

An inside look at working with



*transforming students
transforming nations*

**Friends International
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Welcome



Thank you for your interest in Friends International. We are an interdenominational, evangelical organisation committed to encouraging and equipping 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 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, Dave Pepper replaced him in 2009, and I started in 2016.

Over 1 million international students come to study in the UK each year. In 2016/17 there were 442,375 international students in Higher Education (source: Higher Education Statistics Agency), 7,000 thousand more in Further Education and around 580,000 students studying in English Language Schools. These figures do not account for post-doctorate students or visiting academics who come to study here.

Friends International staff have had contact with international students from a high percentage of the world's countries. 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.

Our desire is to serve international students through staff members and others who partner with local churches in open, honest and prayerful friendships to build bridges across the loneliness, disorientation and anxieties that many experience. We have a commitment to reaching out to international students with the love of Jesus Christ. Friends International now has 65 staff in 32 university towns and cities throughout the UK seeking to equip and encourage UK churches to serve international students for Christ.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Alan Tower'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a white background.

Alan Tower
National Director

Friends International Statement of Vision, Mission & Values

Our Vision:

To see international students transformed by the good news of Jesus so that they fully engage with the mission of the church in the world.

Our Mission:

To work with the church to communicate the good news of Jesus to international students in both word and deed and in whole life cross-cultural discipleship.

Our Values:

- Prayerful dependence on God for everything we need to fulfil our mission
- The Bible as our authority, source of teaching and model of ministry
- The vital role of the local church in sharing the gospel with the nations
- Co-operation and partnership that honours others and gets more done than we would alone
- Caring for the whole person
- Giving generous respect to all cultures and aiming for cross-cultural sensitivity at all points
- Giving priority to people groups with the least opportunity to hear the gospel in their own countries
- Servanthood, openness, consultation and mutual commitment in all our relationships
- Giving all staff the 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
- Leadership training courses
- Promoting effective partnerships with churches and other appropriate Christian agencies to develop such ministry among international students in their area and beyond
- Partnering with other student-focused agencies such as UCCF, IFES, Navigators, Agape and Fusion

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

The Friends International Basis of Faith

Friends International has adopted the basis of faith of the Evangelical Alliance, of which it is a member organization.

All staff and Trustees of Friends International are required to agree with and sign this basis of faith on appointment, and thereafter at three-yearly intervals.

We believe in:

- a) the one true God who lives eternally in three persons – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit;
- b) the love, grace and sovereignty of God in creating, sustaining, ruling, redeeming and judging the world;
- c) the divine inspiration and supreme authority of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, which are the written Word of God – fully trustworthy for faith and conduct;
- d) the dignity of all people, made male and female in God's image to love, be holy and care for creation, yet corrupted by sin, which incurs divine wrath and judgement;
- e) the incarnation of God's eternal Son, the Lord Jesus Christ – born of the virgin Mary; truly divine and truly human, yet without sin;
- f) the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross: dying in our place, paying the price of sin and defeating evil, so reconciling us with God;
- g) the bodily resurrection of Christ, the first fruits of our resurrection; his ascension to the Father, and his reign and mediation as the only Saviour of the world;
- h) the justification of sinners solely by the grace of God through faith in Christ
- i) the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, who leads us to repentance, unites us with Christ through new birth, empowers our discipleship and enables our witness;
- j) the church, the body of Christ both local and universal, the priesthood of all believers – given life by the Spirit and endowed with the Spirit's gifts to worship God and proclaim the gospel, promoting justice and love;
- k) the personal and visible return of Jesus Christ to fulfil the purposes of God, who will raise all people to judgement, bring eternal life to the redeemed and eternal condemnation to the lost, and establish a new heaven and a new earth.

The Friends International application form asks candidates to confirm that they agree with the Statement of Faith.

The Friends International Statement on Divergent Views

1. Friends International is an evangelical Mission that works with a cross-section of denominational and independent churches. Furthermore, its trustees, branch officials, staff and volunteers 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, staff and volunteers 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, staff and volunteers to be mutually respectful on teachings not covered by the Statement of Faith. Such teachings should not prejudice 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, staff and volunteers 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, staff and volunteers are able to make decisions, where needed, on matters not covered by the Statement of Faith and where discretion is permitted by Scripture. Whether applying their own viewpoints or deferring to the viewpoints of others, 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).

The Friends International application form asks candidates to confirm that they agree with the Statement on Divergent Views.

Personal Support Funding

The cost of employing our staff (including salary, pension and business-related expenses) is funded through a system of 'Personal Support'.

What do we mean by 'Personal Support'?

Our aim is that a generous percentage 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 just as God 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. We will work with you to produce partnership forms, offer training, and in some Centres there may be a degree of funding to help get you started.

How much will I need?

Friends International will work with you to produce a budget. Your salary, which forms part of the budget, is paid towards the end of each month and is not directly dependent upon fluctuations in gifts received in any particular month. Rather, contracted hours are negotiated at the commencement of employment, reviewed periodically and mutually agreed in accordance with the degree of financial support.

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 be eligible to join our pension scheme.

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

Staff holding sponsored visas will need to be raising support for sufficient hours to be paid a living wage.

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

Is this way of living for me?

The idea of raising your own personal support will need careful consideration and it will require both **faith** and **prayer**.

All Friends International staff workers, in common with many other mission agencies, are funded in this way. God is faithful and we all rely on him for his provision for this work.

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 same commitment and dedication to Christ as 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 by Friends International. Candidates are required to submit a full CV and complete an application form, and then may be invited to interview in which their suitability for the role is thoroughly examined. This is a two-way process enabling the candidate to assess their suitability for the role also.

Learning 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 is an annual Conference which all staff are required to attend. It takes place in January and offers a time of worship and fellowship with other staff, Reach trainees, Branch members and Affiliates, combined with relevant training. The weekend part of the conference also provides a time for families to share and meet together.

In May, Staff and Affiliates can attend a residential regional training event addressing topical issues.

Team Meetings

Full time staff are also expected to attend Cluster meetings which take place three to five times per year. All staff are encouraged to attend Cluster meetings. This is where the staff of neighbouring Centres meet together as a wider team, and usually includes a time of Bible study together, fellowship, information sharing, training and lunch.