



## NEW ISM LOGO: GLOBAL AND GOSPEL

The new ISM Logo communicates that through loving connections we proclaim the gospel with a global perspective. We continue to encourage and equip God's people for intentional Gospel ministry among international students and scholars. Over the next months, the new logo will appear on more and more of ISM's materials and communications. As we seek to be good stewards of God's gifts, the old logo will still appear on certain materials until they are out of stock.

## HOSPITALITY AND GENUINE FRIENDSHIPS ARE KEY

Deaconess Norma Polk

University Lutheran Chapel, Ann Arbor, Mich.

*"I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed," [Genesis 26:4 ESV]*

That is a promise, and God fulfills His promises! In August 2023, I was called to the University Lutheran Chapel in Ann Arbor as the Director of International Student Ministries. I was tasked with starting a ministry among international students at the University of Michigan and other local universities...from scratch! Doing so has been a journey of learning to lean on Him and trust Him. And God is faithful!

Even before I was formally installed, I received a request from someone who works with Chinese students on campus. He



*Our new East Asian friends shows us how to make authentic hot pot!*

picks up Chinese students from the airport and takes them to their housing. He asked me whether our church might participate. Um...yes! Seven of our residents (adult, non-student church members) and students signed up. They picked up about 15 Chinese students. After a week or two we followed up with these students; we had coffee or took them out for meals. We also met students at

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## OVERHEARD BY THE MINISTRY CATALYST

Sue Hasselbring

### "Christian Curious"

"Will you get in touch with our niece, Maya? She is Christian curious." An Indian-American couple requested this of Hannah, who was visiting their Lutheran church in Florida while on vacation. The couple was thrilled to meet a Lutheran from Springfield, Mo. They gave Hannah their niece's name and phone number and urged Hannah to call her. When Hannah asked what 'Christian curious' meant, they explained that Maya has many questions about Christianity but is not a believer.

Hannah texted Maya who eagerly accepted an invitation for coffee. Hannah enjoyed learning about Maya and her studies. Although Maya did not bring up Christianity, Hannah mentioned that she attends church and offered to give Maya a ride to services. Maya eagerly accepted the invitation and attends church regularly with Hannah.

### Nurtured Three Ways

John is a graduate student who is

*(Continued - See "Overheard" p. 3)*

# WELCOMING BILL GEIS TO THE ISM BOARD

We praise God that Rev. Bill Geis has joined the ISM Inc. Board. As missions director of the Missouri District of the LCMS, Bill brings to the board both a passion for missions and connections with a broad network of mission leaders across the U.S.



Rev. Bill Geis

studying chemistry and computer science. These disciplines attracted international students, and Bill naturally developed friendships and spiritual conversations with students from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, India, and China. “I recall how segregated the

international and American student bodies were, and God was always leading me to friendships that crossed over the barriers.”

Bill became involved with ISM in 1994 when he was elected Mission Director of the Oklahoma District. There he organized campus ministry



Bill and Sandi enjoying a hike.

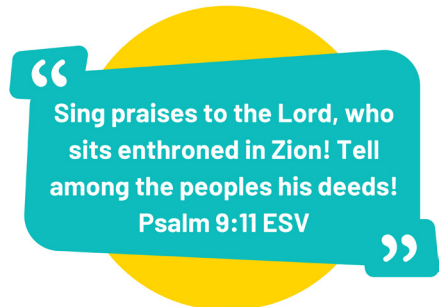
spring break cross-cultural experiences. Later, in Missouri, Bill helped organize the District’s “Campus Ministry Network” serving 24 campus settings and introducing several to ISM. Bill and Sandi have been

International Friendship Family hosts for students from Thailand and India through ISM St. Louis. Bill and Sandi enjoy cycling, hiking, gardening, visual and performing arts, learning ethnic culinary arts, and exploring their cuisine. †

Bill Geis and his wife, Sandi, met as youth involved in supporting international missions. This spring they celebrate 40 years of marriage. They are blessed with two daughters, a son-in-law, and two granddaughters. They live in St. Louis where Sandi

is a writer, music director, and serves as Administrative Coordinator for the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations. Bill has served as a pastor and mission director in Oklahoma, Illinois, and Missouri. He was named the mission director of the Missouri District in 2017.

Bill’s first experiences with international students were at the Illinois Institute of Technology and Concordia University Chicago while



“Sing praises to the Lord, who sits enthroned in Zion! Tell among the peoples his deeds! Psalm 9:11 ESV”

## LOVE FOR ALL PEOPLES

Sue Hasselbring  
ISM Inc. Ministry Catalyst

“Peoples” is an important word in the Bible. When we rejoice before God’s throne we will do so with those from all peoples, tribes, languages and nations. God loves all peoples and desires us to love them too. Those from a tribe have common ancestry and culture, those from a language talk together, and those from a nation are under the same authority. But what about “a people”? It is the hardest of these terms to define.

When I spent time in India, I learned that one’s caste is VERY important. You marry within your caste, your friends are mostly from your caste. You feel close to those in your caste even if you speak different languages, or are part of different tribes. In India, caste is a *peoples* thing. However, in England, a *peoples* thing is whether you cheer for Manchester United or Chelsea football leagues. In urban areas, the gang you or your cousins are part of may be a *peoples* thing. Sometimes denominations or political parties become a *peoples* thing. When we talk about “them” and “us,” it is a *peoples* thing.

As we minister among international students and scholars, keeping the idea of *peoples* in mind may help us avoid false assumptions that certain students will naturally feel comfortable with others or that two scholars will have similar beliefs. The idea of *peoples* can help us care for each international friend as an individual and understand that God’s work in their life will also be unique.

You can learn more about the peoples of any country at this website: [tinyurl.com/PplByCntry](http://tinyurl.com/PplByCntry)

Next issue, learn about peoples who are unreached. †

# SERVING ON THE ISM BOARD BRINGS JOY

Announcing Ken Bickel: New Board President

A board member recently commented that ISM board meetings are far more fun than any board he has served on! We praise God for Rev. JJ Voelker’s six years of faithful service on the ISM board, including three years as board president. JJ has reached his term limit and now is transitioning off of the

board. Ken Bickel has been appointed the next president of the Board. Rev. Bill Jensen continues as Vice President, Vicki Jameson as Secretary and Weina Qin as Treasurer. The board is always willing to receive nominations for additional board members. †



*("Hospitality" continued from p. 1)*

the University of Michigan's student orientation called Festifall. We offered to help students whenever we could. We collected a few bicycles, which some now use to get around. Many of these contacts have developed into genuine friendships. We started sponsoring events that have led to more and more contacts.

The first event was inviting international students to a local Chinese restaurant for dim-sum. Six Chinese students attended. We got to know these students, and they now have friends in this foreign country!

In October, we held a Hot Pot party, inviting international students, our residents and local students. The goal was to introduce the residents and local students to the international students, and vice versa. Close to 40 people attended. The best part was that the Chinese students were the experts and were invested in sharing their culture



*Chinese New Year party: learning to make Chinese dumplings.*

with the rest of us: they helped pick out ingredients and showed us how to prepare the hot pots and cook the food! It was a great evening for everyone!

We also hosted Thanksgiving dinner at my house, a football championship game watch party, a Chinese New Year Party at our church, and a Seder in my house. One student has committed to coming to Bible studies every week and also attends church most Sundays. A few others have occasionally attended Sunday services.

Working with international students is rewarding and fun as we learn about their culture, including making their food! I have learned how to make Venezuelan arepas, Chinese hot pot, and Chinese dumplings! But the most rewarding part has been having a Bible study with an Asian student who knew very little about Jesus but who now eagerly asks questions and has had some profound insights after studying the Bible!

I've also grown spiritually. First, I realize more deeply that God orchestrates everything. He opens doors, brings people to us, and even opens their hearts! I just need to lean on Him and trust Him! Second, it has driven home the importance of prayer and being in the Word of God. When

I meditate on His Word and pray, I trust Him more. Third, it has been extremely important to recruit other believers who are also passionate about this ministry. Having a community



*Two East Asian friends join us for the University of Michigan championship game.*

of people working together makes the ministry more effective and fun. Finally, I've learned that this kind of ministry takes a lot of time and hard work. If we don't spend time with these students, how can we ever hope to develop genuine friendships and trust? And developing real trust is crucial in sharing the Gospel with them. Put simply, practicing authentic hospitality and developing genuine relationships is critical if we want to introduce them to Jesus! †

*("Overheard" continued from p. 1)*

also a Christian from South Korea. He heard about the Lutheran campus ministry near him and started attending their weekly Prayer and Praise. Although he is the only graduate student and only international who attends, he appreciates all he is learning from the students and the guest speakers and the opportunity to ask questions about the church in the U.S. and American culture. Last semester, John moved into the Lutheran Student Center House and has invited a Korean friend to also move in next semester.

On Sundays, John worships in Korean at the local Korean Presbyterian

church. Praising God in his own language provides spiritual nourishment and keeps him connected with others from his home country. On Friday evenings, John attends an international Bible Study which is led and attended by international graduate students from around the globe. These students share a bond of being far from family and friends while focused on their studies.

Each of the three Christian groups John connects with blesses him in different ways.

### **She Saw the Cross and Came**

Didi, who is from South Asia, is a master's student in engineering. She is from a Hindu background but met a Christian man during her undergraduate

program whom she would like to marry. Her parents don't approve. When she arrived in the U.S. she was determined to join a church to learn about her boyfriend's faith. She saw the lighted cross on Immanuel Lutheran Church and went to learn more. Pastor S welcomed her warmly, introduced her to both his family and the Lutheran Student Fellowship, and began to teach her God's Word.

Pastor believes that she is ready to receive the gift of baptism. Didi wants to wait until her boyfriend, who is still in Asia, can visit to witness her baptism. Meanwhile, she participates in all of the Lutheran Student Fellowship activities, continuing to study God's Word. †

## LOOKING FORWARD TO IN DEPTH 2025

We share with sorrow that we cancelled In Depth Bible Seminar 2024 due to no registered participants by mid-April. The Bible seminar has blessed so many students. We are already making plans for 2025 and exploring how to assure that the program meets the needs of international students and scholars as we plan for the future.

(“Gift” continued from back cover)

be a quiet ride?”

The evening was a blessing! We ate, mingled, danced and shared as easily as if we were already friends, and it provided an opportunity to share our faith.

The gift of volunteering brought great joy and fun as we made connections with the

community of international students. A lot of people benefited, and our lives are richer.

When we say “yes” to God and accept the gift of volunteering, He calms our fears and enriches our lives. As there is opportunity for you to say yes to being a volunteer for ISM, go forth boldly. God will not disappoint. †



The international students also enjoyed learning to line dance.

## FIRSTFRUITS

Bill Geis  
ISM Inc. Board Member

“God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved...”

(Read more in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17)

The semester is winding down. Goodbyes and reunions, packing and travel, new jobs and relationships, graduations and weddings are part of the seasonal shuffle of May. In the middle of all this comes a Jewish Festival, reclaimed by the followers of Jesus: Pentecost, the Feast of Firstfruits. We might say the Pentecost account of Acts 2 is the first ISM gathering (see Acts 2:3-12)!

Pentecost is a Jubilee 50 days after the resurrection of Jesus. It is the “Great Sending Day,” graduation day for the student-disciples of Jesus. “Go therefore and make disciples... be my witnesses... to the ends of the Earth.” (Matthew 28:19 and Acts 1:8).

The Jewish feast celebrated the offerings of “firstfruits” which would multiply exponentially during the summer harvest. The Bible tells us that WE are the firstfruits, the early pickings, of God’s harvest. We are the first of the overflowing blessings and grace, the many tribes, nations and generations, all coming together around Jesus for an eternal Jubilee.

Pray for those graduating, that God’s firstfruits multiply in and through them. For international students, the summer may not feel like a time rich with harvest. Not all can afford to return home or travel. Some will be completing the last semester’s assignments. Not all will have full access to the services of their university. Not all will have ISM activities to encourage and support them.

The Christian community to which St. Paul wrote above thought that they could “take the summer off” and Jesus’ return would just take care of the harvest itself. Paul, however, challenged

them to be workers in God’s harvest. He encouraged them and us to:

- Think of ourselves as offerings of thanksgiving to God (v. 13a),
- Grow in our witness by practicing holiness (v. 13b),
- Exercise our calling/vocation as a Gospel-bearers (v. 14),
- Be faithful in participating in Christian community (v 15),
- Bless and comfort others (v. 16), and

Take up every opportunity for good “works” and good “words” that proclaim Jesus (v 17).

Enjoy the summer! But also remember: You’re still on harvest duty. May you, empowered by Christ, creatively give: supporting, encouraging, loving, calling on, writing, praying, and cultivating faith with another person. Identify one person you can support this summer with that Spirit of Pentecost and as the offering of the firstfruit you are in Jesus. †

*Requests from the Articles*

- May each of us live as firstfruits, sharing Christ's gifts with international students and scholars.
- May more Christians be offered the gift of volunteering and joyfully receive that gift.
- May John from Korea continue to be strengthened in faith and let his light shine to others.
- May Didi continue to grow in faith and receive the gift of baptism.
- May God guide Hannah in sharing Christ's love and truth with Maya.

*University Lutheran Chapel, Ann Arbor*

Norma Polk, Deaconess

- May God grant wisdom to Norma Polk, as she encourages residents and students at University Lutheran Chapel to join her in ministry among international students.
- May Norma have the wisdom she needs to balance recruiting/training volunteers, and ministering among internationals herself.

*ISM @ University Lutheran Chapel, Austin*

Marcia Mittwede, Director

- May the International Potluck Party May 4 be a blessing to the students and honoring to the Lord.
- For wisdom in helping two new ESL students: W and M who have very limited English.

*LCMS students reaching out*

- Praise God for the article in the summer LWML Quarterly about two students and another young woman ministering among international students. Pray that those who read it

realize they also can minister among internationals near them.

- Praise God that LCMS students at Missouri State and University of Central Missouri are increasing in ministering among international students.
- Pray that more LCMS students will grow in their love for international students and scholars.

*Equipping Conference May 16-18*

- Praise God that sixteen are registered for the ISM Equipping Conference: four are university or seminary students.
- Pray that the number of registrants continues to increase.
- Pray for all the presenters as they prepare their presentations.

*For LWML District Conventions*

- May God grant grace as delegates vote on the grant proposal from ISM St Louis in Missouri and the grant from ISM Inc. in Michigan.
- May all attendees at district LWML conventions who interact with ISM volunteers and staff grow in their knowledge of and willingness to be involved in ministry among international students and scholars.
- For safety and strength for Sue as she attends LWML District Conventions in Missouri June 7-9, North Wisconsin June 13-15, and Michigan June 28-30

*International students and scholars*

- For international students and scholars who will return to their home countries in May and June: peace, good farewells, good reunions, and continued friendships with Christians.

- For international students moving into two-year jobs in the U.S. in the fields of science and technology: good transitions to their new homes, assistance in setting up an apartment or home, good Christian friends in their new location.
- For international students who are continuing in their studies: for good times with friends over the summer, for time to learn more about God and his Word.
- That many would receive the gifts of salvation, baptism and new life in Christ.

*ISM site leaders and volunteers*

- For wisdom in farewell interactions with students and scholars who are transitioning back home or to other cities in the U.S.
- For diligence in connecting students and scholars to Christians in their new cities who might continue to support, befriend and share Christ's love and truth.
- For wisdom in deciding what events or classes, if any, to offer during the summer months.
- For time to reconnect with family, and friends, and to be renewed spiritually.

*ISM Inc. Volunteers*

- Praise God that Judy Monje is now serving as our Prayer Coordinator and that Bob Cissell is serving as Presentations Scheduler.
- Pray for volunteers willing to serve in the areas of social media, data entry, updating mailing list, encouraging volunteers, and opening mail/depositing checks. †

Email Sue@isminc.org if you wish to get Prayer updates by email between issues of the Doorstep News.



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NOTE: Mail sent to the former address will continue to be forwarded through January 2025

## DoorstepNews

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

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### THE GIFT

Susanne Smith

First-time ISM volunteer

Have you ever received a gift, questioned it, but then been surprised by the joy it brought once you used it?

We recently had this experience. My husband, Bud, and I were asked if we wanted to attend a square dance. We swiftly accepted with enthusiasm, having square danced in the past. As the evening approached, we were invited to volunteer (the gift) by providing transport for international students to and from the event. My enthusiasm began to wane as fear and doubt niggled their way in. This was our first involvement with International Student Ministry.

I questioned the gift. “What do I say? Will I be able to communicate? Will this

*(Continued - See “Gift” p. 4)*



*International students learn to square dance.*