

# DoorstepNews

The quarterly news publication of *International Student Ministry, Inc.*

## ISMinc

Serving Internationals on Campus

www.ISMinc.org ISMinc@ISMinc.org

Winter (Jan-Mar) 2024 • Volume 28/Issue 1

## ISM INC. 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Praise be to God for his gracious work in ISM Inc. during 2023! He led us in:

- Restarting both the In Depth Bible Seminar and the Equipping Conference
- Coaching and mentoring site leaders at 5+ new sites
- Distributing six \$500 grants to local sites for Christ-centered materials and events
- Stretching the missional awareness

*(Continued - See "Report" p. 3)*

Scan the QR code or type in the URL below to view the full ISM 2023 Annual Report



<http://tinyurl.com/ISMAnnualReport2023>

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## BAPTIZED INTO OUR FAMILY

**Rev. James Lanning**  
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church,  
Columbia, MO • University of Missouri

Early in 2023, my wife, Hannah, and I met Rosie, a wonderful graduate student from Southeast Asia who

showed up at Campus Lutheran wanting to know more about Mormonism. She was welcomed in and recommended to Quarterlife, our young adult group. She knew very little about Christianity when we first met. However, she has faithfully come to Quarterlife events since February and has attended church at Good Shepherd. As I and the members

*(Continued - See "Baptized" p. 4)*

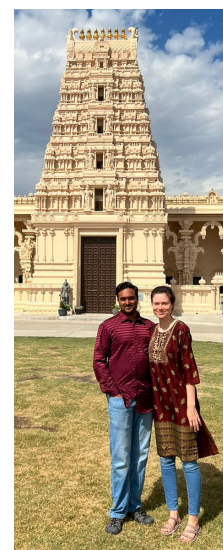


*"Rosie" at her Baptism*

## HOW FAR IS TOO FAR?

**Katie Olszowy**  
Trinity Lutheran Church  
Auburn, AL

At the end of this year, I'll marry into a Hindu family. Three years ago, my fiancé became a Christian and was baptized, but the rest of his family remains devout Hindus. Getting to know his family has been a great gift but has also brought challenges. I've worried about how I can become familiar with their religion and culture without compromising my own beliefs. Am I allowed to visit their temple? Can I eat their idol-blessed food? How far is



*Katie and her fiancé visiting the Hanuman temple.*

too far? Here are three simple tools I've used to help me answer these questions:

### Ask Questions

Americans are taught not to ask questions for fear of being rude. We feel it's impolite to ask an international family about their religion, if they go to church, or how they worship. However, I have found that international friends and my in-laws are excited when I ask

*(Continued - See "How Far?" p. 3)*

## LORD, HELP!

Vickie Loemker

Trinity Lutheran Church, Norman  
University of Oklahoma

Lord, help! Show me how to be effective for your kingdom in this new group of students.” This has been my prayer this year. Every year brings new students and new opportunities to meet grad students, visiting professors and visiting scholars at the University of Oklahoma (OU). Every semester offers opportunities to build relationships and sow seeds for the kingdom. But this semester has offered even more new experiences and challenges (or possibilities) for me and our volunteers.

For the past seven years, our student group has mostly come from East Asian countries: China, Taiwan, South Korea. We have become familiar with their Buddhist, animist, or agnostic/atheist backgrounds. Some have been curious about Christianity and have attended the Bible study we offer. A few have become Christians.

Beginning about a year ago, the number of East Asian attendees decreased, and the participants from the Middle East and Central Asia increased. These are mostly Muslim, and that was new to me. I experienced a new level of uncertainty in group interactions: Would they be offended by prayers before meals at picnics? On days when our on-campus venue was unavailable would they be willing to enter our church building for our group meeting? How would they respond to the seeds of Christian references we often include

I prayed a LOT! I worried too much. I have learned a lot!

This was my experience (it may differ from yours): The Muslim students are not offended by our mealtime prayers. They willingly came to our church when our group met there. The “seeds” of Christian references led to some interesting questions in our conversation groups. They attended some of the Christmas activities. They enjoyed most of them. They were curious about them. They got pretty overwhelmed by the Christmas Eve service (too much information for

those unfamiliar with the Bible and Christianity). They were happy to come to Christmas dinner.

Fall semester was good. I am sure I will be sending many prayers heavenward as the spring semester progresses. I am sure I will learn a lot more. Some moments make it all worthwhile: At the end of our field trip to see Christmas lights,

a visiting professor from the Middle East who misses family deeply thanked us and said, “This has been a perfect day!”

One more thing I learned: God is in charge of all of it. Why did I worry? †



in our presentations? Would they be interested in participating in the extra activities we offer around the Christmas holidays? Or would they avoid them?

## BEING AS WISE AS SERPENTS AND AS GENTLE AS DOVES

Jesus sent out his disciples as “sheep among wolves” and urged them to be as “wise as serpents and as gentle as doves”. In the U.S., we have been blessed with more than two centuries of preferentially positive treatment for

Christians. A majority of international students and scholars are from countries in which, even a little evidence of friendliness toward Christians, or attending a church service, might result

in them being questioned for hours by police, being unable to get a job in their field, or worse.

God still desires that they know the truth about him and be welcomed into his kingdom. God

wants Christians to share his truth and grace with them! God wants new believers to return to their home countries to be light and salt there. He also wants us to be wise and gentle in how we share information about them.

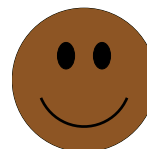
Some students and scholars may say, “Sure, you can use my photo.” They may give permission to avoid dishonoring you or harming their friendship. None of us can know how pictures may be used in the future.

We know you love to see the faces of international students and scholars. We need to prioritize. Which is most important: The safety of students and scholars

or our desires and preferences?

A couple issues ago, we began to cover the faces and shoulders of all international students in the Doorstep with a black box. We do this to protect students and scholars. In years past, blurring faces was enough to avoid recognition. Now identities can be determined with blurred faces. We will now use faces rather than black boxes. God has blessed all people the gift

of imagination. Ask him to help you imagine real faces as you enjoy photos of students and scholars participating at ISM sites across the U.S. †





# THE BLESSINGS THAT COME FROM GIVING YOUR TIME!

Paul writes to the Philippians: “I am not trying to get something from you, but I want you to receive the blessings that come from giving.” Philippians 4:17 CEV Oh, yes! We all know it: It is more blessed to give! Might you join us in praying that God will bless someone by being able to serve ISM Inc (and people far and wide) by serving in each of these ways:

- Posting encouragement and updates on our social media sites (internet)
- Coordinating and encouraging increased prayer (internet)
- Monitoring and updating our mailing lists (email, phone, internet)
- Processing our donations (St. Louis)
- Data entry for donations (internet)
- Tracking our contracts, memberships and online accounts (internet)
- Monitoring our three email lists (internet, email)

- Managing our growing volunteer base (phone)

Training is available for all of these. Most of these would take a couple hours each week. Some require 10 hours one or two weeks a quarter, with one hour a week all other weeks. Call (314)745-3253 or email Sue@isminc.org if you or someone you know might be willing to receive the blessings that come from giving your time. †



(“Report” continued from p. 1)

of young people at two Higher Things Conferences and the Beautiful Feet Missions Conference

- Leading breakout sessions at two Best Practices events and the Campus Ministry Conference
- Connecting and reconnecting with women at the LWML Convention
- Submitting LWML Mission Grant proposals to Michigan, Missouri and Texas districts
- Welcoming onto the ISM Board Lydia Schinnerer-Hartwig, Angela Mueller and Vicki Jameson

Our change of mailing address delayed the receipt of many gifts sent during December. Year-end financial information will be shared in our full Annual Report, online at:

<http://tinyurl.com/ISMAAnnualReport2023>

†

(“Too Far” continued from p. 1)

questions: they can share something that is important to them. Asking questions allows them to share part of their heritage, culture, and daily life with me. Questions build a good relationship and encourage future meaningful conversations. These have allowed me to get to know my in-laws better. Such discussions also help me determine what activities I would feel comfortable participating in while I visited them!

## Accept the Tension

Initially, the tension between my in-laws and myself felt nearly unbearable. It was clear that I was an outsider to them, and they felt they were losing their newly converted son.

Did they expect me to go to church on Sunday morning and temple in the afternoon? Was it wrong for me to buy them flowers that might be used in Hindu ceremonies? How could I plan a wedding uniting a Christian and Hindu family? I’ve answered some of these questions and still feel totally lost on

others, but I’ve realized this tension is a good thing. It’s like this: I remind myself that I am a miserable sinner, and then Jesus reminds me that He makes me a saint. I try (and fail) to obey the Law, and Jesus reminds me that I’m



*Katie and her future grandmother preparing flowers. The grandmother, who is a well-known Hindu priestess, could adorn altars or consecrate blessings with these flowers.*

saved through the Gospel. I must make difficult confessions so Jesus can remind me I’m forgiven. This tension brings me closer to Christ. The hard decisions I must make with my in-laws remind me to ask God what He thinks. They remind me to look toward scripture to find an answer, to talk to my pastor, and to try my best to act like Christ.

Although the tension sometimes feels overwhelming, I believe God uses these moments to make me a better teacher, friend, and family member.

## Pray

Marrying into a Hindu family has allowed me to try many new foods, travel to new places, and learn about a beautiful culture. I have had so many good moments, yet I know I’ve made mistakes along the way. My in-laws took me to a Hindu temple to show me what a worship service looked like. I went inside and didn’t participate in anything, but maybe I shouldn’t have gone inside at all. One day, my fiancé’s grandmother blessed me, and I had no idea how to respond. Should I have let her do that? I don’t want to sin, cause others to sin, or lead others to think that I adhere to Hindu doctrine. I’ve realized I should talk to God before, during, and after new experiences to ask for guidance and discernment. Over time, God has brought people into my life to help me navigate difficult conversations. He shows me Bible verses and other books that offer guidance. He reminds me to be patient, forgive myself and others, and love everyone as hard as possible. †

## TRUSTING GOD AS WE MOVE...

Our new mailing address is:

**International Student Ministry, Inc.**  
c/o Ascension Lutheran Church  
5347 Donovan Ave.  
St. Louis, MO 63109-2636



We praise God that Ascension is allowing us to use their address! We're so grateful for faithful volunteers in Stevens Point who served so well. Here are some important notes about our address change:

Mail will be forwarded for a full year from our Stevens Point PO Box. We'll continue to use donation envelopes with our old address for a time. You may wish to place a sticker over the old address and write in the new. If you use a check-writing service, please inform your bank of our new address.

If giving through a Donor Advised Fund, Qualified Charitable Distribution or Thrivent, be careful to choose our ministry from among others with similar names. At the national level, we have a name with no location. At least two local International Student Ministry organizations have a city as part of their name. Those are not us. Note: we have a street address in St. Louis, not a PO Box.

It will take time to update our address everywhere. Please, email us at [isminc@isminc.org](mailto:isminc@isminc.org) with questions or if you find our old address where it should not be. †

*("Baptized" continued from p. 1)*

of Quarterlife have taught her the truths of the Bible, we faced challenges such as the language gap, the large number of stories and theological concepts in the Bible, and the fact that Christianity was completely foreign to her.

I have often doubted whether I'm doing enough, have explained things well enough, or have prepared well enough to effectively teach Rosie (as if my preparation, teaching, and planning could create faith in her). God has shown me not to rely on my own intelligence and abilities, and we have seen Rosie's faith grow.

Rosie asked to be baptized last summer, and in August she became a baptized member of the family God — not because of anything she, or I, or anyone in Quarterlife did, but because God chose her and planted a seed of faith in her heart. I may think that I didn't say enough, or use the right words, or teach her enough of the story, or explain enough doctrine. However, it's not about my words, or intelligence, or ability to effectively communicate. It's about God and His Word, which is more powerful than I can possibly imagine and certainly more powerful than anything I could ever say or do.

Praise God from whom all blessing truly flows. †

*(all edits to her name, appearance, and country of origin are made out of an abundance of caution)*

## REGISTRATION IS OPEN!

### In Depth Bible Seminar

If you are the friend of an international student or scholar who is a new believer or active seeker and has been studying God's Word for at least six months, encourage them to attend the In Depth Bible Seminar in St Louis on May 19-25. They will join others who are digging deep into God's word of truth. Registration is open through the link at [www.isminc.org/indepth](http://www.isminc.org/indepth).

### ISM Equipping Conference

You and your friends are invited to register for the Equipping Conference May 16-18 in Norman, Oklahoma, hosted by Trinity Lutheran Church. Plenary and breakout sessions will be appropriate for people of all ages and experience level: university students through retirees, those just starting through those with years of experience. Come be encouraged and equipped to minister among internationals on a campus near you! Register through the link at [www.isminc.org/equip](http://www.isminc.org/equip). †



*Praying for Site Leaders*



*Judy Newhouse leads an Equipping Conference session on Connecting with Internationals.*



# International Student Ministry *prayer* February 2024

*Vickie Loemker  
Trinity Norman  
University of Oklahoma*

- May God provide presenters for our weekly cultural topics.
- May God bring more students to our ESL conversation groups.
- Praise God for the faithful attendees and the relationships they are building with our volunteers and each other.
- May international students have an increased interest in Bible study.
- For wisdom to use every opportunity to share God's love with our participants.
- May God raise up another faithful co-leader to be a backup for our current leadership team.

*Marcia Mittwede  
ISM Director  
University of Texas at Austin*

- Thank the Lord for faithful volunteers who help make the ministry possible.
- Praise for students who have recently shown interest in the Gospel.
- May the Lord lead students whom He wants in our program this semester.
- God's wisdom in offering a new class for Mommies and their infants

*Beth Greimann  
Campus Lutheran Church ISM  
Columbia, Missouri*

- Praise God that several Internationals were baptized this year, both youth and adults!

*Mark Meyer  
University Lutheran Chapel  
Lincoln, NE*

- For D (Pakistan) who asks great questions and is learning more about Jesus and the Bible. May God grow faith in her heart. May Christ also draw S (India), D (Bangladesh) and R (India) to Himself.
- May God bless the American Christians who meet one-on-one with international students. Pray for great friendships and opportunities to serve and share the Good News.
- May God draw international students to join our Bible Discussion Group.

## *ISM*

- Pray for the committees preparing for the In Depth Bible Seminar and the Equipping Conference.
- Pray for donors to give generously to fund the nearly \$15,000 in scholarships estimated to be needed for this year's In Depth.

### ***Please pray for volunteers for ISM Inc.***

May God provide serve-from-home volunteers for ISM Inc.

- Prayer writer and sharer
- Social Media post-er
- Data entry
- Mailing list updater
- Volunteer encourager

And one in St Louis:

- Open mail, deposit checks

## *Thank You*

### **IN HONOR & MEMORY OF**

We praise God for each person you honor or remember as you give. From August 2023 through December 2023, gifts totaling the following amounts have been received.

#### **In Memory of:**

- Devasara and Charlotte Battu Rao \$25
- Bob Dickudt \$1,420
- Helen Jahnke \$15
- Colin Jones \$100
- Roger Lutz \$100
- Karl Lutze \$150
- Carl Selle \$60

#### **In Honor of:**

- Sue Hasselbring \$100
- Carl and Karol Selle \$175
- Karol Selle \$50
- Jean Zeinert \$50

## **thrivent<sup>®</sup> Choice Dollars**

Support ISM with your Thrivent Choice Dollars:

- Online at [thrivent.com/thriventchoice](https://thrivent.com/thriventchoice) or
- Call **800-847-4836** and when prompted, say "Thrivent Choice."

### **THE TIME IS NOW! DIRECT CHOICE DOLLARS**

ISM Inc. received more than \$2,200 Choice Dollars in 2023! Any of your Thrivent Choice dollars from 2023 must be "directed" before March 31. Call Thrivent at 800-847-4836 and say "Choice Dollars." Or go to [thrivent.com/choice](https://thrivent.com/choice) and login to your account. There are several "ISM" organizations. Choose "International Student Ministry, Inc." (with no location in the name). Our new address is 5347 Donovan Ave, 63109. Thank you to all who direct Choice dollars! †



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## *Doorstep***News**

Doorstep News is the official publication of ISM, Inc.  
A Recognized Service Organization  
of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod,  
dedicated to ministry among  
international students and scholars


**Winter (Jan-Mar) 2024**  
**Volume 28/Issue 1**



## **BEAUTIFUL FEET IN SEWARD**

**Sue Hasselbring**  
Ministry Catalyst, ISM Inc.

What a joy to interact with more than 200 students from five Concordia universities who came to learn and pray and grow in the area of letting their light shine to people of all nations! A dozen of those present joined a new ISM Inc. email discussion group for university students who desire to intentionally minister among international students and scholars. Even more signed up for the Doorstep News. Pray for these young people with “beautiful feet” as they proclaim peace and salvation and share that “Our God reigns!”



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