



THE FEAR FACTOR

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN / MADISON, WI
INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP CENTER VOLUNTEER
WAYNE WIESS / ISM INC VICE-PRESIDENT

*I'm not comfortable around strangers, especially internationals.
My time is limited.*

I don't speak any language other than English.

What if I can't understand them?

I wouldn't know what to say to them.

I wouldn't have anything in common with them.

Over fifteen years ago I contacted Karen Bjornstad, then director of the International Friendship Center, an LCMS international ministry on the University of Wisconsin/ Madison campus. I called her to seek assistance in establishing a small group ministry with an outreach emphasis for my home church. I didn't know Karen, but I thought she must be doing that at her ministry.

She indicated she was thinking about establishing such an outreach, would I like to meet with her to discuss it further.

After our initial meeting she contacted a local LCMS pastor whose church was having success in this area and arranged a meeting. The pastor was extremely helpful. As we were leaving the meeting, I thanked Karen for her help, still looking at this as something I would take to my own church. Karen stopped me dead in my tracks by stating strongly: "Wait a minute! You're going to help me! I brought you down here to join me at the IFC!"

My response was "But that's out of my comfort zone, and my time is limited."

"Don't worry," she replied, "God will take care of that! Meet me next Monday and we'll set up the procedures and goals." As they say, "The rest is history."

Some time before that, I had asked the Lord to lead me and use me in an outreach role. I always thought it would be in my church. Be careful what you pray for, because God will answer it and it might be in ways you never expected. Within six weeks of our organizational meeting, my wife, Suzanne and I were attending our first small group Bible study at the International Friendship Center. Over fifteen years have passed, with God providing and blessing us beyond our wildest dreams.

Karen addressed my biggest objection on comfort rather quickly and forcefully, but what about the second one, my limited time? God took care of that one too. The loving reception we received from the internationals made this new ministry a top priority. Time was no longer an issue. I internally had all the concerns listed at the beginning of this article. Over a very short period of time, God addressed all of them. The promise he gives and keeps is:

"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up..." Ephesians 4:11-12

Not only does God equip, but he blesses. Your international friends are blessed because they feel an unconditional acceptance for who they are as individuals. They now have American friends whom they will treasure forever. You are making it possible for them to make lifetime friends from other countries. Their English will improve. They will gain a better understanding of our culture. They will experience what it is like to receive a "servant's" love and to feel God's love through you. And, they will have the opportunity to hear God's Word and have the seeds of salvation planted in their hearts.

The blessings you will receive are countless and eternal. Every new person you meet will be a blessing. The smiles and hugs you receive will overcome any of the fears you may have. The crowning joy comes when one of your international friends accepts Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10

The nations of the world are coming to the United States. Don't allow your fears to keep you from reaching out to them. You're loving kindness will be felt for all eternity.



LEARNING FROM OTHERS

FLINT INTERNATIONAL FRIENDS / FLINT, MI
KATE COLE, ISM DIRECTOR



Where do you go when you have a problem and need help? This is a question we frequently ask international students who come to our conversational English groups. Students want to know all the intricacies of American culture--from introducing themselves in a formal setting, to understanding their American peers' slang.

But where do our ISMinc leaders go for help when they have questions? We're thankful to God for all the help we get from our international ministry partners across the US—and for the information we need to connect with other sites via our ISMinc.org website.

Recently our local board approved a plan to begin a student-led conversational group where students develop their own lesson plans. I called an ISMinc partner at the nearby Friendship House, Lansing MI, to ask permission for our new student-teachers to sit-in on one of their conversational English classes to get ideas.

Director, Rich Bearup and his staff including Teacher Maxine, arranged for our visit. Our group from Flint sat in on an inspirational conversation class with students from Russia, Turkey, Palestine, China and Brazil. We witnessed a world-class example of international conversation at a level we'd not discovered yet.



STUDENTS FROM FLINT INTERNATIONAL FRIENDS ENJOY A CONVERSATION AT THE FRIENDSHIP HOUSE IN LANSING, MI WITH TEACHER MAXINE.

After a great morning of learning, Teacher Maxine took time to answer our individual questions and provide additional information—which resulted in a new more student-oriented class format that better serves our students.

Collaborative learning in the highest degree is waiting for all of our ministry leaders when you take advantage of the experience of others who have been there and done that! Check out our list of ministry partners at our ISMinc.org next time your group is resolving an issue. Help is just a click away.

Some of the students who are still in town over the summer join us on Thursdays for English conversation, international food, and Bible study.

This week's Bible study centered on Jesus and his Fishermen Friends. We talked about how some of us love to fish, but have trouble finding good places to fish. Family friends invited us to bring anyone from ISM to their Saturday celebration at the lake. Miao and Martin were excited to come. On the pontoon boat ride they caught nothing. I encouraged them to try off the boat dock and they happily caught little perch and sunfish. Martin's rod broke, but he continued to use the line, with a big hook and a night-crawler he hooked a "nice bass". What joy! Look again at the happy looks on their faces!

What fun it will be to check out God's Word and some of the great times Jesus' fishermen friends had at the lake with Jesus. We'll share with them, too, the words of Jesus that motivate some of us fisher-folk; "I will make you fishers of men..." HAPPY FISHING!



A FISH TALE

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY / DETROIT, MI
BOB DICKHUDT



BOB, MIAO AND MARTIN SHOW OFF THEIR PRIZE FROM A DAY ON THE LAKE.

MEMORY LANE



ALL SAINTS LUTHERAN CHURCH AND STUDENT CENTER / SLIPPERY ROCK AUGUSTA R. MENNELL , CAMPUS MINISTRY DIRECTOR

This summer Chulsoon, a Korean alumnus of Slippery Rock University brought his wife, daughter, and son to see where he had gone to college and to see the Lutheran Student Center he had often visited. He thought it was going to be a trip down memory lane, but I believe that God intended it to be an opportunity for him to once again hear the Gospel that he had heard for several years, during our many discussions.

Soon after coming into the All Saints building, Chulsoon and his wife asked if I would like to hear their children sing a song in Korean that they had memorized in church. The children sang beautifully and were very proud of their music, which sounded like a Psalm. It was very evident that Chulsoon's wife and his children are Christians.

Chulsoon described his life. He owns a successful school, which teaches English to Korean children. It even prepares college-age students to come to study in America. Chulsoon said he works at the school seven days a week. He is pleased to be so successful, but he intimated that he is tired of doing the same old work day in and day out. He claimed that he did not have time for church.

Out of the blue Chulsoon's wife stated matter-of-factly that "He is not a Christian." I saw tears come into her eyes as she said this. Her words shook me and shocked me. I thought Chulsoon would be angry with her for being so outspoken. Her statement was very blunt. Amazingly, he admitted that he was not a Christian. He said that he does not believe because there are "too many hypocrites in the church." He added that too many people in his wife's church try too much to pressure him into coming to worship.

So here we were, right back where we began when Chulsoon was a student, eight to ten years ago. Once more we talked about faith. This visit for Chulsoon was turning out to be more than a trip down memory lane. For us, it was another opportunity to share God's love with Chulsoon, who did listen willingly. We suggested to him that Christians realize that we all are hypocrites, all of us, and that is why we go to church: to receive God's gift of forgiveness. We again talked about mistakes we Christians make when we try to evangelize our



ABOVE: CHULSOON HOLDS UP A PICTURE OF WHEN HE WAS A STUDENT AT SLIPPERY ROCK. LEFT: CHULSOON'S CHILDREN SHARE A CHRISTIAN SONG IN KOREAN.

friends and neighbors. We suggested that we need to invite others to church in a loving way, not with a hectoring manner. Attempting to strong-arm a person into belief in Jesus never works. Perhaps Chulsoon could tell his wife's fellow believers that.

The visit with Chulsoon and his family ended on a good note. They left feeling cared about no matter what happens next. All Saints will pray that the Holy Spirit will help Chulsoon to open his heart to God. We said goodbye with tears on our faces, not knowing when we will ever meet again, but believing that seeds of friendship and faith have been planted. It was more than a walk down memory lane, it was a gift from the Lord to Chulsoon and his family.

Our goal for the coming school year remains the same as ever. We will open our hearts and church to all the Chulsoons who come to the Lutheran Student Center. We feel it is a privilege to share the Gospel with students. Please pray for our work here.



A SUMMER FULL OF FUN AND LEARNING

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN / MADISON, WI
INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP CENTER
JUDY TANG / DIRECTOR



Every summer the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra has a wonderful program called "Concerts on the Square." Thousands of people bring blankets and enjoy some beautiful music on the lawn of the Capitol building. We had a great time talking, eating, and continuing to build friendships!



Many of the IFC English classes and Bible studies this summer have 20-25 people in attendance! And it's been quite an international group! The IFC has wonderful classes including idioms, grammar, pronunciation, US history, conversation, and Bible. So much fun to learn and share together!



International students love to be able to see how Americans live. Joe and Lois graciously opened their home and hosted a traditional American BBQ for 30 international friends. We enjoyed some lawn games, eating hamburgers and the best Wisconsin brats, along with fruit, potato salad, chips, lemonade, and homemade chocolate chip cookies. So thankful for the awesome IFC volunteers!



So thankful for friends from Lyndon Station, WI who came to lead a special class for "Embroidery on Paper." The international students were excited to learn something new and were very good at crafts.



PING-PONG

UNIVERSITY LUTHERAN CHAPEL / COLLEGE STATION, TX
REV. PAUL HOEMANN / ISM INC PRESIDENT

Chinese students Daisy Xu, left, and Xi Wang try out the new ping pong table at University Lutheran Chapel in College Station. The table was donated by a former Texas A&M student to the glory of God and in thanksgiving for University Lutheran Chapel and its ministries to both American and international students. It was given in memory of former Chapel volunteer Alta Kirk, who passed away in 2017. For many years, Mrs. Kirk served as a faithful conversation partner, English class leader and friend to many international students at Texas A&M. To God alone be the glory!



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THE DOORSTEP IS THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF ISM, INC., A RECOGNIZED SERVICE ORGANIZATION OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD, DEDICATED TO MINISTRY AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS.

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