

# **An inside look at working with**

# **friiends** **INTERNATIONAL**

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# **An Inside Look at Working With Friends International**

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## **Introduction**

Friends International is an interdenominational, evangelical organisation committed to encouraging and equipping UK churches to reach international students for Christ.

Friends International was formerly known as International Student Christian Services (ISCS). It began in 1985 when its founders, Max and Pat Kershaw, arrived from the USA with a vision of starting a movement in the UK dedicated to reaching out with the gospel to the many international students here. Max died in 1986 and his wife stayed on in the UK to continue this pioneering work. Peter Hayden took up his appointment as the first Field Director in 1987 and Gordon Showell-Rogers was appointed National Director in 1988. Richard Weston took over as the new National Director in 1999.

On 29<sup>th</sup> August 2002 we announced the change in our name to Friends International. This announcement followed a lengthy period of prayer and discussion to develop an identity that more closely reflected our ministry. It is through open, honest and prayerful friendships that the bridges are built across the loneliness, disorientation and anxieties of many international students. We chose the name Friends International to encapsulate this aim.

Although we have a new name and vision, we have the same commitment to reaching out to international students with the love of Jesus Christ. Friends International now has over 60 staff in 30 university towns and cities throughout the UK seeking to serve international students for Christ.

## **Friends International Statement of Vision, Mission & Values**

### **Our Vision:**

That every international student in the UK have a Christian friend, giving them the opportunity to respond to the message of Jesus Christ and return home with the desire and skills to spread the Gospel in their own country and throughout the world.

### **Our Mission:**

To make known to international students in the UK the Good News of Jesus Christ by word and action, lead them to a personal faith in him and train them to become effective witnesses for Christ in their own countries and among all nations.

### **Our Values:**

- Prayerful dependence on God for everything we need to fulfil our vision
- The Bible as our source of teaching and models of ministry
- The vital role of the local church in sharing the Gospel with the nations
- Cooperation & partnership in the expansion of God's kingdom
- Caring for the whole person
- Giving equal respect to all cultures
- Cross-cultural sensitivity in all relationships
- Giving priority to people groups which have least opportunity to hear the gospel in their own countries
- Servanthood, openness, consultation and mutual commitment in all of our relationships
- Giving all staff opportunity to use their unique, God-given gifts to their full potential

## How we work

We aim to achieve our mission through the following core activities:

- Motivating, mobilising and equipping churches and their members to share their lives and faith in Jesus Christ with international students in their local area by:
  - Providing programmes of practical care and hospitality for international students
  - Teaching international students the good news about Jesus Christ
  - Encouraging, nurturing and training in their faith those who are already, or who become, Christians
- Discipling Christian international students in their spiritual growth in preparation for their return home and providing & developing a network of Christians in other countries committed to continuing the discipling process
- Producing resources to help Christians reach international students in a culturally sensitive way
- Running training events and conferences to facilitate the development of international student work across the UK
- Promoting effective partnerships with churches & other appropriate Christian agencies to develop such ministry among international students in their area and beyond

Examples of Friends International Activities:

- Welcome Programmes to meet students as they arrive in the UK
- International cafés
- Outings to visit various parts of Britain
- Social events, special meals etc
- Hospitality schemes
- International women's groups
- Mums and toddlers groups
- Opportunities to practise English conversation
- Help with British culture
- Bible studies for those interested

## Friends International Ethos Statement

The ethos of Friends International derives from (i) our mission to share with international students in the UK the good news of Jesus Christ, by both word and deed; and (ii) our commitment to serve evangelical churches in the UK by helping them to develop their own ministry among international students. We therefore aim to show Christ's love to the international students we serve, to the evangelical churches we seek to mobilise, and to one another within Friends International (John 15:12) through the power of His indwelling Holy Spirit.

The motivation for our mission comes from Christ's command (Matt.28:19) and from His love (2 Cor.5:14). It is therefore rooted in our faith in Christ, which produces a distinctive heart attitude of love for Him and for others, and a trust in God for guidance (Ps.32:8) and provision for our needs (Phil.4:19). This faith is the basis of the relationship of individual employees to God, to one another, and to Friends International. It is expressed in the following values and behaviour:

- A desire to glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in all we do, and to base all our decisions and actions on His revealed standards, leading to an attitude of service to others, both within and outside Friends International (John 13:14-15) and to dependence on God for some or all of their financial support.
- Recognition of the image of God in every individual, of the uniqueness and value of their contribution to Friends International (1 Cor.12:12-20), and of the need for individual spiritual growth as well as the enhancement of skills.
- A sense of belonging to Friends International, not just as an employing organisation, but as part of the family of God (John 1:12), leading to prayer (both corporate and personal) and care by every employee, trustee and volunteer for the work of Friends International as a whole, and for all the individuals within it.
- A commitment to our doctrinal statement and to lifestyle choices and behaviour which reflect belief in the Scriptures as the authoritative word of God in all matters of faith and conduct.

These values and behaviour are inherently linked to the success and fulfilment of our mission. Therefore the attitude and motivation of our staff and the way our mission is achieved are an important part of the mission itself. (John 13:34, Matt. 22:36-39, 1 Cor.13:1-3)

As this attitude and motivation come only from a relationship with Jesus Christ, it becomes a genuine occupational requirement that all of our staff are committed Christians. Roles that involve significant leadership, that are central to fulfilling our mission, or involve developing, maintaining and communicating our Christian ethos, will always be held by committed Christians. All other support roles have key spiritual elements to them, which can only be carried out by a committed Christian.

We believe that the Bible calls us to a distinctive lifestyle of discipleship. Our ministry requires us to demonstrate that, especially as we are likely to influence others. Such a lifestyle includes regular Bible reading and prayer and active involvement in a local church. It is marked by a selfless attitude to money, possessions, time, work, leisure, social action and relationships. It demonstrates moral standards including an acceptance that the only appropriate place for a sexual relationship is within a marriage between a man and a woman. Whilst we recognise that as fallen people we often fall short of this ideal, we believe that grace and forgiveness are always available to those who repent. We nevertheless expect that all working with us will be committed to work towards achieving such a lifestyle with God's help and failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.

Notwithstanding this, Friends International is committed to diversity amongst its staff and volunteers, and will not discriminate on grounds unrelated to our ethos.

## The Friends International Statement of Faith

The various clauses of this statement are intended to be consistent with the chief confessions of faith of the churches in the British Isles, such as The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England and the Westminster Confession. All staff and Trustees of Friends International are required to agree with and sign this basis of faith on appointment, and thereafter at yearly intervals.

The basis of faith shall be the fundamental truths of Christianity, as revealed in Holy Scripture, including:

- a) the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the Godhead;
- b) the sovereignty of God in creation, revelation, redemption and final judgment;
- c) the divine inspiration and infallibility of Holy Scripture as originally given, and its supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct;
- d) the universal sinfulness and guilt of human nature since the fall, rendering all subject to God's wrath and condemnation;
- e) the full deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God; His virgin birth and His real and sinless humanity; His death on the cross, His bodily resurrection and His present reign in heaven and earth;
- f) redemption from the guilt, penalty and power of sin only through the sacrificial death once and for all time of our representative and substitute, Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and people;
- g) justification as God's act of undeserved mercy, in which sinners are pardoned all their sins, and accepted as righteous in God's sight, only because of the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, this justification being received by faith alone;
- h) the need for the Holy Spirit to make the work of Christ effective to the individual sinner, granting them repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ
- i) the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in all those thus regenerated, producing in them an increasing likeness to Christ in character and behaviour, and empowering them for their witness in the world;
- j) the one holy universal Church, which is the Body of Christ, and to which all true believers belong;
- k) the future personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge all people, executing God's just condemnation on the impenitent and receiving the redeemed to eternal glory.

I agree with the Friends International statement of faith.

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## The Friends International Statement on Divergent Views

1. Friends International is an evangelical Mission that works with a large variety of denominational and independent churches. Further, its trustees, branch officials and staff also represent a considerable diversity in their church backgrounds.
2. The Statement of Faith contained in the Trust Deeds represents the essential truths of the Gospel that are basic for the ministry of Friends International. As such, it is the doctrinal base to which all trustees, branch officials and staff must assent, and the grounds on which Friends International is in fellowship with churches and other mission societies.
3. Friends International does, however, recognize and respect the divergences of biblical interpretation and practices amongst evangelical Christians, including those of churches overseas to which international student Christians may belong. As long as these differences do not conflict with the Statement of Faith, or cause undue divisiveness, they are not a barrier to becoming a staff member, a trustee or a branch official.
4. Being non-denominational in doctrine, Friends International expects its trustees, branch officials or staff to be flexible on teachings that might be divisive. Such teachings should not influence their advice when counselling a new believer regarding church affiliation, nor affect the churches and mission societies with which they have contact.
5. When working in a single church context, whether one's own or another, Friends International expects its trustees, branch officials and staff to operate with respect towards that particular church's viewpoints on matters not covered by the Statement of Faith. However when working within an inter-church context, trustees, branch officials and staff are able to make decisions, where needed, on matters not covered by the Statement of Faith, whether in terms of applying their own viewpoints or deferring to the viewpoints of others. Either way their practice should be motivated by a desire for the optimal cooperation of the group and not by a sense of loyalty to their own theological convictions.
6. Friends International believes that God has called the trustees and staff to concentrate unswervingly on evangelism, discipleship and preparing students to help in the development of churches in their own countries upon their return, according to Christ's mandate (Matthew 28 v18-20). Therefore, all are urged to concentrate on these goals and to exercise care in all conversation and correspondence so that no offence is unnecessarily caused to anyone, be they colleagues, local churches or students on any matters, whether doctrinal, political or racial. Whilst the cross may be an offence to some (Galatians 5.11), we are called to be the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing (2 Corinthians 2.15).

I agree with the Friends International Statement on Divergent Views

Signature\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What distinguishes Friends International from other Christian Student organisations?**

There are many organisations committed to bringing God's word to students in the UK and overseas, such as UCCF, IFES, Navigators, Agape and Fusion. Where Friends International differs is that our sole focus is on international students in the UK. Our primary method of working is through UK churches.

### **Why did you change your name to Friends International?**

In August 2002 we changed our name from International Student Christian Services (ISCS) to Friends International.

Within the group of our supporters, the name ISCS had become fairly well-known, albeit difficult to remember. For students there was the confusion of the exact type of 'services' we offer: a common request being for accommodation. To leave these confusions behind, and to link with our vision statement, the new name was adopted.

### **How many international students come to study in the UK each year?**

Over 1 million! In 2004/5 there were 318,395 international students in Higher Education, 86,000 in Further Education and around 600,000 students studying in English Language Schools (source: Higher Education Statistics Agency). These figures do not account for post doctorate students visiting academics who come to study here, so a good estimate is over 1 million international students in the UK at any one time.

### **Which countries do the students come from?**

A survey of Friends International staff revealed that we have had contact with international students from 85% of the world's countries since 2000! (Source Nigel Mansfield – An impression of international students contacts, Annual Review 2002-3). An exciting fact about our work is that many of these students come from countries with little or no Christian witness, which makes their time in the UK a tremendous opportunity for them to hear about Jesus.

## Personal Support Funding

Friends International has no central base of funding. All our staff are funded through a system of 'Personal Support'.

### **What do we mean by 'Personal Support'?**

Our aim is that at least 50% of the funding for each staff worker will come from the churches in the city where they work and/or from a sending church. The remainder usually comes from personal supporters.

### **This can sound very daunting....**

and often it is! But God is very faithful and just as He inspires us to participate in this work, so he inspires others to support us. It's not just financial support that we need, but also prayer support.

### **Is this way of living for me?**

The idea of raising your own personal support will probably be very daunting. You will need to give this careful consideration and it will require both **faith and prayer**.

All Friends International staff, in common with many other mission agencies, are funded in this way. God is faithful. If God is calling you to this work He can and will provide.

### **How much will I need?**

Friends International will produce a budget for you. Realistic budgets are set reflecting the cost of living for the urban missionary working in the UK.

If you are considering becoming an employee this will take into account your basic salary plus all the 'add-ons' of employment costs as well as general expenses. You will also have the option of joining our pension scheme.

Friends International will support and advise you regarding writing letters and approaching churches for personal support.

Staff at the Friends International Support Centre will be happy to discuss this with you in more detail and answer your individual questions.

## Staff Information

The staff of Friends International seek faithfully to serve Jesus Christ, the Lord of all nations. As a movement Friends International is committed to serving, equipping and guiding its workers to help prepare international students to be effective disciples throughout the world.

Full time ministry with Friends International requires the commitment and dedication to Christ of anyone going to serve abroad on the mission field. The leadership recognises that the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual demands on an individual or family can be great. Therefore, we are committed to serving our staff in every aspect of life, assisting their ability to be good ministers of the Word of God.

### Selection and the Interview Process

Careful selection of staff is made through the Friends International Personnel Committee. Candidates are required to complete an application form and submit a full CV, and then may be invited to interview in which their suitability for the role is thoroughly examined.

### Training and Development

Friends International aims to provide orientation for all new staff, giving them an adequate preparation for ministry in a cross-cultural setting. Staff are encouraged to continue their development through appropriate training, conferences and individual study.

There are 2 annual conferences which all full time staff are required to attend:

- **The Staff Conference.** (5 day conference) As the name suggests this is specifically for Friends International staff. It usually takes place in January and offers a time of worship and fellowship with other staff combined with relevant training. The weekend part of the conference also provides a time for families to share and meet together.
- **The Training Conference.** (Weekend conference) This is a larger conference for both staff and others outside of Friends International who are interested in working with international students. It usually takes place in June.

### Team Meetings

Full time staff are also expected to attend area 'Team meetings' which take place approximately 3 times a year. This is where the Field Staff of each designated area meet together with their Field Director for a team day. This usually includes a time of Bible study together, fellowship, information sharing, training and lunch!