The International Friendship Center (IFC) in Madison frequently has cooking classes to help introduce internationals to American foods as well as foods from other countries. We were excited to learn how to make kisir, a traditional Turkish dish from one of our students. It was so delicious! There's something about sitting around a table and eating with friends that makes conversation more robust! So many customs and festivals center around food, family, and friends. These cooking classes provide such wonderful and unique opportunities to share about each of cultures and even spiritual conversations.

The IFC has 15 English classes and Bible studies each week, in addition to monthly cultural events that connect internationals to life in Jesus Christ and life in the U.S. The last few months we've had some great cultural and spiritual discussions with people from China, Turkey, South Korea, Japan, Ukraine, Brazil, Tibet, Hungary, and more!
PLANTING SEEDS

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

What a wonderful, inspiring, encouraging letter. It came from Robin, who lives in Massachusetts. Her son, Moses, is a student at Grove City College and attends worship and student meals at All Saints Lutheran Church and Student Center. Robin wrote saying how thankful she is that this LCMS campus ministry is here in Slippery Rock for her family. She wrote, “My husband still talks about the sermon Reverend Loree preached at the August service that Herb attended. [When he brought his son, Moses, to Grove City College]”

This letter is especially meaningful because it addresses a question campus ministry often faces: is it worthwhile? Sometimes ministry to young students seems to bear fruit, but other times not so much. Sometimes seeds are planted but don’t seem to bear fruit, since we don’t see baptisms. This letter from Robin, who is an active LCMS layperson inspires campus ministry to go on planting seeds. After all, what is the option?

Robin wrote that she and her husband, Herb, are thankful that someone shared the Gospel with them. She described their lives before Christ as being in darkness with no joy. Now they are filled with the satisfaction of sharing the Gospel in rural Western Massachusetts. She wrote, “We have been very blessed in our recent contacts with college students.....” She continued, “We hosted eight Iranian students on Christmas Day. We had truly wonderful conversation with them in which I was able to share how the Lord led me to give Moses his name, and to share other ways he has guided us. One student asked her what the differences between Islam and Christianity were. Herb has studied Islam and frequently memorizes and meditates on the Bible, so he was ready, willing, and able to answer.” She went on to describe their Christmas party with Malaysian students, and the ESL (English as a second language) class they hold for students from Yemen, Afghanistan, and the Sudan. Their joy in sharing the Gospel is inspiring. Robin and her family are not counting the number of students they see becoming Christians. They just plant seeds and let the Holy Spirit do the rest.

What does this have to do with campus ministry? Why is it so inspiring? Because it reminds those of us in campus ministry that although it might seem easier to stop doing ministry to students because they don’t often asked to be baptized, it is still very worthwhile! There is joy in sharing Jesus. There is little joy in just concentrating on those who already know. This attitude is not joy filled and is not a satisfying option. All Saints will continue to work to reach students.

This week Isuri came to say a final goodbye. She has become family. She has helped with student meals, attended a few church services, and, often came to talk about life. Clearly she loves and admires her Buddhist parents who are her role models. They are sensitive, affectionate, and hard-working parents. Isuri brought them to visit in our home. When her parents left for home they asked us to stand with their daughter after they returned home to Sri Lanka. They trust us to care for her even though they have heard us say that we believe that Jesus is the meaning of life. Isuri has been at ASLC for three years, but prefers to be Buddhist. Does this mean that campus ministry wasted its time? No! Seeds are planted. The story is not concluded yet; it is not yet the ninth inning or the last quarter of the game. For Isuri it is still the first inning. We were not asked to grow the seeds, just to plant them. This we did with all the love possible. As Robin’s letter reminds campus ministry, the rest is up to the Holy Spirit.

Thank you, Robin, for your letter. It is a great reminder that we should share the Gospel on campus; that we should enjoy doing it; that we should let the Holy Spirit do His work. And yes, please tell your story one day. It will inspire us, too.
CHRISTMAS IN DETROIT, MI

BOB DICKHUDD / ISM DIRECTOR
WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY / DETROIT, MI

Our family has a tradition of inviting International Students, who are not traveling over the holidays, to join us for worship and dinner on Christmas Eve. We take them to our 6 p.m. Family Candlelight Service, after which we go to our home for food, fun, and fellowship.

Most of those who join us are Chinese scholars, not students. They are here for just one year, or less, working on special research projects ranging from automobiles, to biological sciences, to cancer research, mathematics, and computers, etc. They are super-intelligent folks, most of them with advanced degrees and teaching in universities “back home”.

How blessed we are to get to introduce them to the God of the Bible, our Creator, and the Lord Jesus Christ, sent to bring Joy to the WORLD, including also them! We invite your prayers; that the Holy Spirit may touch their hearts in special ways, accepting what they read and hear of God’s love for them shown by our Lord Jesus. Pray that we may give a winsome witness through our words and deeds.

...IN PITTSBURGH, PA

PASTOR ERIC ANDRAE
CAMPUS PASTOR AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENT CHAPLAIN
LUTHERAN STUDENT FELLOWSHIP OF PITTSBURGH, PA

Students from China attending the their first Christian worship service ever on Christmas Eve. Pictured here with Rev. Eric Andrae at First Trinity Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Also enjoying a Christmas party, at the home of ESL instructor, Anna Mussmann. The Students really loved and appreciated both events!

... IN MADISON, WI

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

Every year the IFC, along with several other international student ministry organizations, hosts an International Christmas Party for about 200 students. It’s a night filled with the joy of sharing the true meaning of Christmas! We have a potluck dinner, special live music, sing Christmas songs, and put on the Nativity drama with internationals playing all the parts of the play. The drama is the highlight of the night and a glimpse into what heaven will be like with people from all nations praising Jesus!
Host families of KSU exchange students from the Czech Republic invited their student(s) to join in the congregation’s family ice skating party. Students met a lot of congregational members, their grandkids and students from our campus ministry. Some of the internationals even helped some of the little kids to skate. A good time was had by all.

On Friday, January 26, American and international students from Texas A&M University combined to measure, weigh, seal and box more than 10,000 packages of food, which will be sent to people in need somewhere in the world (destination TBA). It was a great opportunity for our international students to experience what it means to be a volunteer in the United States. It was a great opportunity for our American students to get to know some of our international friends better. God be praised!