

Weekly Gatherings for International Students

Some universities schedule an informal weekly gathering for international students to which religious groups may send representatives. In some instances, your campus ministry may want to sponsor such a weekly gathering at your campus center or in the Student Union. This is sometimes also done in partnership with other groups. Obviously, the meeting should be such that international students will **want** to come again! Here are some suggestions:

Atmosphere

Start with personal invitations.

The invitation notice also sets the atmosphere.

Greet the students as they come in; chat with them.

Have comfortable room, posters, tea, something to eat.

Sing (a simple song, applicable words)

Introduce the evening's program. People are more relaxed when they know what's going to happen.

Introduce all those present, not just the newcomers. **Don't** single people out as "new" or "our guests." (Share their name, country, something personal like what they are studying, what they find funny in our culture, etc.)

Take time for people. Have lots of time for discussion.

Friendliness goes a long way, be a friend, use their name.

Team members talk with guests—not with each other or with other "insiders!"

Get Christian international students involved in leading the meeting; they will help the atmosphere be truly international.

Timing

Too short is better than too long.

Build bridges from one element of the evening to another.

End on time.

Leave time for personal conversations.

Agenda for the Meeting

Introduction of the evening and each other, singing

Casual time for tea and chatting

Program

Personal conversations at the close of the meeting. This can be the **most important part of the evening.**

Program Suggestions

Thematic:

Easter, Christmas, etc., national holidays, party, games, etc. Close the evening with a five-minute devotion from Scripture, trying to tie it into the evening's theme.

Bible Study:

Photocopy texts in various languages on the same sheet, introduce the text, read it in the various languages. Divide into small groups (6–8 persons), each group to be led by a team member with prepared questions. Come together as a large group after 30–45 minutes. One team member to pull together in a few sentences the most important points from the passage.

Country:

Invite international students to take an evening to introduce their country (nationals can do this once in a while too). They can prepare their national foods, show pictures, slides or film/video of their country, teach songs and folk dances.