

**Resolution on Supporting Legislation
Regarding the Rights of Adult Adoptees and their Natural Parents**
from the Presbytery of Newton
Affirmed in 1981 at General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),
and Synod of the Northeast

Whereas: God our Creator saw fit to use an adult adoptee who was well aware of the truth of his origins (Moses) to deliver the Israelites from bondage to the Egyptians:

Whereas: The Psalmist acknowledged the presence of God in the Creation of every individual when he said, "You created every part of me; you put me together in my mother's womb ...when I was there - you saw me before I was born", and

Whereas: Isaiah affirmed the unlikelihood of a mother's ability to erase the memory of a child she bore when he said, "So the Lord answers, 'Can a woman forget her own child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?'" and

Whereas: Jesus said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free" (John 8:32); and

Whereas: the "sealed records laws" instituted in the last five decades have prevented adopted persons, over whom a contract is made in their infancy when they are helpless to participate in it, from ordinarily knowing the truth of their origins by permanently sealed birth certificates and agency and court records pertaining to their adoption; and

Whereas: although any non-adopted person in the United States has the absolute right to obtain personal vital statistics for a minimal fee, an adoptee must go to court, however expensive and unsuccessful the process, to request a judge to issue a "good cause" order to know the simple truth of who gave birth to her or him; and

Whereas: Because of permanently sealed records, adoptees have no medical, cultural or religious history and often experience emotional anguish; and

Whereas: permanently sealed records have created a mythology about adoption, which is that adopted persons have only one set of parents; the surrender paper in effect becomes a certificate attesting to the death of any relationship at any time between the original parent and child, thus creating for the child a pair of ghost parents who are not in their graves but who may live in the next town, or have hereditary illnesses that do not surface until they are in their middle years (long after any medical history is taken at the child's birth), and whose children, born later, may unknowingly risk incest when they attend college or work in the same places with their half sisters or brothers; and

Whereas: "Our Lord spoke often of acceptance, forgiveness and reconciliation as qualities desirable for believers to experience daily in their human and spiritual growth;

Therefore: the Presbytery of Newton, meeting at Madison, New Jersey, on March 10, 1981, respectfully overtures the 193rd General Assembly as follows:

1. To go on record as supporting the rights of adult adoptees to receive, upon request, copies of their original birth certificates and court and agency records pertaining to their adoption.

2. Supports Title V of the Model State Adoption Act and Procedures, prepared under Section 202 of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment and Adoption Reform Act of 1978, which would grant adult adoptees the aforementioned information and which would grant natural parents more limited rights

3. Through the General Assembly Mission Council, encourages and stimulates synods, presbyteries, and local churches to take the following types of action in supporting adoptees who have reached adulthood, in their desire to know the truth of their origins"

a. Send letters of support to Congresspersons and to the President of the United States.

b. Write letters to the editors of local newspapers and national magazines expressing support of open records

c. Work to help all persons involved in adoption - birth and adoptive parents and adoptees, who comprise 10 percent of our population - face the reality of their situations with honesty, openness and compassion for one another.

NOTE: The following point was included in the original overture presented to and approved by Newton Presbytery and the Synod of the Northeast. It was inadvertently left out of the copy which was distributed at General Assembly (1981) and is therefore not a part of that document reproduced above.

4. Support proposed state open records legislation in individual states.