

# Oikonomos International

PO Box 187, Harborcreek, PA 16421

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Brothers and Sisters,

Consider the following scenario. You are a missionary, serving the Lord overseas. You have been there a little more than four years. You have an apartment or a row house near the church, and the ministry is showing fruit. But you have just received a reminder. Your Missions Agency has a Home Ministry Assignment (HMA) and the IRS requires that you leave the field for 6 months to 1 year in order to remain eligible for Social Security when you retire.

You start to think through the implications of this requirement. You can't afford the expenses of a home overseas, and the cost of being back in the US. Nor is it wise to leave a house empty for six months or longer. In addition, over the next three to six months, you will have to pack up your household goods and put them into storage. You will cancel your lease and your utilities, and you will make arrangements for mail to be forwarded. During this time, the work of ministry will suffer.



And then you think about what will be required when you return. The hunt for a new apartment or house may take months. There may not be anything available, at least not close to the church, or it might not be as affordable. It may take months to find and lease a new place, arrange for delivery of your household goods, unpack and organize the house. And in the meantime, the ministry will continue to suffer.



At any given time, 10% of missionaries are off the mission field, complying with these IRS requirements. Another 10% are in the process of preparing to leave or are getting re-established on the field. This is a significant personal expense, an emotional and physical drain, and a disruption to the mission of the Gospel.

Missionaries spent years settling in and building a ministry team. While the rest of the team will continue to work, many missionaries don't want to lose their home.

### **What if there were another way?**

Enter **Oikonomos International**. The founders of Oikonomos International, after learning about this problem faced by missionaries, suggested an alternative. They would house-sit for the missionaries, sharing the costs of the lease, and assisting in the local church. In 2015, David and Adrienne Hills and Tom and Catherine Swaim first travelled to the United Kingdom to support two missionary families. In 2019, Oikonomos International was incorporated with the purpose of recruiting, vetting (Titus 1:5), training, and deploying "house-sitters" to assist missionaries.

While the COVID Pandemic delayed our start-up, the ministry will support 3 missionary couples and has supported a student conference for prospective missionaries, all in 2022.

**Our Name:** The New Testament Greek word "Oikonomos" (*οἰκονόμος*) means "household steward" (Luke 12:42 and Titus 1:7). The "International" part of our name reflects our ministry scope.

We see our trusted household manager as a person or couple who cares for the home of a missionary. Our Stewards are not accredited missionaries, but we assist, where and as needed. We are also not a security service, but we provide confidence that a property does not sit empty. Finally, this should not be viewed as "a cheap vacation in an exciting city." A Steward's primary mission is support the missionaries, but the Steward is also expected to contribute within the local church.

## **Oikonomos International: A Win-Win-Win-Win Solution**

**Missionaries:** The missionaries served by Oikonomos International are able to keep their homes on the mission field at a reasonable cost. The disruption to their lives and ministries, both before and after furlough, is greatly reduced, as they do not need to pack, move out, house-hunt, move in, and unpack.

**Local Church:** Although Oikonomos International “Stewards” are not missionaries, they are recruited from church leaders. They have the theological background and the servant’s heart to assist the local church. Our “Stewards” have co-taught small-group ministries, worked in sidewalk evangelism, assisted in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, set up tables and chairs, vacuumed carpets, held babies, and assisted in a student missionary orientation conference, serving wherever and however needed.

**Stewards:** Oikonomos International Stewards have the opportunity to see and understand the mission field first-hand, experiencing the daily trials and tribulations of living and working in a foreign land, developing relationships with in-country church leaders and members, seeing God work in hearts and lives, and contributing to God’s kingdom.

**Home Churches:** Oikonomos International Stewards return home with both an excitement for missions and first-hand experiences to share with their home church. This can contribute to the overall vision for supporting and even participating in missions within the church.

### **How Can You Help?**

1. **Apply to be an Oikonomos International Steward:** After vetting and training, Stewards are matched with missionaries to satisfy their specific needs and dates.
2. **Support Oikonomos International:** We are a 501(c)(3) charity allowing Oikonomos to receive tax-deductible contributions for administration, for operations and for Stewards.
3. **Contribute to an Individual Steward:** House-sitting expenses vary by location, but a six-month stay, with travel, insurance, housing contribution, and living expenses can total upwards of \$10,000. Today stewards cover this entirely on their own. Contributions are tax-deductible.



Through Oikonomos International, missionaries are relieved of the worry over their leased overseas homes while on extended furlough.

Thank you for considering supporting this ministry.

**David W. Hills**  
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*Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household? Luke 12:42*

David W. Hills – Chief Executive Officer  
Thomas P. Swaim – Chief Operations Officer  
Adrienne A. Hills – Missions Liaison Officer  
Catherine M. Swaim – Secretary/Treasurer