

THE IMPACT OF LOVE

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

Mengdong Guo Liu was an international student in the campus ministry at University Lutheran Chapel, College Station, Texas, in the mid 1990s. She was befriended and served by a Lutheran couple, Don and Jean Mahnke, who were members of Bethel Lutheran Church in Bryan, Texas. Over the last 25 years, despite Mengdong moving away from Bryan-College Station, they continued to keep in touch. Don passed away in 2014. And Jean passed away on January 14, 2019. Mengdong wrote the following testimony about what an impact this loving Christian couple had on her and her family. It appeared in the bulletin at Jean's funeral on January 22, 2019:

Knowing Jean is such a blessing in my life. I came from China and studied as a graduate student in fall 1994. I visited University Lutheran Chapel soon after school started in August 1994. There was a nice couple, Mrs. Jean and Mr. Don Mahnke, who volunteered to help me and another Chinese student who came at the same time to study at Texas A&M University (TAMU) to practice speaking English through a program called "Conversation Partners." This program was a co-ministry of Bethel Lutheran Church and University Lutheran Chapel.



DON AND JEAN MAHNKE WELCOME MENGDONG GUO LIU (CENTER, HOLDING THE SMALL CHILD) AND HER FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO THE MAHNKE HOME IN BRYAN, TEXAS, DURING THE 2005 HURRICANE RITA EVACUATION OF HOUSTON.

That changed my life. Since then, Jean and Don provided constant love, the kind of love I never knew. They didn't know me, a foreigner, but they loved us as family. They not only talked with us as conversation partners are supposed to do, they invited us to join them in major holidays, family gatherings, field trips, and local events. They never expected anything back from us. Their love drew me close to an invisible God who authored love in them. I was baptized a year after I came to TAMU, as a strong believer. In that I am thanking Jean's testimony of godly love forever.

After I graduated from TAMU in 1997, my family has been in continued contact with Jean and Don. For me, I felt I adopted them as my parents here in the United States. My own mother came to visit me in 2000. She witnessed the love that changed my life, and she was baptized in Houston before she went back to China. Over the 20 plus years of knowing Jean and Don, I feel they were sent by God to me and my family. My children, Michael (20), Gabriel (14), and Angela (11), know Granny Jean and Papa Don as their own



DON AND JEAN MAHNKE AT MENGDONG GUO LIU'S GRADUATION.

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grandparents. My children have kept their birth presents given by Jean and Don-quilts made by Jean-til this day. For me, the great time Jean and Don shared with me and the faith they witnessed has changed my life, and I am grateful for that forever.

During Hurricane Rita in 2005, my family and several of my friends' families came to Jean and Don's home in Bryan for refuge. Jean and Don showed compassion to me and my friends' families. Their love moved everyone in the group. Jean and Don's love and faith changed my life and my children's lives. I love you, Jean and Don, and forever I am grateful for you.

Mengdong Guo Liu - January 14, 2019

An additional note from Patty Phelps, one of Don and Jean's daughters:

"Mengdong went on to say she was considered the black sheep of her family. In China, they told her that Americans were cold

and had no love in their families. She was very confused when she witnessed this love first hand. Her husband was very skeptical and resisted this "invisible" god. Seven years after Mengdong was baptized, her husband accepted Christ and was also baptized. She said Don was overjoyed and wrote him a lengthy letter they will always keep.

"Mengdong's own mother passed away last month (December 2018). When her sister witnessed their mother's peace as death approached, she said, "I want to have that, too." Mengdong witnessed that the co-ministry of Bethel Lutheran Church and University Lutheran Chapel has spread the Gospel all the way to the China. It's amazing how a seemingly small witness can be used by our Almighty God."

PARTNERSHIP FOR PARTNERSHIPS

ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN/KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
LIZ BEIKMANN, ISM FACILITATOR

In partnership with a local Christian organization, Helping International Students (HIS), St. Luke's helps with beginning of semester orientation meals, furniture donation, spring banquet, and many other events. Students that want to be partnered with an American friend sign-up through HIS and are then connected to a friend through one of the partnering churches. St. Luke's has a special relationship with universities in the Czech Republic who participate in the KSU Exchange Program which allows contact prior to arrival at KSU. This gives students the opportunity to connect with an American friend/family and allows for airport pick-up, homestay and friendship for the duration of the exchange. Through our volunteer families, the internationals are introduced to American culture and customs such as going to a rodeo. This ministry shows, by example, a Christian way of life and opportunities to attend church and to participate in numerous church events such as picnics, fishing, pancake fundraisers and ice skating.





CONNECTIONS

INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP CENTER /UNIV OF WI-MADISON
JUDY TANG/IFC DIRECTOR

International Friendship Center (IFC) welcomes people from all countries and cultures and new students walk through the doors almost every week, eager to learn more about English and Christianity. In one of the weekly Bible studies, we were studying “God and Culture.” Different languages and different cultures make the world more colorful. The variety of cultures can be a blessing and a curse – creating a feeling of pride in “our own culture” and/or seeing the beauty of different cultures. Revelation 7:9-10 gives us a picture of how God desires to unite the people once again. *“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’”*

Through our discussions it was fascinating to see how the Holy Spirit works through studying God’s Word. One Chinese student wrote on the whiteboard one word in Mandarin that means both “same” and “different.” As we learned about the Tower of Babel, we discussed parallels in history such as the Great Wall (for defense and for uniting people). A Colombian student said, “If people are united, they would lose their faith. They would be too strong and think they can do everything and that they don’t need God.” As we studied Jonah, we learned of God’s command to Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach, but Jonah ran from the Lord, taking a ship in the opposite direction. A Chinese friend remarked, “God’s got a big plan and every chapter is part of the plan.” Wow! Sometimes we don’t follow God’s call and yet God promises to never leave us or forsake. He gently leads and guides us through each “chapter” of our life.

We learned God has made Himself known through creation – *“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.”* (Romans 1:20) We also talked about how every culture has a concept of sin and showed how Jesus provides a

bridge, through faith in His life, death, and resurrection. Our international friends had lots of questions... What is salvation?, Is Jesus Christ the same meaning as God?, Does everyone have sin?, Are cultures created by God? What incredible opportunities we have to share Jesus and the Good News of salvation with internationals who have never heard this great message!

In addition to the English classes and Bible study classes, the IFC has 2-3 cultural activities each month. These events provide tremendous opportunities for internationals and Americans to build friendships, share American culture, and learn about other cultures too. This past semester we enjoyed great activities such as a visit to a Wollersheim Winery; a trip to the outlet mall; apple-picking at a local orchard; hiking and picnic at Devil’s Lake State Park with 30 people; a Pumpkin-Carving Party with 80 people and sharing the Gospel message of how Jesus is the light of the world; internationals enjoying Thanksgiving Day with American friends; Corn Maze, Hayride, and Bonfire with 42 people; the annual International Christmas Party with 160 internationals and 50 American hosts and volunteers. Through these activities, the American friends and I have great conversations about work, school, family, living in Madison, and faith.

When our international friends leave Madison to return to their home countries, they always say how awesome and wonderful the IFC is and what a blessing we have been in their lives and how much they will miss it. What a blessing to be able to connect internationals to life in the U.S. and life in Jesus Christ!





REACHING OUT TO KETTERING

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN / KETTERING UNIVERSITY / FLINT, MI
MARTHA HELMREICH

The Evangelism/Outreach committee at St. Paul has taken steps to get connected with the International students at Kettering University. Located about a mile from the university, this group of volunteers wants to show our “neighbors” we care about them while they are away from family and friends in their home countries.

Our first activity was a “Welcome to Flint, Michigan, USA” lunch where food was served grown or made right here in the area: Koegel hotdogs, apples and cider from a local orchard, and fresh vegetables from the Farmers Market, as well as potato chips also, Michigan made!! The students enjoyed their visit and interaction as we shared a bit our respective cultures.



We were so happy with the response in early November as we introduced students from India, China, Jamaica, Germany, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines to an American Thanksgiving dinner with turkey and all the trimmings! There was lots of conversation around the tables during the meal and students were introduced to a brief history of the first Thanksgiving.

St. Paul members warmly welcomed students who attended the Candlelight service held on Christmas Eve. One student called one of our outreach committee members 2 hours before the service and asked IF it would be okay if they brought friends along. We were delighted to welcome all 12!! The students experienced the JOY of Christmas through the Christmas hymns, carols, and the message, as well as the beautifully decorated church. They thanked us “from my heart” for inviting them and including them in our “festival.”

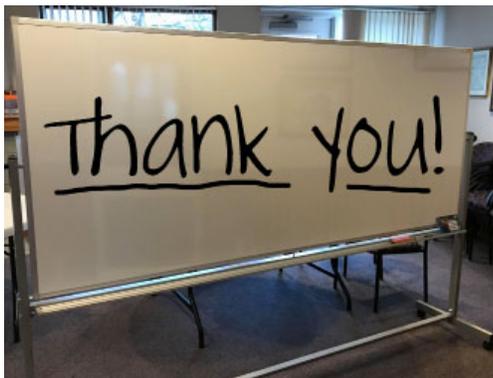
AN ENDURING PARTNERSHIP

FRIENDSHIP HOUSE MSU / EAST LANSING, MI

RICH BEARUP / DIRECTOR

Back in 1992, University Lutheran Church played an active role in the formation of the ministry now known to many as Friendship House MSU. That act of leadership, still going strong 26 years later, is one of the cornerstones to a ministry to MSU International students, scholars and family members that has served an estimated 4,000 Internationals since its doors opened just around the corner from the church.

What began as a fledgling and even fragile attempt to provide English as a Second Language and Bible study classes to a handful of curious of Internationals has now grown into a ministry which offered 35 weekly classes (including nine Christian education classes), seven days a week, this past semester and taught by an all-volunteer faculty numbering more than 60 people.



Due to the continuing leadership and support of the members of University Lutheran, six of these weekly classes are now held on the congregation's campus.

In yet another active example of this blessed partnership, the congregation's Local Benevolence Grant committee approved funds for the purchase of a new, large portable whiteboard that can be used by Friendship House classes and the church alike throughout the week.

Friendship House – its students, teachers, conversation partners, Board members and other volunteers – is grateful for the leadership and support of University Lutheran Church. May God will that this union of shared ministry continue for His use and ends well into the future.

INTEGRATING AMERICANS

FLINT INTERNATIONAL FRIENDS ASSOCIATION, FLINT, MI

KATE COLE / ISM DIRECTOR

Integration occurs when separate people or things are brought together. America works hard at integrating people from many nations into our society. God tells the Church in His Word, Psalm 96:3, that He is not a separatist but wants us to “Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.”

This declaration to all nations doesn't always require us to learn a different language or travel great distances, but it does require us to step out of our comfort zones.

As I speak with leaders of international student groups across the country, I'm hearing concerns, that for some reason, Americans of all ages find themselves outside of their comfort zone when interacting with people from other countries—especially those who may be highly educated. To take this a step further, declaring God's glory to people of all nations may be a bit over the top!

My church overcame some of their fear factors when our international friends invited them to a “Taste of India” after our Saturday night worship service. Upon entering the church members were greeted with the warm and inviting smells of exotic food. Some of our international students joined in the worship service while others remained in the kitchen making last minute preparations for a dinner consisting of Momo appetizers, Buttered Chicken and Mushrooms, served with delicious Chia and Ginger teas. For dessert there was creamy rice pudding and pineapple



up-side-down cake. Members clapped their appreciation when the meal was finished.

Students from Russia, India, Nepal and Africa joined our members at the tables for interesting conversations that knocked down more of the communication barriers for many Americans.

As the Lord continues to bring the nations to our country for higher education, let's prepare our hearts, homes and chuches to welcome them as Jesus commands, so that all people may love and praise our God, who gave His Son, for the whole world.

PRAYER AND PRAISE

MARCH 1-9, 2019

**SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY / EDWARDSVILLE, IL
BESSIE FICK / ISM COORDINATOR**

- Pray that we would be faithful in following up on the contacts on Campus and that we are faithful to use opportunities to invite them to hear of God's love for them.
- Pray that God's people continue to bring their gifts for the work among students on campus especially to open opportunities to also reach the internationals on our campuses. Thank you prayer that this year has been provided for by the people of the Southern Illinois District. Also pray that God would provide volunteers to serve in meeting the needs of the internationals on our campuses.
- Thank you prayer that we were able to meet new students at the Spring Welcome Reception. May God bless these contacts with opportunities to serve our international neighbor and to invite them to hear of God's salvation in Christ Jesus.

MARCH 10-16, 2019

**INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP HOUSE / ASU-TEMPE, AZ
SHARON OWENS, DIRECTOR OF CAMPUS MINISTRY**

PRAISE FOR:

- Praise God for the new students who arrived for the Intensive English Program at ASU. Pray that they will join our activities and hear the gospel.
- A great Valentine's Day event. This year Valentine's Day was on Thursday our regular night to meet. We planned a fun event with activities and discussed how the love of a Valentine is special but God's love is beyond what we can imagine.
- We have 42 new students this year and are close to reaching our goal of 50 new students to attend one of our events where the gospel is shared.

PRAY FOR:

- The preparation of our Easter Baskets for students. We will include a cross, Bible, Christian tracts, and of course a chocolate Easter bunny and other traditional Easter candy. Pray that the students will receive this gift with joy and begin reading the bible and other materials.
- Spring break choices. Pray that our students would make healthy and wise choices on their Spring break and that they can find relaxing and fun things to do.
- Pray for our students. Many of them experience depression, loneliness, the fear of not measuring up to parents expectations. All this causes a lot of stress on the students.
- Pray for wisdom, direction and unity for our campus ministry. Pray that we would see where God is leading the work and that we would follow where he leads.

MARCH 17-23, 2019

**UNIVERSITY LUTHERAN CHAPEL / COLLEGE STATION, TX
LYDIA SCHINNERER AND REV. PAUL HOEMANN, ISM CO-DIRECTORS**

- Pray for Teresa, Jae Hyeong, and Sinhye, all from South Korea; Victor and Milonka from Peru; Flavia, Eloisa, Anna and Caroline, all from Brazil; and Elonora from Russia. These are our new students, so far, for the winter/spring semester. Some are Christian. Some are not. Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us as we serve and minister to them.
- We'd like to once again send a student(s) to In-Depth Bible Conference this year. Ask God to show us who is ready for such a week of study.
- Pray for Sina and Fatemeh, a couple from Iran, who had to prematurely return to their homeland. Gospel seeds were planted while they were with us last fall. Pray that the Lord of the harvest will bring in the fruit!
- Nittaya and her family from Thailand; Burcu and her husband from Turkey; Nabila from Bangladesh; Amerika and her boyfriend from Brazil; and Yong Chen from China are all returning students with whom we've developed significant friendships. Pray that the Spirit of God would draw these unbelievers to himself.
- We continue to pray for a new co-director to work with Lydia. Ask the Lord of the harvest to raise up a new worker for our ministry. Also, ask the Lord's blessings on Allan and Mary Beth, our volunteer English conversation leaders. We are so thankful for their faithful service!
- Pray that the Lord will continue to provide faithful financial partners so that our ministry of friendship and hospitality to internationals at Texas A&M University will continue.

MARCH 24-30, 2019

**FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY IN BIG RAPIDS, MICHIGAN
BETHEL LARSEN**

- Thanks be to God that a Middle Eastern family found me recently in spite of my irregular schedule.
- With challenges of weather, scheduling, and location, please pray that I find creative ways to form and maintain good connections with international students, and that opportunities to share Jesus will result.

MARCH 31-APRIL 6, 2019

**UNIVERSITY LUTHERAN CHAPEL / UNIV OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN
MARK MEYER/ DIRECTOR**

- That God would continue to draw new international students to our ministry.
- That God would raise up American students to disciple International students.
- For the young believers among us that they would continue to grow in their faith.
- That God would draw F, J, S, M, B and E to baptism.

PRAYER AND PRAISE

APRIL 7-13, 2019

**ALL SAINTS LUTHERAN CHURCH AND STUDENT CENTER
SLIPPERY ROCK, PA
AGUSTA MENNELL / ISM DIRECTOR**

PLEASE PRAY...

- that the student meals, transportation, and time that we make to listen to their concerns are all part of our friendship. Most of all, please pray that the Holy Spirit would draw them to worship and to Bible study.
- for Mikayel from Armenia. He graduated several years ago and continues to call, always praising All Saints for our support. He does not see the value in attending worship, but we encourage him to read his Bible.
- for Carlos from Paraguay. He graduated from SRU and tried to get a job in the US, but was unsuccessful. Although he was baptized on Easter Sunday while a student, he doesn't believe that God cares about him and has stopped attending church. He is very lonely.
- a Christian pastor who preached the Gospel on Christmas Day in India where a former student's mother and father were in the audience. The mother is a fervent Christian, but her family is not. Asking God to bring this pastor back again to share the Gospel so her whole family can believe.
- that Chris and Samantha will continue attending Bible classes this semester. They are sincere Christians. She is Catholic and he is Reformed. Both want to learn more about the Bible.

APRIL 14-20, 2019

**ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH/FLINT, MI
MARTHA HELMREICH**

- Thanking God for step by step opening the doors for St. Paul's outreach to Kettering University.
- Thanking God for the blessing of our initial interactions with the students both at St. Paul as well as on campus.
- Asking God to continue to guide and direct the Evangelism/Outreach Committee's future plans to develop relationships with Kettering students.
- Asking God to prepare hearts and minds of students, giving them a hunger to know Jesus.

APRIL 21-30, 2019

**INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP CENTER /UNIV OF WI-MADISON
JUDY TANG/IFC DIRECTOR**

- Praise God for wonderful new connections and blessings with new people leading the "Ask the Expert" class. Praying that will continue!
- Pray that God would continue to strengthen the current IFC volunteer teachers and bring new volunteers to the International Friendship Center.
- Continue to pray for God's healing and support a Chinese friend and volunteer struggling with depression. Pray that God would work mightily in their hearts and minds.

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS & AUSTIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

MARCIA MITTWEDE/ISM DIRECTOR

- Thank the Lord that "S" (S. Korea) desires baptism! Ask the Lord to use this to encourage others who are ready to take this step.
- For the Lord's guidance in who to invite to the In-Depth Bible Seminar.
- That the Marriage class would strengthen marriages of internationals in the class.
- In thanksgiving for the Lord's provision of volunteers to pray, teach, support and encourage ISM in Austin and around the country!

*Doorstep*News

**YOU'VE GOT STORIES AND WE WANT TO SHARE THEM!
SEND US YOUR ARTICLES, PICTURES AND PRAYERS.**

Please share with us, and our subscribers, what's happening at your ministry site with the internationals you serve. We are honored to pray with and for you and encourage you to send your prayer requests!!

Articles and letters may appear in our print edition of the DoorstepNews, our website, or Facebook page. Submission does not guarantee publication.

Join our International Student Community on facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ISMCommunity>

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