

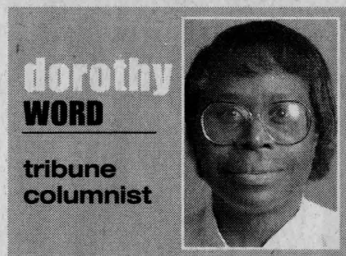
# Spring means it is time to celebrate motherhood

Spring is in the air and so is Motherhood (and Fatherhood). But don't take my word for it. Ask Christi and Mike. They have been married for 12½ years, and now they are brand-new parents. Their newborn, a healthy Caucasian baby girl, was just three weeks old when I asked Christi about the baby and the adoption process.

After nine and a half years of trying to have children, Christi marvels at how this private adoption came about so quickly and so smoothly. "Amazing," says Christi, affirming that the Hand of God and His faithfulness were evident throughout the whole adoption process.

It all began in mid-February 2003. A birth mother put her baby up for private adoption. That, of course, involved lawyers. At that particular time, none of the lawyers had names of couples on their waiting lists, couples waiting to adopt a baby. Christi and Mike weren't on any waiting list either.

An alert, knowledgeable person who knew one of the lawyers and



also knew Christi and Mike communicated with both sides so they could make connections. Soon Christi's own lawyer became involved in the proceedings too. By mid-March, the necessary interviews, the necessary paperwork, especially the Home Study were all finished in record time. And the baby arrived. It usually doesn't happen that fast.

A Home Study is a massive, thorough examination. It includes assessing the marriage, the medical records, and assessing the psychological and economic stability in the home. It involves interviewing the family, friends and neighbors done by social workers.

A long waiting list is a normal part of the Home Study. Sometimes couples are on the waiting

list for years. Then, after all the paperwork and court procedures, there is still another waiting period – waiting for the child.

Karen and Brian faced the "waiting game" back in the 1980s when they decided to adopt. The Home Study waiting period for them was seven years! Not wanting to wait that long for a Home Study plus "X" number of years waiting for a child, they turned to international adoption.

Karen and Brian discovered a private agency in Oregon that they trusted. The agency, Holt International Children's Services, had a good reputation of keeping children with their parents if at all possible; but if not possible, then adoption – keeping the child's best interest in mind.

As the mother of three international children and as a former professor of Family Studies at Purdue and IU Kokomo, Karen is very knowledgeable on this subject. And she was very generous in sharing a wealth of adoption information with me. Thanks, Karen!

"Accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative" when it comes

to adoption attitudes. That would be Karen's suggestion, I'm sure. "Bad" adoptions make the news headlines much more often than the stories of successful adoptions. It should be the other way around.

Being older parents, being single, being infertile are the main reasons for adoptions. At any given time in the U.S., an estimated one million people are seeking to adopt a child; and in America about 120,000 children are adopted by non-relatives each year. While most adoptions are outside of the child's "family tree," most adoptions stay within that child's race.

In the 1980s there were racial barriers that prevented or slowed cross-race adoptions. In the 1990s there were less barriers. The number of African-American children waiting to be adopted is more than 120,000 and researchers are now saying that cross-race adoption is no longer a problem.

Really? I wonder.

The perception that there are more international adoptions taking place than American-born

adoptions is false. There are only 12,000 international children available for adoption each year compared to the 120,000 American-born children who are adopted each year.

Magazines like "The Adoptive Family" are good resources because they publish lists of licensed, approved adoption agencies.

Karen cautions couples who want to adopt to avoid risky situations. Dealing with an individual lawyer or an independent adoption agency is the most risky. A public agency involves a long wait but is safer. The place of choice is probably a private agency like Holt International.

Karen and Christi and mothers everywhere will recognize the motherly wisdom of these proverbs: "No gift to your mother can ever equal her gift to you – life" (author unknown). "A mother understands what a child does not say" (Jewish Proverb). "An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergymen" (Spanish Proverb).

*Dorothy Word of Kokomo is a retired teacher.*