

## VOLUNTEERS: AN ESSENTIAL BLESSING!

MARCIA MITTWEDE, ISM DIRECTOR  
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS IN AUSTIN

Good and faithful volunteers are essential for the effectiveness of international student ministry! It is a wonderful blessing to see others enjoying the relationships with internationals as they help them with English - and along the way they help the internationals learn of, and experience the love of Jesus.

I am so thankful to the Lord for again providing great volunteers here in the ministry at the University of Texas in Austin!

One method of launching new volunteers is having them observe the teaching style of other volunteers. Seeing only one person's style may give the impression that only one method works, but there's no "one-size-fits-all" formula. So, observing two or more people as they interact with students is important. Allowing each person to "be yourself" and encouraging them to use their unique personality, gifts, educational training, skills, and interests is the most effective and fulfilling way of plugging them into a ministry.

During these COVID-19 days, we've helped some volunteers learn to use Zoom. Meeting volunteers for an online trial-run using Zoom is essential before using it in a 'real' class or meeting.

A myriad of websites, podcasts, books, and other resources can help those who wish to volunteer with ISM. After the volunteer observes other volunteers and meets with a few students, they have questions and insights. We can then refer them to resources that specifically address those needs.



Some current University of Texas in Austin volunteers at a recent Zoom meeting: Left to right, top to bottom: Nancy Giese, (Marcia Mittwede), Donna Halliburton, Richard Mittwede, Al Lange, Liz Zoch, John Jacob, Betty Bobo. Not pictured: Mark Boerger

The comments below show how volunteers are a blessing from God and receive blessings as they serve internationals:

*"It's a blessing to speak with people from other countries and learn about them and their cultures." - Nancy Giese*

*Involvement in the ESL program has broadened my understanding and appreciation of a small portion of God's children who come here from other countries, contributing their unique personalities, skills, cultures, and perspectives to discussions as we read books together. - Liz Zoch*

*Participating in the ministry to international students has indeed been a blessing to me over the years. My outlook is enriched by the interactions with people from different countries and cultures. Developing friendships through the program has brought me joy. This program gives me a wonderful satisfaction of letting my talents be used to further God's kingdom - Mark Boerger*

# WELCOME TO THE TEAM!

## **KEN BICKEL** **ISM, INC. BOARD STRATEGIST**

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Ken lives in St. Louis with his wife Gail. He is active with the St. Louis ISM group and has enjoyed developing wonderful relationships with international students, at Washington University. Prior to retiring as a Financial Planner with Thrivent Financial, Ken taught in Lutheran and public schools, served as Director of North American Ministries with Lutheran Hour and had various strategic management and product line responsibilities at AAL's (now Thrivent Financial) Home Office.

Ken's first experiences with international visitors came at a very young age when his father, a Pastor in rural Michigan and Ohio, organized visits to migrant labor camps, home to mostly Mexican national workers. While teaching sociology in 1979 at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, he became connected with his students from Iran who came under personal attack during the Hostage Crisis.

Ken is also very active in his congregation's "Colossians 4" Group which helps members gain confidence and experience in having meaningful Spiritual conversations. He sees ISM as a field to meet bright, friendly, and open-minded students from other countries who wish to know more about Americans and Christianity.



## **GRACE MOODY** **ISM, INC. INTERN**

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I am originally from the Detroit area, and I am going to be living in Allendale Michigan as a student at Grand Valley State University. I will be a student teacher at an elementary school nearby, so I'll be learning a lot as I jump in hands-on in the classroom each day.

In anticipation of the new school year and living back near St. John Lutheran church, I have been praying about where God wants me to be and how He wants to use me. Pastor Marin Cerchez (of St John) told me about the ISM internship and intentionally making connections with international students. With the opportunity in front of me, I prayed and felt inspired and then the inspiration turned into ideas about what I could do to bring people together. And so, I gave the opportunity a 'yes'! As an intern for ISM, I want to start off with willing hands and an open mind. I know that it will be God making the connections, and He has control over what they look like.

I believe that we all have common ground no matter what background we may have: Jesus is the bridge to the Father, and we can reach out to others in love to show them who He is. When I first visited St. John earlier in college, I felt so welcome. I felt like I had common ground with everyone because of the love they shared through acceptance and encouragement. I hope to bring people together in the same way, including international students, in Jesus' name.

# LOOKING AHEAD...

Featured articles that point to a way your site might engage with students in the coming months. We hope these are a blessing to those new to sharing with international students as well as our seasoned volunteers.

## SHARING OUR THANKSGIVING

**SUE HASSELBRING**  
**ISM, INC MINISTRY CATALYST**

Many cultures and religions have a harvest celebration or festival, so international students often feel at home attending Thanksgiving activities. Some ways of sharing Thanksgiving require much advanced planning while others take only a simple invitation:

- Christian university students can invite one or more international students to travel home with them to spend Thanksgiving weekend with their family, joining in with preparing the food, attending the worship service, getting to know extended family members, and perhaps shopping the sales on Friday. During such a visit, we might show special concern for the student by spending time one-on-one each day to answer any questions, checking in with how they are feeling (and what feels overwhelming), and where appropriate praying together.
- Families around your university may host one or two students for Thanksgiving Day or the whole holiday weekend. Perhaps you can involve members of rural congregations a bit farther from the university by inviting them to host students over Thanksgiving.
- Prepare and serve a traditional thanksgiving dinner to international students. With two or more volunteers at each table, activities or questions can help students share and learn from one another. A speaker can tell the story of early Thanksgiving celebrations in the U.S. and why we give thanks to God. A gift can be given to each student.
- Host an international thanksgiving potluck meal in your church, inviting each student to bring a traditional dish from their home culture to share. Table discussion with volunteers, a speaker and a gift can also be included.



When might you need to begin planning to organize a meaningful Thanksgiving experience for international students near you?

### POSSIBLE THANKSGIVING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Allow free discussion and really listen to one another, no need to complete all the questions.

1. What is something about your home country for which you are thankful?
2. What is something about your family for which you are thankful?
3. What food from the American Thanksgiving dinner do you enjoy the most? Why? (some might also share which they enjoyed least, it may feel embarrassing to be asked about that.)
4. How does someone in your culture show that they are thankful? What do they say or do?
5. If people in your culture express appreciation to God, how do they do that?

# FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO...BOUNCER?

DAN WINTER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
FRIENDSHIP HOUSE MSU

During the COVID pandemic the Friendship House MSU closed its doors to visitors for an unknown period. As one actual door closed, another virtual door opened.

The unexpected blessing was that technology brought many people to our community from around the world and down the street. The pandemic painfully reminded us that we are all in this together, even if we physically can't be together.

We are working toward our hybrid model of classes, which combine virtual and in-person classes, that begin on September 7. Although my expectation is that far fewer "local" students and teachers will be in the house this fall as I had hoped even a couple months ago. Due to the Delta variant, especially in the unvaccinated, and in following the lead of Michigan State University (MSU) in requiring masks and proof of vaccination, I suspect many people, vaccinated or not, will still opt for virtual attendance.



But what of those who do come for in-person classes? Will they be "masked up" ready for class? Will I need to be diligent to look for fake vaccine cards, like bouncers checking for fake IDs at the college bars here in East Lansing?

One of my guiding principles is, "Do good, and above all, do no harm." When I started at the Friendship House MSU a year ago, I didn't imagine that I might have to turn an international student or teacher away at the door for not being vaccinated, or to ask someone to leave the house because they refused to wear a mask in class.

I pray that the Holy Spirit guides me and our community through this next phase of the pandemic here at the house. I pray we do good for and to each other and above all, that we do no harm to those we encounter.

I pray for all the campus ministries, international and otherwise, as we navigate this fall. At this moment, I also pray for the people of Afghanistan and Haiti and all those suffering. May God's strength and peace guide us to a better world!

## IN DEPTH BIBLE STUDY

In Depth Bible study will be offered in May or June 2022. In Depth provides an opportunity for international students who have studied God's Word for six months or more to dig in more deeply together with other students who want to grow in their understanding of God's Word and who desire to share God's Word with others. Please contact ISM Board President Pastor JJ Voelker (jvoelker@kent.edu) to express your interest. Or complete this form at [tinyurl.com/isminddepth](https://tinyurl.com/isminddepth).

## INTERNSHIPS

The internship program of ISM Inc. allows new or restarting sites to benefit from the services of an intern for several months while also providing a training and service opportunity to young people who desire to serve international students. If your site would like an intern, write [kate@isminc.org](mailto:kate@isminc.org). To apply to serve as an intern please visit our website to fill out an application: <https://www.isminc.org/internships.html>.



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# JOIN OUR TEAM!

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## COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST



Delight! Is how so many describe their relationship with international students. Sharing that delight with others through the Doorstep newsletter, our website, and other channels using God's gracious gifts is the privilege of our communications specialist. Join us in begging our Father to lead us to the next ISM Inc. Communications Specialist.

### Communications Specialist (part-time):

- Compile, and design newsletter layout for print press and online distribution (6 issues per year)
- Work with printer and mailing house
- Send newsletters and communications via MailChimp
- Maintain postal and email lists

- Update the ISM website including newsletters, events, workshops, and links to resources through Weebly website platform
- Design banners, brochures, posters, mailings as requested

### Required experience:

- Producing print press ready newsletters and/or other printed materials
- Operational knowledge of Mailchimp, Google Suite, Microsoft Office, Weebly (or similar website platform), Adobe InDesign (or similar page design software)
- Some cross-cultural experience
- Provide own laptop or desktop computer

This position is open to a volunteer or for an hourly stipend. Full job description available on request. Please send resume and samples to Sue Hasselbring at [sue@isminc.org](mailto:sue@isminc.org).

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