

## Adoption Assistance Policies

The Sovereign Grace Community Church Adoption Assistance Program is part of the congregation's benevolence ministry to SGCC members, and Mercy Ministry to the world. It is consistent with our purpose as a local church to be a Christ-Exalting, Gospel -Centered, Church-Planting Church. The Scriptures commands mercy to orphans:

*"Leave something for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands."* – Deuteronomy 24:19

*"Defend the cause of the fatherless."* – Isaiah 1:17

*"Religion that God our father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."* – James 1:27

Adoption is a means of caring for orphans. God himself adopts his people:

*"I will not leave you as orphans."* – John 14:18

*"In love... he adopted us as his sons through Jesus Christ."* – Ephesians 1:4

Adoption is also expensive. Our Adoption Assistance Program seeks to help with the significant costs of domestic and international adoptions for qualified SGCC couples who desire to care for and raise orphaned children and who struggle to do so because of a lack of financial resources. Many adoptive couples need financial help. In the interest of helping orphaned children, this program seeks to assist such qualified individuals by helping with some of the expenses.

### How the Program Works

1. The Adoption Assistance Program is a benevolence fund of Sovereign Grace Community Church. Monies may be received into the fund from general SGCC budget allocations; offerings collected for the fund; grants from other churches or charities; or contributions from individuals. Designated offerings for a specific adoption or a specific adoptive couple will not be accepted into the fund.
2. Married couples applying for adoption assistance must be active members of Sovereign Grace Community Church in good standing. Both husband and wife must be part of the church for at least one full year prior to being eligible to apply.
3. Applications must include a pastoral recommendation, a recommendation from the couple's care group leader, and a recommendation from a friend who is also a member of SGCC.
4. Only those who have actually begun the adoption process may apply. The program is designed to help those who have already decided to adopt. Since we cannot guarantee financial assistance, we do not want couples to base their decision to adopt on whether or not they receive a grant. Applicants are expected to use available personal financial resources for their adoption costs. However, as all active members participate and contribute to church life and ministry, we encourage all members pursuing adoptions to apply for adoption support. In this way, the church can participate and share in their specific ministry of adoption.

5. Grants will be determined based upon the degree of need, consistent church and small group participation, commendation from the couple's pastor, small group leader, and another SGCC member, the amount of resources currently available in the Fund and the number of open applications.
6. The program will grant no more than 50% of adoption expenses. Grants will be given based upon:
  - Need-based: up to 50%
  - Member-based: a standard donation of \$3000 or 25%, whichever is less
  - And available funds

Upon approval, 25% or \$3,000 (whichever is less) of the grant will be distributed. The remainder will be given when the child is ready to be picked up and the bulk of the funds are due.

7. The Adoption Fund Application requirements differ based on the type of funding requested – Need-based vs. Member-based.
  - a. Member-based applications intend to clarify that:
    - i. The couple understands and is committed to adoption
    - ii. The couple has an established adoption plan – administrative & financial
    - iii. Adoption is a reasonable (wise) pursuit for this couple
  - b. Need-based applications intend to clarify that:
    - i. The member-based criteria is satisfied
    - ii. The couple's monthly cash-flow & net worth is healthy
    - iii. Established money management practices are in place

If a couple's financial situation is found to be marginal, the church will purpose to help the couple through financial counseling (if they desire it) – both as a means of care and in order to facilitate the adoption.

8. Qualified adoption expenses include the following: Licensed private or public adoption agency fees; court costs and legal fees associated with adoption; travel costs for an adoption; local, state, federal, INS, or international fees for adoption; medical fees (which have not been reimbursed) related to the adoption; home study costs; temporary foster care expenses incurred prior to placement; post-placement report fees; and other lawful bona fide expenses consistent with local customary costs associated with adoption and approved by the court having jurisdiction.
9. The Adoption Fund Board will consist of the at least one SGCC elder, the deacon of finance and at least one other member of the Financial Advisory Committee.

Ideally, we intend couples considering adoption to gain more than funding from the Adoption Assistance Program. The application process should facilitate biblical wisdom and encouragement.