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# MINISTRY OF HOSPITALITY

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WITH INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS





In the United States, more than a million international students study on our college campuses each year. In fact, the U.S. hosts more international students than any other country in the world.

R. Stephen Coffee states, “In previous generations, missionaries gave their lives to bring the gospel to places where it wasn’t yet known. Now, God is bringing people from least-reached communities into our own neighborhoods! This is an historic opportunity to share the good news with people who’ve never heard.”<sup>1</sup> There is no greater mission field in the United States than to develop relationships with international students in the name of Christ.

If building relationships is at the heart of your congregation, you may be called to ministering to international students. If so, read on. This ministry guide can help you get started!

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<sup>1</sup> R. Stephen Coffee, *Refugees: Responding to the Refugee Crisis in Light of the Gospel*; available at <https://www.christar.org/explore/resources/christar-refugee-booklet/>.



## Discover the Needs in your Community

Before you begin any new ministry, it is important to first take time to discover and understand the unique needs within your community in a process called “exegeting the community.” Explore the physical community, listen to and learn from people living and working in the area and seek God’s guidance by prayer-driving and prayer-walking the neighborhood.

To learn more about how to exegete your community, download the [Discovering Needs in your Community Ministry guide](#).

*If preparing your church to develop a ministry for international student is a need and desire within your congregation, keep reading! We have practical steps to help you get started.*

If not, [check out some of our other ministry guides](#) for opportunities that fit your church’s gifting and community’s needs.

# Strategically Consider Ministry Opportunities with International Students

Take the next step by enlisting a small group of people within the congregation to assess ministry opportunities by working through the following questions with you:

- **What partnerships or groups in your community could you contact for help to meet this need?** These could include other community churches and leaders, local college administrators and campus ministry groups and other preestablished programs providing help and support to international students.
- **Who in your church is passionate and equipped to lead or participate in this ministry?** Consider families, Sunday school classes, senior adults — anyone with a desire to minister to international students.
- **What resources and relationships has God given your church to support this ministry?** Consider missions offerings, other financial resources, church members who are connected to local colleges and community groups, members who are bi-lingual and Sunday school class members.
- **What resources have you identified that could work collaboratively with your church to build meaningful relationships with international students?** These questions can lead this small group of members to determine whether or not:
  1. There is a desire within the congregation to meet this need.
  2. There are resources of people, space and money to meet this need.
  3. This ministry is sustainable over time.
  4. You feel God leading your congregation in this direction.

Without intentionality on the part of churches and individual Christians, many international students will never have the opportunity to hear about Christ while they are here. Ministering to international students through hospitality can provide opportunities to share Christ and build international relationships. That opportunity, however, is time-limited. It expires when international students return home.





# Steps for Beginning a Ministry for International Students

If your church is ready to begin to reach international students, follow these basic steps from Baptists on Missions:

- 1. Develop** an International Students Team that will plan, publicize and put together church events and emphases for international students.
- 2. Create** a prayer team that will support the work of the International Students Team and will pray for international students by name.
- 3. Look** for international students in your community through local colleges and universities in your area.
- 4. Work** with the campus minister(s) at local colleges to find out what is already being offered for international students and discover how your church could help support that work. Seek their approval for your church to begin reaching out to international students on their campus(es).
- 5. Identify** areas of needs for international students, including:
  - Friendship.
  - Transportation, since most do not own a car.
  - Holidays, since most have no way to go home on holidays.
  - Meals on-campus, at the church, or in individual homes, in order to help students learn about American traditions and culture.
- 6. Share** Jesus Christ with students, but do not impose that belief on students.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Baptist on Mission, "International Student Ministry"; available at <https://baptistsonmission.org/Missions/Local-Ideas/Community-Ministry-Projects/International-Student-Ministry>.

# Methods and Resources for Ministry to International Students

Most churches involved in ministry to international students use a variety of programs and events. These include:

- **Friendship Partners:** Enlist families to adopt an international student to host for the duration of his/her time in the United States. Families share a monthly (or weekly) meal with their students, invite them to outside activities and include them in family holiday traditions when possible. Work through a campus minister to establish these relationships.
- **Offer events for sponsoring families, international students and others working with international students:** This time can help international students build other relationships within the church and help sponsoring families and their adoptive students strengthen their relationships.
- **English as a Second Language Classes:** Few international students arrive with a high level of English. Most arrive looking for help in preparation for class lectures and assignments. Both beginning and more advanced English classes are needed.
- **Provide Bible studies for International Students:** Many students come to the U.S. expecting to learn about Christianity. Classes that are designed specifically for international students can meet that need.
  - Beginning Bible study resources include:
    - [Creation to Christ storying](#)
    - [Discovery Bible Story](#)
    - [The Jesus Film](#)
    - [The Magdalena movie](#)
  - Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker's book [Ministering in Honor Shame Cultures](#) is a helpful resource in understanding cross cultural relationships.
  - Bibles for more than 80 foreign languages can be purchased through the [American Bible Society](#). [WorldBibles.org](#) provides links to Bibles in over 4,000 languages.
- **Teach a church-wide course on World Religions:** Understanding the culture and beliefs from which international students come allows Christians to engage international students in conversations about their lives back home.

# Meeting the Needs

Why is it so important to offer hospitality to international students? Because 80% will return to their countries without ever having been invited into an American home. Because 40% of the world's 200 Heads of State studied in the U.S. Because only 10% of international students are currently reached by any churches or ministries in the U.S.<sup>3</sup>

A hospitality program provides the opportunity to build relationships with international students, letting them experience the love of Christ and hear the gospel while in America. The church is uniquely positioned to minister to international students in America. Why?

- Because the church is already planted in communities where international students live.
- Because the church has been instructed to provide and protect foreigners (Deut. 10:18-19, Mal. 3:5, Job 31:32, Matt. 25:25-26, Gal. 5:14).
- Because the church's calling is to share the Gospel with the entire world (Matt. 28:18-20, Gal. 5:14).
- Because our God loves them (Jam. 2:15-17).

## WHAT'S NEXT?

*"IMAGINE . . . what it would look like if every church and every Christian accepted the challenge to make an intentional plan for reaching the 'mission field' that is the university campus and doing it with the vision of ultimately reaching the world!"<sup>4</sup>*

Is God calling you to take up the mission to reach those who haven't heard of Christ — with ministry to international students in your community?

<sup>3</sup> "International Students," Internationals in the USA — The Traveling Team; available at <http://www.thetravelingteam.org/internationals-in-the-usa>.

<sup>4</sup> B. Tyler Ellis, p. 9.



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