



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.

The fall and winter holidays are an exciting time for many families!

The holidays are traditionally a time of togetherness and celebration. For many, they are a time of great anticipation and excitement. But the holidays can also bring stress, chaos, and many changes from our everyday routines. For some families, the holiday season may feel like it brings just as many challenges as it does rewards.

For adoptive families, the holidays may seem even more difficult. Activities that are intended to bring joy to children, may overwhelm those with trauma histories. Many children who were adopted may struggle with feelings of loss regarding their birth families, and these feelings may be intensified this time of year. Changes to routine and lots of noise, lights, and smells might overwhelm some sensory systems.

As with many parenting challenges, preparation is the key to enjoying the holidays with your family. By anticipating some issues that may arise, you can prepare to meet your family's and children's needs before they happen. It's also important to know that your family is not alone in their holiday struggles! In this issue of our newsletter, we'll highlight some common holiday challenges and give some helpful hints to assist your family in getting through the holidays smoothly and hopefully even create some magical memories along the way.

*Sarah Dock, BSW, Case Manager, Post-Adoption Resource Center, Region 4*



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

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"Traditions touch us, they connect us,  
and they expand us."

—Rita Barreto Craig

Along with changes in the weather, the winter months bring along many holidays and changes to family routines. Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, New Years, Kwanzaa, Diwali, Winter Solstice, and Las Posadas are traditionally large family and community events, full of traditions and celebration. While these holidays are something many families look forward to with anticipation every year, for some adoptive families, the holiday season can be a source of anxiety and apprehension.

For children with trauma histories, the holidays can trigger many confusing emotions. Children may feel conflicted or guilty about enjoying the holidays with their adoptive families. Or the holidays may trigger feelings of loss regarding their birth families. A simple change in their everyday routine and environment can be stressful. For parents, there may be feelings of wanting to provide the “perfect” holiday celebrations and memories, whatever that may be. However, despite the best of intentions of both the children and parents, the holidays can sometimes be the most difficult part of the year.

**At the Post-Adoption Resource Center, we’ve put together some helpful tips to assist families in navigating the holiday season.**

### **There is no RIGHT way to celebrate the holidays!**

Many families get caught up in the expected traditions of the holidays; that might be things like making cookies, attending school and church events, sending holiday cards, decorations and light displays, or large piles of presents. However, many parents might find that some of these expected activities do not work for their family at this time. And that is okay!



There is no RIGHT way to celebrate any holiday! Also, remember that if it’s better for your family to pass on something you enjoy this holiday, it doesn’t mean that your family won’t be able to enjoy that activity in future years. Our family life, and our family’s needs, are always changing!

### **Traditions.**

Traditions matter. As a parent, you probably have at least one holiday tradition that is precious to you. As well, your child might have had a tradition with their birth family that was special to them. Do they remember eating apple pie on Thanksgiving Day? Did they like making a snowman with their birth siblings? If your child can tell you about a special birth family tradition that is meaningful to them, find a way to incorporate it into your family’s holiday plans this year too. In addition, your family might want to invent a new holiday tradition that is special and unique to all of you.

### **Birth Family.**

The holidays tend to bring up memories of our loved ones. There is a good chance that your child is thinking about their birth family, especially during the holidays, even if they don’t verbalize these thoughts. If appropriate to your child’s specific situation, consider reaching out to their birth family members during the holidays. This could be an in-person meeting or a gift exchange, a phone call or a video chat, or even just sending a holiday card. If birth family contact is not possible at this time, maybe your child might like writing a holiday letter or drawing a picture for birth family members that can be filed away for the future.

“Family traditions, old and new, what works for me may not work for you. The important thing is, we work together to make memories that will last forever.”

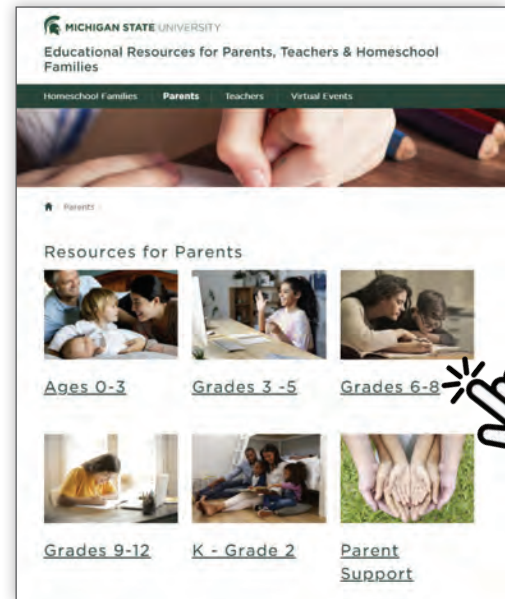
—Stacy Coles

## Did You Know?

### Prepare.

Surprises, and not knowing what to expect in any situation, can be unsettling. Preparation is the key to success! Let your child know what to expect at any event your family might be attending. Begin your preparations days, even weeks, before the event. Who will be there? What kinds of sounds, smells, activities should they expect? How long will you be there? These might sound like small details to you, but to an anxious child, the more they know, the better. Repeating these conversations over and over during the days leading up to the event is helpful too. Parents might also want to think ahead about any potential conflicts that might arise. Is food being served? Is it a meal that is unfamiliar to your child or food your child might not want to eat? Try packing a couple of protein-rich snacks for your child to munch on or a separate meal for your child. If you are worried about your child becoming overwhelmed with people or sounds, talk to your host about a quiet space your child can use if needed. Practice a “secret code” or gesture that your child can use with you if they need to take a break. The more prepared you are, the better chance that your family will have a successful and enjoyable outing.

The holidays can be a fun and memorable time for your family! By keeping in mind your child’s and family’s specific needs, parents can adapt their holiday expectations and celebrations to make this an exciting time of year for everyone.



**Did you know that MSU Extension has online educational resources and opportunities for your children?**

*MSU Extension: Remote Learning and Resources Page*

Remote Learning and Resources is your one-stop-shop for all things MSU Extension has to offer online—from personal budgeting articles to activities for your children.

*What they say:*

**“In tough times, such as the uncertainty surrounding the current novel coronavirus pandemic, we recognize that accessing the vast knowledge and resources of MSU is more important than ever. The MSU Extension Remote Learning and Resources online space can bring you the resources you need, wherever you need them.”**

To find out more and view MSU’s Remote Learning Resources, go to: [CANR.MSU.edu/RLR](https://CANR.MSU.edu/RLR)

**MICHIGAN STATE**  
**UNIVERSITY**

“Although no one can go back and make a brand-new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand-new ending.”

—Carl Bard



# Local Events, Training & Family Activities

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



## REGION 2:

**Northern Michigan**

231-995-0870

[parctc@bethany.org](mailto:parctc@bethany.org)

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

## REGION 3:

**Central Michigan**

231-924-3390

[parcfr@bethany.org](mailto:parcfr@bethany.org)

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

## REGION 4:

**Western Michigan**

616-224-7565

[parcgr@bethany.org](mailto:parcgr@bethany.org)

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



Adoptive parents enjoying a social distancing trip to Traverse City's famous Moomer's Ice Cream!



PARC Region 2 launched the very first TEEN TIME activity group (ages 13–18) and enjoyed playing games, making clay charms together on Zoom, and ending the summer with a social-distanced zip-lining event at Mt. Holliday!



PARC Region 3 loved being able to offer FREE family photos to their families this summer!

## Family Testimonials

“My kids and I enjoyed such wonderful afternoons on Thursday and Friday of this week. Thank you so much for providing ways for adoptive families to connect and relax!”

“Thanks for providing such great information and activities for us! Our family really enjoyed the scavenger hunt that was delivered to our door! It was a blast!”

“The work PARC puts in to instill joy into our family is appreciated and is very much needed. I don't need to tell you, but for post-adoption families like ours, sometimes joy is hard. PARC makes it easier. Keep being creative with your supports, we love them!”

“Thank you so much for all your help during our initial work to balance this unexpected way of life. Also, we really appreciate you following up to see how we are. We won't hesitate to reach out as we go forward, as I am sure with each stage of life, we will have new challenges to face or an increase in the challenges we currently deal with. Thank you again for everything!”



Bethany 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/traversesecity](http://www.bethany.org/traversesecity)

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)