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ON EARTH
AS IT IS IN
HEAVEN MATTHEW
6:10

FALL – WINTER 2021



At a school in El Salvador, while children run giggling at recess, soldiers stand nearby with guns ready for any outburst of violence. **For Global Servants Eliberto and Molly Juárez, it felt unbearable to see children surrounded by and often trapped into violence.** What could the church do to bring change?

When Eliberto was growing up in El Salvador, his hometown was caught in the violence of the country's 12-year civil war, which ended in 1992. He persevered through school and in high school became a follower of Jesus, organizing Bible studies for classmates and friends. During and after college, he began working with international organizations focused on evangelism, theological formation, pastoral training, and community development. His own experiences gave him hope that God could use connections between education and faith to transform life in El Salvador.

Across the globe, in a small town in Pennsylvania, Molly found herself thinking from an early age about how to link her faith with the needs around her. After high school, she served for a year in the Dominican Republic and, in 2013, spent the final semester of college serving in El Salvador, where she and Eliberto met.

Molly decided to extend her time in El Salvador, where the violence of civil war had been replaced by widespread gang violence. Children ages 8 to 13 are at high risk of gang recruitment, and youth ages 13 to 23 face a very high risk of violence due to direct or indirect gang activity.

In 2015, Christian leaders from the city of Chalchuapa approached Eliberto with a question: "What more can the church do to bring peace to our community?"

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a message from
SHARON KOH

Dear IM Family,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

As the U.S. seeks to reopen amid rising concerns about COVID variants, we continue to pray for our brothers and sisters in Asia facing a surge in the pandemic and in Haiti, as they respond to the devastation of an earthquake less than six weeks after the assassination of their president.

Through your gifts, our global partners are providing food and medical aid in Haiti, Myanmar, China (including Hong Kong and Macau), India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Mongolia.

In Hong Kong, through our partners Swatow Baptist churches, Metro World Child, and the Moming Society, you helped provide personal protective equipment, daily necessities, and food coupons for the homeless, refugees, ethnic minorities, and underserved families. Through Metro World Child coordinator Pastor Peggy Yeung we have heard that God is bringing amazing impact through these ministries, with many seeking to learn more about the Christian faith. In response, they are developing fellowship groups, times of worship, and opportunities for children to learn about the Bible.

In Myanmar, the place where Adoniram and Ann Judson traveled to share the gospel two centuries ago, the military coup last February brought widespread violence and complicated the country's healthcare system, drastically increasing COVID infections. Your gifts helped to provide medical equipment and humanitarian aid for those suffering with COVID in Myanmar.

Thank you for partnering with IM in these ways and many more. May the Holy Spirit give us the courage to be people who do not fear bad news but in every circumstance with steadfast hearts trust in our God, who is faithful (Psalm 112:17).

Gratefully,

Rev. Sharon Koh
Executive Director / CEO



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We welcome comments on Facebook at International Ministries—American Baptist.

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SOWING SEEDS of peace in El Salvador

Continued from cover

"In the past, the culture promoted Christian teaching inside the churches, but the values were not being practiced in the community," says Eliberto. "After much discussion, the church leaders decided that the best place to plant the seeds of peace and conflict resolution would be in the public schools, where the peace message could be disseminated widely—from children to parents to teachers and into the community."

Eliberto, Molly, local pastors, educators, and psychologists worked together to develop the curriculum for a program, Misión Vida Y Paz (Mission Life and Peace, or MVP). It offers simple tools for students of all ages to become protagonists for peace. **MVP volunteers are trained to guide weekly classroom discussions on how to apply the teaching of Jesus to everyday life. For many children, school is the one place they find hope that they can have a future outside of gangs.**

"MVP has become a family of volunteers and leaders in El Salvador who are committed through their faith to serve as agents of transformation," Eliberto says.

One year after developing the MVP curriculum, Eliberto and Molly were married. As Misión Vida y Paz spread across the country, the couple searched for funding to sustain the ministry and discovered International Ministries through a series of unexpected events.

"I immediately felt connected with Molly and Eliberto's longing for God's peace in El Salvador during our first Skype conversation," says IM Area Director for Iberoamerica and the Caribbean Dr. Adalia Gutiérrez-Lee. "Through MVP, Christian values are nurturing hope for new generations in El Salvador."

Eliberto and Molly moved to Maryland in 2018 to build their Mission Partnership Team and raise the funds needed for MVP. While in the U.S., they are working with recent immigrants from El Salvador and other Central American countries.

"There is something about working directly with those who fled El Salvador that makes the need for peace even more urgent, to change the brokenness that causes migration," Molly explains. "A mother should never have to



An MVP volunteer with children from a school in El Salvador

decide between staying home with the risk of death threats for her son, or traveling to the U.S. and risking the lives of her family to the dangers of the journey through Guatemala and Mexico. The stories I hear affirm my own conviction that MVP has power to make changes for peace."

There are also stories of MVP's continuing impact: children cheering when MVP volunteers walk into classrooms or asking if MVP classes can go longer. After a year of MVP at one school rife with gangs, the principal said, "I know MVP is making a difference. Never before have we gone the entire school year without having to paint over graffiti in the bathrooms. This year no one graffitied at all! Your work is really touching the kids!" The absence of gang-related graffiti meant that these children felt less of a need to "show power" within the school.

"The schools don't just see us as a Christian group in the schools," Molly says, "but truly as a group of people who want to invest in our community and transform the lives of young people. Eliberto and I now need to grow a network who will partner through time and giving, who believe in the power of education, who believe that peace is possible, even in the darkest storms. A strong network has the power to impact thousands of lives."

Will you pray for MVP to continue and to flourish? To learn more or give to this ministry, visit www.internationalministries.org/author/juarez/.



CARING FOR IM's missionary kids

In April 2021, Global Servant Debby Witmer became IM's Global Coordinator for Missionary Kid (MK) and Family Care. For seven years, Debby, Kyle, and their four children have been serving in the areas of theological education and leadership development in Thailand. As Kyle continues in that role, Debby will bring her experience as a parent and a missionary to serve IM's sixty missionary kids and the unique needs of families engaged in cross-cultural mission. Here you can find out more about how IM supports MKs.



Q: Why did you decide to take on this role?

A: My husband, Kyle, and I were commissioned as IM global servants to Thailand in 2014, but Kyle's partnership with the Thailand Karen Baptist Convention and his teaching role at Siloam Bible Institute have been the main focus of our time here, as I have been busy in the role of homeschooling mom. Now I find myself at a new stage in life, with only one of my four kids still at home. When [IM Associate Executive Director for Global Mission] Jim Bell and [IM Executive Director/CEO] Sharon Koh approached me in January about this position, I immediately felt a little spark of passion ignite inside me. When I asked my kids their opinion of me taking this on, they all responded in exactly the same way, saying, "Mom, you'd be perfect in that role!" They were so encouraging, and as I began to pray and think through the possibilities, my mind filled with vision and ideas and I felt the Holy Spirit confirming more and more that it was indeed a good fit.

Photo: Debby plays a game with the children of Global Servants Alise and Mark Juanes.

Q: What is your vision for this role?

A: Within a few days of being invited into this role, a vision emerged in my mind of IM Missionary Kids (MKs) 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. First and foremost, MKs need parents who understand their journey and are prepared to guide them on it, and they need to be able to develop trust through active discipleship and communication with their parents. And both parents and their MKs need someone who can provide them with the resources and help they need to do this well. Then, when the difficulties of transition (and other struggles) arise, MKs and their parents have the relationship and tools needed not only to survive but to thrive together.

Q: Why is this role so important?

A: As part of IM's Responding to the Call strategic initiative, IM developed ministry priority areas, one of which includes care for personnel. We believe that MK and family care is a vital part of this. Research has shown that a large number of MKs in the 18 to 27 age range struggle with anxiety and depression, have difficulty building lasting relationships, and express a feeling of rootlessness and lack of belonging. 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. This means remaining actively, intentionally, and holistically involved in their lives.

Q: What does the role entail?

A: There are a few general responsibilities, for instance heading up the children and youth programs at the Conference for Missionaries each year and being a part of the Member Care Working Group. As the pandemic allows, I hope to visit MKs in their host countries or in the U.S. during their United States/Puerto Rico assignment or endorsement. But there is also a lot of flexibility built into this role, and it has been fun to allow the Holy Spirit's leading and my own creativity to guide me. My first two goals have been to connect with the MK families, and then to begin connecting them with each other. I have already heard from families how much encouragement they've found in getting to know each other and in having their kids become acquainted as well. The teens especially need to find their "tribe," who understand them and share similar life experiences. I've created and am giving

resources to a Facebook group for MK families and offering biweekly Zoom parties for the teens. I also want to support the families' Mission Partnership Teams as much as possible, so we've begun a monthly newsletter of resources for those people who are supporting MK families. Upcoming projects include initiatives for young adult MKs.

Q: How can we best pray for you?

A: Pray that I will connect well with the MKs and parents as I build relationships. Pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to give me vision and ideas for how best to connect MKs and their families to each other because many of them are desperate for community. Also pray that God will give me whatever I need in order to fulfill this role well.

Photos: Debby with Kyle and their four children



GLOBAL IMPACT through local West Virginia women's groups

"My first experience with the American Baptist Women's Ministries [ABWM] of West Virginia was as a young woman just married," says Kathy Hudson, the group's current president. "I loved how a small group of women at my local church worked together to impact people across the world in the name of Jesus."

The first West Virginia Baptist women's group formed in a Parkersburg church in 1879. Today the West Virginia ABWM encompasses nearly four hundred West Virginia churches in all fifty-five counties in the state, with a state board of directors led by fifteen women. The women meet together for two statewide annual gatherings, where "relationships are formed, maintained, and a camaraderie is established," says Sue Hamric, the West Virginia ABWM communications coordinator. "Each lady attending any of these events takes our annual projects back to her church or churches in their associations."

Every year the larger group commits to raising funds for both local and global projects, and together the women have a nearly 150-year history of empowering transformative projects in both their state and communities around the world.



Photo: A team from WV ABWM prepares for their virtual 2020 Annual Conference with IM Global Servant Rhonda Reed (in back of truck). Group president Kathy Hudson is standing by the front door.



Photo: WV ABWM members have lunch with IM Global Servant Denise Aragón (seated middle, with Sue Hamric second from right).

The group maintains an ongoing partnership with IM Global Servants J.D. and Rhonda Reed in Bolivia, Debby and Keith Myers in Mexico, and Denise and Juan Aragón in Mexico. Their 2021 projects include raising \$6,000 for the House of Hope in Bolivia, where the Reeds are serving. Past projects have included purchasing a vehicle for the Aragóns and helping fund an economic development project in South Africa through IM Global Servants Drs. Rick and Anita Gutierrez.

"Why do we do all this work?" Sue asks. "Because we take very seriously the scripture in Matthew 25:40: 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

"The annual projects allow women to see the needs of our missionaries and others internationally and within our own country and state," Kathy explains. "ABWM has taken me on a journey of faith and service surrounded by women who love God. I thank God for this experience."

To find out how your church group can partner with IM's global servants and partners, email imdonorservices@internationalministries.org.



THAILAND: HOUSE OF LOVE

Founded in 1995 to provide hospice care for women with HIV and care for at-risk hill tribe children, the House of Love in Chiang Mai is today seeking to expand its ministry outside its walls. The national staff and Global Servants Alise and Mark Juanes are working to increase overall support for families in the community, serving many more children and helping to bring change into whole families. Funds will train staff to use their experience with child development and trauma care out in the community, prepare families to care for their children through coaching and support, and provide basic meals, education, and counseling for the children living in the House of Love. \$1,000 will prepare a family to be reunited with their child.



LOTT CAREY NAAMC SCHOLARSHIP

Give scholarship funds through the National African American Missions Council (NAAMC) to support a Black missionary candidate and lessen the costs of her or his first term of service overseas. Black missionaries face great challenges to secure ongoing committed funding for cross-cultural ministry, and NAAMC scholarships are a realistic way in which IM can come alongside and support Black missionaries. The annual award of \$1,600 will be given in memory of missionary to Liberia Lott Carey, who in 1819 was the first Black missionary appointed by the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions (the predecessor to International Ministries).



SOUTH AFRICA: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Train and equip leaders in sustainable agriculture that will reduce poverty and nutrition-related diseases in South Africa. Global Servants Drs. Anita and Rick Gutierrez are working to integrate poultry raising, gardening, and growing fruit trees into one mission project that will create mini-farms. Each farm will be managed and owned by a partner who can recruit and train ten more students in sustainable agriculture. These partners have shown initiative in serving their community and are committed to share the word of God. \$1,000 will establish a complete mini-farm for a leader and family.



COLOMBIA, ECUADOR, MEXICO, CENTRAL AMERICA: HELP FOR MIGRANTS

Provide food, water, upgraded facilities, educational materials, trauma workshops, sleeping materials, and personal hygiene items for ten migrant shelters in this project led by IM Global Consultant Ray Schellinger. Our partners are struggling to find the resources they need to minister to the 25 million refugees and 65 million internally displaced people fleeing violence, persecution, or natural disasters who need shelter and care. \$1,000 can purchase beds, mattresses, sheets, and blankets for twenty people.

To partner in these or other projects, visit <https://portal.internationalministries.org/find-a-project>.

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More info to come: www.internationalministries.org/category/events