



**HISTORY
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November 2019 Newsletter Let's Eat!

Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry has been busy! In the last two months we've talked about conversation coaching and about a Bible study in a fraternity. The participants in both of those activities have a few things in common. Among the most important? They all eat. So every other Friday evening we have a dinner and conversation night!

This activity began because of a simple, and sad, fact of life for international students and scholars. They have come to this country in part because of the academic opportunities of our educational institutions, and in part because they want a cross-cultural experience. Why is this a sad fact? I'll give you an example. The names and settings have been changed to protect the innocent. Actually, I am making this part up entirely, but it's a very real situation, doubtless experienced by thousands of international students.

Tan is from a large city in coastal China. She has multiple degrees from an institution in China, and has been working in a government office for several years. She applied to study for a year in the United States, researching a topic which is pertinent to the agency for which she works. Her husband, who works for a University, applied for a leave of absence so he and their four year old son could come as well. The family would like to learn more about American life and culture. They are also privately curious about Christianity, but they are concerned that speaking of that too much could hinder their careers.



The family comes to Columbia, Missouri. Tan takes some courses through the Asian Affairs Center. Her husband is supportive and enjoys the time with his son, while helping the son thrive in a pre-kindergarten program. They live in an apartment complex which is mostly rented to people from China. They visit with the other Chinese scholars. They shop at the traditional Asian market in town. Though they are learning some English, they don't really practice it at home or in their community. After a year's study, the son is fairly accomplished with English conversation, since he has been immersed in school. Tan remains very good with reading in English but less good with conversation. Her husband reads about as well as she does but he doesn't converse in English. He's never needed to. The family has gone to Yellowstone Park. They have visited Disneyland. They saw Santa Claus. But they never

crossed the cultural divide. Not many Americans have entered into their lives, and they have not entered into the lives of many Americans. There's less than a 20% chance that they have ever set foot into the home of a local resident who is not an international of some sort.

About eighty percent of international students and researchers never enter the home of an American. Yet they come to this country wanting to learn something about our life and culture. Three years ago, seeing this situation, we decided to try inviting some internationals for a dinner and conversation time. We would serve middle American food, since that's where we live. We would introduce the different dishes to people who didn't know what to do with them. We would try to play some English word games or have a guided discussion. Since we are a Christian family and work with a Christian ministry, we are unapologetic about seasoning our conversation with our Christian faith, praying before meals, speaking about spirituality, and affirming the Scripture as our infallible guide.

I've been really bad about taking pictures at these dinners. Really bad. The fact is, it's such a busy evening that taking pictures and getting photo permissions is just about at the bottom of our task lists. This picture is from a long time ago! We could take pictures of the preparations, but really you don't want pictures of how we prepare a taco bar. Not that there's anything wrong with our prep work, but how many times do you want to watch someone cutting up green peppers and onions? Once our friends start arriving it's nonstop. We have two Americans who are wanting to learn more about Lutheran Christianity, so they arrive a half



hour early for a quick catechism class. We welcome about an equal number of Americans and internationals. We pray, we introduce the different foods, we help people get themselves served, and we mingle with people, talking, laughing, and loving one another until everyone seems to be dug into dessert and coffee.

As a new element this year, rather than playing word games I have a list of different biblical events and topics to walk through during the year. It's being received really well. On Friday the 8th, for example, we had at total of 23 people present. Eight of them were internationals. Four of those were children. Five more of our internationals had schedule conflicts but said they certainly want to be at our Thanksgiving dinner on the 22nd. Two of the people who attended were with us for the first time. One of them I just met on Thursday the 7th. When the dessert was gone and we were into the second pot of coffee, I settled myself by the fireplace, sort of my version of being on the hot seat, and reviewed some of the outline of the Bible we have gone over before. We then talked about the role of the prophets, both the oral prophets and writing prophets, in the Old Testament. They had a special work of reminding people how they had fallen short of God's command and how they needed to repent of their failures and

trust God, like Abraham did, for forgiveness. We talked about how the prophets pointed forward to Christ, the one who provides forgiveness for his people by dying for their sin so they can live in his righteousness. The room got really very quiet while we absorbed the impact of God's Word. A few people had some questions and more questions came up as we started talking among ourselves about other things.

What's the bottom line? Our dinner and conversation nights bring our American friends and our international friends together. We are family for those whose families are far away. We provide a way for people from radically different cultures to enter into one another's lives. We also lovingly introduce our friends to Jesus, the one many of them would like to know better but have difficulty doing in their native culture.

Our next dinner is a traditional Thanksgiving dinner. Everyone wants to see the turkey. I have warned them not to get their expectations too high. After all, it really just looks like a big chicken. We've got a halal turkey for our Muslim friends, and we will supplement it for those without dietary restrictions with a less expensive non-halal bird. Two weeks after that, on December 6, we will have a Christmas party, which has been characterized by some as "Dickensian." I'm not sure if that means I'm like Mr. Scrooge or like Mr. Fezziwig. Hopefully the latter. Come decide for yourself, but bring some finger foods or some non-alcoholic drinks.

Wittenberg Door Financial Update

Our activities have been great! We're getting traction in the community, which is wonderful. And financially, we're glad to report that giving continues to increase. As of November 11, we have brought in about \$22,500, as compared to about \$21,500 for the entirety of 2018. So contributions are up. Yet compared to our ideal budget we have a long way to go.

I was making a presentation at a church congregation this fall and a person asked me privately how I am able to carry on this ministry without a salary. Frankly, it has meant tapping into money which is really earmarked for eventual retirement. I am glad that I have been able to do this. God has blessed me with the ability to do a work which I think is very important and to persist in it while still raising support. It is not a situation I can work with forever.

Our best estimate based on the average of individual contributions is that we need about 200 more individuals who will give to support this ministry on a monthly basis. Considering that a church congregation normally consists of more than ten families, we could also make everything work out with another 20 congregations who would undertake monthly support. I'm going to ask my readers to consider this seriously. As Jesus put it, the fields are white for the harvest and the laborers are few (John 4). We pray that the Lord would send forth workers into His harvest fields. However, we also want to care for those who are laboring in the Word of God (1 Timothy 5). My tendency is to work away and not worry about whether there are resources to take care of it. Yet I realize that my supporters and potential supporters cannot read minds and also cannot know what's up with the Wittenberg Door bank accounts. Believe me, any contributions will be received with joy and will enable us in the kind of ministries we describe on a monthly basis!

If your church congregation or other Christian group would like to hear more about what we are doing so as to consider financial and prayer support, please let me know. We'll make it happen. Together we can have a great impact around the world!

Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Checks mailed to us are deposited with no commission paid to any intermediary. Most of our contributions are actually received this way, but we can receive funds sent through Paypal or Google Pay as well. Giving is easy! Simply visit our website at www.wittenbergcomo.com and click on "about" and "support us."

Uganda Update:



We are on pins and needles about our friend Alice in Uganda. Over the past 27 months we have raised nearly \$90,000.00 to provide her with lifesaving treatment of a brain tumor. Today she had an MRI which, if it comes out as they hope, could result in her release from treatment. She will meet with the doctor on Friday. I'm sure this week will seem like an eternity to her, to Pastor Simon Peter, and to all the rest of us who have been giving and praying for over two years.

Meanwhile we are still preparing for the visit to Simon Peter and many others in Uganda, arranged by Eleos ministry (www.themercyway.com) in January. Last month I told you that I had promises of as many copies of *The Lutheran Hymnal* as he requested. They are in my office now. We were also in search of copies of the Bible, preferably in the 1986 edition of the New International Version. I have been talking with a local church congregation which is replacing their pew Bibles. The new Bibles are in the church office so the old pew Bibles will soon join the hymnals in my office. Now to find an efficient shipping method . . . By God's grace it will certainly happen. I have some leads already.

The Lord is working among those of humble means in a place far across the world from my home. It will be a privilege to visit in the homes of my brothers and sisters in Christ, bringing them the hope of the Gospel, which is the same for every nation!

If you would like to assist in these opportunities to see God's people learn and grow in their faith, and especially if you would like to help with the expenses of bringing some of the resources needed by our Ugandan friends, please let me know. In any case, please pray for the work being done by these faithful servants of Christ. As Simon Peter told me, "I can bring an eternal hope to everyone through the Gospel, but if these people want any earthly hope at all, they need to learn to read, write, and speak as educated people."

Upcoming Activities:

Tuesdays 5:30 pm – Mere Christians – at The Heidelberg
Wednesdays 5:30 pm – Biblical One-Anothering – at Beta Sigma Psi
Thursdays at 1:00 pm – Bible discussion at Mizzou Student Center

November 22 – That Friday Dinner – Thanksgiving Edition – 6 pm Spotts House
November 28 - Pastor Spotts leads Thanksgiving Service at Trinity Lutheran Church,
Columbia MO - 9 am
December 6 – That Friday Dinner – Christmas Party Edition – 7 pm Spotts House
January 5 - Pastor Spotts at Family of Christ Lutheran Church, Ashland MO
January 10-25 Pastor Spotts goes to Uganda!
January 27 - We jump into the second semester of college work a week late!

We always have something new at the website, the blog, and the activities calendar. Please be a friend on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. If you're in Columbia, let's get together on or near campus. Go to <https://www.wittenbergcomo.com/support-us.html> to provide financial support. The Wittenberg Door 300 needs you!