

The Olsen Outlook August-October 2008

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IT'S HAPPENING!

In our last Olsen Outlook, we explained our strategy for connecting believing internationals from the university with local churches through small groups. We believe very strongly in the responsibility and privilege for the body of Christ to minister to the needs of internationals in our midst. It is the proper role of parachurch organizations like CCC, InterFACE and ISI to help the church fulfill it's mission.

Ken and Yen are our first potentially successful attempt at this strategy this fall. They arrived in Lincoln two weeks before the semester began and we met them at International Women and Children. Kurt, who came to help set up that morning for the Welcome Tea, had to stay, because there were two men in attendance! Here is what Yen wrote after the meeting...

Dear Nanette,

It's nice to meet you couple this Tuesday and thanks for your kindness and consideration....

I appreciate your service in Christ because it's really a tough time for us. Ken is trying to be a student again in different language when he has worked for several years. As for me, I've never been a fulltime mother and housewife. I'm learning cooking and really need more wisdom from God to teach Esther during her " 2" year-old period.

Therefore, I think this group is really helpful for me. I look forward to meet you this Sunday and next Tuesday. God bless!

Yen

At IWC, we are now able to have visitors fill out contact cards and a sign-up sheet for opportunities such as connecting with ISF (International Student Fellowship), English classes, friends from the community and Bible study. Ken and Yen were interested in friends and Bible study, so we immediately invited them to church. We introduced them to a couple who also has young daughters and hosts one of the small groups that fits their schedule. Yen has connected with several women in the toddler nursery on the 3 consecutive Sundays they have attended church. Last Sunday was the first fall meeting of the home group, and Ken and Yen attended.

Yesterday, Grandma Nancy, who is here visiting for 5 weeks, went with Nanette to International Women and Children, where the other moms were waiting to meet "Michael's Grandma." Another mom from church with a young daughter came to help with the children.

The Office of International Affairs is working very closely with Nanette to get the word out about this group, because they see the value in having these women's needs met in ways they are unable to address. Often, the format is just "Chat & Play," but yesterday, a psychologist presented material on Understanding Cultural Adjustment and led a discussion for Nanette to participate in with the group. This is part of the published schedule that Nanette and Thais came up with over the summer. The announcement had gone in e-mail to all international students and scholars, all department heads, the women's center on campus and married student housing

for posting in the buildings! Each of the international student advisers is also posting the schedule in a highly visible location on or near their desk or door.

The discussion was very helpful to Yen, yesterday, as she identified symptoms of culture shock which she and her family are experiencing. Nanette and others were able to assure her that this is normal and offer support in her struggles. We are praying for and anticipating greater participation than we have seen so far this semester, with the opportunity to connect more families to church members who can either share Christ with them or help foster their Christian faith.

We met with the elders of our church one recent evening and they were very excited about this strategy, not only for our congregation, but for other local Bible-teaching church congregations as

well. It is our belief and prayer that as international visitors to Lincoln connect in deep, meaningful relationships with local church members, they will be disciplined in the faith. They will link these church members with their own network of international friends to whom the small groups can minister. The believers will become more firmly grounded in their faith and able to defend it in their home cultures, while their non-believing friends here will be exposed to the love and claims of Christ, some of whom will then become His followers. One elder who leads a small group said he would even welcome nonbelievers to visit his group and observe Christians interacting with the Bible and each other.

In about 5 weeks, we will have the opportunity to meet with all of the small group leaders from another congregation whose pastor is on our Personal Advisory Council. Pastor Andy, along with our pastors and elders, is very appreciative of our desire to spur the body of Christ onward in the mission to internationals. When parachurch organization workers begin to lose this focus, they start to form stand-alone microcosms of believers that mimic the church in some ways but do not perform the full functions of the church. Parachurch workers like ourselves need to remain fully accountable to the pastors, leaders and congregations of our own respective churches. We also need to be sure that we are promoting discipleship as a process that takes place in the context of churches. In this way, as the ministry grows, it is dependent on these churches and not the parachurch ministers themselves. (Concludes on p.2, bottom right)

**A DYNAMIC, SPIRITUAL MOVEMENT IN LINCOLN
IMPACTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
WITH CHRIST'S LOVE
BY LINKING THEM WITH CHRISTIANS
WHO SHARE THE GOAL OF MAKING
DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS.**



Meeting the masses at **Big Red Welcome**...inviting to ISF