

IMMK

Church Connect

Handbook

Recommendations and Ideas for Connecting International Ministries (IM) Churches and Individuals with International Ministries Missionary Kids (IMMKs)



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IM VISION & CORE VALUES FOR MK & FAMILY CARE

Vision

We desire to see International Ministries Missionary Kids (IMMKs) and their families engaging in healthy relationships with God, each other, those outside their families, and their cultures; thriving through transition and adventure; and following Jesus in active discipleship as both individuals and families.

Because of this, we believe in MK Care: The ongoing process of enabling missionary kids' emotional, spiritual and physical health through nurturing growth in their relationships to God, themselves, their family, the church, culture, peers, International Ministries, and others by providing support, avenues of communication, educational assistance, resources and understanding. We believe that the healthy/resilient family will have healthy kids; therefore, the role of those involved in caregiving is to come alongside the parents in a supportive, encouraging, and equipping way in order to assist in building healthy individuals and families.

Core Values

- ❖ Because of the model of servanthood Christ demonstrated, His command to “love one another,” and the commitment to unity He taught in John 13-17, we are committed to serving and to living out these Biblical mandates as they apply to our MKs, parents and organization.
- ❖ We are committed to meeting the life-long needs (personal, spiritual, emotional, and academic) of MKs as children, adolescents and adults.
- ❖ We are committed to the development of programs and services to better meet the needs of our families and MKs personally, spiritually, and emotionally.
- ❖ We believe that MKs are of great personal worth and that they have tremendous ability to impact the world in significant ways because of their background and experiences as MKs. Therefore, we work with parents to develop and release the potential of MKs.
- ❖ We are committed to serving in all aspects of the flow of care: preparing MKs and families for living and ministering overseas, supporting them while overseas, and assisting them in transition and re-entry.



WHY IMMK CHURCH CONNECT?

The goal of IMMK Church Connect is to fulfill our vision of making sure that each of our MKs and their families feel strongly connected to God, each other, International Ministries, and the churches who send and support them. As we follow the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, it is our responsibility to do whatever we can to love our MKs at every stage of life and help them to live into their identity as children of God and as our first mission field.

To fulfill this goal, we are encouraging American Baptist churches to be intentional in ministering to IMMKs and their families and experience the joy of connecting them to the church family who will intercede regularly for their children's spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being. We desire to let the MKs know that they have value and are important in and of themselves (and not just because of their parents' ministry). Our aim is longevity of care, rather than care for a season, allowing churches to build and maintain relationships with MKs.

SUGGESTIONS FOR LOCAL CHURCHES

1) Appoint an IMMK Connect team.

This team may be composed of individuals from different ministry groups in your church—women's ministry, children's ministry, youth ministry, missions committee, etc. This team can form the foundation for how your church can connect with your church's IMMKs. The team may reach out to the Global Coordinator for MK and Family Care to assist with that connection.

2) Pray for your MKs.

Share this important ministry with the entire church family. One idea would be to assign different small groups a specific day of the week to regularly pray for your IMMKs (see "How to Pray for MKs"). Ask for current prayer requests, as well as using "How to Pray for MKs" bulletin inserts (available on request) a few times each year. Pray for your IMMKs during the worship service and encourage church members to remember your church's IMMKs in prayer daily.

3) Communicate regularly with your MKs and their family.

Ask your IMMK family them the best way to communicate with them. Frequent cards, letters, and emails will let them know that they are important. Keep praying and writing even if your MK (or their family) does not always respond! And of course, remember special occasions such as birthdays and holidays (see "Giving Gifts to Your MK"). Encourage children and youth in the church to write personal notes or to connect with MKs on social media. We want IMMKs to have a sense of connection and friendship with the kids and youth in your church.



4) Plan special ways to connect with and bless your IMMK family during their home assignment months.

When your IMMK family is on home assignment, invite them to your church. Be creative and plan special events for the MKs, like a pizza party with their kids/youth and a time for learning about their lives. **If they would like to participate**, offer your MKs the opportunity to share in Sunday school or at church (*but don't force them if they aren't comfortable with it, and be understanding of shy MKs*). Extend an open invitation to the church so that everyone can connect with your MKs and their family. Communicate with the IMMK family ahead of time to let them know how you plan to welcome their MKs (otherwise, the MKs might just stay home!). Offer extra travel funds so that MKs can travel with their parents, since their expenses are not paid for through work funds.

Looking for special ways to bless an IMMK family during their home assignment? Offer to sponsor a fun experience for their family during their time in the U.S., for example: tickets to a zoo, amusement park, or water park; tickets to a Christian concert; an adventure or sporting experience like whitewater rafting or skiing. Provide scholarships for the MKs to attend church camp if they are in the U.S. during the summer.

And don't forget that your IMMK family may have special needs during home assignment time, like a vehicle to use for their travels, temporary housing, and winter clothing if they are used to living in a tropical country but will be spending winter in a cold U.S. state.

5) When your IMMK graduates from high school and returns to the U.S., your connection is needed more than ever!

Even if the MK lives in or attends college in a different city, please help find a family who will open their home to your MK during weekends, vacations, and school breaks. Send special care packages to their college campus or wherever they are staying. Gift cards to restaurants in their area, to Wal-Mart or Target, or to Amazon.com are always appreciated. If you are in the area, stop by and offer to take them out for lunch. Ask if they need to go shopping for anything, including clothes for the different seasons (particularly winter, if necessary). Consider how you might help college MKs with summer employment and living arrangements.

6) Be faithful and continue the connection as long as possible.

Local churches and individuals are strongly encouraged to maintain a connection with their MKs at least through the first four years after high school graduation (or until completion of college). The transition back to the U.S. as an adult without the support of their parents is often the hardest for MKs and the time when they most need your support. We desire to keep MKs strongly connected to a church when possible.



HOW TO PRAY FOR MKS

Pray that they will love and trust Jesus. Just because their parents are missionaries, that doesn't automatically mean that MKs have a personal relationship with Jesus! Just like other kids, they are growing and learning about Jesus, and watching to see how God may be at work around them. Pray that they will learn to love Jesus for Who He is and what He has done for them, and not just because their parents do. Pray that as they grow physically, they would also grow in their faith.

Pray for their relationships with others. The MK life is a transient life, and both the MKs and those around them often come and go. Pray that our MKs will have honest and joyful relationships with their parents; close friendships between siblings; meaningful relationships with other Christian adults; and good friendships locally, as well as lasting friendships with others around the world. Pray, too, that they would interact well with the people in their host culture.

Pray for cultural adjustment. Living cross-culturally is a blessing, but it's not without its difficulties. Pray that MKs would find good balance in their host culture – being able to assimilate and accept what is good in their new culture, as well as having the wisdom to identify worldviews that collide with truth. Pray that they will feel accepted where they live; that they will cope well when they feel “different;” and that they will appreciate their unique experiences.

Pray for language acquisition. Not understanding what people around you are saying can be confusing and stressful, and it can be hard to make friends if you don't understand the language. Pray for patience, quick learning, and for language not to be a barrier.

Pray for their daily life in their new country. Pray for their schooling, whether that is in a local school, international school, or homeschool. Pray that they would be well-prepared educationally to make the transition to college. Pray that they would have times of fun and respite and enjoy new experiences in their host country. Pray that they would be supportive of their parents' ministry, and that the family would find a good balance between ministry and family time.

Pray for their families that are left behind in the U.S. MKs don't have the joy of growing up with their grandparents and extended family members nearby. Pray that, in spite of the distance, MKs would be able to maintain good relationships with families overseas and pray for the family that misses them.

Pray for their safety. Life overseas can sometimes be unsafe due to natural disasters, unstable governments, hazardous travel, pollution, inadequate medical care, and foreign



illnesses. Pray that the Lord would keep our MKs safe and, if crisis hits, that they will keep trusting God to be in control and take care of them.

Pray for times of transition and goodbyes. MKs often have to cope with constant change and goodbyes, as they move from place to place or as others around them leave. Pray that our MKs would be emotionally healthy; that they would be able to say goodbye well and deal with the grief that comes from the loss of friends, family, and places and things they love. Pray that they will adapt well when they have to spend time back in the U.S. after a period of living overseas (whether returning for deputation or for college), as that transition can prove difficult. Pray that they would trust God through their times of transition.

Here are more specific prayers you can pray for MKs:

- “May _____ find his/her primary identity in Jesus.”
- “Provide _____ good friendships with both local kids and other MKs.”
- “Help _____ adjust to the culture and learn the language.”
- “Create in _____ a love for both his/her host culture and passport culture.”
- “Give _____ grace for transitions and goodbyes, and may he/she learn to grieve well.”
- “Graciously provide _____ a healthy, open relationship with his/her parents.”
- “Grant _____ safety and health, physically, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually.”
- “Provide spiritual protection for _____ so that Your truth would prevail in his/her heart and mind.”
- “Grant _____ wisdom and a teachable spirit.”
- “May _____ learn to trust You, God, in all of life’s circumstances.”
- “May _____ always seek You and Your Kingdom first.”

GIVING GIFTS TO YOUR MKS

Sending gifts to MKs blesses both of you. What do you send to MKs? Ask their parents for suggestions. Also ask MK parents before sending a package overseas. Sometimes packages can be complicated or costly to receive. Ask parents if there are creative ways to give gifts (funding an “experience” the family might not otherwise be able to afford, for example). Consider coordinating with the parents so that they can buy a gift locally with money you have collected, or ask how to send a check to their US bank account.

