

Fall/Winter
2024

on location

A group of IM missionary kids at the All-Staff Gathering this past summer.



Missionary kids can slip through the cracks if we're not careful.

For missionary kids (MKs), going overseas with your parents is not just a journey; it's a life-changing experience. You meet new people, master challenging languages, and explore exotic cuisine. Most importantly, you get to see with fresh eyes what the kingdom of God looks like worldwide.

But that's not the whole picture. You also glimpse poverty, war, injustice, and heartbreak. You may find yourself asking, "What is God doing? Why did he put me in this place and among these people?"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

A Message From Sharon Koh



Children have a right to feel loved, safe, and special. But if we fail to pay attention, kids can disappear into the whirlwind of ministry.

I'm not just talking about the children we serve through IM-supported projects around the world – children who have survived trafficking, abuse, injustice, and poverty. I'm also talking about our missionary kids (MKs).

Research tells us that nearly half of MKs grow up feeling alone, at risk, and like they come in second to their parents' ministry. These kids are highly likely to walk away from their faith as adults. **It doesn't have to be this way.**

Many years ago, IM committed to addressing the emotional, relational, and spiritual needs of our MKs and their families. We invested our resources and energy into that commitment by appointing Debby Witmer as the IM global coordinator for MK and family care. Under her leadership, we've seen our MKs flourish, whether on the field, on home assignments, or in college.

Jesus had a lot to say about children. "See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:10). What we invest today in children, we reap in a future that looks a little more like the kingdom of God "on earth as it is in heaven." With 210 years of global service, IM is dedicated to seeing that future become a reality.

In this edition of On Location, you'll not only see how Debby is bringing our MKs closer to God and each other, but you'll also discover how one couple, Wayne and Ingrid Dvirnak, is investing in IM through donor-advised funds that will create an impact long after they're gone.

Crafting a sustainable ministry means partnering with people of all ages to establish a legacy for future generations. You're never too young or too old to matter to God or to us. That's our commitment to our global servants, their children, our ministry partners, and you!

Please join us by giving to global servants like Debby, investing in our MK care ministry, or considering if a donor-advised fund might be right for you.

Together with you in mission,

Rev. Dr. Sharon T. Koh
Executive Director / CEO

Inspired by what you read? If you would like to equip IM global servants to share the gospel, please use the enclosed reply envelope to send your gift of support or donate online: **internationalministries.org**

Help us reduce costs when you receive an electronic version of this newsletter instead. To receive our e-communications, subscribe at **portal.internationalministries.org**

Connect with us!

-  [internatmin](#)
-  [internatmin](#)
-  [InternationalMinistries](#)
-  [IntlMinistries](#)
-  [international-ministries](#)

Questions?

imdonorservices@internationalministries.org

Growing Up Global: Helping MKs Find Their Place in God's Kingdom



Debby Witmer
MK Global Coordinator

Life as a missionary kid is defined by goodbyes.

"The world of people living overseas is a mobile world," says Debby Witmer, IM's global MK and family care coordinator. "Just when you get attached to someone, it's time to say goodbye."

When a new global servant family sets out from the U.S. to their assigned country, their kids lose everything – their house, food, and the people who matter to them—all in a single plane ride. It takes about two years for children to start building roots in a new country.

"By the fourth year of a family's assignment," Debby says, "the new country feels like home. And just then, it's time to return to the U.S. for a year."

Home assignment is a chance to reconnect with family and friends in the U.S. and plow into a pile of yummy food. Once again, however, those benefits come at an enormous price.

Debby describes the MK mindset: I'm going to be living with relatives or friends. I'm going to be on the road visiting churches, and I have to be on my best behavior because my parents need the money to serve God.

Other MKs who go on home assignments also think: Oh, I've got friends there. I'll reconnect. Unfortunately, reconnections



are rare, and relationships don't automatically go back to how they were, which may intensify an MK's feeling of isolation.

Each goodbye, each transition, stacks up like blocks on a tower. The average missionary kid enters college with 20 blocks on their tower of grief – more than most American adults will experience in their lifetime.

Goodbyes are everyday life for most MKs, but what if someone in the family has to be hospitalized or medically evacuated? What if political turmoil makes the country unsafe? What if you're robbed? What if you have to leave at a moment's notice with no chance to say goodbye?

Statistics give the answer: Eight in 10 MKs aged 18-26 report having severe depression or anxiety. One in five will leave the faith entirely, becoming an atheist or an agnostic.

In Mark 8:36, Jesus asks, "What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?" We might ask a similar question, "What good is it for a global servant to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others yet forfeit their children's well-being?"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

IM missionary kids play a game during the MK program at the All-Staff Gathering this past summer.



And that is why we have MK care.

At International Ministries, our ministry priorities include health and wellness for youth and young adults – in addition to the health and wellness of our global servants and their families.

As the MK and family care coordinator, Debby works with MKs individually and in special places and times – such as during our MK conferences – to help them understand they always have a home with Jesus. He is the source of their identity. God has a special plan for them. And He can teach them how to transform their challenges into something uniquely beautiful for His glory.

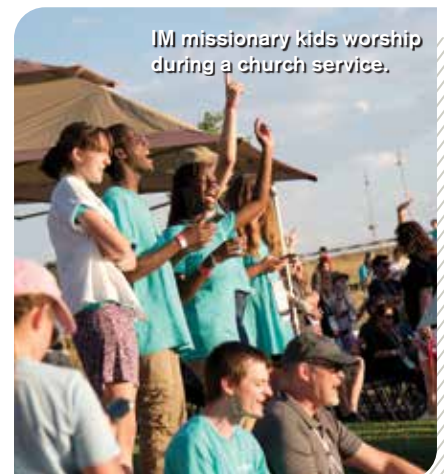
Debby also helps parents understand how to raise resilient kids overseas. Healthy families don't happen by accident—they are the result of intentional discipleship and formation, which can look different when raising kids in cultures outside of the U.S.



IM Global Coordinator for MK Care Debby Witmer presents artwork created by IM missionary kids.

If God is prompting you to invest in IM's MKs, we invite you to:

1. Pray for our missionary kids!
2. Support college MKs, families in transition, and MK families who come to visit you or your church.
3. Consider giving to God's global mission through IM to support the MK and family care ministry.
4. Learn more about MK care, upcoming events, projects, and other ways to support MKs at internationalministries.org/mk.



IM missionary kids worship during a church service.

More Than Wealth: How Intentional Giving Impacts Generations

Rev. Wayne Dvirnak, a retired American Baptist pastor, and his wife Ingrid, a former program associate for American Baptist Women's Ministries, connected with International Ministries decades ago. They wrote checks to support missionaries and projects, hosted missionaries in their home and churches, and participated in mission trips.

Now in their late 70s, with enough money invested for the rest of their retirement, Wayne and Ingrid began thinking about their legacy. "How can we be responsible with our giving," they asked themselves, "realizing that IM will be here long after we're gone?"

The couple spoke with their financial advisor, who recommended a donor-advised fund (DAF). A DAF is a charitable giving vehicle that you set up with a qualifying nonprofit sponsor. Through a DAF, you can make a charitable donation, receive an immediate tax deduction, and recommend grants from the fund over time.

Wayne and Ingrid are retired. They thought, "Wasn't a DAF only for the mega-wealthy?" Their financial advisor reassured them that a DAF is flexible, allowing them to start with a small contribution, in their case, \$5,000.

As editors of *The Secret Place*, a quarterly devotional magazine published by Judson Press, the Dvirnaks had already invested their time and talents into God's kingdom— but with a DAF, they realized they could leave a lasting financial legacy, too. So, Wayne and Ingrid followed their advisor's recommendation and opened a donor-advised fund.

Since contributions to a DAF are irrevocable, it is essential to work with a sponsoring organization you trust and talk with your family and other prospective heirs before making any decisions. "We never ran out of ways to build the kingdom of God through our giving," Wayne said, "so we didn't worry about that part."

Their family respected the value Wayne and Ingrid placed on giving. "We have written a letter of intent about what we want this donor-advised fund to do, and we talked to our son about it," Ingrid told us. "He gets it."

Already, the Dvirnaks' DAF is making a difference in Ukraine. "We both have ancestral ties to Ukraine, so that explains our passion for that giving opportunity,"

We never ran out of ways to build the kingdom of God through our giving...



Wayne and Ingrid Dvirnak



Marc Kirchoff
Director of Development

mkirchoff@internationalministries.org
610-768-2103

Ingrid explained. "Wayne's grandparents were immigrants from the area near Kyiv. A statue of an ancestor on his grandmother's side of the family stands in Kyiv, and a battleship was also named for him."

Ingrid's father's family were Mennonites who fled persecution in Germany. They were welcomed in Russia/Ukraine because of their work ethic and farming skills. After the political climate in the region changed, however, they migrated to the U.S.

In a way, Wayne and Ingrid are the personal legacy their forebearers left. They are the future their ancestors once sacrificed to make possible. Today, they continue their family's heritage by leaving an ongoing legacy of faith through their family, their publications, and their generosity.

If you would like to know more about how you can leave a legacy through donor-advised funds, charitable gift annuities, or other planned giving vehicles, contact IM Director of Development Marc Kirchoff at **610-768-2103** or mkirchoff@internationalministries.org.

Project Spotlights



Aid to Ukrainian Displaced Persons

You can help some of the 3.7 million Ukrainian people displaced by the war with Russia. These children, women, and men often fled carrying only a single bag of belongings. While some leave Ukraine for another country, others migrate to a peaceful part of Ukraine near Hungary, a historically poor area that has absorbed about 67,000 internally displaced people. The Transcarpathian Baptist Charity Foundation partnered with the local government to provide these unsettled people with food, healthcare, trauma counseling, and hygiene kits. As the war wages on, aid has decreased, and staff has dwindled. With new people arriving daily, the need is urgent and severe. Give a gift to this project today at internationalministries.org/aid-to-ukrainian-displaced-persons.



STEP – Thailand, Children of NightLight Employees

Provide safety and healing for women coming out of sex work in Thailand. Rural families frequently pressure their teenage daughters to leave school and go to the city, where they can make 20 times the salary of a rural job by working in prostitution. Staying in school, however, helps prevent the cycles of poverty and abuse that lead to prostitution and exploitation. Through education, NightLight helps protect vulnerable rural women. Although education through high school is free in Thailand, the associated costs of school uniforms, supplies, and travel are an enormous burden on low-income families. You can make a difference by giving a gift to this project at internationalministries.org/children-of-night-light-employees.

RECONPAZ – Good Living

You can provide clean water and food for 21 communities in Central America that are seeking to care for God's creation. In most places where extractive industries have caused dislocation or destruction of watersheds and water resources, the communities become divided and in conflict. The Christian Continental Network for Peace (RECONPAZ) equips each local community to care for their bodies of water through education, reforestation, and rainwater collection. Community leaders also participate in national and continental gatherings that seek to deepen their understanding of creation care and provide support and accompaniment for communities that often feel isolated. The project's total cost is \$460,000 over three years. Learn how you can help fund this project at internationalministries.org/reconpaz-good-living.



Lebanon – INSAAF Center

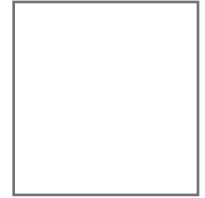
Share Christ's love with some of the 250,000 migrant domestic workers in Lebanon. Victims of abuse and discrimination, these workers live on the fringe of society, unprotected by Lebanese labor laws. Unfortunately, the church has been absent in addressing these atrocities in Lebanon. The INSAAF Center, the only organization of its kind in Lebanon, provides food parcels and medical care for the families who are most in need. INSAAF also offers Bible studies and prayer for women and practical skills courses so migrants can find meaningful work in their home countries when they return. Give a gift to help fund this project at internationalministries.org/lebanon-baggao-insaaf-center.



INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES

1003 W 9th Ave, Ste A
King of Prussia, PA 19406

www.internationalministries.org



Woven together and looking toward the future!



International Ministries' global servants and staff came together for an All-Staff Gathering in Colorado this summer. *It was an incredible time of fellowship, worship, prayer, and envisioning God's future for global mission.*

