



The Doorstep

SERVING INTERNATIONALS ON CAMPUS

I COULD DO THIS

Pastor Paul Hoemann
University Chapel, Texas A&M

“I could do this!” That’s what Mary Beth Vanderpoorten of Bryan, Texas, kept telling herself. For three Sundays in a row, she noticed in the church bulletin of her home congregation an appeal for volunteers to serve in the international student ministry (ISM) at University Lutheran Chapel in College Station.

At first, she had doubts. But having previously worked and traveled for an international company, she realized she could relate to some of the challenges that international students face: basic communication in a foreign language and loneliness.

She also has a strong desire to share her Christian faith. She particularly remembered the admonitions from both the Old and New testaments that God’s people are called to “take care of the foreigner among you.” So, she decided to answer the appeal.

She began in the summer of 2014, leading an English conversation class from time to time, filling in for another volunteer who was on vacation. That fall, she took on the challenge of leading a weekly English conversation class, and she has never looked back. The 2017 fall semester will mark the beginning of her fourth year as a volunteer with the Chapel’s ISM.

“I enjoy learning about my students; how they feel about themselves, the issues they face living in our country, and the different ways of thinking between East and West,” she says. “I also like hearing their reactions to their experiences here. They don’t always see us as we see ourselves.”

Mary Beth covers a variety of topics in her weekly class: English idioms; pronunciation; some grammar and spelling. And she uses a variety of sources for topics, such as “Easy English News,” “Why Are Americans Like That?” and some online materials.



Mary Beth Vanderpoorten, center, is surrounded by students from S. Korea, Taiwan, China and Ukraine. They make up her Thursday English conversation class this summer at University Lutheran Chapel.

She also regularly has students to her home for holiday meals and to teach them how to cook American-style dishes and how to sew and knit. Mary Beth has been a great blessing to the Chapel’s ISM, but she insists that she is the one who has been most blessed.

To anyone who is now where she was three years ago, wondering if ISM is something that they can do or not, she says, “You can do it! Just come and be interested in them and help them feel at home. Treat them as a guest, and you will be fine!”

The Doorstep is the official publication of ISM, Inc., a Recognized Service Organization of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, dedicated to ministry among international students.

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CAN YOU PARALLEL PARK?

Augusta R. Mennell, Campus Ministry Director
All Saints Lutheran Church, Slippery Rock University

Campus Ministry at All Saints Lutheran Church and Student Center wants to be available to help international and American college students who attend Slippery Rock University. We're here to take students to the Giant Eagle for groceries. We are here to listen to their problems. Some face the clash of two cultures; so they want to know how to convince their parents to let them marry the person they love, rather than going along with tradition and allowing their parents' to make the choice of a mate. Others want help dealing with a boyfriend or girlfriend who has been unfaithful. And some, like Isuri, ask for help learning how to drive a car.



Isuri has been part of All Saints for some time. She has helped with the student meals, and she has kept us in touch with the international students (she has been the president of the international students group). She went from being an occasional visitor at our congregation to attending rather regularly. We have often taken her to lunch after church at the Red Rock Restaurant at the edge of Slippery Rock.

Those lunches turned into a friendship outreach event when she met Donna Jean Heintz (Bethel Evangelical-Glenshaw). We had all gone out to lunch after church, when Isuri mentioned that she was looking for an internship this summer or in the fall semester. Donna was able to tell her about Concordia Lutheran Ministries in Cabot, as a possible internship location. She urged Isuri to apply, which she did. She was accepted by Concordia and will be an intern there in the fall. She cannot wait to begin.

When Isuri asked us to help her learn to prepare for the driving test, it was a great opportunity for us. It gave us extra time to talk as we practiced driving. Isuri described her warm, loving, flexible and supportive family at home. She shared that the reason she is familiar with and comfortable with our liturgy is because she attended a Christian church occasionally at home in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. I asked her what she thought of the teachings at the church there, as well as Buddhist teachings at the temple she also attended. She replied that she did not, and does not, see any difference.

Isuri took the driver's test but failed the first time. Even though she had sailed through parallel parking and driving on the road in Mercer, she let the car's tires touch the curb at the end of the test and that meant she had failed! We were crushed. However, we returned a week later and she passed, with a great deal of relief and joy.

Two Sundays later she came to All Saints' worship late. This was unusual for her, and it happened because Pittsburgh friends who were helping her find a car to buy, shocked her by bringing the car to her apartment. She beamed as she showed her new car keys to everyone at All Saints. The congregation broke into applause for her.

Immediately after worship she approached Rev. Larry K. Loree Jr. and asked if he would give her car a blessing. He was thrilled to do so. He gave the blessing in Jesus' name, asking God to keep Isuri safe and happy in her car.

Helping Isuri learn to drive was a great opportunity to grow a friendship and to talk about God. Campus ministry will continue to teach driving skills as a way to connect with college students. We're already doing this with another student who is from Iran. Such help does not obligate the students to become Christians. It does not mean that they will come to Bible class, worship, or student meals. But it is a great opportunity anyway!

I recently read something that applies to campus ministry. An article by Chad Fox in the July-August 2017 issue of the Lutheran Layman called "Increasing Persecution of Christians Opens Doors for Gospel Proclamation," says, "While you would think that persecution would have a negative effect on Christianity, we see quite the opposite," says Rev. Peter Kirby, LCMS regional director for Europe. "It actually opens doors for the Gospel."

The very same phenomenon can be said to work concerning campus ministry outreach at our nation's universities. Although Christianity is often treated with hostility and the secular view that "Putting me first" is treated as profound truth, nevertheless campus ministry grows anyway. Therefore it is a blessing to have had this crucial opportunity to influence students for the past forty years at All Saints. It is a blessing even to help a student learn to parallel park. Who knows where parallel parking will lead? Please pray that we will have forty more years of parallel parking instruction for students.

PARTNERING FOR INTERNATIONALS

Liz Beikmann, St. Luke's ISM, Manhattan, Kansas

St. Luke's Lutheran's International Student Ministry partners with HIS (Helping International Students) which is a Christian organization. HIS was started by a KSU professor back in the 1970's when visiting Nigeria he realized that people coming to the U.S. to study wanted to have more contact off campus to get to know people, our culture, and Christianity.

HIS is a partnership between 30 local churches and Christian campus organizations who befriend internationals while at KSU. Through this partnership, a welcome dinner is held during orientation week. There is a furniture give away, spring banquet, and various other functions.



Internationals can sign up to be introduced to an American friend. Various member churches and organizations provide ESL classes, Bible studies, bikes, and rides for shopping.



The American friend shares their faith with the international students by showing them a Christian life, sharing resources, and answering questions. Often these friendships can last a lifetime.

Each individual partner of HIS then has their own events like picnics, taking the students fishing, celebrating the holidays and birthdays, and taking them to typical American things, like a rodeo.

HIS is our churches' connection with the University which allows us to connect with the international students. We have been blessed with the many lifelong friendships that have formed from our hosting of international students through St. Luke's and HIS.

SUMMER FUN

Bessie Fink, ISM Luther Memorial Chapel, Shorewood, Wisconsin

International Student Ministry is a ministry of friendship and hospitality. It is a wonderful privilege to serve the internationals and their families in the Milwaukee area.

There were many activities this summer. We had a number of tours to enjoy the culture and nature in the Milwaukee area. We are thankful for our networking assistants who help to plan these activities. One of the places we visited was a strawberry farm, where we enjoyed picking and eating the fruit.

One of the annual events at LMC is the church picnic. It was fun to enjoy food and conversation. The children and adults also enjoyed playing some traditional games such as the balloon toss. We thank all that work hard to make this an enjoyable event.



We are always in need of many volunteers to assist us in activities. If you would like to help please email: Bessie.fick@yahoo.com

Our volunteers range from senior citizens to high school students. They help lead English conversation classes, prepare meals and, work with the children. Through their assistance,

invitations are made to worship and Bible reading. We are so thankful that as a result 173 have attended Bible studies this year.

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Three years ago Ming arrived in Milwaukee to visit his fiancée; during that visit he became involved in Sports Night activities. While there, he was invited to attend worship services and participate in Bible studies. A number of Luther Memorial members provided transportation to attend. He soon became involved in involved in adult instruction classes. This year we celebrated three special events in Ming's life. In May he was baptized and confirmed and in June we celebrated his marriage blessing. He is now active in leading sports night activities and assists in many of our tours.



You are always welcome to attend any of the conversation classes, tours or activities. We are always in need of drivers for our tours. Below is the listing of some of our coming events. Contact Bessie for firm date and time:

State Fair Tour, Milwaukee Tour, September International meal, pumpkin carving, Thanksgiving dinner and Christmas dinner.

If you would like to contribute to the support of this ministry, please send contributions to:

International Student Ministry
Luther Memorial Chapel
3338 N Maryland Ave
Shorewood Wisconsin 53211



I thank all who have served in, prayed for, or supported financially the International Student Ministry these past seven years. I will be moving to Southern Illinois in August. My husband, Jeff, has accepted a call to serve in that district. It has been a great joy and privilege to work with so many special friends. I pray that you will continue to support the work among the internationals through your prayers and through your financial support.



The ISM support team met in June and is firmly committed to continue the program. They are in the process of hiring a new coordinator and will have an interim coordinator in place in the meantime. Please let others know about this opportunity.

St. John, Port Washington, brought many household goods and winter clothing. If you have any gently used household items or winter clothing, please contact John at 414-477-9448.





ENROLLMENT DROPS WHILE OPPORTUNITIES INCREASE

Kate Cole – Flint International Friends Coordinator

A significant drop in international student enrollment at nearby universities and colleges has opened up new opportunities for our existing ministry. An invitation to join a community effort to re-establish an international center in the heart of the downtown district of Flint where we can maintain a presence and meet the immigrant population is just one of the new ventures our ministry is looking into. We are also working with the community director of schools in a new social-studies curriculum where international students will participate with elementary students.

Reading about a far-away country is one-way of learning—but hearing directly from students who live in these countries brings new life to social science—and provides another doorway for us to work with internationals as we coordinate this effort. Learning about family life in China, what's important to family members, how schools in China operate, what Chinese eat for dinner, (Is there such a thing as a Chinese Hamburger?) and a host of other topics will awaken the younger students to a wider world view—even at the elementary age level.

While the Muslim population at universities is declining due to reduced funding in some countries, in the Flint Public schools, 20 to 30% of the students speak Arabic at home—an incentive to seek God's will in outreach ministries to these families.

We're seeking guidance through you, our prayer partners as we begin a new school year—with Jesus!

