

# Faith sustains military couples seeking to adopt\_110804

November 5, 2004

Posted: 11/05/04

## Faith sustains military couples seeking to adopt

**By Felicia Fuller**

*Buckner News Service*

The Bible says it's the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. It sustained U.S. Army Chaplain Lance Fadeley as he witnessed to soldiers amid death and devastation in Iraq. It sustained his wife, Shauna, as she read the headlines home alone in Texas.

And it sustains them now as they plan for the future in the face of uncertainty.

"Faith is at the center of everything we do," said Lance Fadelay, a 12-year Army veteran and former Baptist pastor. "We have about \$500 in savings, but I'm not worried. One of my favorite sayings is 'Jehovah Jirah,' which is 'God will provide' in Hebrew."

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U.S. Army  
Chaplain  
Lance Fadeley  
and his wife,  
Shauna, pray  
for a miracle.  
The couple  
long to adopt  
internationally  
through  
Buckner. But  
with limited  
resources and  
his impending  
redeployment  
to Iraq, the  
obstacles are  
great.

The Fadeleys, childless since they married 10 years ago, are trusting God for provision to adopt a little girl from China before his redeployment to the Middle East. To date, they've invested more than \$2,000 of their own resources but need an additional \$14,000, not including overseas travel expenses. It would be money well spent, the couple said, as they seek to save "at least one young life" from certain destruction.

"We heard that girls in orphanages are not treated the best" in China, she said. "They're prevented from having children ... leave the orphanage at 16 ... don't have schooling ... turn to prostitution. That just broke my husband's heart. We just feel like we could give her a great opportunity to be in a loving home and go to school. And when she's 16, we're still going to love her."

Although they've considered adoption for many years, the couple didn't officially begin the process until a chance conversation during his first tour in Iraq. He'd been planning to conduct a marriage retreat when he returned home on 30-day leave, so he asked his deputy division captain for site suggestions and was referred to Camp Buckner Hill Country Retreat.

"I looked it up on the Internet from my barrack," he said. "But the website I went to had nothing to do with land Buckner owns in Marble Falls. It was all about adoption. And it was a place in Dallas. So I sent an e-mail and said: 'Hey, my name is Lance. I'm in Iraq. I live in Killeen. My wife's named Shauna. And we want to adopt a girl from China. Can you help us out?'"

That was last fall.

"Right now, we're working on getting documents notarized and certified to complete our dossier for delivery to the Department of State," he said. "We trust that everything will be in order soon."

The couple credits Christ and the generosity of others with what they term little miracles along the way. The Army and Air Force have agreed to allow the Fadeleys to fly standby to China on a military jet to help curtail costs. And on March 12, during Fadeley's final chaplain service in Iraq, members of his battalion collected \$458 while he wasn't looking as a sign of solidarity.

Among those who gave was a young soldier Fadeley baptized in the Tigris River after weeks of consoling and praying him through a painful breakup with his wife.

Asked to characterize the importance of that moment, Fadeley says: "We've lived here (in Killeen) for two years, and a mortar round hasn't landed in our little yard. I don't get shot at when I walk out my front door, but that's a daily occurrence in Iraq.

“Experiences like that make soldiers think more about eternal matters ... about family matters.”

Lt. Col. Fred Leinweber is a man accustomed to making things happen. But this Texas Army National Guardsman concedes some things are out of his control.

“Our way is not always (God's) way,” he says. “You just have to have faith.”



Lt. Col. Fred Leinweber and his wife, Tabetha, have endured years of fertility problems and now believe God has called them to adopt Dimitry, whom they hosted for the 2004 Buckner Angels from Abroad program.

For most of their seven-year marriage, Leinweber and his wife, Tabetha, have struggled in vain to conceive a child. They've tried it all—five surgeries, high-dose hormones, even natural remedies but most of all, prayer.

“My body can't take anymore assault,” said Mrs. Leinweber, 37. “Besides, you don't have to give birth to a child to be a parent.”

It took a shy 12-year-old boy from Russia to teach her that.

Dimitry, affectionately called Dima, visited the Leinwebers for two weeks this summer as part of the Buckner Angels from Abroad program. Accompanied by directors and caretakers from two children's homes in St. Petersburg, 18 orphans toured Texas to raise awareness about the trove of older children available for adoption in Russia.

The Leinwebers were among 14 Dallas families who served as hosts.

“We sort of stumbled upon the opportunity,” she recalled. “In December last year, we started talking about adoption, so we went on the Internet and found names (of agencies). Then we came to Buckner, but when I pulled up the homepage, there was all this information about the angels program.”

The couple talked about it and decided it would be a good experience, a sort of litmus test of life as full-time parents. Little did they know what began as an experiment would change their lives like nothing else.

“It was tough the first four days. I was on the phone a lot crying, ‘I don't know what to do with Dima,’” she said. “He was very introverted; I think he was scared, and he missed his friends.”

After a play date with other host program participants and a few rounds of ping-pong with Leinweber, Dima slowly shed his cool exterior, and a lively little boy emerged.

“He showed his personality more toward the latter half of the visit,” he remembered. “We formed a bond, and we perceived that he also was connecting with us.”

The day Dima left, his prospective mother said she felt an aching in her heart—the kind of longing a mother feels when she's separated from her

child. In just 15 days, Dima and the Leinwebers had gone from strangers distanced by language to kindred souls bound by love.

“He's our kid. He is the child we've been praying for, and we've got to get him home,” she said, near tears.

A marketing professional, Mrs. Leinweber has dedicated a website to the cause, aptly titled [www.bringdimahome.com](http://www.bringdimahome.com). After years of desperately trying to conceive, the Leinwebers are on a new quest to adopt. But resources are limited and, with recent developments, time is short. Just two months ago, they learned Dima soon would be transferred to an orphanage for teenagers, making adoption unlikely.

With the clock ticking, the couple contacted Buckner International Adoption, completed their preliminary paperwork and participated in a home study. Now they're appealing to friends, family, the Christian community—and even talk show host Oprah Winfrey—to help them raise the remaining \$27,000 in expenses. A friend of a friend referred the family to a producer at Harpo Studios in Chicago, where “The Oprah Winfrey Show” is taped. They hope the doyenne of daytime talk will air their story and help generate support.

“We're turning over every rock and deploying viral marketing to get the word out and drive people to the website,” said Leinweber, who works in civilian life as a project manager for a pharmaceutical services provider. “We're also passing out fliers that say, 'Help me find my way home' with little footprints and Dima's picture. ... You do what you have to do for your family.”

For information on ways to help these families, call Mary Ann Hamby at Buckner International Adoption, (214) 381-1552, ext. 226.

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