

friends
INTERNATIONAL



Who are

Friends International

Growing Friendship and Faith with International Students



“I warmly commend the ministry of Friends international as they seek to equip the church to share God’s love with international students.”

Krish Kandiah, founder and director of Home for Good

“Perhaps the most strategic Christian ministry taking place in the UK today”

Vaughan Roberts, Rector at St Ebbe’s Church, Oxford

Together, we are Friends International!

Friends International grows friendship and faith with international students in the UK and Ireland!

We believe that by supporting international students, nations, governments and communities can be influenced for good. Annually, approaching one million international students come to study in UK but for many the experience is daunting.

Through our local centres, we give international students the chance to experience British culture at its best and the opportunity to hear about Christianity. We dream of a world where churches are full of international students, equipped and envisioned to play a role in the mission and ministry of the Church, in the UK and beyond.

We are passionate about what we do and are excited that you want to find out more about

working with us. Hopefully the next few pages will give you a clear idea of what it would be like to join our team.

Of the 1 million international students who come to study in the UK each year, approximately half attend universities and half come to learn English at language schools. The latest figures (2019/20) show there were 556,625 international students in Higher Education, and around 500,000 students studying in English Language Schools.

Many of these students come from countries with little or no Christian witness, which makes their time in the UK a tremendous opportunity for them to hear about Jesus.

The experience of students who come to the UK is often one of loneliness, disorientation and anxiety. We desire to build bridges between these

students and local Christians so that they instead have a joyful and transformational time here.

We aim to partner with churches in much of what we do, so that they are encouraged and equipped to reach international students for Christ.

We have a commitment to reaching out to international students with the love of Jesus Christ, and we would love for you to join us!

Alan Tower
National Director



A bit of history...

Friends International was formerly known as International Student Christian Services (ISCS).

It all started in 1985 when Max and Pat Kershaw, arrived from the USA with a vision of starting a movement in the UK dedicated to reaching out with the gospel to the many international students here.

Max died in 1986 and his wife stayed on to continue this pioneering work. Peter Hayden took up his appointment as the first Field Director in 1987 and Gordon Showell-Rogers was appointed National Director in 1988.

The number of international students has grown significantly over the years, and therefore so have we. We now have over 70 staff working in more than 40 locations across the UK and Ireland.

A survey of Friends International staff revealed that we have had contact with international students from 85% of the world's countries since 2000!

We were started in

1985

as International Student Christian Services.



“Though I am a foreigner, when I am with you I don't feel like one anymore.”

Yusuf, Student from Turkey

My Experience

Being a New International Student

I'm Albert, a Hungarian student at the University of South Wales. I lived 19 years of my life in my home country and then decided to try something new. Now I live in Pontypridd and study International Wildlife Biology.

I arrived here not knowing a single person, which was a truly refreshing experience. I soon found out that the Welsh accent is difficult to understand and that it was going to take me some time to get used to. I also noticed that the towns here in the valleys are pleasantly nature-filled. The permanent rain doesn't bother me too much.

The first month was tough: I had never lived on my own so I had to get independent quickly. I started learning to cook, devising shopping routes and so on. I often felt very stressed, but at the same time it was a joy to be part of this entirely new culture, place and to speak the language.

The campuses here are filled with internationals, so it wasn't long until I started meeting all kinds of different people from all over the world. By the end of the first month I had already made many friends and learnt

much about being independent, so the stress started to disappear.

I had never really been religious before, yet most of the friends I've made are Christians, since I felt strangely comfortable among them.

I was eventually invited to Bethany Baptist Church, where I witnessed greater kindness than I had ever seen. These people became my family and assured me that my future here in Wales is in the right hands.

There have been a few challenges, but nonetheless living in Wales has been absolutely amazing. I know it was the right decision to take that huge step out into the world, and I hope I can stay much longer!

- Albert Kovács



“These people became my family...”

Ministry Impact

Currently, Friends International has over 70 field staff working in some 40 locations across the UK and Ireland.

Over the course of a year we connect with over 10,000 international students, inviting them to Bible studies, social events and church activities.

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, we have seen an increase in international students numbers and we took on more staff in 2020 than any other year.

Friends International Numbers (Academic Year 2020/21)

80

Friends International Staff and Admin workers

63

Affiliates on our Affiliate Scheme

1,500

Number of volunteers active in the ministry

13

Reach Trainees

300

Number of churches we work with in ministry

40

UK and Irish cities and towns with ministry to international students

70

International students who attended the Philip Project Course

730

International students who have been hosted

510

International students who attended our English language classes/groups

1,300

International students who attended a Bible study

68

International students who have made a faith commitment

10,000

International students contacted



The Students we are Reaching
(Academic Year 2019/20)



Arrival

International students are coming to the UK

556,000

at UK universities.

550,000

at English language schools.

15%

from countries with limited access to the gospel.



Our Vision

OUR FUTURE DESIRED REALITY

“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.”



Our Mission

OUR OVERARCHING TASK

“To work with the church to communicate the good news of Jesus to international students in both word and deed and in whole life cross-cultural discipleship.”



Opportunity

The unique opportunity while they are here

Many are open to:

- Local people and local customs
- Making new friends
- Discussing the big questions of life

Influence

Some return to positions of leadership.

16%

of current world leaders have studied in Britain.

Mission

They could return as missionaries to their own people.



Departure

When they return to their home country



“Perhaps the most strategic Christian ministry taking place in the UK today”

Vaughan Roberts, Rector at St Ebbe’s Church, Oxford





“The mission of Lansdowne Church... is served so well by the overlapping vision and values of Friends International.”

Peter Baker, Senior Pastor,
Lansdowne Church in Bournemouth

“We invest heavily in international student work and are delighted to partner with Friends International in this.”

Ramzi Adcock, Executive Minister,
Jesmond Parish Church in Newcastle

“I’ve long appreciated the work of Friends International. Their commitment to discipling, equipping and engaging students with the gospel – often from very closed places spiritually, but studying right on our doorstep – is as exciting as it is significant.”

Rev. Dave Gobbett, Lead Minister,
Highfields Church in Cardiff



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