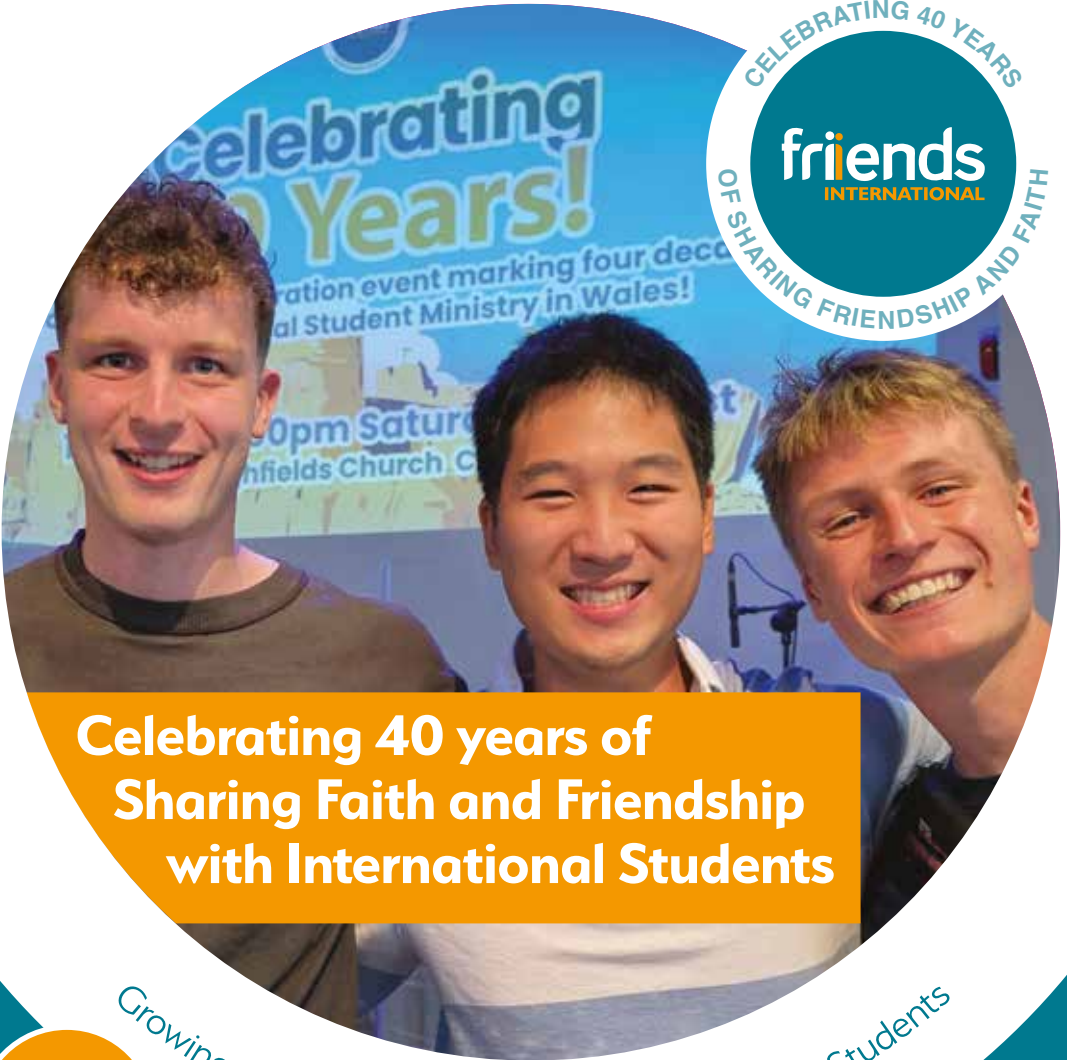


Opportunity

August • November 2025



Celebrating 40 years of Sharing Faith and Friendship with International Students

Growing Friendship and Faith with International Students

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Leading Thoughts

As I write this column I've just returned from Belfast, the last of our core 40th anniversary events, after similar celebrations in Edinburgh, London, Manchester and Cardiff.



It's been a privilege to meet so many faithful supporters, people who have shared our journey from a fledgling organisation, exploring the

potential for international student ministry, until today where we have a network of 35 Centres established to reach international students with friendship and faith. We've shared memories, recalled events, and heard from international students past and present of how the Gospel has made a difference in their lives.

It has been a profound experience to recall history and to acknowledge God's hand on the ministry, giving God the glory and being encouraged for the future. Our vision is to see 50 Centres established across the UK and Ireland so that every international student can experience the support, love and hope that knowing Jesus brings.

Much of what Friends International does is regular, faithful ground level activity, partnering with churches and varied Christian student groups to run social activities, cafés, Bible studies, igniting interest in faith and commitment to Jesus. However, as we were reminded by Lindsay Brown [see p6] and

other speakers, international student ministry is one of the most strategic forms of mission there is, as it reaches international students from unreached countries and many go on to hold influential positions when they return home.

Elsewhere our work continues. In mid-Wales, the Big Weekend Away at the end of April saw 150 international students and supporting team gathering for a time of worship, fellowship and Bible study. Aimed at both Christians and those still seeking, some began their walk with Jesus, while others were encouraged in their faith or had the opportunity to have their questions answered. [You can read more on p12].

Thank you for being part of the wider team supporting our ministry. We value your partnership as we look to God to hold and sustain us as the story of what God is doing in the lives of international students unfolds further.

Alan

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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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‘For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false’. Habakkuk 2v3



Philip Project

We interviewed two graduates from the Philip Project about their experiences of the course.

Robin Lee from South Korea

I participated in the Philip Project while pursuing graduate studies in London. Although I had been a Christian for most of my life, I struggled to interpret the Bible accurately, relying on subjective understandings. My experience with the Philip Project was a turning point. I discovered that the Old Testament books I had previously found difficult were pointing to the coming of Jesus. Thanks to the teachers, I was equipped with the tools to study the Bible and remain true to its intended message.

The Philip Project marked the beginning of an incredible journey in life, where I learned the joy of studying the Bible. Shortly after returning to South Korea, I formed a Bible study group with some close friends. I shared this passion for studying the Bible with my now-husband, who has since become a junior pastor. I currently work at the US embassy in Seoul as a local staff member specializing in North Korean human rights issues. As I've pursued this work over the past ten years, God's Word sustains me. The lessons I learned from the Philip Project continue to guide me.

Kit Tuan from Malaysia

I was a Buddhist and had never opened the Bible before coming to England, but through the Global Café and a local church in Canterbury, I understood more about God and Jesus' love. Joining the Philip Project in London helped me to understand the Gospel better and gave me a deeper understanding about different worldviews. It reminded me of the need to explore more about other people's views and not rely on my own understanding. It also helped me to learn how to prepare a Bible study with a target audience.

Visit www.philipproject.org.uk for more information or scan this QR code.



Thanks to the teachers, I was equipped with the tools to study the Bible.



Joining the Philip Project in London helped me to understand the Gospel better.

We Were There!

40th Anniversary Celebration Events



Edinburgh: (26th April)

Edinburgh kicked off our series of celebration events. We heard inspiring stories of changed lives, testimonies of former international students, volunteers and supporters. Alan Tower shared the vision for growth: that we would see increasing opportunities for international students to hear and experience the Good News of Jesus and to go on to serve Him, joining in the mission of the Church around the world.



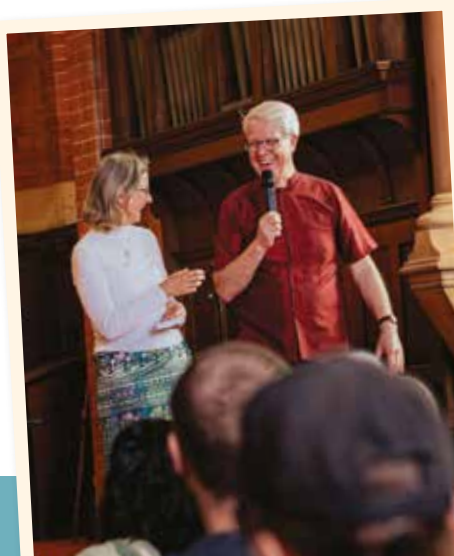
Birmingham: (26th April)

To God be the glory – great things He has done! We had a wonderful afternoon of celebration at St Stephen's Church in Birmingham. Many past and present supporters, volunteers and team members came together for a service of thanksgiving followed by a lavish afternoon tea. We gave thanks to God for His faithfulness and His work among international students – also looking forward expectantly to the years ahead.



London: (10th May)

In London, we continued Friends International's 40th celebrations with friends old and new coming together to remember, share stories and thank God for His faithfulness and blessing. It was great to be in East London Tabernacle Baptist Church where Peter and Gwyneth Hayden, Friends International's first team members, were based and we were joined by Wanyeki Mahiaini, who began the Philip Project 25 years ago.



Canterbury: (17th May)

It was great to celebrate at St Andrews United Reformed Church where Andrew Way, our first Friends International staff worker, established a thriving international café ministry. Many supporters and volunteers came together to thank God for all that He has done and share stories of changed lives of international students and volunteers who experienced God's love, provision and blessing through this ministry.

Manchester: (17th May)

We heard powerful testimonies from international students whose lives have been impacted by the local work in Manchester and Salford. To mark this special occasion, a beautifully made cake was shared and cut by Maynard, who was part of the original beginnings of Friends International's work in Manchester.



Cardiff: (31st May)

A fantastic event with over 140 people in the room. It felt like God's hand was bringing elements together to produce a coherent message of how He worked through certain people to begin His ministry – it was lovely to hear testimonies from those who had gone before us, before Lindsay Brown powerfully brought God's word and history together. Visitors left with a complimentary gift bag and sampled Welsh cakes cooked by our volunteers and helpers.



Belfast: (7th June)

Our 40th Anniversary celebration was held in Riddel Hall at Queen's University. We were joined by volunteers past and present, international students, and staff, as well as colleagues from our valued partners OMF International and Christian Unions Ireland. The evening featured a delicious dinner, quiz, interviews, prayer, and a talk from Christoph Ebbinghaus. It was a wonderful evening and we are so grateful for everyone who came along to celebrate!

Turning Universities Upside Down



Four Compelling Reasons to Share the Gospel with International Students.

In 1981 I received a phone call from Pete Lowman, the then president of the Christian Union in Cardiff University. "Lindsay, I've received a message from an American couple, Max and Pat Kershaw, who sense God is calling them to come to the UK to set up an organisation to share the Gospel and minister to international students in university towns in the UK. Could they come and see you in Cardiff?" A few weeks later they visited Cardiff, where I was a Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship [UCCF] staff worker at the time, and the rest is history!

It has been wonderful to observe the growth of church-based student ministry across the UK over the last 40+ years, but why do we engage in international student ministry? Why is it important? I suggest there are at least four reasons:

Firstly, because of the biblical injunction to care for the alien or foreigner. In an age when tensions are rising because of illegal immigration, it would be easy to get caught up in the furore over increasing numbers of immigrants. However, the Bible calls us to be counter-cultural in the way that we treat people from other nations or people groups.

Secondly, historically. The evangelical church has always had a clear understanding of the Commission to take the Gospel to the ends of the Earth. Part of the calling of the Church was to reach people when they were on the move away from their home nations when they are perhaps more open to consider alternative world views. This is especially striking in the book of Acts, starting on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

Thirdly, reaching people when they're away from home is one of the best ways to reach the unreached. How can we see a great multitude 'from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues' in heaven if we can't enter their countries? We can do so when they come to live – and study – among us.

Continued on page 11.

Lindsay Brown

Prayer Diary

August • November 2025



Seventeen weeks of prayer points



Thank you for your continued prayers and support for international students.

40th Anniversary

Week 1
4th Aug

Madeleine Bonicel, Nottingham

Give thanks for the 40th anniversary event we held in July. Pray that many of those who attended would continue to partner with us. Pray for Madeleine as she seeks to build new partnerships with churches across the city and also with Nottingham Trent University, so we can reach more students with the Gospel.

Going Home

Week 2
11th Aug

Raquel Medina, Norwich

Pray for the students that have returned to their home countries. Pray for 'U' from Japan, who came to faith in her last week in the UK. Also pray for a series of events for international students this month, jointly organised with the CU, and for the new plans in place to reach and disciple international students, as well as training for local churches.

Week 3
18th Aug

Ruth Farquhar, North of Scotland

Please pray for the international students, past and present, who joined the Philip Project Summer School. They came from Japan, South Korea, China, Singapore, India, Nigeria and Hungary. It was a privilege to work with young people who are determined to share the Bible around the world. Please pray that this commitment will be realised in faithful service for Jesus and his Church.

Week 4
25th Aug

Tim Stanyon, Loughborough

Pray for all those who have been involved in Bible studies this year and that they would connect with Christians in their home countries. Pray especially for 'E' from Turkey. She has been with us for four years. Pray that she would remember our conversations about the Gospel and that God would bring her into his family in Turkey.

Week 5
1st Sept

Madeleine Bonicel, Nottingham

Give thanks for the online 'Chat with Friends' ministry which gives us the opportunity to speak with international students who have now left Nottingham. Through connections at Nottingham University we are also able to talk to students who have not yet come to Nottingham. Pray for good connections with both old and new students.



New Academic Year

Week 6
8th Sept

Ivana Bajic, Stirling

Friends International will be organising the Big Global Café for international students during Freshers Week in September. Please pray for protection because we are truly the light in the darkness and great Christian ambassadors at Stirling University.

Week 7
15th Sept

Kirsten Wynn, London

Pray for new international students arriving in London, and for churches as they organise welcome meals, contact local student accommodation and universities. Pray that international students would respond positively to each invitation.

Week 8
22nd Sept

Monika Terpstra, Glasgow

The Friends International Glasgow Autumn Welcome is an initiative to welcome international students to the city. We have organised a range of events including mural walks, ceilidhs, meals and Chinese lantern-making. Please pray that friendships are built and for the universities and student accommodations to be willing to let international students know about these events.

Week 9
29th Sept

Ayodele Matthew Ojo, Portsmouth

Pray for the arrival of new international students to the University of Portsmouth in September 2025 and January 2026. Pray for opportunities as we attend the international fairs. Please also pray for the staff and the branch committee as we work to build new connections with local churches who we pray will provide financial support, and supply a treasurer.

Week 10
6th Oct

Sally Miller, Lancaster Our Conversation Cafés are great opportunities for staff and volunteers to meet new international students and develop friendships before term starts. Please pray for new students arriving in Lancaster this September to hear about these.

Mike and Rachel Hill, Birmingham In Birmingham, we thank God for our Friends International Society which allows us to meet many international students during Freshers Week. Pray they sign up and come to the welcome events we are organising.

Week 11
13th Oct

Lilli Jones, Guildford Join us as we pray for the new academic year, new students and staff arriving at the University of Surrey – we want to listen to the Lord for his guidance alongside our own ideas. **Jonnie Green, Oxford** Please pray for our welcome dinner for new international students at Oxford Brookes.

Week 12
20th Oct

Baiba Strause-Kalmeere, Canterbury In Canterbury, pray for the new academic year and Freshers Week with Christian Unions, and for good links with new international students. Pray for our new Reach trainee, Victor, that he settles in well and for another Reach trainee, Emi, who is moving back home to Japan while she considers her next steps.

Alex McCann, Colchester Pray also for the team in Colchester; for great contacts to be made with new and returning international students.



New Beginnings

Week 13
27th Oct

Helen Morrissey, Exeter

On Friday 31st October – Sunday 2nd November, we will be taking a group of seekers and Christian international students for our annual weekend away on Dartmoor. Pray for good times of fellowship and relationship building for all, and that the Bible teaching will be enlightening and challenging for everyone, wherever they are on their spiritual journey.

Week 14
3rd Nov

Matthew Brindley, Durham

Earlier this year we met with five local churches, UCCF, OMF and Christian Union students to plan longer-term international outreach activity. Give thanks for this meeting and the various ideas that were raised. Also please pray for Christian Union students as they lead activities among international students on campus, and give them a loving welcome when they arrive in this country.

Week 15
10th Nov

Madeleine Bonicel, Nottingham

Give thanks for Sophie and Abigail who will be joining the Nottingham team as Reach trainees in September, and Jennie who will be an apprentice. Pray that they will personally know Jehovah-Jireh, God the provider, and that they can raise the financial support to start the programme.

Week 16
17th Nov

Graham Stockton, Manchester

Please pray for a city walk and country walk we've arranged for new international students. Pray also for church contacts in Bolton where we hope to start a new international student ministry.

Week 17
24th Nov

Susan Caddy, Southampton and Winchester

Give thanks for Phoebe Ridout and Lydia Bown as they come to the end of our two-year Apprentice Staff Worker Programme. Pray for them as they become Staff Workers in the Southampton and Winchester Centres and continue to use and grow their skills and experience over the next academic year.



Continued from p6

Fourthly and finally, there's no doubt that under God many great Christian leaders have been converted away from home. Let me share a few examples.

Antoine Rutayisire came to study at the University of Bangor in north Wales in 1981. He was probably a nominal Christian at the time but came to a deeper faith during his time in Wales. He returned home to become the first national student worker in Rwanda. Under his leadership the student work grew but in 1994 the civil war left over one million Hutus and Tutsis dead. All the leaders of the student movement were killed with the exception of Antoine, who was taken to a refugee camp for safety with his wife, who was pregnant at the time. I wrote to Antoine offering to bring him out of the country for a sabbatical break, but I still remember his reply. "Thank you for your invitation Lindsay, but I cannot leave the country. As soon as the way is open I must return to the capital Kigali. For if I do not share in my people's pain neither can I share with them the joy of the Gospel." Today he pastors a church of 4,000 people in the capital.

Derek Mutungu was a student from Zambia who came to the University of Bath. He was greeted at the railway station by a group of Christians seeking to offer help to international students. That first Sunday he was invited to the home of a Christian couple in a local church who hosted him for several Sundays to come. Under their influence, Derek became a believer. He was impressed by the vivacity of the Christian student group and decided to start something similar in Zambia, and the Zambian Fellowship of Evangelical Students was born. He became their first staff worker. News reached the ears of the President, Kenneth Kaunda. He invited Derek to the presidential palace and asked him "What is this message which you are preaching which is turning the university upside down?"

Do we need any more compelling reasons for seizing these opportunities to reach out to international students while they're studying in the UK and Ireland?

”

In response Derek preached the Gospel to him and the President invited him to come back in two weeks. When they arrived, Dr Kaunde had lined up the whole cabinet. He turned to Derek and said: "Preach to them what you preached to me two weeks ago!"

Do we need any more compelling reasons for seizing these opportunities to reach out to international students while they're studying in the UK and Ireland? That privilege is afforded to many of us even if we never leave the country. Sharing the Gospel with 'the least of these' could have significant implications for the advance of the Gospel globally, so let's be engaged ourselves and mobilise our churches to reach out in hospitality and loving kindness to international students in our midst.

Lindsay Brown
(Former General Secretary, International Fellowship of Evangelical Students [IFES] and International Director, the Lausanne Movement).

This is an abbreviated version of the talk Lindsay Brown gave at the 40th anniversary celebration event in Cardiff.





“The most wonderful days I’ve experienced, with godly people and a soul connection with God.”

For four days in April, the Cefn Lea Conference Centre in mid-Wales became a temporary ‘international village’ for 157 international students, graduates and team members from universities all over the UK and Ireland, meeting for the annual *Big Weekend Away* (BWA).

With more than 35 nations represented, the BWA is one of the largest Christian gatherings for international students taking place in the UK today, bringing together international students and graduates of all backgrounds and nationalities. Building on last year’s inaugural event, the BWA has its roots in the Word Alive international student track, which ran for more than a decade as part of the wider Word Alive conference in Prestatyn. Organised in partnership with OMF, it was a privilege to have Al Gibbs from Cornhill as the main speaker. A former international student worker himself, Al spoke on ‘God’s Order in a World of Chaos’, drawing from the first three chapters of Genesis. Our team, including staff and

volunteers from 23 centres, worked together to lead discussion groups, activities, and provide seminars.

Although the majority of students attending were Christians, around 20% were serious seekers. Thus, while the Bible talks and seminars focused on discipleship issues specific to believers from different cultures, we were also aware that some were discovering biblical truth for the first time and learning about the reality of following Christ outside the UK. For one student from India, months of searching and asking questions led him to give his life to Christ on the final morning, much to the joy of those who had been part of his journey to faith.

A unique feature of the BWA is that international students form the majority of those attending, unlike many other Christian events in the UK. This might seem obvious but shouldn’t be taken for granted! The shared experience of living as a Christian while away from home created an instant sense of community, giving everyone the freedom to explore and express their Christian faith and identity alongside their cultural heritage, including a beautiful parade of national costumes on the first morning. With small groups based around nationality and cultural background, students studied Scripture in-depth and prayed in their heart language, grappling with the challenge of applying lessons from Genesis 1-3 to their own cultural context. This was a first-time experience for some.

Among the students were those who had already faced opposition to their faith, and their testimonies of God’s faithfulness served to challenge and encourage others. It was a particular joy to see students from India and Africa stepping to the fore with their exuberant worship and infectious joy in the Lord. “I could feel the greatness of collective worshipping, singing and praying together. It felt really encouraging and amazing”, one student reflected. “I don’t clearly know why I felt like that, but it definitely cheered me up before I go back to my country, where I’m so afraid that my people there will not accept



me as a person who is trying to know more about God.”

A Master’s student from China, who chose to come realising she would not have a similar opportunity at home, shared: “What I have enjoyed most about the BWA is the opportunity to walk with the Lord every day and to live in fellowship with my brothers and sisters in Christ. I’m especially encouraged when I hear people worship and praise God together in different languages, it’s a powerful expression of our unity in Christ that deeply moves me.”

“Through these moments, I’ve come to realise that our faith should not be confined to the ‘gaps’ in our lives. Rather, we are called to walk with the Lord in every moment, immersing ourselves in His Word and His love daily. When we try to journey alone, our faith can become fragile. But when we serve alongside others and root ourselves in God’s love, we find renewed strength, deeper joy, and a firmer foundation”.

Lynette Teagle (on behalf of the BWA2025 planning team: Rowland Hughes, Sue Burt, Levon Chorbajian, Harmienke Jerphanion, Simon McClure, Lynette Teagle).



London International Outreach May 2025

After a 10-year break, the London International Outreach was back. A team of 32 from across eight countries, we used Stratford in east London as our base. Together with our partners Agapé, Bridges International, International Mission Board, UCCF and local churches, we organised a full programme with team time and training in the mornings, street and campus outreach in the afternoons, and evening events. Praise God for all who heard the Gospel during the week and for the 20 guests from 12 different nations who joined in the evening discussions and Bible studies.



First Ever Philip Project Summer School a Resounding Success

In May 2025 a team of staff from different Friends International Centres joined forces to run the first ever Philip Project Summer School in Perthshire, near Dundee. It was a resounding success. The students worked hard, asked questions, shared ideas and were hugely appreciative of the course. It was a joy to work with 10 young people from Japan, S Korea, China, Singapore, India, Nigeria and Hungary: all determined to serve Jesus and share the Gospel. They all said they felt more prepared and had learnt how to read their Bibles better for themselves. Some said they had not understood the Old Testament before. "I had got lost reading my Bible. At first it was exciting but when I came to more difficult passages, I was lost. Now I know what to do."

Apprenticeship Graduation

Robert Webster has spent the last two years in Glasgow on the Friends International apprenticeship programme. We caught up with him to ask about his experiences and how international student ministry is having an impact.

My time serving with the University of Birmingham Christian Union saw me getting stuck in and helping with a weekly English Club and Bible study. It was here that my passion for international student ministry emerged. From there, I was introduced to Friends International who invested in me significantly through their staff workers. I was given many opportunities to serve including running Table Talk, attending numerous social events, and preparing Bible studies. I was also asked to help with the Reach programme, where I could devote my time to befriending and ministering to international students. It set me up well for the apprenticeship programme because I got to see exemplary international student ministry, meet other volunteers, study and visit other Friends International Centres.

Working with Friends International has been positive and an experience filled with variety. Ministry to international students takes many shapes and sizes, and so do the teams of volunteers and churches that we work with. No two days are the same!

One highlight from the past two years was seeing a dear friend from China decide to follow Jesus. Not only that but seeing him through the Philip Project and growing in his Bible handling skills, meant he left Glasgow able to give short talks – even from Ecclesiastes! – and with a good understanding of what it meant to live for God in the workplace. It gave great joy to my soul.

In the future I long to see the churches across Glasgow welcoming and particularly discipling international students well. And, more than that, I'd like to see the churches work together increasingly. One of the greatest differences this area of mission can make for the local church, is to bring together churches that might not otherwise engage in partnership, for the sake of the Gospel going out to all nations.



For more information about the Apprenticeship Programme send an email to info@friendsinternational.uk

New Centres and Leaders

Tom grew up in an atheist family in communist Czechoslovakia, where everyone he knew was an atheist. After enrolling in a Friends International Bible study, Tom gave his life to Jesus. Now he is involved in full time ministry in his home country leading others to Christ.

Tom is a terrific example of the strategic impact international student ministry can have. Our vision is to establish a network of 50 Centres so that every international student in the UK and Ireland is in reach of a local Centre where they can hear the Good News about Jesus. In 2025 we hope to start two new Centres and broaden and deepen our work in London. We will also require additional staff, people who can mobilise others, cast vision and be catalysts for international student ministry in their local area.

Please pray – Will you join with us to pray that more international students come to know Jesus Christ and experience the hope He brings?

Please give – Can you make a donation to help Friends International establish new Centres in fresh locations? Your donation will also help us recruit new staff to boost our existing teams and help us achieve our vision of 50 Centres across the UK and Ireland, where we can share faith and friendship with international students.



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