



friends
INTERNATIONAL

jan – apr 2018

opportunity

Sharing Christ with international students in the UK

Christian Unions: On the front line of ministry



www.friendsinternational.uk

inside this issue

- Farewell to Priscilla
- Mission Housing Trust
- Word Alive 2018

Leading Thoughts



International students are of course a subsection of the overall student population. They operate in the same spaces and encounter the same realities as other students, but their experiences are often more acute or, at the very least, seen from a very different perspective.

So we value our partnerships with Christian Unions and other Christian student groups, as we are all seeking to befriend, support and share Jesus with these students. There is so much to do, there are so many opportunities, and we are a long way from being fully on top of our task.

Of the 438,000 international students at UK universities – most of whom are on campuses in some 100 towns and cities – we have staff in 35 Centres and connect with Affiliates in seven more. Even if we effectively reach 100 students in each of these places through cafés and Bible studies, we are still only in touch with 1% of the total number of international students in our universities.

As a result, partnership with Christian Unions is crucial for our scope, as well as for what it says about how we want to work – collaboratively, showing unity. Furthermore, it is partnership where both parties have something key to offer. Christian Unions have a presence on most campuses and access to university locations as well as natural contact with their international

colleagues. Friends International staff and local church volunteers are outside the 'student bubble', they are likely to be able to offer hospitality in homes as well as transport, and they are often older having life experience. We celebrate our partnerships with Christian Unions and it is great to read in this edition of *Opportunity* how CU committee members appreciate this partnership too.

Word Alive is a particularly fruitful and focused time with international students in a context of good Bible teaching; you can read about this on pages 8 and 9. Finally, the Insight journal has stood the test of a decade and continues to thoughtfully address our ministry issues at an academic level (back page) – let's celebrate helping to resource the church in international student outreach in this way.

Let's be renewing our efforts and celebrating our opportunities.

Alan

Alan Tower
National Director

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine..."
Ephesians 3:20



Opportunity is published by **Friends International**. Editor: Jack Bentley. ©2018.
Friends International, The Rowan Centre, All Nations Christian College, Easneye, Ware, Herts SG12 8LX.
Tel: 01920 460006 Email: info@friendsinternational.uk Web: www.friendsinternational.uk
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"Farewell" from our International Student Blogger

In April 2015, I introduced myself to you as the international student blogger. Sadly, this will be my last blog post. Even though I desire to continue blogging I now need to focus on writing my PhD thesis.

Studying in the UK as an international student from Hong Kong has been a bittersweet journey. It has pushed me to leave my comfort zone and to survive in a foreign country.

There were things that I did not expect. Firstly, I never thought English could be so challenging until I was struck by the various accents! I sat in class and struggled to follow the lectures for the first three months in the UK. But the sense of joy and satisfaction emerged and grew as I became bold and more skilled in using English. Secondly, I never expected my skills in cooking Chinese cuisine to advance so much until I was forced to prepare my own food all the time.

One of the best things about being a student in the UK is definitely the multicultural experience. I have met friends from places like Kazakhstan, Slovakia, Ecuador, America, Australia, Jamaica and Nigeria ... basically from all over the world! The more people I befriend, the more I realise how little I know.

However, one of the annoying things about being an international student is the cost of maintaining a student visa. Every three months I am required to check-in with my student ID card so that the government can keep track of me. Some of us have to report to the police to update any changes. Not to mention the long process of visa applications and the enormous fees involved!

Overall however, I have cherished every moment of being a student.

I am particularly thankful to Friends International for this platform. This blog has reminded me regularly of how much I have grown and learnt. Through it I have come

across interesting people and I would like to thank my readers for sharing with me these precious memories. I really enjoyed reading your comments! Take care.

Priscilla

P.S. I have recently relocated to Fenstanton, Cambridgeshire. Perhaps you will bump into me when you are around!

Read back over Priscilla's blog at:
www.friendsinternational.uk/blog



Christian Unions:

On the front line of ministry

Christian Unions (CUs) are evangelical Christian student groups, meeting on university campuses all over the country. In the UK there are about 180 Christian Unions with an estimated 20,000 members.

CUs are uniquely placed in ministry to students and are instrumental in much of the activity that happens on the ground. For example, last academic year, 50,000 students attended a CU mission week event and 36,000 a CU carol service.

Almost all CUs are affiliated to their universities' students' union, meaning they have official status in the university. They are also affiliated to the Universities and

Colleges Christian Fellowship (UCCF), a national organisation which encourages and equips students in their Christian witness.

Peter Dray, UCCF's Head of Creative Evangelism, says, "As a former CU international secretary, my friendships with international students were a key highlight of my own student experience. I'm encouraged by the way that so many students in CUs today are building relationships with, loving, serving and sharing the gospel with friends from different ethnic and national backgrounds to their own. CUs are predominantly undergraduate-led and SU-affiliated groups, making them particularly strategically placed to reach the UK's 236,000 international undergraduates."

'I began meeting up with Catherine, a student from Hong Kong, before Christmas as she wanted to study the Bible. We decided to read Uncover. After the second study, on the woman at the well, Catherine said, "I now understand that Jesus will love us no matter what we have done wrong." She recently sent me a text and added at the end, "By the way, I'm a Christian now." Praise God that He has worked through His Word and so clearly in her heart!' **Katie Shaw, UCCF Staff Worker in Sheffield**

How Friends International can support your Christian Union:

RESOURCES:

We offer print and digital resources designed to explain the gospel to and disciple international students.

PEOPLE:

We have staff who are available to give training or speak at international student outreach events.

NEW IDEAS:

We give creative ideas for reaching out to and serving international students.

Top Tips for Welcoming Internationals into a CU:

1. Understand that the gospel is for the whole world... and that your CU has a brilliant chance to be a part of that as you welcome internationals.
2. Recognise that this is the responsibility of your whole CU. Don't just leave befriending overseas visitors to the international secretary!
3. Start welcoming. Don't just wait until some internationals show up at your CU meeting to think about how you can welcome them.
4. Brief your speakers well. Tell them that CU is for people from a mixture of cultures, so they might want to think about how best to deliver their talk.
5. Show hospitality. It will cost you very little, but could mean the world to a new friend who is far away from their home and family.

From the CU Committee Members

"My name is Sam, and I go to the University of Bath. This year I am International Secretary for the CU, which means I lead a team of 5 other students all specifically tasked with organising our international student outreach."

The main event that we run is a weekly Globe Café. Every Wednesday lunch time we welcome around 60 international students into our Chaplaincy centre and feed them a free meal from a chosen culture. The

primary purpose of Globe Café is international friendship forming, and 'gossiping the gospel' as opposed to a sit down gospel talk.

Often when Christians think of international mission they think of packing their bags and heading overseas, but actually we are provided with thousands of internationals on our doorstep! We know that this is a unique opportunity and so we spend our time and money to intentionally talk to internationals about Jesus."

Sam, Bath University



"Through iWelcome, a few days of dedicated international student welcome events, we help new students move into halls and invite them to a meal where members of the CU can start to get to know students and warmly welcome them to Southampton."

Every Monday members of the CU run iCafé in the Students' Union where students can come to engage in some fun activities, practise their English, meet new people and explore the Bible in the optional Bible study.

Some international students who come to the UK may have little or no understanding of the Christian faith and meeting Christians in Southampton may be one of the only places for them to explore who Jesus is."

Hannah, Southampton University



"My name is Joanna, and I am the international secretary of the University of York Christian Union."

There are three main activities that our CU does to welcome and reach out to international students. The first is Bridge International, a buddy scheme which pairs international students with members of the CU. The second is supporting the iConnect Café which Friends International runs by going along and making friends with international students. The third activity is Bible Explore, a Bible study which Friends International and the CU run together at the University.



I think that it is important for our CU to reach international students because God commands us to love our neighbours and preach the gospel to all nations. It's also important since they may never have had or will have a Christian friend in their home country. As people who were once alienated from God, it should be our joy to share the same love and concern that Jesus showed to us to international students who often feel lonely and not understood during their time in the UK."

Joanna, York University

"My name is Joe and I am the International Coordinator for Kent Christian Union (CU). We run World Café every other Monday to welcome international students to the university but also to the CU."

So far this has provided a great way to get to know and better involve the international students. Additionally it provides opportunities for students that have never heard the Gospel to hear it for the first time! Through the café some of the Chinese students were invited to church and really enjoyed it.

At Kent University around 25% of students are international students; this means there is so

much opportunity. Therefore, some of them are Christians and the ones that come along to CU are a real blessing in all areas of CU life."

Joe, Kent University





Word Alive is an annual 6-day event offering the chance to take a break and relax whilst learning from God's Word and responding in worship together.

Word Alive is for everyone, but it includes one of the largest student gatherings in Europe – and Friends International gets to run the dedicated programme for international students, together with OMF.

This dedicated international student track is designed to gather together Christian international students and enable them to begin to think through the issues that may arise during the process of returning to, and living in, their home countries.

Sue Burt, Friends International's Head of Returnee Ministry, who was on the team at Word Alive 2017, says "Over 4 intense days students engaged with excellent talks from Peter Teagle on John 13-15 and our theme of 'Living for Jesus in an Uncertain World'. Seeing the way relevant teaching challenges international students to consider what it means to live for Christ in the UK and back home is always a highlight. The Word Alive international student track is such a brilliant tool for discipleship."

When: 7th - 12th April 2018
Where: Pontins Holiday Park, Prestatyn, North Wales
www.wordaliveevent.org



The International Student Track

The aims of the international student track are:

- To provide Bible teaching from gifted, biblically-faithful and cross-culturally aware speakers who will endeavour to address some specific needs and issues facing international students.
- To show the importance of a growing relationship with God and submission to the Lordship of Christ as the keys to both ongoing discipleship and reintegration into the home culture with both a national and Christian identity.
- To enable networking between Christians from the same country. This will provide an opportunity to study the Bible and pray with others from their own country and in their own mother tongue.

What the students said:

"Word Alive was fresh air for me. It is true; we live in a world of uncertainty and constant change. Many miles away from my home country I found that in this part of the world almost everything is different, except for one thing: the heart of my heavenly father, and Word Alive helped me to remember it."

"It was excellent! I really learned lots from other Christians. I found it very relatable and useful for when I go back to my home country."

"It has been amazing, Peter's talks were easy to understand, and it really helped me to have a deeper understanding about Jesus."

A Few Statistics from 2017:

- Around 70 students took part in the track.
- 73% Christians, 27% Not-yet-Christians.
- Of the Christians: 77% became Christians in their home country, 23% while in UK.



If you or students you know would like to attend Word Alive in 2018 please contact Ramzi Adcock: ramzi.adcock@friendsinternational.uk

International Student Mission Housing Trust (ISMHT)



ISMHT exists to provide affordable housing to mission workers who are reaching international students for Jesus.

Our aim is not only to make housing financially viable, but also suitable for the vital ministry of hospitality to students.

The Trust is managed by unpaid Trustees, and was set up in early 2017 by Friends International as a separate charitable trust.

Latest Property Purchase: Cambridge

"We are so grateful to the many people who have been part of this project and enabled us to move in to Pearl Close. It seems a long time ago when the idea of finding a house in Cambridge for Friends International was first discussed and yet we have seen the Lord provide in numerous ways over the last year. We are grateful ultimately to God for providing for us.

Since we moved in it has only confirmed what we and others had hoped and prayed for; we can already imagine numerous ways in which the location and character of this house can be used for family life and ministry.

Becky and I are grateful to be stewards of this house and very much hope it will be used by many others in years to come."

Josh Bell, Cambridge Centre Team Leader



Josh, Becky and their daughter Hosanna, outside the new house in Cambridge.

We are seeking Christians, who support world mission and outreach to international students, to partner with us in our strategic objectives, by offering funds in one of the following ways:

- Direct charitable donation
- Interest-free or low-interest loan

- Property investment
- Bequeathing property – lifetime gift or legacy

If you can help, or would like to know more, please contact us:

hello@ismhousingtrust.org.uk
www.ismhousingtrust.org.uk

Our Latest News

Current Vacancies

At the time of going to press we are looking to fill the following vacancies:

Centre Team Leaders in:

Edinburgh, Newcastle, Aberdeen, and Loughborough.

Staff Workers in: London, Canterbury, Manchester, Norwich and Stirling.

Philip Project Coordinator (North)

Reach Programme Coordinator

For job descriptions please go to:

www.friendsinternational.uk/jobs

Tell My Story: Video Competition

Tell My Story is an international student video competition with prizes to be won! International students experience many things studying in the UK. Good things, bad things and some very strange things! Make a short video of your experience and you could win £100.

Find out more:

www.friendsinternational.uk/video-competition

TELL MY STORY AND WIN £100!

A video competition for international students!



Reach Volunteers 2018-19

If you are finishing university this year and are looking for opportunities to serve then our Reach Programme could be for you.

To apply, and for more info, go to:

www.friendsinternational.uk/reach

Wanted: Blogger

Priscilla has just finished writing for us as our 'International Student Blogger'. We are now looking for our next blogger; someone who is an international student and who would like to write for us about their experiences of studying overseas. Please contact Jack if you would like to know more: jack.bentley@friendsinternational.uk



Insight 10th Anniversary Edition

insight



Insight, our academic journal that explores the issues surrounding international student ministry, is 10 years old this year.

To celebrate this and to keep previous editions' content in circulation we have published a short book packed full of the best articles from the last 10 years.

The Insight 10th Anniversary Edition is out now for just **£2.99**. Purchase a copy at www.friendsinternational.uk/shop

