HILARY TERM 2026

ISSUE 1

THE OICCU MAGAZINE

WORDS THAT WITNESS



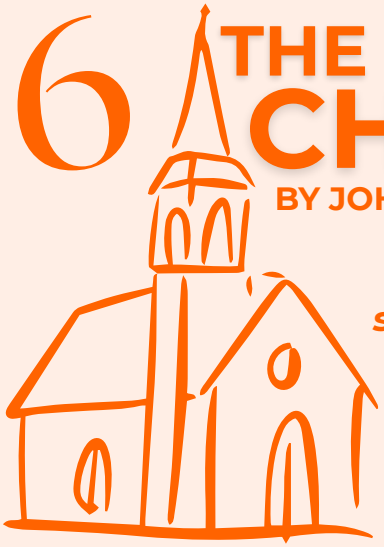
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MEET THE COMMITTEE

We asked a few members of the OICCU Committee some questions about about their role, how it serves the mission of OICCU, and what OICCU means to them. Here's what they said.

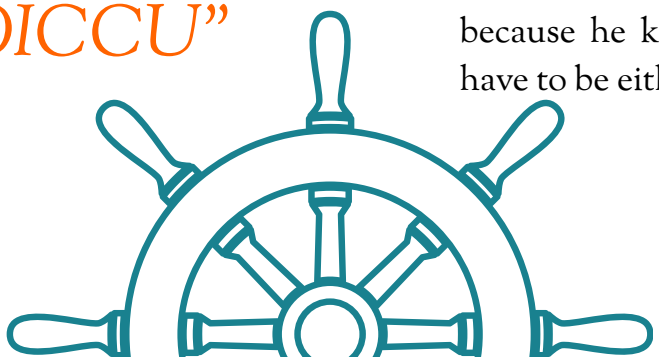


Hi! Benjy writing here, OICCU President (until Easter). I'd love to tell any interested readers a little bit about what I do in OICCU and what my hopes and prayers are for CU!

The role of President seemed a bit mysterious and hard to define to my predecessors, but, since a good metaphor always helps, I like to think of it as steering a ship. Your hand is on both the wheel and the telescope– you couldn't hope to run the ship without the rest of your crew, but your job is to have your eyes on the sea in front of you. I hesitate to say captain because Jesus is the captain of OICCU (of course!) but my job is to keep our eyes collectively fixed on him and help steer OICCU on the path he wants us to go.

My greatest prayer for OICCU is that we would overflow with the joy that comes from receiving the abounding grace of God in our weakness and be so captured by the glory of Jesus that we can't help but speak about him wherever we go! It feels like a bold prayer,

"Jesus is the captain of OICCU"



but a verse that always encourages me is 2 Corinthians 12:9, where God speaks to Paul about his suffering: 'But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness".'

In my time, I've seen that Oxford is terrified of weakness. It is excellent at projecting strength and brilliance, but on the inside, it is afraid of being found out as not good enough. I think, as Christians in Oxford, we can often get taken into this mindset and think that our evangelism will be more effective the more skilled or trained we are– not so! This verse reminds me that I've been set free to follow my Lord Jesus who left behind power and glory for a body like mine, and embraced weakness to be totally dependent on his Father like I am. It means that, when I feel most like a failure of a leader and a Christian, I can be sure that God's rescuing power is most at work in me! Jesus wasn't afraid of being weak because he knew his Father's power– we don't have to be either.

Benjamin Mathole
Chemistry, St Catherine's College



My name is Kirsten Attfield, and I am the Outreach Secretary for OICCU for the 25-26 year. Practically, this involves running the regular event of Oxford's Big Questions, as well as three one-off events: outreach at the Summer VIIIs boat races, welcome events for all the freshers and the OICCU Christmas Carol Service. Oxford's Big Questions is a lunch event in which we consider a 'Big Question' about the Christian faith, involving a talk and Q&A. This is great in working towards OICCU's vision of giving all students in Oxford the chance to hear and respond to the Gospel of Christ, as it helps to provide an academic way to engage with what Christians have to say. Lots of folk in Oxford enjoy talks, debates and seminars, and so this provides a familiar setting for them to hear about why we believe in the Good News, and how our faith interacts with our studies. Lots of folk in Oxford enjoy talks, debates and seminars, and so this provides a familiar setting for them to hear about why we believe in the Good News, and how our faith interacts with our studies. My hope for this event is that it encourages Christians in personal evangelism, equipping them with answers to questions they may be faced with. Also, that it will help to prove the credibility of faith to non-Christians, to show its attractiveness, and encourage them to find out more.

At the time of writing, it is close to the Carol Service. I am particularly excited about this, as it is such an amazing chance to share the Gospel with lots of different people throughout Oxford. Christmas is a wonderful opportunity for everyone to connect with the wonder that is the Eternal Word coming down to earth as a human to share in our sufferings in order to bring us to life with Him! I pray that, through the Carol services, we will be able to share the immense joy that we have in Christ to our non-Christian friends, and that they will be filled with a longing to know Jesus for themselves.

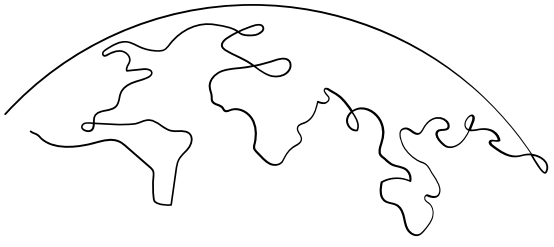
Kirsten Attfield
Maths, Mansfield College

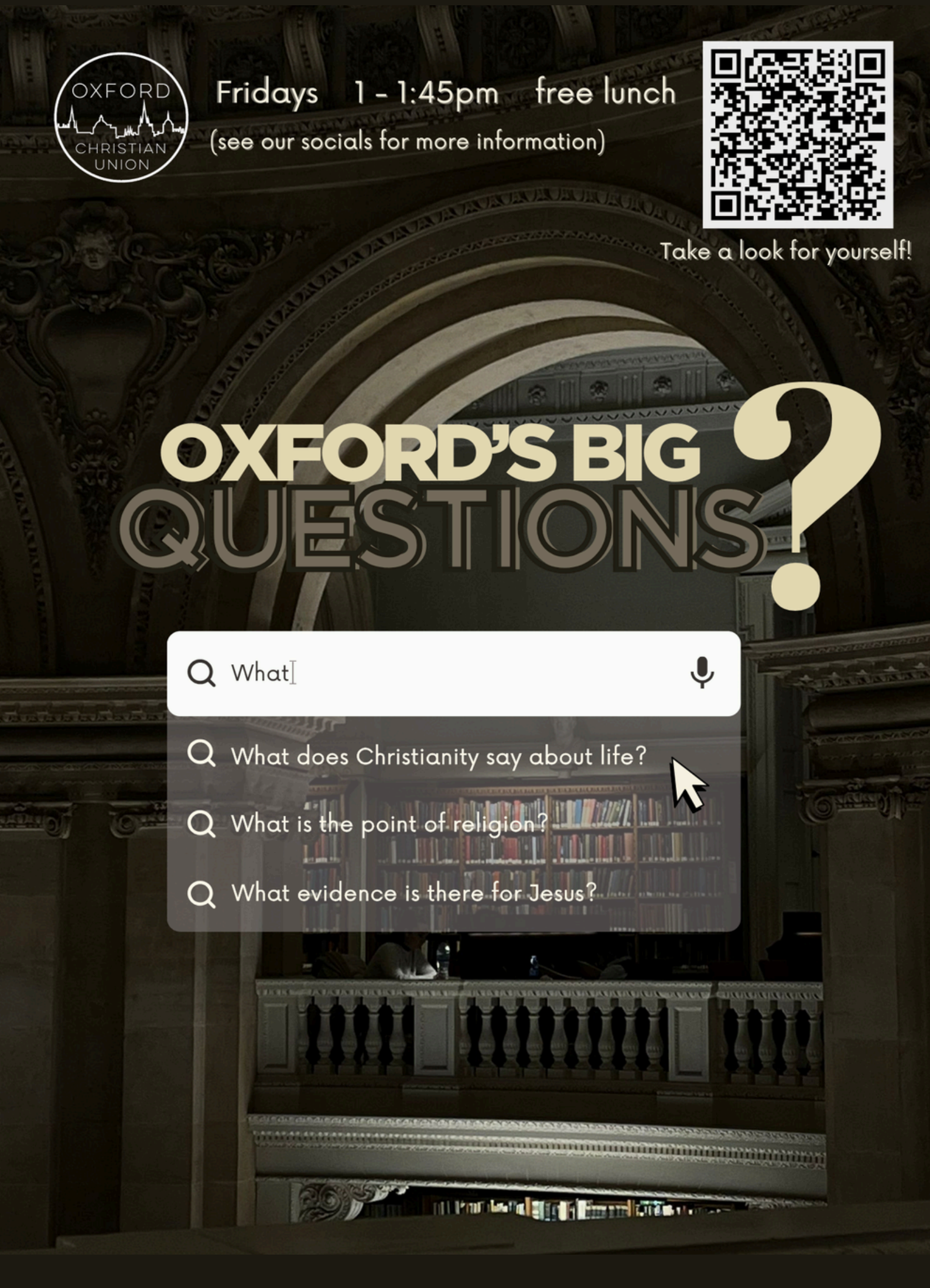
Hey there! I'm Abel. I'm the International Secretary for OICCU this year, which means I lead the International Team (i-Team). We help to organise OICCU's gospel outreach to international students, such as through our weekly Café360 and bigger events, such as International Welcome Week and the International Christmas Dinner. Oftentimes, international students– both Christians and non-Christians– find it tough to transition from their home country to the UK. Within OICCU, we as the i-Team strive to help Christian international students settle into church life and OICCU, and we also share to international students the love of Jesus that transcends cultures and peoples. My hope for OICCU is that, as Christian students in Oxford, we will be more encouraged to bridge the cultural gap between British and international students, and to especially look out for those on the fringes. In John 4, when Jesus befriends the Samaritan woman, we see a ripple effect in how many people from her town came to faith. I believe that with God's help, the same thing can happen here in Oxford as we introduce Jesus to people who might not have heard of Christianity before!

Nehemiah Abel Johan
Engineering, Trinity College



"the love of Jesus transcends cultures and peoples"




OXFORD
CHRISTIAN
UNION
Fridays 1 - 1:45pm free lunch
(see our socials for more information)
Take a look for yourself!
OXFORD'S BIG
QUESTIONS?
What
What does Christianity say about life?
What is the point of religion?
What evidence is there for Jesus?

The Case For Church



For years, the story seemed settled. New Atheism had set the cultural tone, church attendance in the UK was in terminal decline, and younger generations were drifting away from organised Christianity. Yet a report published last year, titled The Quiet Revival by the Bible Society, has overturned that narrative.

Between 2018 and 2024, regular church attendance amongst 18-24 year-olds rose fourfold from 4% to 16%, a shift very few would have predicted. This coincides with a wider cultural moment where Christianity is once again being discussed in all forms of media, politics, and popular culture. At the heart of this new reality, we ought to draw attention to the seemingly simple practice of church-going. In an age suspicious of institutions and with the technological ability to listen to any sermon on our phones, why does this still matter?

I first attended church reluctantly as a child, holding the hands of my parents who insisted it was good for me. I didn't get why. It wasn't until I turned fifteen, during the confusion of lockdown, that I started asking questions about purpose, faith, and the Bible. I came to understand the fullness of the gospel in my bedroom: I stood as a great sinner, but God's love for me poured out on the cross was, and forever will be, immensely greater.

"Between 2018 and 2024, regular church attendance among 18-24 year olds rose fourfold"

I grew in a genuine relationship with Him, and when lockdown ended, I began to actively search for a local church. For me, it felt like the natural thing to do. Dare I say, it should be the natural thing for anyone with faith in Jesus to do.

Central to my conversion was reading the Bible, largely on my own. I could have left things there: me, my God, and my Bible. Many believers worldwide are forced to operate that way, either by family pressure or by the state. But if we can go to church, we should.

We live in a culture shaped by consumerism, individualism, and comfort, where personal preference is a primary and endless voices are

available at the tap of a screen. I fear this has negatively affected the modern Christian mind, contrary to the framework the New Testament provides. We have not been called to an individualistic religion, but one which emphasises community.

It was the pattern of the Apostle Paul's ministry to establish churches wherever he evangelised. His letters were addressed to congregational communities living out their faith together – in Rome, Corinth, Ephesus and elsewhere. The earliest church also devoted itself to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer (Acts 2:42). The Lord intends for us to hear gospel teaching together; partake in the Lord's Supper together; and when "two or more gathered in [His] name" together, Christ is especially present (Matt. 18:20). We're even instructed not to be like those "neglecting to meet together" but, by contrast, to be "encouraging one another", presuming that the most effective way of doing this is through meeting together (Heb. 10:24-25). This is for our benefit. Christians are in a spiritual war against sin and darkness which they cannot fight alone (Eph. 6:12).

"We have not been called to an individualistic religion, but one which emphasises community"

"Christians are in a spiritual war against sin and darkness which they cannot fight alone"

The Holy Spirit is our primary 'helper' and 'comforter'; He 'dwells' in us and 'helps us in our weakness'. But the Lord has purposed the local church to provide structure to our spiritual lives too. Fellowship with other believers allows for individual faith to grow and be sharpened through corporate worship, fruitful conversations, confession of sin, and receiving the sacraments. Church leadership is important too. Pastors are called to love, serve, teach, and discipline the church they oversee through regularly preaching the Word, developing a supportive relationship with members, and exerting discipline when needed.

Church is vital for spiritual life because it prevents the believer from being a one-man-army. Instead, you live how God has intended you to: with others who can encourage and sharpen you, but also hold you to account in your walk. The Lord wills us to be the salt and light of the world, to live and share the gospel in the holiest way possible. In a culture where Christianity has risen in popularity, God wants His people rooted in His word, His truth, and His local church.

John Alexander Utime
Theology, Wycliffe Hall




mondays, 7:30pm, at the costa on queenstreet
THE
SEARCH
free coffee, free cake and conversation
OICCU

Joyful & Lasting HOPE



My name is Annabel Philp and I'm the External Vice President of OICCU. This means that I focus on reaching outside the OICCU community to those who aren't members, but are interested in exploring faith for themselves. I have two main roles: running The Search and co-leading the Events Week team.

Events Week is week 4 of Hilary term, where we have talks and events every day that share the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Christian Unions across the country have been doing this for many years. It is a space for those seeking to understand and indeed challenge the Christian faith, a place for questions, discussions, and community. Events Week this year is titled 'What if... There is hope?'. In 1 Peter 3:15 Peter writes '...Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect'. We believe that in Jesus we have found a brilliant hope that can be trusted, even in the face of difficulty. Events Week is an opportunity to explain why we have such a hope to those who have questions. There are loads of ways to volunteer if this sounds like something you'd be interested in! From stewarding to cooking, and most importantly, if you or your friends have questions about faith, invite them along!

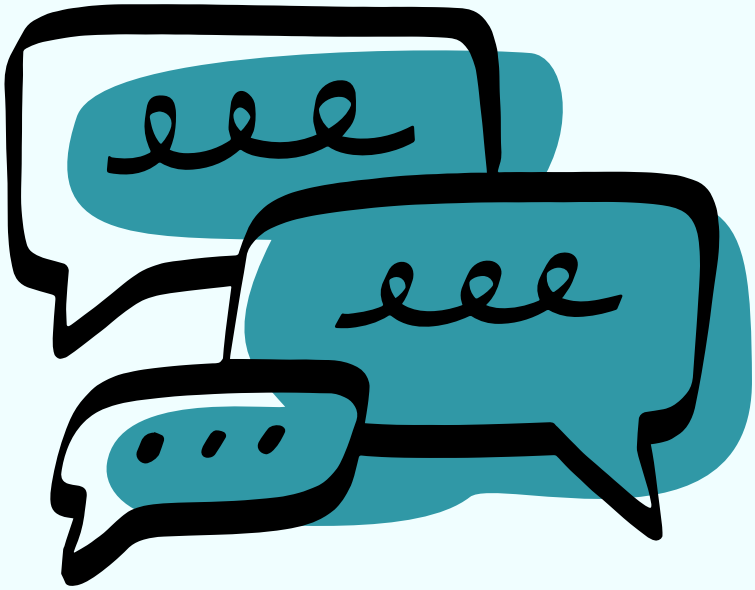
The Search is an event that started over ten years ago because of Events Week. People had been hearing about Jesus and they wanted to hear more, so The Search was a space for them to ask their questions. People just kept coming back so at the end of Hilary term, the leaders decided to keep it going, and it's still here today!

When you go to The Search, you walk into Costa and are greeted by student helpers (which anyone reading this can volunteer for!) who reassure you that, yes, you really can get any drink on the Costa menu. You are then directed upstairs to a table (and the cake!). The tables are the communities which make The Search what it is. Table leaders are an amazing team of student workers and masters students who love to engage with apologetics, theology and all the tricky questions people have when they are exploring faith.

"I love The Search... for the community and the hot chocolate and the chance to see the Gospels through fresh eyes"

After some time to enjoy cake and chat, the Search officially kicks off. Each term we go through one of the Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. We read a short passage from a Gospel, then a speaker delivers a ten minute talk offering explanations of the passage to those who might never have heard it before. The speaker helps draw out the kind of questions that people at different stages of exploring faith might be asking, from the highly sceptical to those longing for it to be true, and at the end, they hand over to the tables to discuss.

I love The Search for so many reasons, for the community and the hot chocolate and the chance to see the Gospels through fresh eyes. But mostly I love it because of this discussion time. I've had conversations with people from all sorts of different backgrounds: from long-term atheists to seekers who are so passionate they are attending Church but still aren't sure God is there yet. I've spoken to several people from other faiths, particularly the other Abrahamic faiths, Judaism and Islam. I've spoken to people approaching faith from all different angles. This includes long-term Christians who don't know how to explain things to their friends, or who are wrestling with doubt or who just love to facilitate discussions where non-Christians can really have their voices heard– I know I've been in all of these boats when attending The Search. Attendees include those who have been deeply hurt by the Church and those who are deeply impressed by the generosity of the Church. There are those who see religion as a material means to a better life, and those who are incredibly spiritual and seeking something beyond the material. It really is a space for those of all faiths and none. Somewhere people can ask questions and bring their ideas to the table. It's a place where as table groups we find out about the ways that our beliefs, philosophies and faiths impact the way we live our lives, and the ways in which we negotiate the different challenges we face.



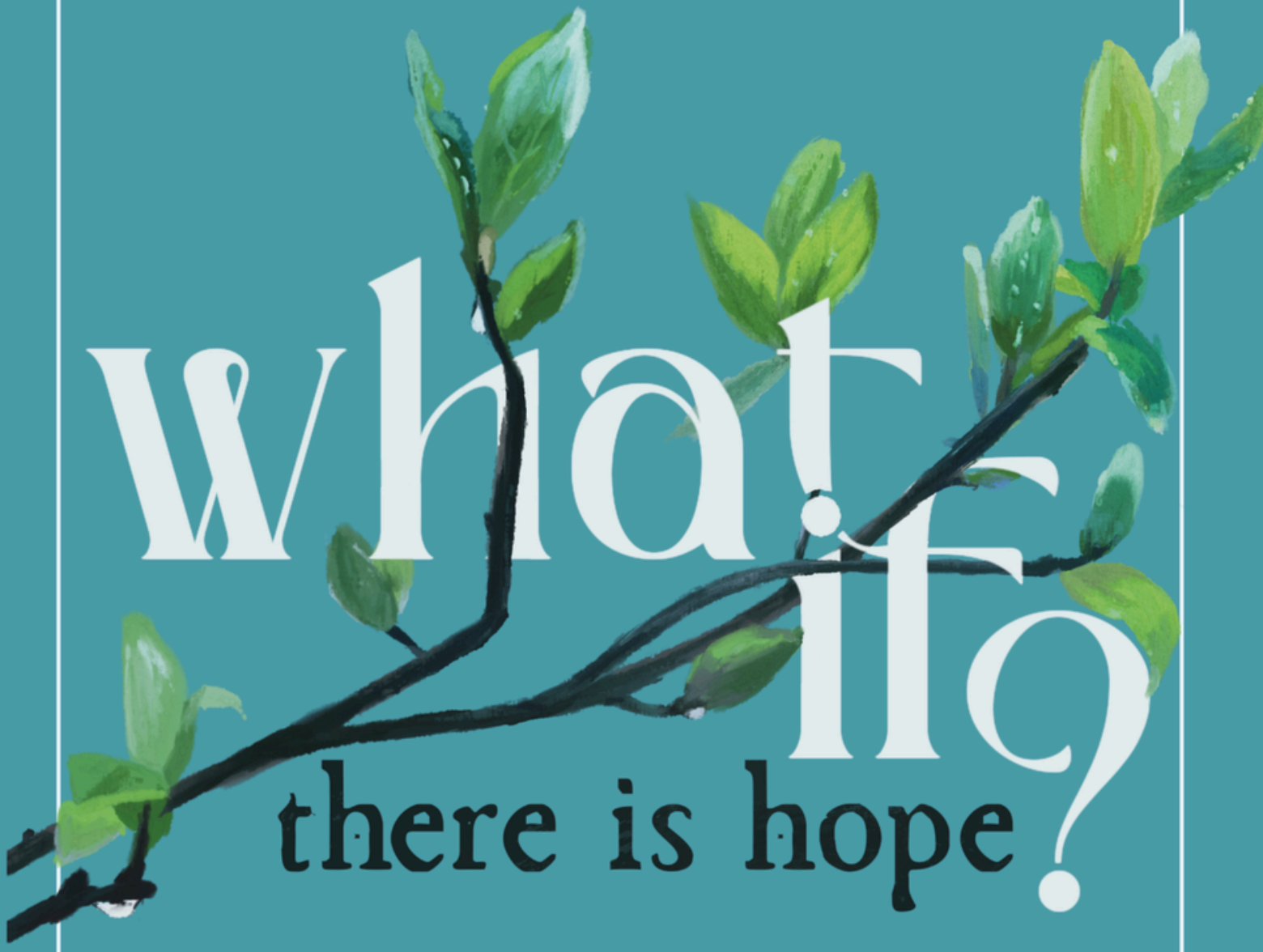
"It's a place where... we find out about the ways that our beliefs, philosophies and faiths impact the way we live"

Often table groups become really strong communities where friendships can grow. I think this is because The Search is a space where, whilst we highly value intellectual discussion, we can also go beyond the intellectual and explore the wider shape of our lives and the kinds of stories we tell. Often people do find Jesus through The Search. Sometimes they continue seeking by attending Alpha or church, and sometimes we don't know what people do next. It is our hope and prayer that The Search is somewhere people can encounter Jesus if they so desire, and where we can explain why we think Jesus can give us a joyful and lasting hope.

Annabel Philp
English, Merton College

EVENTS WEEK 2026

09/02 - 13/02



what if?

there is hope?

Psalms 33:20 We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.

How Shall They Hear?

Reflections on International Mission & Student Ministry from Romans 10:12-15

Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

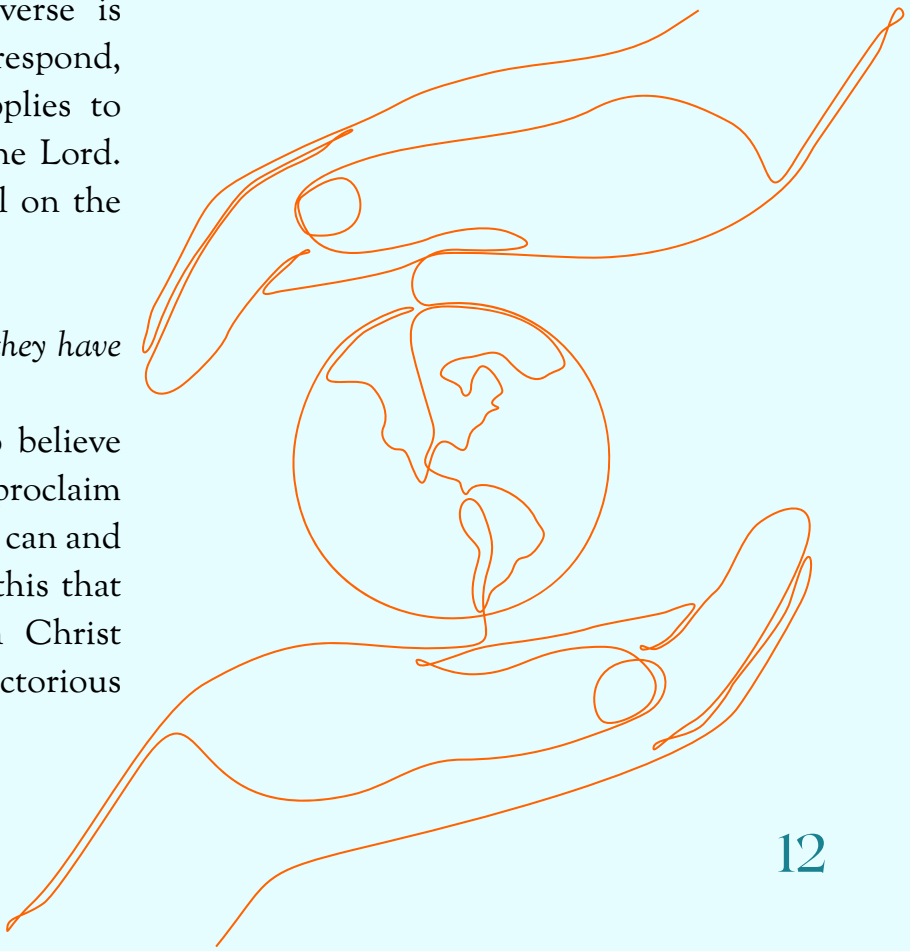
We have likely all heard this reassuring truth, and many of us have clung to it in moments of despair or doubt. It is indeed reassuring, for the promise is that all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. The Lord is rich unto all who call upon him, he delights to lavish his mercy and grace on us when we come to him in repentance and cry out to him in faith to save us. The cry and exhortation from this verse is directed at all, anyone who will respond, whosoever shall call. This promise applies to anyone who will respond and call to the Lord. We can, and we must, exhort all to call on the Saviour!

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?

Calling out to the Lord requires us to believe that he is, and that he can help us. We proclaim the truth that Christ is Lord, and that he can and does save. It is only through believing this that anyone can call on the Lord. Preach Christ crucified and raised from the dead, victorious over death and able to give us life!

How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?

This is where the urgency of the task at hand becomes evident. Someone can only call on the name of the Lord if they have heard about him. Carl F. H. Henry said "The gospel is only good news if it gets there on time". Shocking as it may seem, there are over 3 billion people in the world who do not know a single Christian from whom to hear of Christ.



How shall they hear without a preacher?

1 Corinthians 1:21 says, "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." God chooses to use our preaching to save people.

People, across the world, in Oxford, and in your college and course, need someone to tell them of Christ! Speak up! Proclaim "Behold the lamb! Look to him!". 12,565. That is the number of international students in Oxford, many from countries with almost no Christians to share with them. Will you have the courage and love to tell them of the Saviour? Perhaps invite them to Cafe360!

How shall they preach, except they be sent?

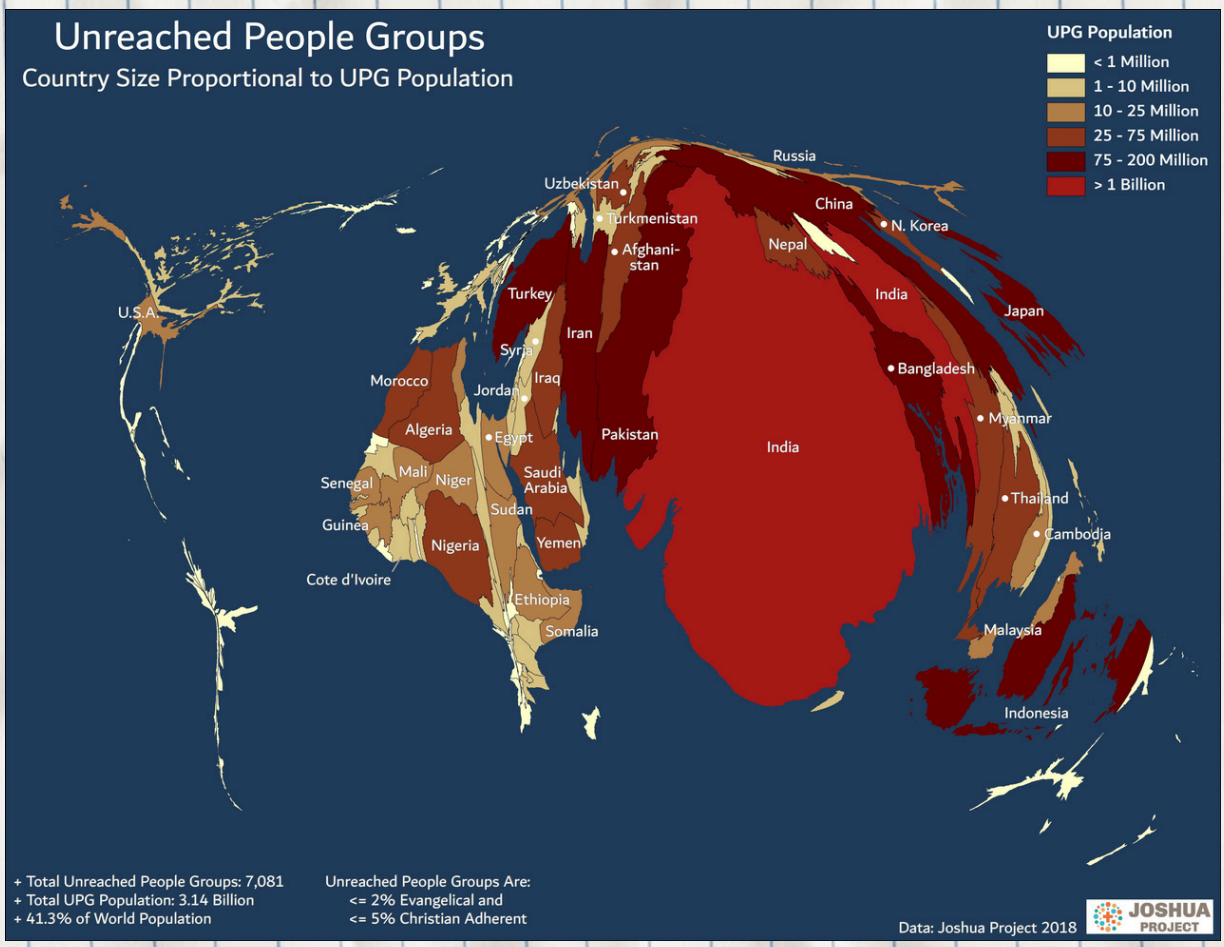
Ultimately, it is God who calls people and sends people to preach Christ. It is God's harvest field, and we are to pray to him to send forth labourers into his harvest field. The harvest is so plentiful and the labourers so few! What shall we do? Pray to the Lord of the harvest! Perhaps join Pray938 (Matt 9:38).

How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel.

OICCU has historically had many people go on to devote their lives to making Christ known across the world, especially in areas where he has not been preached before. Are you prepared to be an answer to your own prayer, if that is God's will?

Perhaps it will be a call to give up everything and move to a non-Christian country, but it could also be a call for now to get over the awkwardness and ask your friends if they have thought about Jesus. If we have such precious and wonderful news, how can we keep it to ourselves? Is our heart's desire and prayer for our friends that they might be saved? Perhaps specifically try to get to know and share with some international friends too. There are few things that give greater joy than being able to share the message of Christ with someone who has never heard before of his death and resurrection!

James Wakefield
Biology, St John's College





Resting on Omnipotent Grace

The Story of J. I. Packer, OICCU and the North Gate Hall

James Innell Packer was born in Gloucester in 1926, and came to Oxford in 1944 to study Classics at Corpus Christi College. He had grown up attending the Anglican church, and he came to wartime Oxford as a prolific reader with a good understanding of theology. At Oxford, two major events were to happen which set the course for his future career.

Despite growing up in the Church and having been confirmed, Packer had not had a personal experience of salvation by the time he came to Oxford. He had promised a school friend that he would make contact with OICCU, and on his second weekend at University he went along to the CU's Sunday evening evangelistic service, held in St Aldates Church. Here, for the first time in his life, he heard the message of the Gospel in fullness and power. During the sermon, when the elderly minister preaching told of his own experience of believing in Christ, Packer had the realisation that he had not had this experience – it was as if he looking through a window into a room where people were enjoying themselves; he understood what was happening, but he was outside, and he needed to come in.

He later described his experience thus: 'I came to Jesus Christ in a decisive commitment, needing and seeking God's forgiveness and acceptance, and assured of Christ's redeeming love for me and His personal call to me.'

The second major event which happened to Packer took place in a building which is well known to many of us– the North Gate Hall. During this period, OICCU, along with much of British evangelicalism, was dominated by Keswickian theology (named after the Keswick conferences from which it emerged). This emphasised that the Christian life was one of 'victorious living'– if the believer surrendered all efforts of self and trusted enough in Christ, they could overcome the power of sin which remained in them and be fully assured of their salvation. For a 'lonely, dithery adolescent introvert whose new-found assurance had not changed his temperament overnight', this message of 'Let go and let God' was despair-inducing. 'The assured quality of others' discipleship', he wrote, 'merely awed me and drove me into further cheerless bouts of inside-scraping'.

"this message of 'Let go and let God' was despair-inducing"

While struggling with this theology, Packer's bookish nature was recognised by John Reynolds (OICCU's Senior Librarian and a member of the Standing Committee), and he was given the task of sorting through a pile of old books which had been left in the basement of the North Gate Hall after being given to OICCU by a retiring missionary. While looking through these books, Packer discovered the works of John Owen, in particular his writings *On Indwelling Sin* and *On the Mortification of Sin*. These works were the means, he later wrote, of 'saving my spiritual sanity'. Owen taught that sin in the life of the believer was an inevitable reality, but that Christ had overcome this sin through His victory on the cross. The believer was called to fight their sin through faith in the sanctifying work of Christ and an active process of mortification, rather than through a self-centred process of consecration. The Christian life was not one of 'victorious living', as Packer had been taught, but a horticultural process of growth and battle against indwelling sin – a freeing reality which allowed Packer to embrace the weakness and challenges of his Christian experience rather than being crushed by the weight of the demand to constant self-consecration and introversion.

Not only did these works save Packer's spiritual sanity, they also introduced him to the richness and depth of Puritan literature and theology which would mould and inspire his own life and teaching – as well as leading directly to the resurgence of interest in the Puritans more broadly. Packer applied his Puritan-inspired theological understanding for the benefit of the church, and particularly CUs, through research, speaking engagements, and writing. One fruit of this is his book, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, which I highly recommend (I read it on Getaway in my second year and it has shaped my understanding of evangelism ever since). In this work, he shows that, far from a high view of the sovereignty of God being a barrier to evangelistic endeavour, it is rather the only secure foundation for evangelism. Evangelism which utilises the gifts and means that God has given but is founded on the truth that God is wholly sovereign in salvation is the only form of evangelism which guards against desperation, disillusionment, and self-reliance. In Packer's words, 'We must learn to rest all our hopes of fruit in evangelism upon the omnipotent grace of God'.

"'We must learn to rest all our hopes of fruit in evangelism upon the omnipotent grace of God.'"

Matthew Roe
Formerly History, Corpus Christi College




oxford inter-collegiate christian union
worship - teaching - fellowship
EQUIP
wednesdays - odd weeks - 7:30pm
at the North Gate Hall

I'm praying for you



It's probably not that surprising a phrase to hear around the Christian Union, but what do we mean by it? Or rather, could we mean more by it? Paul's opening prayer in his letter to the Colossians (Colossians 1:1-14) challenges us with a meaning richer and deeper than conventional turn of phrase.

1. Paul prays from thankfulness more than from need

Paul begins, not with a list of problems or concerns, but with gratitude: "We always thank God... when we pray for you." We often say "I'm praying for you" when something has gone wrong, but Paul's prayer begins because something has gone wonderfully right– his prayer is driven by encouragement, not crisis. Thankfulness is a way of reminding ourselves of our dependence on God, even when in a season of blessing and abundance.

2. Paul prays BIG prayers

Not just big in length (though 'we have not stopped praying for you' is certainly a challenge for us to persevere in!) but big in scope and ambition. "That you may be filled with the knowledge of his will... so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord... bearing fruit... growing in the knowledge of God... strengthened with all power... endurance... patience..."

So easily our prayers can fixate only on our material needs in front of us. Wonderfully, God loves to hear our prayers even on the minutest and most mundane of topics– but surely we are missing out if our prayers never go beyond our immediate circumstances. It takes eyes of faith to see the true worth and effect of a life in pursuit of the knowledge and love of God.

"Thankfulness is a way of reminding ourselves of our dependence on God"

3. Paul prays for endurance, not easier circumstances

It's striking that Paul doesn't ask for the Colossians' situation to change but instead asks that they might have "great endurance and patience." Paul grasps the amazing truth that in the Christian life difficulty can become opportunity. Opportunity for growth, for the maturity of character, and for greater intimacy and
dependence on God– through God-given perseverance that strengthens us far more robustly than a change in circumstance ever could.

4. Paul prays for thanksgiving

"giving joyful thanks to the Father"

Not only does Paul pray from thanksgiving but he prays for it. This is good news for weary Christians who struggle to even be thankful in the first place. If gratitude was the only starting point for prayer, we would be in trouble, but, wonderfully, prayer for gratitude itself can be the starting point.

5. Paul prays from contentment rather than comparison

Paul's prayer is rooted in what God has already done for them: he has qualified them to share in the inheritance of Christ's kingdom. And what was their qualification? That they were rescued by God from being enslaved to darkness and brought back that, forgiven, they might be brought into the kingdom of light, the kingdom of Christ.

This means that when Paul hears of these fruitful Colossian Christians, he is able to really pray for them. He doesn't flatter them. He doesn't compare himself to them. He doesn't assume they don't need prayer. Instead, he prays for them unceasingly.

"everything admirable in a Christian flows from the hope stored up in heaven"

So, what could we mean when we say "I'm praying for you"?

Paul shows us a life of prayer filled with thankfulness, confidence, and big expectations of what God can do.

- We pray because God is already at work.
- We pray from gratitude, not just need.
- We pray for endurance, not to be comfortable.
- We pray for others with joy, not comparison.
- We pray because the gospel that changed us on the day we became Christians is still bearing fruit today.

This challenges everyone in CU:

- If you feel intimidated by others who seem godlier or more gifted, then Paul reminds you: their growth is God's work, not their achievement. And the same God is at work in you.
- If your confidence is quietly in yourself then Paul reminds you: everything admirable in a Christian flows from the hope stored up in heaven and the grace of God, not personal strength or ability.

May our prayers for one another in CU sound more and more like Paul's – anchored in the gospel, full of thankfulness, and overflowing with hope.

Charis Patterson
Formerly English & History, Merton College
UCCF Relay Worker

OICCU at UCCF Forum 2025

In the midnight hours of a misty September night, the grounds of Quinta Christian Conference centre in Shropshire are far from quiet. The sounds of hymn singing, laughter, Spikeball-playing, prayer, crackling fires and the zipping up of tent doors suffuse the air and a general rustle of anticipation stirs amongst the clumps of trees and gazebos.



This is UCCF's Forum National, the annual week of non-stop Biblical teaching, evangelistic training, prayer meetings and musical worship for leaders of Christian Unions all over the country. Topics include doctrine, mission, personal issues, leadership, culture, vocation, discipleship, academics and much more, both in and out of the organised sessions. Events take place in the array of marquees and buildings, marshalled by the cheerful army of stewards, who tirelessly steer the crowd of around a thousand students and UCCF workers through the packed programme.

At Forum 2025, the main speaker was Cambridge's own Niv Lobo, who spoke on the three Todays of Luke's Gospel: 'Fulfilled' ('"Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing"'), 'Found' ('"Today salvation has come to this house"') and 'Forgiven' ('"Today you will be with me in Paradise"'). The themes Niv drew out from Luke emphasised the free gift of salvation through Christ available to all who put their faith in Him, urging everyone listening to share this good news. The Gospel of Luke itself had a spotlight moment during the week, with the official launch of the new Uncover Luke resource, where students were encouraged to undertake one-on-one evangelistic Bible studies with friends, coursemates or even strangers.

The main meetings also included lively worship music, testimonies of conversion, stories of personal evangelism and accounts from the mission field, charging the week with a spirit-filled, Word-driven zeal to spread the Gospel.

Evening speakers Sarah Elwood, Graham Daniels, Gerard Charles and Eric Ortlund spoke rallying and uplifting Bible messages and an abundance of seminars by UCCF staff workers offered wisdom on everything from careers to mental health to Early Church theology.

The evenings featured a fabulous range of entertainments, from comedy, quizzes and movie nights, to silent discos, karaoke and ceilidhs, to just enjoying some relaxed fun with friends. If ever a bit of boredom did come one's way (which was unlikely), the Hub's cafe, mission exhibition and 1oofThose bookshop provided endless opportunity for discussion and discovery.

But many of the sweetest memories came from the in-between moments of mucking around with tent pegs and camping stoves with our very own OICCU lot.

Spending time together planning, praying, reflecting and reading God's word amidst muddy shoes and soggy sleeping bags is a special bond that you can't get from meetings and group chats.

From quiet but profound campfire conversations at 2am to practical workshops on Christians in science, sport or social media, Forum provides an organic and deeply edifying space for young Christian leaders from all four corners of the UK to share ideas, strategies, tales of fruit and of failure, and, above all, a longing for Christ to be made known in our universities.

Margaret McLean
English, St Edmund Hall

OICCU Freshaway 2025

Freshaway is a fantastic event run by OICCU for new students starting at Oxford. It takes place over three days in September, and incoming students are able to get to know each other, have time away before starting a busy term, and hear from both current students and church workers about what living as a Christian student is like. I found it an incredible blessing to have met other Christians at Oxford before starting university. Although I didn't initially know any other first years at Freshaway, it was a wonderful opportunity to make new friends. When I did arrive at Oxford, I was not only in contact with other students across the colleges, but knew other Christians, and this meant we could encourage and build each-other up in our faith. Freshaway helped form a core group of OICCU freshers that has since expanded, and we have absolutely loved solidifying our friendships, and can't wait to continue in the



years ahead! Despite being daunting at first, Freshaway made starting Oxford and getting stuck into CU so much easier with support from new fresher friends and older students- I would absolutely recommend it!!

Ginny Martin
History, Christ Church College





Rooted in Christ: Bella's Story

Neither me nor my parents expected involvement in the church to be a part of my life plan.

I first had an interest in Christianity as a young teenager following the death of a relative. At the time I considered religion somewhat of a Sunday social club, where you pray occasionally and then go to Heaven - though the reality is far greater and more impactful. I first attended church not long before I started my GCSEs, starting a youth group from a friend's invite, though coming to Christ as a teenager is not without difficulties. My church were immensely welcoming to me, but most support was aimed at adults, and youth were seen as an extension of their parents- mine hadn't set foot in a Sunday service since the last family baptism. It was hard feeling like an outsider, both at church where all of my peers had spent their whole lives there, and then at home where my religion was not being taken seriously. But feeling rooted in Christ supersedes all worldly challenges, and though I was often the only Christian in the room, Jesus was always there with me.

All testimonies are impactful. The way that God moves through and changes lives in the most unexpected ways lead to some of the most powerful stories ever spoken. I like to share mine to rock the belief that the only people in church are there generationally, not out of their own choice and love for God. Christ has irreversibly changed my life, to the point where I can no longer picture my life without him.

Bella Taylor

Medicine, Magdalen College



God's Goodness in Small Offerings: Merton-Univ CU

Michaelmas is always an eventful term, and this one has been no different! Merton-Univ (Muniv) Christian Union has swung from new seekers asking questions, to tiny G+Ds trips, to quiet dinners with our lovely core few, but God has been no less present in the small than the big, and we are so grateful for all He has been doing.

As a CU we meet every Saturday evening in Merton or Univ for a home-cooked meal and a bible study, this term continuing our series in John. We've had a variety of discussions (and food!) over the weeks, and as we've studied Jesus together, we've been able to unpick more of God's identity as well as how this applies to our everyday lives in Oxford.

One thing that really stood out to me has been Jesus' goodness through suffering in this gospel – after all, Lazarus had to be dead for Jesus to raise him and declare 'I am the resurrection and the life' (John 11). It has been such a blessing to share our faith in these meetings as several seekers have come.

As the running joke goes, Mertonians are all humanity students, and Univites are all STEM students, and this legacy has only been extended by our incoming freshers! Freshers' week was such a lovely time – personally, as a Merton FREP I got a chance to meet and witness to most of the freshers early on.

A particular highlight was Merton's inter-faith freshers' lunch which was held as a drop-in event joint with Merton's chaplains and representatives from Jewish Soc and Islamic Soc – a great time for chats with interfaith peers as well as a way to connect with our incoming Christian freshers. We also had a freshers' G+Ds trip, where we had some great conversations – a reminder of God's goodness through our small offerings too.

Next term holds all the joys of John's account of Holy Week in our Saturday evening studies, as well as plans in the works for Merton-focused outreach to replace the dramatic loss of our college welfare doughnuts. Merton, however, as the college 'where fun goes to die' is notoriously strict on bookings, events, and general 'fun', so we'd love prayer for smooth approvals and college support! It is always a challenge witnessing to a college where it genuinely feels like everyone lives in the library, but God has proved so faithful so far, and as a college group we can go into next term confident of his sovereignty, power, and love – as Jesus says in John 10:11, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." We at Merton and Univ praise the Lord for all his goodness to us, his sheep, this Michaelmas and pray that we will faithfully follow the Good Shepherd's lead into this next term!

Emily Yates
History, Merton College

Hertford College CU (MT25)

This term at Hertford saw us meeting for weekly bible studies to look at different people's encounters with Jesus throughout the gospels.

It has been really encouraging to reflect on Jesus' character and the hope that he is offering to those in college. It has been a great place to pray for our college and each other, and we book-ended term with a social at Knoops, which was a fun way to get to know one another better.

In 6th week, we met with our awesome Chaplain, Rev. Anthony Buckley, for Chaplain's Tea. It was a lovely time looking around the tower at St Michael- at the Northgate- and getting to know him better as a CU. We had a little difficulty getting the word out so it was just CU members, but it meant that we could reflect on the term and pray with the Chaplain.

Please be praying for our outreach next term (Hilary)! We are planning on doing three events to reach Hertford more than we did this term. Specifically, we'd like to show our love to the Chapel community and see people respond to the gospel. As always with these things, please pray for: our capacities, the logistics, and that we would be motivated by love, not duty!

Caleb Mohammad
Computer Science, Hertford College

Exeter-Jesus College CU (MT25)

I'm Becky, the CU rep for Exeter College, and I'm now helping to lead the new combined Exeter and Jesus CU.

In Michaelmas, we officially came together and launched the joint CU between our two colleges. In the past, Jesus College hasn't had many people involved in the CU, but this year there are lots of first years keen to join in. It's been so encouraging, and such an answer to prayer to see such strong engagement from the Jesus College freshers!

This term, we started studying Philippians in our weekly Bible studies. One of the big themes we've been discussing is the importance of partnership and unity in the gospel- something that feels especially relevant as we continue to grow our joint CU. Please pray that seekers would come along to outreach events with questions, and that through these events they would come to know God and recognise Jesus as their Saviour!

Becky Devlin
Music, Exeter College



Hope in the Darkness: International Ministry in Michaelmas



The i-team has seen God working powerfully this term!

Before Michaelmas began, we ran some international welcome events, helping both Christians and non-Christians to settle in ahead of fresher's week. Our regular event, Café 360, has been frequently well attended, and it has been a joy to see recurring faces coming back to talk more about Christianity and what it looks like to know and follow Jesus. Excitingly, we held our first ever international Christmas dinner focusing on the 'thrill of hope' that Jesus brought to the world when He came down as a baby. Over 130 students attended, feasting royally on festive food and having plenty of discussions about how we can find hope in the darkness through Jesus. Through it all, God has faithfully sustained the i-team with His strength and used the little that we had to create events where people heard the Gospel. A huge thank you to everyone who was willing to serve and help us run events– we couldn't have done it without you! We would love prayer for all the seeds planted at Café 360 and the conversations had at the dinner so that they wouldn't be forgotten in the busyness of term, but that they would take root in people's lives and produce fruit for God's kingdom.

Catherine McMullan
History, Trinity College

Friday 7pm
Formosan Tea Bar*

CAFÉ360

an event by the oiccu ihub



Free bubble tea, board games and chats about life's big questions!

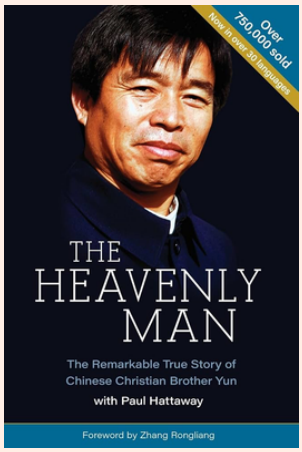
Especially for international students, but open to all.

***in Hilary Term 2026, dates and times of Café 360 are arranged on a week-by-week basis. Check our socials for all the info:**

@the_oiccu
@oxford_ihub

OXFORD CHRISTIAN UNION

BOOK REVIEWS

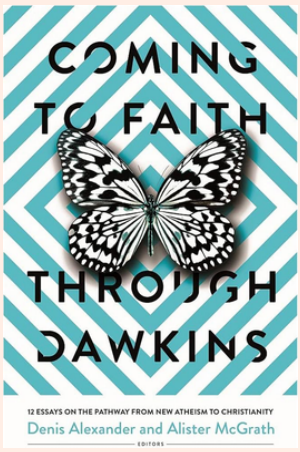


The Heavenly Man
Brother Yun
Hannah Dubberley

Whilst a slightly dated read, *The Heavenly Man* tells the remarkable story of Brother Yun, a young Chinese man whose conversion to Christ changed everything. Totally surrendered to Jesus, he devoted his life to sharing the gospel across China, even under fierce persecution. This book is full of miraculous stories of bold faith– including his supernatural escape from prison with the gates left wide open.

I first read it as a teenager, and it blew open my vision of who God is and what He can do. Brother Yun's testimony paints an exciting picture of a life lived all-out for Jesus, yet ultimately it points us beyond him to the God who works through very ordinary servants. I'd definitely recommend it if you, like me, find yourself needing a reminder of God's power and His ability to save. The book leads you to praise the same God who is at work across the globe and throughout history, even in the face of fierce opposition and gruelling circumstances.

Coming to Faith Through Dawkins
ed. Denis Alexander & Alister McGrath
Nina Crofton



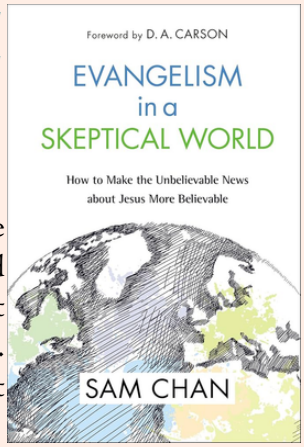
This book is a collection of 12 testimonies from 12 former atheists that all came to know Christ through encountering Richard Dawkins, his book (*The God Delusion*), and the works of other leading figures in the 'New Atheism' movement. The authors' stories and backgrounds vary greatly as they describe their experiences and faith journeys that led them to Christianity. This book is very relevant to believers and non-believers alike and the diversity of experiences shared in the book are relatable to many different people. I would really recommend it to non-Christian friends, especially those interested in New Atheism and doing STEM subjects.



Thank God it's Monday
Mark Greene
Phoebe Sleeman

Thank God it's Monday by Mark Greene is a wonderful book to help you think through what it might look like to honour God in the workplace post uni. Written with lots of personal stories and helpful anecdotes, Greene takes his readers on a journey thinking through what it looks like for Christ's Lordship to be over all of life, including working in a 'secular' organization. He goes through how we can display him in the way we relate to others, whether that be our boss or those underneath us, and how we can declare the truth of the gospel by making the most of the opportunities the workplace offers. A great book for all finalists or anyone wanting to think more deeply about serving God in the future, no matter what vocation you enter.

Evangelism in a Skeptical World
Sam Chan
Tom Mawdesley



Evangelism in a Sceptical World is the sort of book that I would recommend to any student thinking about evangelism. Whether you are still working out what "evangelism" is all about, or you have been sharing Jesus for many years, this book gives a lot of food for thought. The fundamental premise of the book is that we, as Christians, need to think seriously about how to communicate the timeless, unchanging, good news of the gospel in culturally relevant and accessible ways. The book then spells out implications of this: in the personal conversations we have, in the language that we use, in our presentation of the gospel, and in the kind of events and talks that we run. Reading this book has helped me to ask important questions about my own evangelism, and about how I might better declare and display the gospel to the people in front of me.

A note from the editors

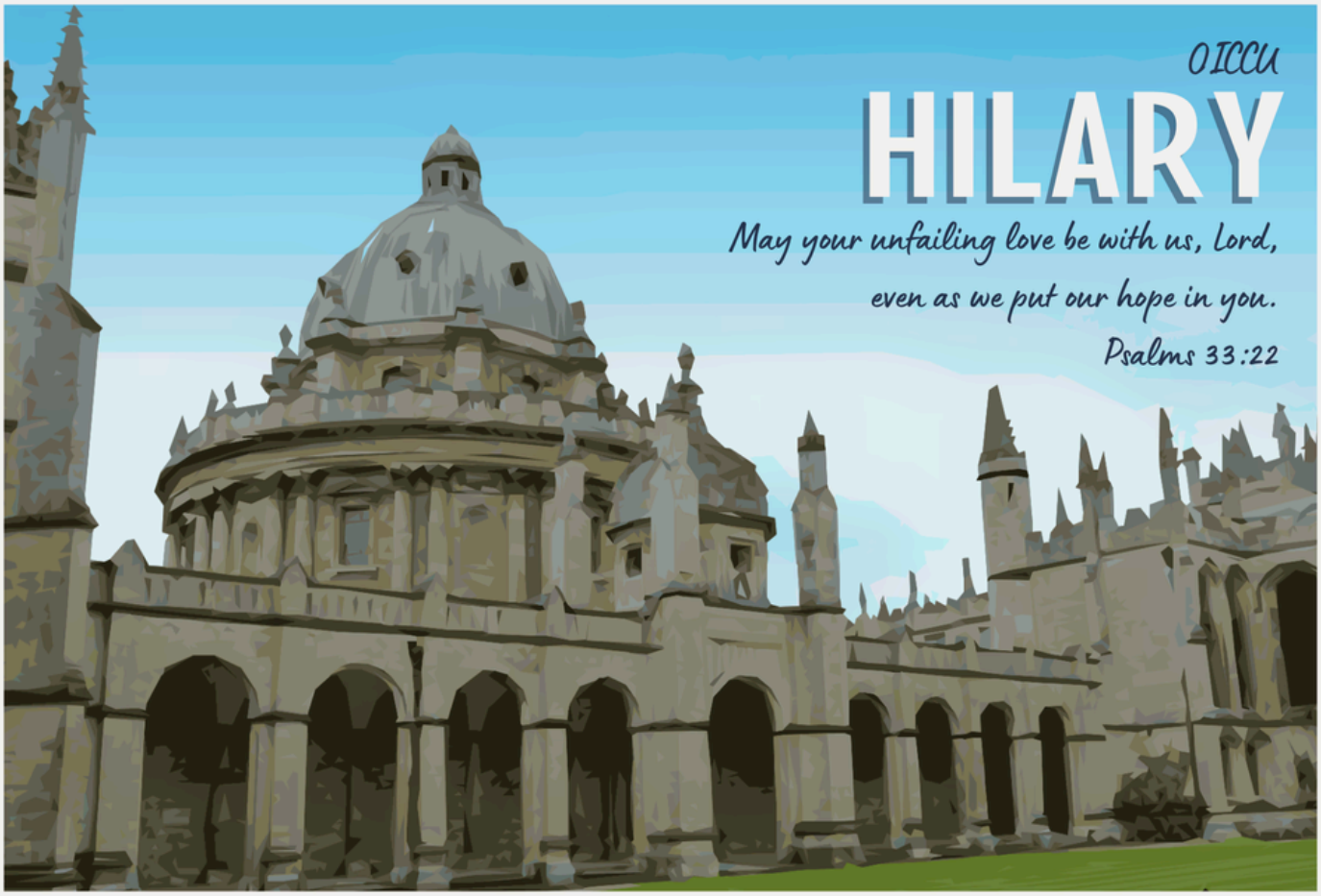


Hi there!

Our names are Margaret and Zoe and we'd like to thank you for being a part of the very first OICCU Magazine. Many people have put a lot of hard work and creativity into their writing and we've had a great time exploring their ideas, as we hope you have. From its conception, the OICCU Magazine has been intended to provide an insight into the inner workings, thoughts and experiences of Bible-believing Christians at Oxford University. We want to increase awareness of OICCU's events, community and Biblical principles, for those inside and outside our membership. This Magazine is founded on the message of the Great Commission in Mark 16:15, that Christians should '"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."' We believe the arts are a powerful way to express this mission and we hope every page proclaims and testifies to the glory of God.

We'd love to invite you to get involved, either by giving feedback or by contributing ideas to future issues. Contact us at margaret.mclean@seh.ox.ac.uk or zoe.todd@keble.ox.ac.uk or catch us during an OICCU event. We pray that this Magazine helps give every student in Oxford University the chance to hear and respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Margaret McLean (English, St Edmund Hall)
& Zoe Todd (English, Keble College)



OICCU HILARY TERM CARD 2026

Monday Morning Prayer

Start your week with prayer and praise! Check out our social media for other opportunities to pray throughout term.

Mondays - 8am - Hertford College Chapel

The Search

Got questions about faith? Ask them here.

Mondays - 7:30pm - Costa on Queen Street

Equip

Our fortnightly main meeting where we gather together for worship, teaching and fellowship.

Wednesdays, Odd weeks - 7:30pm - North Gate Hall

Club Outreach

Hand out biscuits, share the gospel and have incredible conversations.

Wednesdays - 10:30pm for prayer at North Gate Hall (odd weeks), or Exeter (even weeks) - 11pm for outreach

Events Week 2026!

What hope do Christians have in this life? All are welcome to come along for a week of talks and discussions around the claims of Christianity - more information on the Instagram!

Week 4, 8-13 Feb - North Gate Hall

Oxford Big Questions

Hear a talk answering one of life's big questions, with free lunch and a Q&A.

Friday, Week 2 & 6 - 1:15pm - location tbd

OXFORD CHRISTIAN UNION

Cafe 360

Free bubble tea, board games and great conversations - especially for international students, but open to all.

Fridays - 7pm - Formosan Tea Bar

WE WELCOME ANYONE INTERESTED IN EXPLORING THE CLAIMS OF JESUS CHRIST, REGARDLESS OF BACKGROUND OR BELIEF, AND WE WOULD LOVE TO INVITE YOU INTO OUR COMMUNITY!

@the_oiccu

@oxford_ihub

@what.if.oiccu

oiccu.org

Find out more, and join our WhatsApp Community, by scanning the QR code above.