

# REFUGEE 686

PSALM 68:6 - GOD SETS THE LONELY IN FAMILIES

## WHY WE SERVE

**There are children everywhere who are lonely. They go to bed every night wishing for one thing: the love of a family.**

God promises in Psalm 68:6 to set the lonely in families. The body of Christ is called to help fulfill this promise. Refuge 686 is answering God's call to fulfill this promise.

## WHO WE ARE

We are first and foremost a church based ministry, believing that parentless children should find refuge, nurture and care in loving Christian homes that are supported by a local church family.

We desire to help as many Christians as possible answer the cry of lonely and vulnerable children by raising-up, supporting and encouraging adoptive and foster families. As we provide refuge, support and equipping resources to adoptive and foster families more children will be welcomed into Christian homes and find their own place of refuge. Where parentless children can't be placed in families (International Orphans), or are waiting to be placed in families (Foster Children in the US), we desire to serve and support these children who are lonely without the love and support of a family.

We are an outreach ministry of Grace Redeemer Church.

We realize that there are many adoptive and foster families from all backgrounds who are looking for support, a welcoming community and resources. Many of these families may not know Christ or have a church to call home. We seek to reach out to these families through our support groups and special events, with the desire that all adoptive families and children will come to know and love Christ.

## WHO WE AREN'T

We are not a licensed adoption or foster-care agency, nor do we endorse any particular agency.

Rather, we seek to provide prospective adoptive and foster parents with the information and skills to prayerfully and wisely make their own adoption and/or foster care plans. Our heart's desire is to walk alongside adoptive and foster families through the entire adoption and foster care process: before, during and after a child is placed providing community, encouragement, practical support and parenting information targeted to meeting the unique needs of adopted and foster children.

We are not about merely recruiting adoptive and foster families.

Adoption and foster care isn't only about matching lonely children with loving families. Rather, we seek to raise-up loving and well-equipped Christian families who can meet the unique needs of their adopted and foster children. Parenting adopted and foster children can be a difficult task and adoptive and foster families need a supportive community where they can openly discuss their unique challenges and find support, encouragement and targeted resources.

We are not a para-church ministry.

We are a ministry of a local church body—Grace Redeemer Church—and are seeking to encourage families within our congregation and in other local congregations to answer the call of lonely children. We believe that adoptive and foster families are more effective at meeting the needs of lonely children when they are supported, encouraged and equipped by a local church.

## WHAT?

Psalm 68:6

Psalm 68:6 shares God's heart to set the lonely in families. Our vision as the adoption and foster care ministry of Grace Redeemer Church is to see God's promise fulfilled by "building a culture of care and support that reflects God's heart, so that parentless children are nurtured and loved."

"Building a Culture of Care"

Parentless children both nationally and internationally are in need of high-quality family care. Refuge 686 seeks to raise up and equip families that effectively and compassionately care for the unique needs of adopted, and foster children and global orphans. Our hope is that this culture of care begins first in our congregation then throughout Northern New Jersey and around the world.

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"Building a Culture of Support"

Families that effectively meet the unique needs of adopted and foster children and global orphans require support themselves. Refuge 686 seeks to help meet the financial, emotional, practical and professional needs of foster, adoptive and global orphan care families through supportive relationships, direct service and professional and ministry partnerships.

"That reflects God's heart..."

Adoption is the heartbeat of God for us. Galatians 4:4-5 says, "But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His son, born of a woman, born under the law, so that He might redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." John 1:12 further says, "And as many as received Him, to them he gave the right to become Children of God." When we were dead in our sin and transgressions, when we were orphans, Christ died for us and made our adoption as sons possible. Adoption made us a part of God's family. God knows what orphans need: families. God's heart is for adoption and is a vehicle that he uses to fulfill his promise in Psalm 686, to "set the lonely in families." Refuge 686 seeks to reflect God's adoptive heart through prioritizing initiatives that set the lonely in loving, Christian families through adoption, foster care and global orphan family care.

"so that parentless children"

Parentless children are found in our congregation, in our state and around the world. Losing one or both parents greatly increases a child's vulnerability. Vulnerable children are among us: children in our congregation who don't have both a mother and a father. Vulnerable children live in New Jersey. In our state alone there are 2226 children waiting to be adopted and are parentless. Globally, there are 153 million children who have lost one or both parents. These parentless children in our own community, in our state and around the world are the vulnerable children that Refuge 686 seeks to minister to.

"so that parentless children are nurtured  
and loved"

Refuge 686 as the desire that every vulnerable child joins a family and is surrounded by nurturing and loving relationships. First, our goal is that vulnerable children join a loving and nurturing family who is the part of an equally loving and nurturing church family. Secondly our goal is that out of our congregation and networks, loving and nurturing adults will be raised up to build strong, caring and compassionate relationships with vulnerable children.

# **R**EFUGE 686

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## **A Story of Care**

Jackie and Doug are a young couple attending Grace Redeemer Church who have been trying for the past five years to have a child of their own. They tried everything but were unable to get pregnant. Two years ago they began to consider if God would have a child join their family through adoption. They attended an introductory class on adoption offered during the Christian Education hour and an information session where several adoption and foster care agencies were on hand to answer their questions. Armed with resources and information they researched potential adoption agencies and successfully applied to one agency. Once they were approved they tapped into their personal savings, did some independent fundraising and were even approved for an adoption grant through Refuge 686's adoption fund. They hope to bring their little girl home from China in the next six months and offer her the love and support of a loving Christian family, as well as a loving church body who has rallied alongside her family throughout the long and often difficult adoption process.

Refuge 686 seeks to minister to couples like Jackie and Doug who have a heart to adopt and provide a home for a lonely child but need help getting started. Through education and information sessions they seek to provide individuals and couples with access to the information necessary to make a wise and informed decision about adoption. Once in the adoption process, Refuge 686 seeks to walk alongside families like this in prayer and where

appropriate, financial grants to make the private adoption process more affordable.

## **A Story of Support**

The Blackwell family is a large and loving family that includes two boys and two girls. They don't have a church home and have lots of questions about Christianity. Their heart for children is huge. The Blackwells adopted two boys, twins from Russia two years ago. While things look stable on the outside, their life at home is incredibly challenging. The twins spent the first four years of their life in impoverished circumstances, receiving inadequate food and little stimulation, attention or love. This deprivation in the early years of their life has resulted in developmental delays as well as very challenging behavior. While the Blackwells are committed to helping their boys overcome their challenges, they often feel isolated and alone. They long for a community that will understand their struggle and find a place where they can speak openly about the challenges of raising their children.

Refuge 686 seeks to minister to families like the Blackwells, providing them with a support group made up of foster and adoptive families like themselves who understand how difficult it can be to raise a child who has experienced trauma in their early life. In addition to a welcoming support group, Refuge 686 seeks to equip families with parenting resources and classes targeted to meet the unique needs of children like theirs. We seek to minister to all families from the Northern New Jersey area

## **WHO WE SERVE**

We believe that Refuge 686 has a great deal to offer each of the individuals, families and children described in these vignettes. These stories reflect the lonely children and loving individuals and families our ministry seeks to serve.

providing them with parenting resources and information offered from a distinctly Gospel-centered perspective.

## **A Story that Reflects God's Heart**

God's heart is that the "lonely are placed in families." God's heart is that new families are formed and existing families stay together. Chase is a college student with a big heart for children who's majoring in Education. He's listened attentively during the Orphan Sunday and other special events at GRC that have highlighted adoption, foster care and global orphan care and has been especially impacted by the idea that God desires for lonely children to be placed in families. Recently he's learned about a single mom at church going through a very difficult time. She needs to find a new apartment and job. He's offered up childcare for free to this mom so she can go on job interviews and not have to worry about who will take care of her two boys. Recently he heard a Refuge686 presentation that shared about the effects of institutionalization on children and was shocked to learn that for every three months a young child stays in an institution she loses a month of development. This caused him to start to pray about going on a missions trip next summer with an organization that works with local churches in Africa to help them provide family care for orphans in their community and prevent children from being institutionalized.

Refuge 686 seeks to minister to and encourage people with a heart like Chase's. We firmly believe



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that God desires to place lonely children into families. Therefore we prioritize ministries and initiatives that will place parentless children in families and work to keep existing families together.

### **A Story of a Parentless Child**

When you first meet Kendra she is a shy, sweet and compliant child. But underneath her quiet exterior is a torrent of emotion. Though Kendra is twelve years old, in her young life she has experienced more abuse and trauma than anyone should have to endure in a lifetime. The State stepped in when she was nine years old and removed her from her home due to extreme abuse and neglect. She has lived in a group foster home ever since, receiving daily group therapy and interventions designed to help her deal with the horror of her early life. Though she has been legally freed for adoption for a year, no one has stepped up to the plate to adopt her yet, since babies and toddlers are much easier to place than older children who carry lots of emotional baggage. Kendra is slowly beginning to trust through group therapy sessions, the structured environment of the group home and visits with her volunteer mentor and tutor. Despite the support and love of so many adults in her life, Kendra wishes for what every parentless child wants: a forever family.

**Refuge 686 seeks to minister to children like Kendra. By educating the congregation about the needs of children just like her, Refuge 686 seeks to**

raise-up Christian individuals and families who will answer God's call to provide forever families to children like Kendra. There are millions of Kendra's around the world who are ready to join forever families if one can be found. Refuge 686 exists to help raise-up, equip and encourage these families. Until forever families are found, Refuge 686 seeks to encourage and show love to the Kendra's of this world by providing church members opportunities to serve, encourage and show love to parentless children while they wait to join forever families.

### **A Story of Nurture and Love**

Jennifer is a single woman with a huge heart for children and a house with two empty bedrooms. Much of her professional life has been spent working with vulnerable children. For years she has desired to start her family through adoption and foster care. After attending an information session sponsored by Refuge686 she decided to pursue foster care through the state social service agency. She was prayed through the process by the church family and after nine months was licensed by the State to accept foster children. Three days after her licensure she received a call to accept a sibling group of three children over the age of five. She had little more than beds and a dresser to offer her three foster children who arrived with a garbage bag half filled with ill-fitting and out of season clothes. Refuge 686 rallied around Jennifer's new foster family throwing them an impromptu welcome home shower that outfitted the foster

children with clothes, school supplies and toys to make their stay much more comfortable. Even more significant were the prayer partners who prayed with Jennifer, the women who provided meals in the first days of transition in their newly formed family and the patient babysitters who provided free childcare for a few significant afternoons when Jennifer just needed a break. The support Jennifer received from the Refuge 686 ministry encouraged her so much that she has since opened up her home to three more sibling groups needing temporary foster care.

Refuge 686 seeks to minister to individuals and families like Jennifer who answer the cry of lonely children and provide a loving, temporary home to foster children. Realizing that foster families can receive a call and add several new children to their families within hours, Refuge 686 seeks to provide practical support to foster families so that they can meet the needs of their foster children without incurring considerable debt in the process. Additionally, Refuge 686 realizes that being a foster parent can be one of the most rewarding, yet most challenging parenting tasks, so they seek to provide practical help like respite care and babysitting to foster families.



## HOW WE SERVE

Refuge 686 seeks to meet this vision by inspiring, connecting and serving.

### Inspire

**PRAY** for the Holy Spirit to move in our congregation to open their hearts to adoption and foster care through team prayer meetings and Kingdom Prayer requests.

**EXHORT** the congregation with a Biblical vision of adoption through ACE Hour presentations and Orphan Sunday.

**INSPIRE** the congregation to action in adoption and foster care through Grace Stories and testimonies from adoptive parents, foster parents and volunteers.

**EDUCATE** the congregation about the needs of vulnerable children through “A Corner on Adoption and Foster Care,” monthly blurbs in the bulletin.

### Connect

**CONNECT** experienced adoptive and foster families with new families for support, encouragement and information through quarterly Refuge Family Fellowships that serve families throughout Northern New Jersey.

**EQUIP** adoptive and foster families with parenting strategies and resources designed to meet the unique needs of vulnerable and traumatized children.

**MAINTAIN** relationships with private and public agencies that can provide services and resources to adoptive and foster families.

**EDUCATE** prospective adoptive and foster families through bi-yearly general informational events attended by adoption and foster care professionals and foster and adoptive families.

**BUILD** a network of churches in Northern New Jersey committed to working together to meet the needs of vulnerable children.

### Serve

**FACILITATE** positive relationships with adopted, foster and single parented children through connections with formal volunteer programs and congregational relationships.

**PROVIDE** opportunities for the whole congregation to serve in this ministry through special events such as the “Fostering New Beginnings Party.”

**SERVE** the financial needs of adoptive and foster families through third party administered adoption grants and diaconal administered foster family emergency funds.

**WRAP** around adoptive and foster families in our congregation by connecting them with a support system of babysitters, helpers, meals, respite childcare and professional services provided by members of our congregation.