings.net](http://www.martysmusings.net)

# HOW WAS YOUR HOLIDAY?!

by Kimberly Waldie

*Holiday traditions have a way of bringing back happy and sad memories. For an adoptive family, holidays can be even more complicated as we navigate them with kids from hard places. Take some time to think about what your family enjoyed most and what may have caused unnecessary frustration or stress.*

## PREP WORK

Start by asking: why do we do what we do? Many of us can't even remember why we do certain traditions that can drain us year after year. I think traditions are about passing on what really matters to our family.

The year we adopted two of our four children, we desperately needed to create some happy memories. I remember one woman sharing her view of our adoption: "It's like baking a beautiful cake!" I didn't say it at the time, but I felt more like we were all in the mixing bowl being stirred relentlessly! Wherever you are in your adoption journey, the holiday traditions you set (or remove) can go a long way in bringing your family together.

## ASSEMBLING ALL PARTS: OLD AND NEW

All of us have a past. Good, bad, or ugly. Whatever that past, it's great to give every family member a voice. If fruitcake is a symbol of all that is good during the holidays to you, have fruitcake!

If your child is reminded of a traumatic event by a certain holiday, be aware of this. Recognize that healing can start just by giving them the freedom to speak about those sad memories with someone who loves and hears them.

Are there ways you can honor the important traditions of your adopted child's past? If your child was adopted internationally, research holidays from her birth country, celebrate them and the diversity she brings

your family. If you have an open relationship with your child's birth family, can you include them in an upcoming holiday celebration in a way that works well for your child?

Younger children may not have memories of past holidays. Creatively fill in the gaps together! I recently read the story of a parent who threw a special birthday party for her daughter celebrating all nine years of birthdays they never had together. Another parent shared how her elementary-age child was always curious about what he "wore as a baby" so she bought him a special baby outfit and showed him what she would have dressed him in if given the chance. What a wonderful gift to give your child!

Also important, may be honoring your biological children (if you have them) and giving them a voice about those "before adoption" traditions that matter. In your excitement to bond your family, don't overlook the pieces of the past that they find important.

Once you've gone through the old traditions, it's time to talk about the new things you can do as a family throughout the year. Often these discussions will be just as memorable as the traditions that come out of them!

## SURVIVAL TIPS

Our younger son moved in the week before Easter. I went all out setting up new, kid-friendly Easter traditions. Out of that came our family's infamous Easter scavenger hunt, which they loved. Each child was given an individual set of clues to find their Easter basket. Unfortunately, it was a lot of work every Easter Sunday to pull off before leaving for church. As they grew older, my clues had to grow more complicated. I was pretty relieved when they reached their 18th Easter!



## HOWEVER, I LEARNED A FEW THINGS THAT MAY HELP YOU:

**Consider the child.** If the tradition makes no sense, overstimulates a child, or leaves them (or you) frustrated and irritable, let it go.

**Consider your family.** It's easy, in the heart of holiday spirit, to overcommit. Just because you can, doesn't mean you should. Be creative with ideas, but give yourself permission to consider what is best for your immediate family. This may give you some free time to enjoy the holiday, instead of just trying to survive it.

**Consider the future.** Do you want to be doing this every year for the next 18 years? If doing this tradition creates financial or other stress, is it really worth it and reasonable in the long run?

## WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOUR FAMILY?

When it's all said and done, decide what you want your kids to remember about your family and the times you've spent together during the holiday seasons. My children still laugh about how crazy mom got on Easter morning and the ridiculous places she hid those baskets! For me, these memories are the glue that holds our family together long after they are grown up and gone.

## Quotes to Inspire You

If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant: if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome. —Anne Bradstreet

## upcoming events & training

All three Post-Adoption Resource Centers have many family fun events planned for winter, as well as support groups and trainings. Please check your Post Adoption Resource Center region's Facebook page, watch for monthly calendars, or give us a call to find out what is available near you.

### Region 2: Northern Michigan 231-421-6500 • [parctc@bethany.org](mailto:parctc@bethany.org)

[www.facebook.com/  
PostAdoptionResourceCenterOfNorthernMI](http://www.facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterOfNorthernMI)

Join us for winter weather fun  
Ice Skating in Cheboygan, swimming at the Plaza Pool  
in Alpena, Mom's Night Out, and more!

[Watch our Facebook page for additional information!](#)

### Trainings in Region 2

#### Hand-in-Hand Online Series

The Minnesota Organization of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome in collaboration with the Post Adoption Resource Center of Northern Michigan offer this series for parents, caregivers, and professionals who support those who have received or suspect a fetal alcohol diagnosis. The series will cover the following information:

- Jan 5, 2017 – What are FASDs?
  - Jan 12, 2017 – Your Child with an FASD at Home
  - Jan 19, 2017 – Your Child with an FASD at School
  - Jan 26, 2017 – Safety and Boundaries
  - Feb 2, 2017 – Building Resilient Families
- NOON TO 1:00 PM • ONLINE

#### Putting the Pieces Together: The Importance of Lifebooks

Join us for FREE parent/child workshop! Learn the important role Lifebooks can play in an adopted child's life and let us help you and your child get started on creating their very own. It is a book to document a child's history, celebrate accomplishments, and allow his or her talents to shine. Supplies will be provided.

**WHEN:** February 3 & 10 • 6:00-8:00 p.m.  
**WHERE:** Bethany Christian Services,  
1055 Carriage Hill Dr, Traverse City

### Region 3: Central Michigan 231-924-3390

[www.facebook.com/  
PostAdoptionResourceCenterCentralMichigan](http://www.facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterCentralMichigan)

**Give us a call or watch our Facebook page for more information on the following events:**

Join us for hands-on and interactive learning event at Alden B. Dow Museum of Science & Art in Midland. *Date and Location TBD.*

#### Create a Lifebook

You will be provided supplies and guidance to help you document your child's history, present, and future dreams in a decorative Lifebook.

**WHEN:** January 9 • 6:00 p.m.  
**WHERE:** Big Rapids Public Library,  
426 S Michigan Ave, Big Rapids

#### Parent Training

Region 3 has partnered with MDHHS to enhance our Gladwin County support group. Each month Community Mental Health for Central Michigan will present a different topic focused around trauma and behavior/parenting issues. Child care and refreshments provided with RSVP.

**WHEN:** 3rd Monday of each month,  
Jan 23, Feb 20, Mar 20 • 6:30-8:30 p.m.  
**WHERE:** Beaverton Church of the Nazarene,  
540 Lang Rd, Beaverton

**Please RSVP for all trainings and activities to**  
[mjensen@bethany.org](mailto:mjensen@bethany.org) or 231-924-3390

### Region 4: Western Michigan 616-224-7565 • [parcgr@bethany.org](mailto:parcgr@bethany.org)

[www.facebook.com/PARCRegion4](http://www.facebook.com/PARCRegion4)

**Check out our Facebook page for more information about support groups, trainings and family fun events near you.**

#### Tax Training for Foster/ Adoptive Parents

**WHEN:** January 10, 6:00-7:30 p.m.  
**WHERE:** Bethany Christian Services, Door G,  
901 Eastern Ave NE, Grand Rapids

## Family Feedback

*Our PARC worker has been incredibly supportive and encouraging! She walked along side of us each step of the way to help us get the help we needed and provide perspective! What a blessing!*

## Quotes to Inspire You

Daring to set boundaries is about having the courage to love ourselves, even when we risk disappointing others.

—Brené Brown

The biggest communication problem is we do not listen to understand.  
We listen to reply. —Unknown

## Fun Times at PARC Events



Bethany Christian Services is committed to supporting adoptive families through the lifelong, rewarding journey of adoption.

### REGION 2

Bethany Christian Services  
1055 Carriage Hill Dr, Ste 2  
Traverse City, MI 49686  
231-995-0870  
[www.bethany.org/traversecity](http://www.bethany.org/traversecity)

Charlevoix, Emmett, Cheboygan, Presque Isle, Antrim, Otsego, Montmorency, Alpena, Leelanau, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Crawford, Oscoda, Alcona, Manistee, Wexford, Missaukee, Roscommon, Ogemaw, and Iosco counties

### REGION 3

Bethany Christian Services  
6995 West 48th St  
Fremont, MI 49412  
231-924-3390  
[www.bethany.org/fremont](http://www.bethany.org/fremont)

Mason, Lake, Osceola, Clare, Gladwin, Arenac, Oceana, Newaygo, Mecosta, Isabella, Midland, Bay, Montcalm, Gratiot, Saginaw, Ionia, Clinton, and Shiawassee counties

### REGION 4

Bethany Christian Services  
901 Eastern Ave NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
616-224-7565  
[www.bethany.org/grandrapids](http://www.bethany.org/grandrapids)

Allegan, Berrien, Cass, Kent, Muskegon, Ottawa, and Van Buren counties



[postadoptionrc.org](http://postadoptionrc.org)

other suggested websites: [www.adoptivefamilies.com](http://www.adoptivefamilies.com) [www.adoptioninstitute.org](http://www.adoptioninstitute.org)