



friends
INTERNATIONAL

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opportunity

Sharing Christ with international students in the UK

Vital Transitions:

Supporting
Students
Returning
Home

www.friendsinternational.uk

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Leading Thoughts



I have spent time today looking at many things that need doing, opportunities that need responding to, and requests to consider. Decisions about how we spend our time and our energy are so important.

One really important and pressing thing that has been filling our screens in recent months is impending data-protection legislation, or GDPR. You have probably already received a letter or email from us to ask for your explicit consent to continue to be in touch with you, and specifying how we can do that. Otherwise, under the new legislation we will not be able to continue to contact you. So, please do complete that consent form so we can keep sending you important information about Friends International. You can read more about it on the back page of this issue of *Opportunity*.

Beyond the administrative, legal and governance issues I want to have our vision in front of us, our reason to exist. That is: 'To see international students transformed by the good news of Jesus so that they fully engage with the mission of the church in the world'.

One vital aspect of this is that from the outset of any international student ministry we want to be 'returnee focussed'. This means we reach and disciple students knowing that soon they will return home to another culture. How are we going to help international students who

are considering the claims of Jesus, to survive and then thrive as a growing believer, when they return to their own country or move on to their next challenging placement? We want to see thriving returnee students fully engaging with the mission of the church in their part of the world.

The articles in this edition can help us all in this: whether better reflecting on the theory, listening to vital testimony, or discovering some more of the excellent resources available. There are likely to be different activities for international students in our Centres, but do they all have returnee preparation woven into them?

Maybe there are things you have thought of that we have not included, in which case please help us by getting in touch.

Alan

Alan Tower
National Director

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."
Matthew 28:19



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Friends International is an evangelical ministry dedicated to establishing and strengthening the Christian witness in every nation. Partnering with local churches to reach and disciple international students for Christ. Friends International is a member of the Evangelical Alliance and Global Connections. Registered Charity No. 1094095.

My Journey into a New Life

I came to the UK from Italy in 2012.

I worked in Canterbury and then a year later I went to Kent University while working part-time. I got sucked into the culture of clubbing and alcohol consumption. I cannot deny how easy it was to get into these habits. A lot of my friends at the time were English co-workers from the restaurant I was working in. Drinking after shifts was the norm. I used to walk through the high street at night and see that students were doing the same thing, so I did not feel so detached from not having so many student friends.

Anxiety kicked in when I had to socialise without alcohol, and I never lasted without alcohol for long. Everyone was doing it and I started to not know any better.

Things did not end well. I didn't ever think I needed help. Why would I? It was just the way life was.

My parents in Italy were concerned and pushed me to go to a church that they found online: Canterbury Vineyard Church. They could see that the student activities were good and that they had Christian counsellors. I went along and the atmosphere was so easy-going, even if I never stopped to talk to people. I kept going back. Meanwhile, my awareness of the spiritual dimension of life was opened.

Now I am a follower of Christ, but while I was still following my old patterns it was clear that God was advising me to leave my boyfriend. However, I was so dependent and in love with him that when I finally

made that choice I knew it was for God and not for myself.

From that day on, my journey with Christ has been incredible. It has been hard, humbling, and required lots of discipline. Yet I have experienced so much love, healing and patience. I stopped getting drunk and smoking weed.

In my last year of being a student I made some incredible friends at the Boxing society. Our friendship was born from our desire to have fun in a healthy way: sport.

I started to share Jesus with my international friends through my lifestyle from the very start, and it felt right, in my heart.

Monica

Read more, on our guest blogger series:
www.friendsinternational.uk/blog



Vital Transitions:

How our ministry is shaped by the students returning home

One of the unique aspects of being an international student is that, in most instances, after the studies are complete you return to your home country.

This fact should and does influence the whole ministry to international students.

Sue Burt, the Friends International Head of Returnee Ministry, explains why...

"International student ministry keeps us busy: befriending, hosting, witnessing, discipling, and supporting. Do we really have time to think about them going home as well?

Yet, the long-term aim of this ministry is to make a global difference – in the returning student's family, friendship group and wider society. But the sad reality is that a high proportion of students who have professed faith in the UK give up on that faith once home. More and more we are realising that the discipleship we offer here has to take account of and prepare for the home situation.

The most loving thing we can do for our international student friends and the most effective way to build the kingdom of God through our international students is to consider their return home and how to disciple them in the light of this return."

Returning Stories

The Good...

Many years ago a student came to study in the UK. He came across Friends International and attended the local events. At first, he had no thought at all for spiritual things, but over time his heart was stirred and he gave his life to Christ. He returned home a keen Christian and is now a leader in a large national church movement. All four of his children have grown into strong Christians, and have been used to spearhead a national youth prayer movement.

The Bad...

A student became a Christian in the UK and was looked after very well by her church here, and she had good Christian friends. After she went back to her own country, her family tried to stop her going to church. She had no Christian friends near her who could help her. She tried to go to church but didn't get as warm a welcome as she expected, and she found the church environment very unfamiliar. So, she stopped going to church.

3 Ways You Can Help Returning Students:

1 Give them one of these useful work books:

Think Home

A workbook to help Christian international students prepare and think through the challenges of their transition home.



Back Home

A 30-day series of reflections to help Christian international students after they return home.



Books can be bought from www.friendsinternational.uk/shop

2 Download appropriate resources including Bible Studies from our website.

Go to www.friendsinternational.uk/resources and click the 'Students Returning Home' folder.

3 Do some research into the home countries of the students you know.

For example, what are Christians in that country facing? Is it safe to be a Christian there? Will they have to work on Sundays? Will they be expected to worship their ancestors or attend the local temple?

Attempt Great Things for God

I came to Newcastle about 11 years ago to study as an international student and was invited to Globe Café after about a year or so. Globe Café is a place for international students to meet every Monday evening, have a meal and make friends with local and international people.

In Globe Café, I was invited for a series of Bible studies on the book of Mark. During the studies, God worked his miracle in my heart through his word of Truth which convicted me of my sin and my need of a saviour. Then I said sorry to God through Jesus and accepted Jesus as my saviour.

Then I carried on studying the word of Truth, the Bible, in Globe Christian Fellowship, which now is called JPC Internationals. This is a group for international students in Jesmond Parish Church (JPC). And I grew as a Christian.

Later on, I decided to become a Parish Assistant and worked full time in JPC for two years. It gave me a taste of full time church work and also a chance to find out if I was suitable for this noble task.

I went back to Shanghai after that, and got married. I was involved in my local church voluntarily, doing one-to-one Bible studies with men, leading Bible study groups, leading services and preaching. Like the rest of the

leaders in the church I also had a normal job, in my case, a tour guide, to pay the bills.

As my church grew, I started to spend less time working as a tour guide and more time working for my church. At the same time, the church needed more people who loved Jesus and were able to teach God's word. I loved Jesus, but I was not a



good Bible teacher, so I realised if I wanted to serve God's church in China more effectively, I needed more training. I particularly wished to be equipped to teach God's truth faithfully and clearly. Therefore, the Cornhill Bible training course in London became my choice.

I learnt during the last couple of years, through studying as well as working in a church in London, that church work is about people. Church ought to equip people with God's truth so that they can grow more mature. That is the main task for the church.

Now I have graduated from the training course and will be in China working in full-time ministry by the time you read this article.

My vision is to keep the main thing, the main thing. Teaching God's truth to God's people so God's people can encourage one another by speaking God's truth to one another.

Please pray that we won't lose our conviction on the main thing.

Words: Christopher Liu **Photos:** Andrew Shaw



This article was originally published in autumn 2016, in Issue 1 of JOURNEY magazine. It is published by Jesmond Parish Church and is for international students in Newcastle. If you would like to subscribe to JOURNEY or to find out more, please email jpcimagazine@gmail.com.

Introducing New Insight

The *Insight* team is delighted to present our bumper *10th Anniversary Edition!*

This compilation represents not only some of the best thinking and writing on matters close to our heart, but also serves as a handy reader on international student ministry, covering a broad and diverse range of topics.

The book contains eleven short and thought-provoking articles which have been carefully chosen from a decade of *Insight* publications. Each article should take no more than 15 minutes to read, so you could probably browse an article or two during your mid-morning coffee break or a bus journey home.

It's probably safe to say, it's the only international student publication of its kind in the UK and possibly Europe too.

We think you'll agree that *Insight - 10th Anniversary Edition* is an eminently compact and readable volume.

Lynette Teagle
Insight Editor-in-Chief



"...it's the only international student publication of its kind in the UK and possibly Europe too."

5 ways you can use **Insight**

- 1 Give a copy to your local church leaders.** If they still think that Friends International "only do cafés" then this book will give a flavour of the complexity and depth of international student ministry.
- 2 Pick an article for your home group, volunteer team or prayer group to read and discuss.** Whether it's cross-cultural preaching, reaching Europeans or supporting international student families, you'll find ideas which will stretch you and inspire new thinking.
- 3 Bless your local Christian Union (CU).** By sharing the book with a CU committee they can read and be inspired by Fred McLoughlin's account of starting a café from scratch at Leicester De Montfort University.
- 4 Cross-cultural discipleship.** Anyone who is discipling or reading the Bible with people from a different cultural or religious background can benefit from this book. There is so much to equip cross-culturally: from Confucian filial piety and its impact on East Asian students, to how shame and honour are key to the Muslim worldview.
- 5 Sneak one to your UCCF staff or Relay workers.** Alistair Reid is currently UCCF Central Team Leader and his article about CU involvement with international students provides a helpful picture of how students have a vital role to play.



How to get your hands on a copy

Copies cost just £2.99 and can be purchased from our online bookshop:
www.friendsinternational.uk/shop

You may also order copies by email: jack.bentley@friendsinternational.uk
or telephone: 01920 460006

Financial Review

The 2017 Financial Year has been a good year for Friends International and we give thanks to God for His grace as made visible in the financial support we have received.

We have set out a pictorial summary of our 2017 income and expenditure.

Our core gift income received from churches, trusts, personal supporters and related Gift Aid is 11% higher than 2016.

We have been blessed to be able to include within our 2017 accounts an exceptional legacy which will total at least £498,000 when fully released by the executors. This legacy is a bequest from a long-term supporter and the Trustees have accordingly designated this legacy taking full account of the wishes of the supporter. Please pray for all involved as they seek how best to invest such a significant sum.

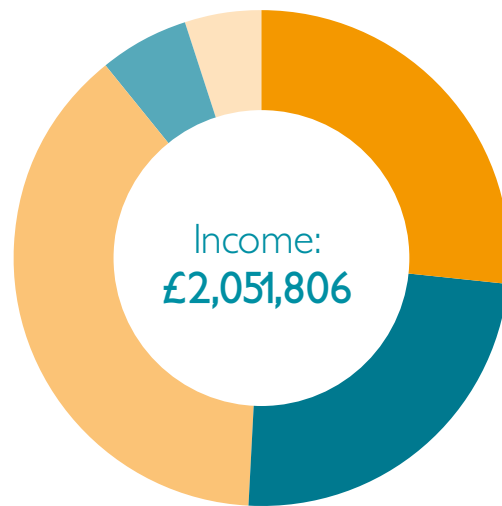
In addition to the legacy we achieved an underlying surplus of some £72,000 in 2017.

We are thankful for a stable financial position and for the continued generosity of so many faithful supporters who stand alongside our staff in many ways, including the vital one of ongoing financial support.

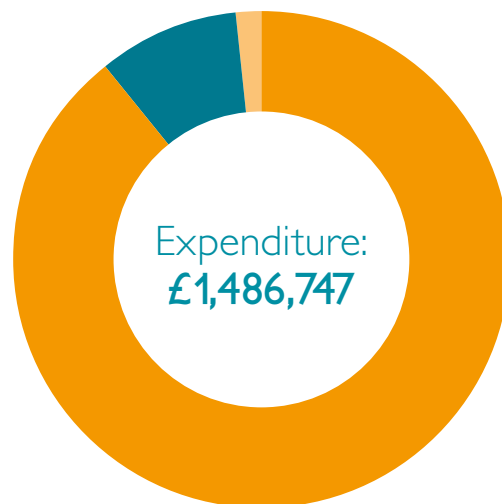
We recognise our responsibility as a Christian body and as a Registered Charity to act as good stewards, to seek good value for money and to communicate our financial position clearly and in a relevant way both internally as well as to our supporters.

We thank and praise God for His ongoing goodness to Friends International.

**Friends International
Finance Committee**



- From churches, trusts and local organisations: **26.7%**
- From legacies: **24.3%**
- From personal donations: **38.2%**
- From Gift Aid reclaim: **5.8%**
- Other (E.g. Rent): **5%**



- To direct ministry costs: **89.4%**
- To management, communications and admin: **9.1%**
- To generating funds: **1.5%**

Our Latest News

Do you like hearing from us?

New rules around data, recently introduced by the government, mean that if you want to continue receiving our *Opportunity* magazine you need to say so. See the back page of this issue of *Opportunity* for how to do this.

Guest Bloggers!

New guest blog posts from former international students can now be read on our website. Simply go to: www.friendsinternational.uk/blog



Home Away From Home – watch the trailer now!

After months of very intense and gruelling filming, 'Home Away From Home' has been completed! The film is an original concept following the journey of a character called Michelle who travels from China to Edinburgh to study. Watch here: www.goo.gl/jMrQhZ



Prayer Mate

Did you know that you can pray for Friends International using your phone? Prayer Mate is a free app that enables Christians to keep up with the prayer diaries of different mission agencies, as well as add your own prayer lists. **Download now from the App Store or Play Store, just search 'Prayer Mate'.**

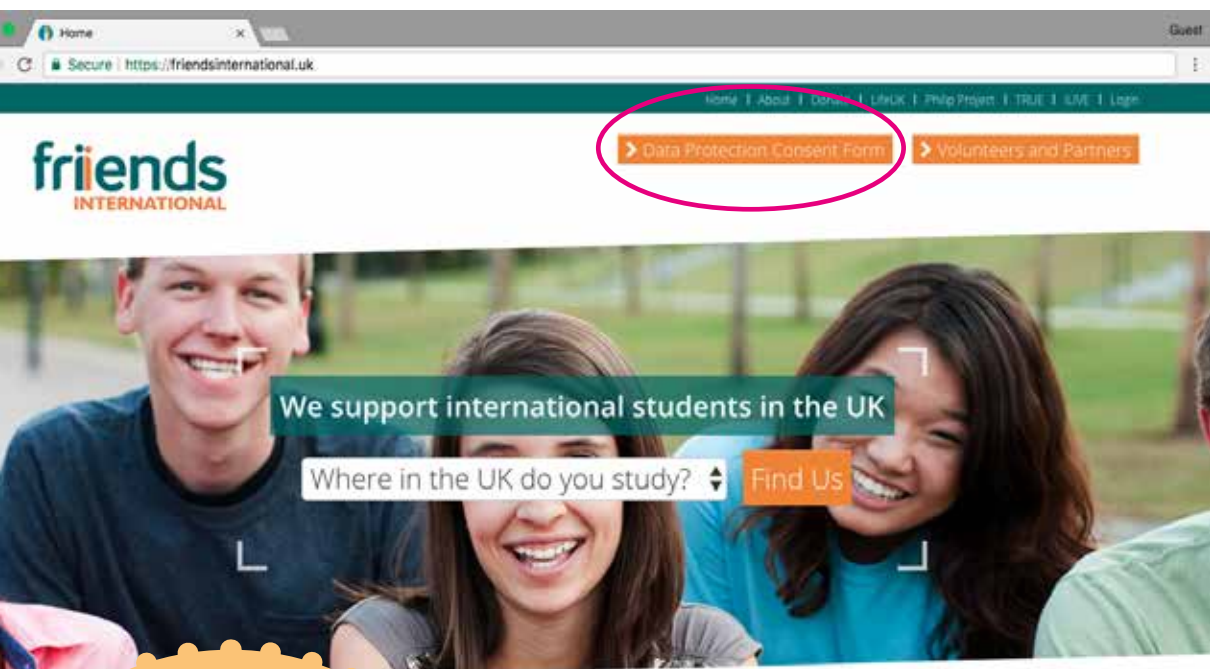
Keeping in touch

important new legal requirements

Do you want to continue to receive this magazine? Then you will have to let us know!

Important changes to the UK Data Protection law are being introduced, which mean we need to have your explicit consent to be able to contact you again.

Please go to our website www.friendsinternational.uk and use the button labelled '**Data Protection Consent Form**' located at the top of our homepage (pictured) to use our online consent form. If you give us consent to contact you by post then you will continue to receive this magazine. It's simple and straightforward!



Please do this as soon as you can!