

Becoming a Welcomer Missionary

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This week's E-News is a special guest blog post by Travis Helm, Assistant Director of Cross Cultural Ministries.

Each Tuesday morning the staff of the Churches of God, General Conference office gather together for devotions and prayer. One of our staff members typically leads the devotional time and then we spend some time praying for churches and individuals from across the CGGC, as well as other issues pertaining to our world and other intercessory prayer issues. Earlier this spring, Travis shared some incredibly convicting information about the number of foreign students who are studying here in the U.S. and the often overlooked opportunity to connect with them during their time here. These opportunities are all around us and are too often

missed or overlooked for a variety of reasons. I asked Travis to share some thoughts around this important idea of biblical hospitality and the importance of welcoming the stranger and alien in our midst. Let's open our eyes to see these opportunities, let's open our hearts to the strangers in our communities and let's open our lives to how God wants to use us to demonstrate and proclaim His love to the foreign born peoples who are living next door.

I want to encourage you to read Travis' powerful challenge and to respond in obedience by asking God to open your eyes to such opportunities and to empower you to reach out to those individuals who are aliens and foreigners in your own communities and neighborhoods. God is bringing the world to us! Are we responding to the opportunities that He has placed right outside our own doors?

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Acts 1:8b says "and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." This is a call for all believers to be a global Christian. We certainly don't all need to go to a foreign country to have a significant part in being a global Christian. We in the U.S. have a very unique opportunity to help evangelize many of the unreached/least reached peoples without even leaving our home states.

According to Institute of International Education Open Doors report, there are more than 900,000 international students in the U.S. An estimated 62% are from sixty eight 10/40 window countries. These are countries in North Africa, the Middle East, and across Asia. These areas are also some of the most difficult for western missionaries to go. These are the countries where the bulk of the least evangelized people live.



I recently heard the founder and international director of The Traveling Team, Dr. Todd Ahrend, speak about habits all believers can have in being effective global Christians. One way is to be a “Welcomer” to these international students within our own country. We don’t even need to learn their native language or travel to their home country.

As an example, Todd shared the following testimony of one way we can be an effective welcomer and share the love of Christ at the same time.

Todd was friends with a young man named Hudson who was heading into his senior year at a college in Arkansas. Hudson had a tough choice to make for his senior year. He could have his own apartment off campus, with a refrigerator and all the freedoms that come with having your own place or-he could live in the international dorm and have a ministry there. Through prayer and talks with Todd, Hudson determined the Lord wanted him to live in the international dorm and have a ministry. The ministry the Lord had given Hudson was simple: he would open the door of his dorm room and pop popcorn. The aroma would draw students in. One particular student from China, nicknamed Sam, became good friends with Hudson. Through this relationship, Sam came to know Christ and was baptized at the church Todd and Hudson attended. Sam led his mom to the Lord during a visit to China over his spring break. He also recruited a mission team from Todd and Hudson’s church to travel to China after he graduated. Sam’s father came to know the Lord during this trip. Sam now serves the Lord back in China bringing the gospel to his own people. This was possible because Hudson made the choice to be a global Christian in the place right where God had him. He only needed to be available and willing, and be able to pop popcorn.

Why reach out to internationals?

~80% will return to their countries having never been invited to an American home.

~40% of the world's 220 Heads of State once studied in the US.

~Only 10% of these students are reached by ministries while in the U.S.

I encourage you to find ways to be relational with the internationals that live around you. Age should not be a barrier. Every age group enjoys ice cream, popcorn, and conversation. Be creative, willing and available and the Lord will fill in the blanks.