

College is tough. People need Jesus. We're helping!

In this issue, we invite two CID campus pastors to provide the rest of us a peek into campus ministry.

Creating a Community of Christians

About two years ago, we had a prospective student in our home for dinner. This person had been visiting both the U of I campus and University Lutheran Church. Also at our dinner table was a Christian PhD student who had several years of study under his belt. We invited him to answer questions and give advice to the prospective student on remaining faithfully connected to Christ amidst the trials and temptations of college life.

He gave one bit of advice that still sticks with me. To the prospective student, he said: "You should nurture several faithful Christian friendships – especially friends who go to your church. You will need them to encourage and exhort you. And they will need you."

Ever since that dinner, I've given that very same advice to several students when they visit, also their families. After all, this is precisely why our Lord calls us into a congregation, a local instance of the body of Christ. By our Baptism into Christ, each one of us is brought into the household of God. In this household, we – a family in Christ – care for, help, and serve one another.

"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness," wrote the apostle Paul. He added: "Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1-2, ESV).

Here at University Lutheran Church in Champaign, we hear the Word of Christ which teaches us the importance of being in this community. We see the great need for Lutherans

(and, frankly, other Christians) here at the U of I to have opportunities to build Christian friendships in a Christian community.

In light of this, we've structured our Christian life together in such a way as to encourage and edify the students. Here are some things we do to nurture strong Christian friendships:

- Foremost, we have Divine Service weekly for the people of God to gather around Christ's Word and Sacrament. We read the Bible together in various Bible studies. Often there are several non-Lutheran attendees. They listen and pray with us. Eventually some go through instruction and are welcomed into our Communion fellowship!
- Each Sunday after the Service we go downstairs and have lunch together. The students love this opportunity both to eat a delicious meal and to have a chance to sit and chat. It's common for several to linger and play games, or to dive deep into discussions of all sorts of different topics, from theology to movies to homework difficulties.
- We have one planned social or service opportunity just about every week. Especially for the young men, working and playing together builds up strong bonds.

The transition to college life is a tough one. For a Christian student, it also affords the opportunity for the devil, the world, and the flesh to tempt away from the Christian faith. Amongst other things, we work hard to nurture Christian friendships, which become a strong guard against drifting away from Christ.

- Pastor Michael Schuermann

Please save us future stamps! Send your e-mail address to amyholmes@cidlcms.org

To donate to endowments for Central Illinois District campus ministry:

<https://www.lutheranlegacyfoundation.org/fund/central-illinois-district-campus-ministry/>

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Ministry to International Students

As a called and ordained Missionary-at-Large for the Central Illinois District, my calling to Wittenberg Lutheran Center in Normal involves not only ministry to American students but also ministry to international students within the college community that includes Illinois State University, Illinois Wesleyan University, and Heartland Community College. The majority of these international students are here for graduate study. Most plan to return to their homeland. As you might expect, they come from multiple religious backgrounds. Cultural differences present hurdles every bit as big as language limitations.

Wittenberg has a long history of outreach to international students, and we continue to include them. We even focus our efforts to provide for their immediate needs. This entails helping them to communicate and providing them with furnishings, warm clothing, and transportation.

Other entities on campus engaging in international outreach / ministry include International Students Inc., International Friends, CRU (also known as International Student Fellowship, or ISF). Of these groups, some specialize in providing temporary housing when school housing is not available, rides to and from the airport, pots and pans, etc. Other groups focus on intentional Evangelism, providing classes with discipleship as their only goal.

Wittenberg's niche within the international circles on campus is International Neighbors Night (INN). We host and provide a monthly meal followed by activities that enable conversation. We get to know students and become familiar with their unique needs. Every month during the academic year, one of the sponsor congregations teaming with us provides the food that is shared. These meal-sponsoring churches come from within

our nearby CID circuits, as well as from other denominations. These partnerships have been very strong.

All our volunteers are known as "INN-keepers", drawing from our Lord's parable in Luke's Gospel. The Good Samaritan provided the resources for the Inn-keeper to care for his neighbor, until the time "when I come back" (Luke 10:35). So our motto is: "The Church in Service to Our Neighbors." We have been serving an average of about 12-15 students each month, with hopes to return to our larger 2019 numbers.

Evangelism is not our primary objective in this effort. Here we reach out to the international students in the form of meeting other needs. However, within such outreach, we often find opportunities to evangelize. When this occurs, it is most rewarding. (We utilize resources provided by the Lutheran Heritage Foundation [LHF], which provides Lutheran material in a variety of languages.) The international students know that they have a friend before they are faced with a new and unfamiliar religion.

Just this academic year, I have begun serving on the board of International Student Ministries, Inc. (ISMinc), a Registered Service Organization of our Synod. ISMinc provides nationwide support for this work, and conducts yearly in-depth seminars and equipping conferences.

When an international student is baptized, and / or joins the Lutheran Church, the joy is shared by all the students at Wittenberg, foreign and domestic. In fact, we experienced this quite recently. Knowing we will only cross someone's path for a short while in this world is bittersweet. Yet we yield to the Lord's will for them, and pray we will meet again in Paradise!

- Pastor William Jensen

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