

Preface

It's April 2008 and my husband Bart and I have just finished dinner with eight of our twelve children. The occasion: the legal finalization of our last adoption, which will bring our family size to fourteen.

As we look down the long, crowded table of mostly teenagers, we are reminded of the journey that began nearly twelve years ago. We also remember a more recent journey, in which we spent two weeks in Great Britain and where this book had its genesis.

We were tourists, gazing at historical sites, taking pictures, trying new foods, learning about bus schedules, weather patterns, non-American washing machines and energy converters. We saw much of what we wanted to see and then we went home, likely never to return. We still have vivid memories of those two weeks, but much of what we acquired was information only, useful if we were to meet others heading to the same place.

Our journey as adoptive parents, however, differs from our trip to Great Britain. Our children have come to us emotionally damaged -- angry, sad, lost -- but not broken. The road we travel together is both hard and meaningful. Like any travelers experiencing a new geography, we have discovered potholes, unexpected turns, steep inclines, terrifying descents and, every so often, a mountain vista that takes the breath away.

Through this ever-expanding adventure we continue to reflect and learn, and because what we have learned might help you, we are compelled to share our story. For though we will not pass this way again, life might lead you down a similar path. Our hope is that these shared experiences will lighten the load and make life a little easier for all of us. And most importantly, for the children we love.

On this journey we are not tourists. We are already home.