

Dear Parent,

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Lance Shumake. For the past 15 years, I have worked with high school and college students as a youth minister, teacher, evangelist, and now as the Director of iWitness Ministries. The fact that you are reading this letter adds further confirmation to the observation that God is stirring the hearts of the students in this generation towards missions. The number of high school and college students that are searching for ways to get involved in international missions continues to grow. It is exciting to see God using students in such strategic and significant ways across the planet.

As a parent, however, I can understand that there might be some concerns as well as questions mixed in with your excitement. Our natural tendency is to worry, fear, and desire to have all the answers. Of course, God's plan most often requires simple trust, obedience, and a willingness to follow Him no matter what the circumstances may appear to be. In today's world filled with uncertain circumstances, those that serve on our staff and our board of directors at iWitness Ministries are committed to trusting, obeying, and following. It is our desire to see students and their parents do the same. Please know that we are proceeding prayerfully with our plans for summer teams, even as we give careful attention to world events.

Understandably, parents call us every year as ask us what we are doing to ensure the safety of their son or daughter. Let me first answer that question this way. There is nothing we can do that could guarantee or "ensure" the safety of your child. However, we are committed to doing everything we humanly can to keep your son or daughter out of harm's way. iWitness Ministries is an independent 501c(3) organization, but we do work closely with the International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention. The IMB is the largest mission sending agency in the world with more than 100 years of experience in caring for the needs of their missionaries. The policy of the IMB is that they will not knowingly send people into areas where their missionary personnel on the field, after input from the American embassy in their area, believe there to be danger to those who would come. As we monitor the situation in each of our locations, we are able to rely on the IMB's experience and expertise as a valuable resource.

Each student serves with iWitness as part of a team with a recognized team leader. Each team leader has overseas experience, usually in the same location where the team will be serving. In addition, our teams work alongside career missionaries on the field. These missionaries know specifically what to do in case of an emergency.

As believers, we will of course pray that God will keep us safe, but we have to remember that God's greatest desire for us is obedience. That does not mean that we will always be safe. Regardless of how unstable the world may seem, the mission of making God famous in all the earth has not changed. As you pray through the decision to allow your student to pursue this opportunity, please know that we believe that your permission and blessing will enable your child to become even more the person that you truly desire for him or her to be. If you have any other questions or would like to talk to me personally, please feel free to call me at 469-698-0125 or 866-809-0125.

Sincerely,

Lance Shumake