

Opportunity

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friends
INTERNATIONAL

Sharing Jesus, Loving Students

Growing Friendship and Faith with International Students

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Leading Thoughts

After many difficult months, it's good to focus on what's new and possible as we eventually emerge from the restrictions we find ourselves under.



Spring of course lends itself to this, the breaking through of shoots after a hard winter and the birth of new life. Then we have Easter, the biggest victory of all, which came from a place of pain and seeming disaster but brings new life beyond the cross.

At Friends International we are hopeful of new birth in the lives of international students, and we are looking to you, our supporters, to help make this happen. Our 'Sharing Jesus, Loving Students' campaign is about exactly this: seeing more international students transformed by Jesus. Therefore, we ask if you would play your part – through giving, praying and being involved in any way you can.

We also have exciting new initiatives emerging which we are delighted to share with you. We have just launched a new

book, which will help international students answer the big questions of life (pages 8 and 9). We hope and trust it will be an excellent resource for churches and student Christian groups.

Friends International has recently enjoyed welcoming new staff into various locations around the country (page 10). We thank God that He is growing the ministry and enabling us to take significant steps towards the vision He has given us, to see every international student in the UK and Ireland within reach of a Friends International local centre.

Thank you for your ongoing support – it's great to partner together in God's work among international students!

Alan

Alan Tower
National Director

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"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

2 Corinthians 5:17

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Significant CU Friendships

Testimony



I'm Candy, from China. I started my study in finance at Ulster University two years ago, and I just graduated last summer.



I firstly got involved in the Christian Union (CU) through the iCafe. At the beginning it was just a place for me to meet new people and hang out with my friends. As I made closer friendships with those in the CU I started attending more events like mission week and small groups. These made me start to think about the meaning of being a Christian.

I found it really interesting hearing my friends talking about their journeys and the wonderful changes that had happened in their lives. So, I started doing a regular Bible study about Jesus with my friend which gradually drew me closer and closer to God.

Even though it's still really difficult for me to understand the meaning of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, knowing Jesus changed my view of life a lot. I used to be easily stressed and worry about a lot of things. Now I know there's no need for me to worry anymore because God is taking care of me. He has control over everything, and he always wants the best for us.

My understanding of what it means to be a good person also changed. I wanted to be a good person, but I didn't know what it meant to be good because I didn't know God. Now I realise that I will never be perfect as God is, but I now know I am headed in the right direction and I would love to continue on this way.

Christian Unions in Ireland and Northern Ireland are supported by the ISM Ireland Project, a partnership between Friends International and Christian Unions Ireland.

"Knowing Jesus changed my view of life a lot."

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International students are open to friendship and faith after a year of Covid restrictions and uncertainty.



Will you join us in sharing Jesus and loving students?

As a loyal supporter of Friends International, you will be aware that our passion is to reach out to international students across the UK

and Ireland and support them by offering friendship and a faith in Jesus.

Although we are able to reach over 10,000 international students a year through our network of local centres, events and the 'local link' hosting programme, our biggest hope is to share our love for Jesus and see international students come to faith.

As I write, international students studying here in the UK and Ireland are facing challenges on multiple fronts and have an uncertain future. For more than a year, international students have lived with the threat of Covid-19 and

the implications of a global pandemic, which has left many grappling with uncertain finances, accommodation and deteriorating mental health.

Will you pray that more students hear the plans God has for them and the hope and future He offers? And please, will you consider prayerfully if you can make a regular donation to support our work at this critical time? The money you give will help us recruit new staff for our local centres and boost our evangelistic programmes so that more international students hear the Good News of Jesus Christ.

We have enclosed a reply form and pre-paid envelope for you to use. Alternatively, you can make a gift by visiting our website at: **friendsinternational.uk/lovestudents**

Your support is so much appreciated, not just by me and our team at Friends International, but by the students themselves who are finding friendship and faith because of your prayers and generous donations.

May God bless you.

Alan

Alan Tower
National Director



"And how can they hear of Him unless someone tells them?"

Romans 10:14



Helping You Spread the Message of Easter

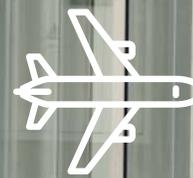
Once again, Easter this year will be significantly different. Yet, we don't want to see international students miss out on hearing the life-changing message of the resurrection, even if it has to be shared online or at a socially distanced event.

Therefore, Friends International has created a free resource for churches and CUs to help engage international students this Easter.

The downloadable resource includes:

- Ways to make your church service international student friendly
- Ideas to share the Easter message over Zoom
- Easter traditions you can explore with internationals
- Engaging Easter activities
- A fun Easter quiz
- Links to more useful resources

To download this free Easter resource for your church or small group, go to: friendsinternational.uk/easter



New Arrivals: Facing the Challenges

Coming to the UK, as an international student from Malaysia, was altogether exciting and daunting after more than 18 years of comfort and familiarity at home.

There were fresh faces, unfamiliar streets, confusing slang and even different scents (fresher air but a milder cuisine experience if I might add). I vividly remember the first day of my induction week for university, I had to give myself a quick little pep talk (TED talk style) in my head just to calm my nerves down. Whilst I maintained my composure on the outside, I will admit that it was intimidating trying to navigate myself in an unfamiliar culture when I first arrived.

I did not know if I was going to fit in as I was surrounded by individuals who had grown up being accustomed to a way of life that I was not completely familiar with. Still, I reminded myself that people really are just people at the end of the day no matter where I am. However, the cultural differences soon became apparent to me which left me feeling isolated and out of place. My natural reflex was to view this as a barrier and while it naturally was, I also knew that this experience was an opportunity of growth that I could not afford to miss out on (also the fact that tuition fees are no joke!).

The Moment I felt Truly Alone

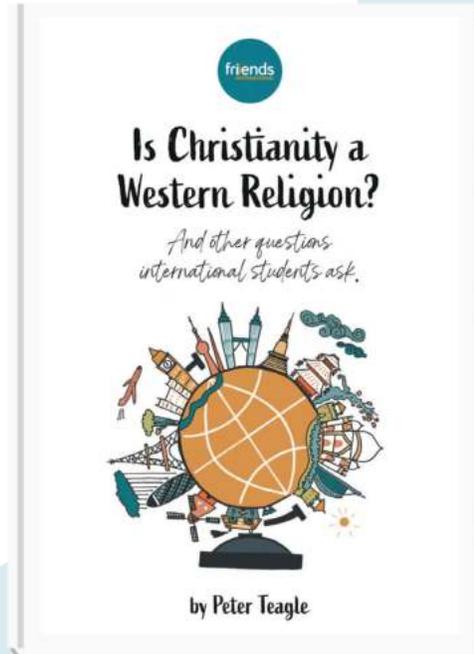
When I first arrived here my parents came as well, to help me settle in. They stayed for a couple of weeks before heading back to Malaysia. It was only when my parents bid me farewell before flying back that reality truly hit me, and I realised that for the first time in my life, I was truly on my own.

All alone in my dorm almost 6,500 miles away from home, I suddenly felt so small and became doubtful of the capabilities of my strength to rise above my circumstances. Suddenly, all my questions were directed inwards as I found myself in an overwhelming position of emotional vulnerability filled with anxiety and uncertainty, which subsequently led to me questioning God's availability in my life.

Joylynn, A student from Malaysia studying at Newcastle University

Read Joylynn's full blog post at: friendsinternational.uk/blog

New Book



A New Book Answering Questions International Students Ask

Friends International has just launched a new book to help international students answer life's biggest questions. Titled, 'Is Christianity a Western religion? And other questions international students ask', the book explores 20 of the most common subjects international students struggle to understand about a religion that is commonly seen as a western faith and irrelevant for other cultures.

Inspired by author Peter Teagle's experience over 20 years of talking to international students and hearing the questions they commonly ask, 'Is Christianity a Western Religion' explores key questions such as: Is it possible to be a Christian and stay faithful to my culture?, Does being a Christian mean I cannot honour my ancestors?, and Do Christians believe other gods exist?

Who is Peter Teagle?

Peter Teagle is the Head of Events Speaking at Friends International. He has spent many years working closely with international students, speaking at events and answering students' questions.



Peter said, "Over the past decade or more, I have travelled to different university centres to give talks to groups of international students about Jesus Christ, the Bible and the Christian faith. For me, one of the best parts of my work is not only that I get to talk to many people about my deepest and greatest love, Jesus Christ, but I also get to meet and hear the questions that international students have about Him."

Peter has been with Friends International since 2001 and is based in Oxford. He is married to Lynette, and they have three young adult children.

New Book



What others have said:

"If you are curious and would like to find out what is it that Christians are excited about, this is a book for you. In this book, you will find answers to FAQs (frequently asked questions) about Jesus and His life-giving power. Some of these may be questions that you have but didn't know how best to articulate. You will enjoy Peter's conversational style and engaging real life encounters. No doubt, you will find yourself identifying with many of these stories."

Yong Yuong Eng,
Assistant General Secretary, FES Malaysia

"I very much recommend this excellent book which will be immensely helpful to any international student who is seeking the truth, as well as a useful resource for those seeking to share their faith cross-culturally. May the Lord use it for His glory!"

Wendy Kasenene,
PhD student from Uganda, Queen Mary University of London

"Here is an excellent introduction to the Christian faith in clear, uncomplicated non-jargonized language written for anyone who is intrigued, curious or indeed searching for a faith which provides meaning, values, forgiveness, unconditional love, freedom and hope in a needy world. Read ...and enjoy!"

Lindsay Brown,
Former IFES International General Secretary

Buy your copy now at:
[friendsinternational.uk/shop](https://www.friendsinternational.uk/shop)

New Staff



Already this year we have welcomed three new members of staff...

Antje Loddeke

New Staff Worker in Bournemouth

"I first got to know Friends International as a student, then I did Reach and am really excited to be back on the team as a staff worker. I'm most looking forward to building relationships with international students and seeing how God will work in their lives in the midst of these difficult times."



Warren MacLeod

New Centre Team Leader in Edinburgh

"I'm thankful to be joining Friends International's work. It's been so clear to me that God has opened every door for me to get here, and even though I know there will be challenges, it's clear that this is where He wants me, so I can't wait to get started!"



What do I anticipate most in my role? I love encouraging the Body of Christ to see the opportunities we have around us for His Kingdom. I'm looking forward to working with local churches in Edinburgh as well as directly with students. I'm very outgoing and so I'm excited to have so much meaningful contact with people."

Nizar Tackie

New Social Media Coordinator

"I'm really looking forward to working to a standard of excellence for Friends International. The job came about at the right time and so divinely and it's no doubt I'm in the perfect role. This will be challenging in some respects but I'm grateful to help serve and be a part of growing our online presence."



Join us in praying for each of them, that they may settle well despite the current challenges. Pray that they would know God's blessing on them as they take on these new roles.

Latest News



Latest News

Philip Project

This year the Philip Project has gone online, meaning Christian international students anywhere in the UK can now access quality teaching on Bible handling skills. Find out more or sign up: www.philipproject.org.uk

Vacancies

As you can see from the opposite page, we are blessed to have new staff joining us. However, our vision for further growth this year means we have a number of roles we are looking to fill. Please find all the latest opportunities on our website here: friendsinternational.uk/jobs

Legacy Giving

Our desire is to care for international students and to see them grow friendships and grow in faith. This is why we would like to invite you to consider leaving a gift to Friends International in your will. Doing this can be a simple and straight forward process and, at the same time, it will have a long and lasting impact on students who come here from all over the world. Find out more at: friendsinternational.uk/legacy

Easter Resource

Look out for the free Easter resource on our website from early March. The resource will help churches and Christian student groups across the country to get the message of Easter out to international students. Find out more: friendsinternational.uk/easter

Follow Us...

Nizar Tackie (left) is ensuring our very latest stories and exciting updates are on social media for you every day. Follow us by searching 'Friends International' on social media or use these handles:



Sharing Jesus, Loving Students

friends
INTERNATIONAL

International students are open to friendship and faith. Will you help us reach them at this critical time in their lives?

Please can you support us by making a donation to the 'Share Jesus, Love Students' campaign? If you are able to make a donation, we will present you with a free gift of our new book 'Is Christianity a Western Religion? And other questions international students ask'.



Give now by going to: friendsinternational.uk/lovestudents



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