

Christian Service or Ceremony to Confirm the Adoption or

Items Needed:

1. Candles in several sizes and/or shapes:
 - a. One larger than the others in the center
 - b. Medium candles for each member of the adoptive/permanent family (adults and children/youth)
 - c. Candles in various sizes, shapes and colors for each person to be honored or remembered
2. Long kitchen match or candle to light the other candles
3. Copies of the Ceremony with readings
4. Commemorative Certificates (optional)
5. Musical selection if desired (optional)
6. Flowers or other decorations (optional)
7. Bible, also prayer book if desired
8. Small gifts if desired (optional)
9. Celebration food or drink if desired (optional)

Set Up:

1. Select the location for the ceremony – options can include a church or place of worship or the family's home - the family dining table, living room or family room, a porch or picnic table, etc.
2. Set up a table with the larger candle in the middle, and other candles around it in a circle
3. Add any other items or decorations desired such as flowers, favorite family photos, etc.
4. If music is to be used, have musician(s), or tape or CD player ready to go
5. Have copies of the ceremony, readings, Bible or prayer book, certificates in place
6. Set chairs for all participants

In Advance:

1. Decide who will read each of the readings
2. Decide if any music, prayers or other optional components will be used and who will lead them
3. Limit possibility of distractions (if in a home this may mean turning off phone, TV, other music, etc)

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Reading One: God is the original creator of families. At the beginning of time, he decided that it was not good for Adam to be alone, so he created Eve. And when he wanted to send his own son, Jesus, into the world, He sent him into a family, with parents and brothers. In Romans, Chapter 8, God refers to us as His “adopted” children. It is clear that there are many ways to create families. Here is one definition of what makes a family: (read Family Voices Definition of Family):

What Do We Mean By Family?

We all come from families. Families are big, small, extended, nuclear, multi-generational, with one parent, two parents, and grandparents. We live under one roof or many. A family can be as temporary as a few weeks, or as permanent as forever. We become part of a family by birth, adoption, marriage, or from a desire for mutual support. As family members, we nurture, protect, and influence each other. Families have strengths that flow from individual members and from the family as a whole. Each family is a culture unto itself, with unique values and its own way of realizing dreams. Together, our families are the source of our rich cultural heritage and spiritual diversity. Our families create neighborhoods, communities, states, and nations.¹

Reading Two: We are here today to speak the truth about our family. We acknowledge and celebrate that we are a family. God brought us together from different places and different pasts but we have shared much. We have shared ordinary days and special days in our lives. We have shared fun times and hard times. We have shared hopes and dreams for the future. We have broken bread together; we have prayed together - We are a family.

Reading Three (one of the youth): You are not the parents who brought us into the world, but you have always been real parents to us. You have done everything that parents do for children – you have fed us and taken care of us when we were sick. You have taught us and given us your wisdom. You have nurtured us spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically. You have pushed us to be the best we can be. You are our family.²

Reading Four (one of the parents): It is true, we did not give you life, so we take this moment to honor the parents who did give you life and to recognize that they will always be a part of your heart, soul and very being. Over time, your life and ours have been joined and we have given you our lives and shared in your lives. We have watched you grow and change. We have laughed and cried with you, worried about you and prayed for you. We are proud of you. Today, we are here to say that even as you approach

¹ Adapted from a statement prepared by the New Mexico Coalition for Youth and Families, and the New Mexico Young Children's Continuum, 1990.

² See “variation” at the end for ceremonies which include the presence of birth family members

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adulthood and move on to new adventures in your life, we will always be here for you. We are your family, now and forevermore.

CANDLE LIGHTING

Reading Five: Each of these additional candles we light represents a person from our past that we choose to remember and honor on this day. These are the people who helped form us to be the people we are, and we carry some part of them with us every day. The candles are all different – in size, shape and color, representing the diverse and unique ways in which each of these people became part of and influenced our lives.

NOTE: Participants can take turns lighting the candles of various sizes, shapes and colors. This can either be done in silence, or as each candle is lit, the person lighting it can say aloud the name of the person who it represents (examples are birth parents, other siblings, former foster parents, social workers, etc) and any thoughts or reflections they choose to share about that person

Reading Six: Now, we each light our own candles. Each candle stands on its own and bears its own light, reminding us that we are each unique individuals, created by God in His own image, with our own special light to share with those around us – our spirit, our personality, our talents and gifts. Even the light of one candle can light the darkness, and so, too, each of us can be radiant and powerful. And yet, the light is even more powerful, and more beautiful when the light of many candles glow together, reminding us that we are not alone, that together, as a family, we create a special and powerful light that is greater than anything we can create alone.

NOTE: During this reading, each participant lights his or her own candle

Reading Seven: Now, together, we join the lights from our many candles into the one, center candle. This symbolizes and seals our commitment to being one family, now and forevermore. It helps us to remember that we are all part of one another, and that together we are greater than the sum of our parts.

NOTE: At this time, each person takes his or her own candle and together, lights the larger center candle.

Reading Eight (pastor, social worker or facilitator): Do you, _____ (say each name) acknowledge and commit to being a family, sharing a past, a present and a future, caring for one another in good times and bad, celebrating each other's joys, sharing each other's sorrows, supporting and upholding one another now and forevermore, with the help of God?

All Participants: WE DO

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The pastor or social worker will then present each person with his or her own copy of the commemorative certificate and everyone will sign.

End – It is appropriate to end with a final reading selected by the family (such as a favorite Bible passage or poem) or a prayer, or a song either played on a CD or tape to listen to or sung together or solo by a participant, or instrumental.

Optional: It is also optional, but appropriate to then share a celebration food or drink such as cake, pie, a toast or a meal. If gifts are to be exchanged this is the time. Gifts are totally optional!

Variation on Readings when Birth Parents or Birth Family Members are Present

Reading Three (one of the youth): We are here today with the parents (family) who brought us into the world and the parents who walk with us into the future. Together, you have given us the love and care we need to grow and thrive – you have fed us and taken care of us when we were sick. You have taught us and given us your wisdom. You have nurtured us spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically. You have pushed us to be the best we can be.

Reading Four (birth parent or birth family member): We loved you and gave you life. You carry not only our genes and physical traits, but also our hopes and dreams for a better future. We are thankful for the life you have now and with gratitude we support your deep and lasting relationships with your adoptive family. We will forever be a part of you, and you of us.

Reading Four (one of the parents): We are grateful to have this moment to honor the parents (family) who did give you life and to recognize that they will always be a part of your heart, soul and very being. Over time, your life and ours have been joined and we have given you our lives and shared in your lives. We have watched you grow and change. We have laughed and cried with you, worried about you and prayed for you. We are proud of you. Today, we are here to say that even as you approach adulthood and move on to new adventures in your life, we will always be here for you. We are your family, now and forevermore.