
CAMPUS LIFE

Adventist International Friendship Ministry

Dayton Chong

Mei Zhang, a 28-year-old Chinese woman working on her doctorate in physics at the University of Michigan, was delighted that Peter and Jane Sims invited her to their home for a weekend. The Sims prayed that their house guest would see their Christianity lived out and ask about their faith. So they could hardly hide their excitement as they told Mei what Christ meant to them personally.

"How can I learn more about this Christ?" she asked. And a little later, as they sat at the dining room table, it seemed that Mei would rather listen than eat. "How can I know God?" she asked again.

Peter, a probation officer, shared how Christ had changed his life. When he and Jane met in college, Peter had been indifferent to God. Through Jane's perseverance and love for him, Peter came to know Christ as his personal Saviour.

"It was exciting," recalls Jane, a teacher and mother of two teenagers. "Mei was so open and really searching. Her questions dealt with the basics of Christianity. I could tell she was really thinking about our answers."

Although Mei did not make a commitment to Jesus Christ, she agreed to keep in touch with Peter and Jane. Jane said, "I'm praying that she will know Christ personally by the time she returns to China next year. I'm also praying for Mei's family."

Yvette, an 18-year-old Buddhist, made a commitment to Christ because a Christian fellowship group invited her to their camping trip. She was all alone on the University of Connecticut campus, having

just arrived from Hong Kong. A year later, she transferred to the Kettering College of Medical Arts. While there, an adult fellowship group sponsored by the Horace Kelleys at Dayton, Ohio, invited Yvette to join their fellowship. She noticed their deep Christian love in action, and asked for Bible studies. Two years later, she became a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. Through the providence of the Lord, several years later she became the wife of an Adventist pastor.

Ministering to Foreign Students

Mei Zhang and Yvette are representative of the more than one million men and women from more than 180 countries who are living in the cities of the Americas, Eastern and Western Europe, and Australia—attending colleges and universities, training on the military bases, serving in foreign government offices, and businesses. All of them are trying to cope with a culture that totally baffles them.

Foreign students come because the country of study has something to offer them. The education and professional experience they receive will open doors back home and usher them into the upper levels of the societies they left behind. Many of these students are often destined for high-level achievement in some field, be it medicine, business, engineering, agriculture, education, military science, or nuclear physics.

The international students whose lives we touch will become influential people in their

homeland. Simple friendships with these students have tremendous potential to enrich our own life and theirs—the potential to share with them the saving power of our Saviour and the Three Angels' Messages.

Ellen G. White speaks of the great importance of working among the foreigners who have come to our lands:

God in His providence has brought men to our very doors, and thrust them, as it were, into our arms, that they might learn the truth, and be qualified to do a work we could not do in getting the light to men of other tongues. Many of these foreigners are here in the providence of God, that they may have opportunity to hear the truth for this time, and receive a preparation that will fit them to return to their own land as bearers of precious light shining direct from the throne of God (*Christian Service*, p. 200).

Reading in the book of Acts, one finds two major patterns for missions: One, God sending the church to where the world is, and the other, God sending the world to where the church is. Unfortunately, the latter is often overlooked.

Why Should Adventists Get Involved

The following are some of the reasons you should consider for getting involved in this ministry:

- Adventist Christians can become part-time missionaries in the comfort of their homes.

- Your local church can experience an on going, hands-on foreign missions experience with minimal financial investments.
- As your congregation becomes involved in this ministry, the members will develop an even stronger heart for missions, transcending merely giving money to occasional appeals.
- Holidays and special occasions take on extra meaning when shared with your foreign friends.
- You can expose your children to other peoples and cultures, right in your own home.
- Adventist International Friendship Ministry provides the older couples in the local church with companionship and an opportunity for witnessing (in most foreign cultures, senior citizens are the most respected family members).
- Returned overseas missionaries will be able to continue their ministry to students from their previous field of labor.
- Prospective missionaries can develop their cross-cultural skills.

How to Develop Your Team

Once you and a group in your church see the possibility of starting a local International Friendship Ministry, you may proceed to develop a team. Its size will vary with the size of your congregation and the strategy you select. Any church near a college or university can set up this type of ministry. You do not need an established campus ministry first; however, this approach will work in close cooperation with all campus ministries.

The following two positions are needed to effectively develop and coordinate a viable ministry:

A. International Friendship Coordinator: He or she meets international students who want to develop friendships with local citizens; helps match international students with your church's

Friendship Partners; supports their ongoing relationships; and sends all international returnee students' information to the Adventist International Friendship Ministry office.

B. Friendship Partners Coordinator: He or she recruits and develops from within the church a group of Friendship Partners who are committed to pursuing genuine friendships with international students; promotes spiritual

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growth in the lives of international students who are involved in your church's International Friendship Ministry.

How to Start This Ministry in Your Church

The following approach will allow you to begin a local International Friendship Ministry:

1. Locate interested international students/scholars.

- Secure names of interested persons from each university or college's foreign student advisor's office.
- Network with any existing Adventist Campus Ministry in locating interested foreign students/scholars.
- Look for members of your congregation who are involved on campus, such as, professors, instructors, office workers, etc.

● Volunteer to host an international student in an ongoing activity.

2. Recruit Friendship Partners.

- Hold a vision meeting to explain about the ministry.
- Ask each interested member to complete an Interest Response Questionnaire.

3. Orientation and training of Friendship Partners.

- Present a walk-through study in how to be a friend to international students.
- Complete a Friendship Partner Questionnaire.

4. Matching Friendship Partners with international students.

- Consider the distance between the homes of each Friendship Partner and his/her foreign friend.
- Match occupational interests, personal preferences, interests in hobbies, or language spoken.

5. Organize church activities for your international friends.

6. Train Friendship Partners to lead an international student to Christ and to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

7. Organize a Sabbath School class for the international students.

8. Disciple international students.

9. Evaluate the spiritual growth of each participating international student.

10. Prepare each Adventist international student to return home as effective witnesses.

11. Forward a copy of each international student returnee form to Dr. Dayton Chong, Director, Adventist International Friendship Ministry. (See address below.) He will seek to connect each returnee student/scholar with the respective mission, conference or union.

Activities

In addition to a program of spiritual nurture and fellowship in the church, the following activities could be utilized to foster the development of friendship, fellow-

ship, and discipling:

- Church potluck fellowships.
- Christian films and videos, followed by a discussion.
- Spiritual retreats for Friendship Partners and their international friends.
- International Weekend or Food Fair, sponsored by the church and the international students.
- Celebration of special holidays. Explain briefly why they are being celebrated.
- Social programs such as picnics, community tours or field trips, boating, camping, skiing, progressive parties or dinners, etc.

Friendships formed through these activities are packed with tremendous potential. An International Friendship Newsletter will be developed to ensure sharing of experiences and communication between international students and their Friendship Partners.

A successful Adventist International Friendship Ministry in any church or campus ministry needs planning, commitment, teamwork, and willingness to be led by the Holy Spirit. Through this International Friendship Ministry, you can have a part in reaching the millions in the unentered territories of the world for Jesus. All that is required of you is a warm heart, a Christ-centered home, time to share, hope, and faith!

Dayton Chong (Ed.D., Andrews University) was born in Singapore. Together with his wife Yvette (R.N., Kettering College of Medical Arts), born in Hong Kong, they founded the Adventist International Friendship Ministry (AIFM). Readers interested in obtaining a manual that more fully describes this outreach or in arranging for a seminar on how to start a local AIFM should contact the Chongs at 18150 Lincoln Dr., Lathrup Village, MI 48076. Tel. (313) 569-0482.

ACTION REPORT

Eastern Africa Division

The Eastern Africa Division has approximately 6,000 Seventh-day Adventist students attending public universities. Five of our unions—Zambesi Union in Zimbabwe, East African Union in Kenya, Tanzania Union, Zambia Union, and the Botswana Region—have university chaplains employed to minister to the needs of those students at their universities. It is the desire of the Eastern Africa Division to have chaplains employed by the remaining unions in the near future.

The chaplains are involved in coordinating many activities for the students on their campuses. These activities include Youth Week. No classes are held during this week. Instead students are encouraged to get involved in community services which have included building bridges and roads, and constructing homes for the aged and the poor.

Seminars are regularly conducted on topics of interest to the students, such as Courtship and Marriage, Drug Dependency and Alcoholism, Temperance, Nutrition, Soul Winning, and Methods for Giving Bible Studies. These seminars not only draw our Adventist students together, but also stimulate spiritual growth and

equip them for service in the church.

The students are encouraged to visit their fellow students in their dormitories, leading out in Bible study. As a result of this type of contact with their fellow students 200 baptisms have been reported during the last year.

The Adventist students are also encouraged to join with their local Adventist church, becoming involved by leading out in Sabbath School, and filling church offices by becoming elders, deacons, deaconesses, or taking other offices the church leaders ask them to help with.

Each year there are special conferences held in December lasting from 6 to 10 days. The purpose of these conferences is to bring the Adventist students attending non-Adventist universities together for fellowship and spiritual growth. Guest speakers, including pastors, educators, and physicians are brought in to this campmeeting-like gathering to instruct and minister to the students. As a result of this type of encouragement we have 30% of the students following a daily Bible reading programme.

It is our hope that by becoming involved with our Adventist students who are attending public universities we can nurture their spiritual growth and thereby help prepare them for Christian service. We wish to encourage the "students to use for the highest, holiest purpose the talents God has given them that they may accomplish the greatest good in this world. Students need to learn what it means to have a real aim in life, and to obtain an exalted understanding of what true education means" (Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, p. 341).

Tommy Nkungula