

Opportunity

May • August 2019

friends
INTERNATIONAL

**The Nations
Are Here!**

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Sharing Christ with international students in the UK



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Leading Thoughts

The world is here. In fact, 170 different countries send students to UK universities!



I recently heard of a small church who – after starting to welcome local university students – found that they had met students from 28

different countries in just the first 6 months!

There are many other instances of churches meeting students from across the world and across the religious spectrum, and sharing God's love and His gospel with all.

This is a special moment for UK Christians, and it becomes even more significant when we realise that many of these students come from countries where there is no gospel freedom, and sometimes even Christian persecution. People from these countries are often referred to as the 'least reached' – yet they are coming to the UK to study. These are gospel opportunities that can't be missed!

At Friends International one of our values is to 'give priority to people groups with the least opportunity to hear the gospel in their

own countries'. This overlaps considerably with our Hard to Reach ministry strategy, of finding new ways of reaching groups that are more challenging to engage with than others. Read in this edition of *Opportunity* about ministry to students from the 'least reached' countries, and how our Hard to Reach strategy is a part of this.

We celebrate the opportunity to reach out as friends – true friends who include the sharing of what we know of our heavenly father (John 15:15) – with those from almost every country in the world.

Please be encouraged by the articles in this edition of *Opportunity*, and turn your celebration into further prayer for more workers in the harvest field, as well as seeing if there are local activities you can join in with.

Thank you for your ongoing partnership.

Alan

Alan Tower, Friends International National Director

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Thank You: We want to thank each and every person who prays or gives to this ministry; it wouldn't happen without you!

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Testimony

Sarah's Testimony:

My Nine Year Journey

Coming to faith in Christ has been a very long journey, which started the moment I arrived in the UK. Now, in 2019 – after nine years in the UK – I am getting baptised!

I arrived at Heathrow Airport from China nine years ago to begin my studies at the University of Southampton.

I was introduced to many activities during the welcome week, including dinners hosted at City Life Church and the International Café run by Friends International. I also met Grandad & Grandma Robson, who have helped and supported me enormously.

After my studies in Southampton, I moved to the University of East Anglia in Norwich. I was again involved in Friends International activities, which were led by Angela Leeding. I went to their World Café activities and Bible studies.

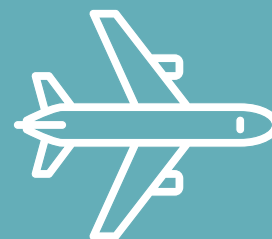
From Norwich, I then moved to Manchester. I went to the iCafé led by the Stocktons and attended the Word Alive conference, with fees all paid for by donations from an anonymous person! I also went to a student Bible study group in St Peter's House.

I then moved to Birmingham. The first Friends International activity was the Malvern Hills walk, which was led by Nick Devas. He then invited me to his church's service and the Bible study he and Pamela run. Since then, I have also been to the Globe Café and Open Home, as well as Bible studies run by City Church.

Although my initial involvement in many of the activities was partly motivated by trying to improve my English, they have definitely helped me learn more and gain more trust in Jesus along the way.

Sadly, I have not been able to keep in contact with everyone and have even forgotten the names of some who helped me in my journey, especially at times when I was rejecting God.

There is no single Christian or church that helped me become a Christian, but all of those who I have met along the way. I thank all of you!



Now, in 2019 – after nine years in the UK – I am getting baptised!

”

The 'least reached' people of the world are here!



"The gospel
is for every person.

Yet, not every person has the
freedom to hear it, the presence of local
churches, or easy access to a Bible.

Remarkably, thousands of people from
these more 'restricted' countries are leaving
home for a short time to come to the UK to study.

This is the amazing opportunity we have
to share Jesus with the 'least reached'
people of the world, who are now right
here on our doorstep."

Alan Tower,
National Director

”



"Muslim students are coming to church..."

Earlier this year, our small Baptist church in
south Wales held a baptismal service. Three
students were baptised, so it attracted a crowd
from the university.

Among the visitors were two **Iraqis** and one from
Sudan, all Muslims. As I spoke to them they told
me that they had never been to church before,
and all they knew of a baptism is from what they
had seen on YouTube.

They were a little apprehensive, but after a warm
welcome they thoroughly enjoyed the service as well
as the vegan food served afterwards.

Amazingly it wasn't a one-off; one of them now comes to
church regularly and I have been able to give him a Bible
in Arabic and explain the gospel to him in some depth.

Student Worker, Cardiff



13 = Open Doors World
Watch List rank (very high
levels of persecution).

1,400 = Students in
the UK from Iraq.



6 = Open Doors World
Watch List rank (extreme
levels of persecution).

270 = Students in
the UK from Sudan.

The Hard
to Reach



Coffee with Friends

I've met up for coffee recently with some Muslim ladies – from **Libya** and from **Saudi Arabia**.

Life is hard for them studying here. My Saudi friend, in particular, is not very independent and is struggling a lot with learning English. I was grateful for a chance to meet her recently and remind her that she is more than just a language student.

Please pray for both these ladies to be loved well by a range of Christians and to learn to see beyond us to Jesus and all He offers them.

Staff Worker, Cambridge



4 = Open Doors World Watch List rank (extreme levels of persecution).

1,195 = Students in the UK from Libya.



15 = Open Doors World Watch List rank (very high levels of persecution).

8,065 = Students in the UK from Saudi Arabia.

"I am ready to die for Jesus"

A young student from **Iran** came to faith 18 months ago, but if she returns home she will definitely face persecution, which will also hit hard against her family.

She has told me about the struggle of telling her family that she has become a Christian because it makes them vulnerable: *"I am ready to die for Jesus. I just can't bear the thought of my family suffering for what they don't yet understand."*

She has an incredibly difficult decision to make, as do many others like her who come to faith while in the UK.

Staff Worker, Midlands



9 = Open Doors World Watch List rank (extreme levels of persecution).

1,420 = Students in the UK from Iran.

Partner With Us

Why don't you join us in this simple, yet world-changing ministry?

We are seeking partners who want to pray and support our 'Hard to Reach' ministry strategy. Alongside the challenge of ministering to the students from the 'least reached' countries, Friends International is now seeking to identify which students, when they come here, are the hard to reach once on the ground in the UK.

Although we meet and befriend many students, some groups remain unengaged. In order to be intentional in reaching out to the many who are not attracted to what we offer, we need to ask what we can do or what might we change to draw near to them and them to us.

Perhaps they do not self-identify as international students. Perhaps they are watched by government and fellow nationals. Perhaps they simply don't like our kinds of activities or do not want anything to do with Christianity.

A new work is underway to identify 'hard to reach' student groups in each location and to give thought to new creative and strategic pathways of outreach.

We need to ask the Lord to lead us forward, and we need your partnership.

Please consider praying for this ministry and giving a gift using the giving form provided with this edition of *Opportunity*. Thank you.

Rachel Chard, Head of Hard to Reach

Student stats: hesa.ac.uk
Open Doors World Watch list of Christian Persecution:
opendoorsuk.org/persecution
Names have been removed or changed to protect individuals.

International Student Events Weeks

Already in 2019, Peter Teagle (Head of Events Speaking), and others from the team have led international student talks at 10 different university events weeks across the country.

"As I write, we have just finished the second of two training days seeking to equip speakers for, among other things, international student talks at university events weeks.

The need and appetite for such learning reflects a growing vision amongst Christian Unions to hold international talks at their events weeks.

I am excited about the opportunities and importance of such talks. But what is my reason for promoting them?

Simply this: international student talks are NOT the 'English-made-easy' version of the 'main' talks; rather they are an opportunity to address the different worldviews, presuppositions, apologetic questions and heart-issues that (particularly) non-western students have, and to do so in an accessible, understandable, culturally sensitive way."

Peter Teagle, Head of Events Speaking

What is a CU Events Week?

A CU Events Week, or Missions Week, is usually 5 days consisting of a series of outreach events and evangelist talks run by a university's Christian Union (CU).



Cambridge Events Week – 'Tomorrow – Life in Longing'

We had about 40 students at our first international dinner with momentum building over the next two dinners, as Friday night ended with about 100 students.

Each evening consisted not simply of a warm meal and good fellowship, but also a short talk introducing a question or issue in life that the Bible answers, before a 15 minute interview with an international Christian. We had a young woman who had converted from Islam, a well-respected teacher from the University who shared how God challenged her to find identity in him and not in work, and a Nigerian pastor with a bounty on his head from Boko Haram who spoke of why he continues to live for Christ in an exceedingly difficult situation.

Josh Bell, Staff Worker, Cambridge



Canterbury Events Week – 'Something More?'

Dick Dowsett, our guest speaker, gave culturally sensitive and contextualised evangelistic talks for the international students. Afterwards, we invited them all to head to the evening events at the Cathedral Lodge, with musical performances, interviews and testimonies.

As far as we know at least two students made faith commitments, and many others wanted to learn more. I was particularly encouraged that our speaker prayed with a number of international students, one of whom is from Iran and now wants to follow Jesus and get baptised!

Baiba Strause-Kalmere,
Staff Worker, Canterbury



Sale



Book Shop Summer Sale!

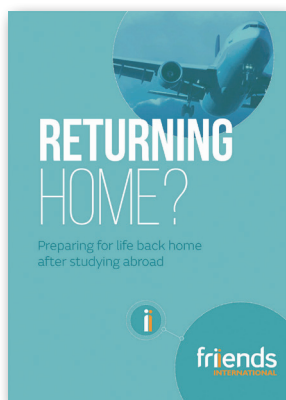
This summer,
Opportunity
readers get **50% off**
any of our books when
purchased through
our website.

Why not try...



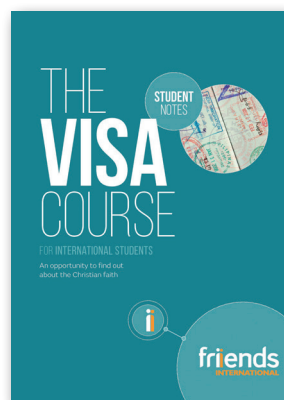
LIFEUK – A Guide to Life in the UK

A great gift to any newly arrived international. This short booklet introduces the quirky aspects of British culture, while also being incredibly practical. For example, it includes info about public transport, the NHS and getting a bank account.



Returning Home?

For anyone returning home after an extended period abroad, it can be really tough. This workbook helps readers process and work through all the practical and emotional issues that arise with returning home.



The Visa Course

Using simple English, this 10-week course introduces international students to the Christian faith. It is particularly useful for English language students.

Use this code
at checkout:
50OFF2019

Sale ends
**31 August
2019.**



Visit our bookshop now:
www.friendsinternational.uk/shop



Latest
News

Latest News



New Staff

In the last 12 months we have welcomed 11 new staff, who will be working in 11 different cities across the UK! We thank God for this growth!

However, we are still trying to fill a number of vacancies. Read about them on our jobs page:
friendsinternational.uk/jobs



New Staff Training in March 2019

Friends International App

We have now had over 4,500 registrations on our app – which has really exceeded all our expectations!

Students are discovering our events and church activities on the app and simply turning up! It is a blessing to be able to have these new ways to connect with students.



New: Church Affiliation

Churches can now sign up to our Affiliates Network, and have three individuals as Affiliates at a special reduced rate! If you are a church and are interested in finding out more about this, please contact Kah Foon: Kahfoon@friendsinternational.uk

Read more about our Affiliates Network here:
friendsinternational.uk/affiliates



A summer adventure awaits...

Reach out to international students this summer – in England, Scotland or Ireland.

Run an outreach café, lead cross-cultural Bible studies and make friends with people from all over the world.

Summer Team Locations 2019:

- Bournemouth
- Cambridge
- Canterbury
- Dublin
- Edinburgh
- Manchester
- Oxford

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Find out more:
**[friendsinternational.uk/
summerteams](https://friendsinternational.uk/summerteams)**



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