

I called our church leader in desperation, asking for help, and they responded in the most amazing way. Not only did they provide meals for us for ten days straight, they ensured that food arrived at our door hot and ready to eat at mealtimes. Removing the element of food preparation completely broke the cycle of stress for our little boy and his anxiety levels dropped right down. We were able to establish consistent routines and begin to gain his trust, while keeping things calm to help our daughter through such a huge transition. What our church did was simple and practical, but there are no words to explain the significance of it and the difference it made for our family.

- Marie, adoptive parent

We have cared for more than twenty children over the past decade and our church has welcomed each one, and often helps us practically in different ways. Recently, a little boy was placed with us who had experienced extensive trauma and struggled with extremely challenging behaviour – it was our toughest placement to date. We questioned whether we could even take him to church but every week we were reassured that we were welcome there, and more importantly, that he was welcome there. Wherever possible, our leaders tried to engage him, and if it came to a situation when my wife or I had to step in, then nobody made a big deal of it. The best thing was that nobody stared. It made it possible for us to be able to help him calm down and then he could re-engage with the activity without it being an issue.

- Tim, foster carer

We were on holiday this summer with our little foster child. We really wanted to get to church on the Sunday but hadn't had time to research one beforehand, and didn't have a good enough signal to look on our phones. So we just went into the nearest church hoping for the best, not a little nervous about how she would cope in a new setting and what kind of response we might get. Would she be too loud? Would she be unsettled? Would she even stay? When we arrived the vicar came over and introduced himself. I felt able to share our concerns with him, only to be told, 'Oh don't worry about anything – we are a Home for Good church and we have several adoptive and foster families here. We understand your concerns.' He went on to show us around so she knew where things were, and he left us with the words, 'You are very welcome here.' It was amazing to find such a safe and welcoming place where we could worship together.

- Frances, foster carer

There are many ways that our church has shown that they are with us and for us as we have started fostering. We received so much encouragement and prayer as we started the process, and one church member looked after our birth children every week so we could attend the eight weeks of preparation workshops.

We asked a few individuals and families to join our 'official' support network, and they have all been DBS checked so they can offer practical help with placements – as well as emotional support for us. We were delighted that others heard about this group and asked to join! We've had meals provided and the loan of clothes and toys as children have come into our home.

We have been so touched by the way so many in our church have been sensitive to our change in lifestyle, and we feel very strengthened by the shared heart and vision of others. It really does make a big difference to know people are standing with us who understand what we are doing and why!

- Stu and Livy, foster carers

Sadly, we had to leave our last church. It broke our heart to do it but we had to put our adopted son first, and they just didn't understand our concerns when they started using Facebook to broadcast services live. We explained the risks of him being on social media but their solution was that we should just keep him to the side – meaning he would never be able to engage in services with the other children. Our church now is completely different. They do all they can to make us feel welcome and valued and reviewed all their policies with us so we knew he would be safe.

They seem genuinely pleased that we are there, and want to put our needs first. It has certainly restored my faith in church!

- Helen, adoptive parent

NB. Some names have been changed