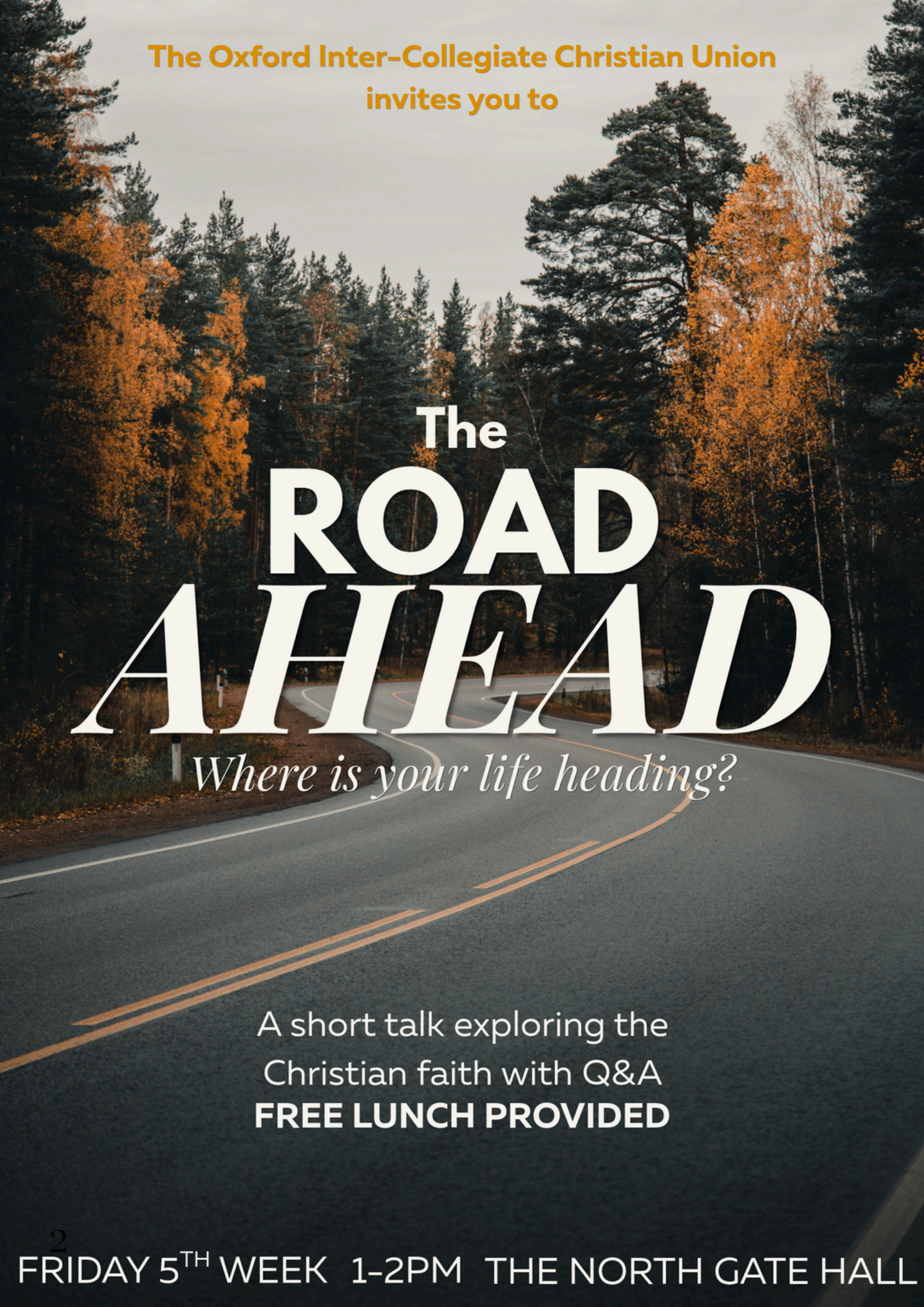
MICHAELMAS TERM 2026

ISSUE 3

THE OICCU MAGAZINE

WORDS THAT WITNESS




The Oxford Inter-Collegiate Christian Union
invites you to
The
ROAD
AHEAD
Where is your life heading?
A short talk exploring the
Christian faith with Q&A
FREE LUNCH PROVIDED
FRIDAY 5TH WEEK 1-2PM THE NORTH GATE HALL

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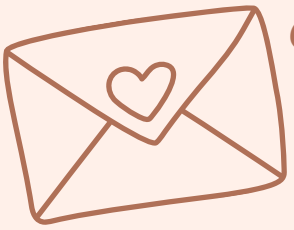
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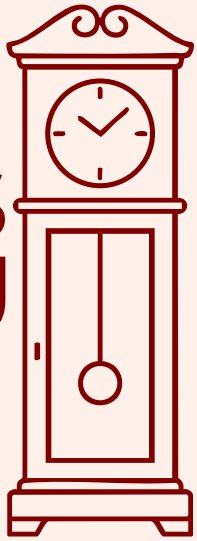
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at the North Gate Hall
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some words from the exec:

WHAT IS OICCU?



Hello! I'm Ester, and I'm OICCU's president this year. It is a real privilege to be serving OICCU, and I'm excited for all that we will do and learn together over the year ahead.

OICCU's mission is to create opportunities for Christians to delight in the wonderful truths of the Bible and to learn what it means to live out the Christian faith as students. From this place of humbly growing together, we hope to display something of Jesus' love to the students of Oxford, as we are able to give a reason for the hope that we have.

Being involved in OICCU has introduced me to so many people who have influenced my faith: speakers who have challenged me to think more deeply about my purpose, and fellow Christian students who have advised and encouraged me amidst the turmoil of Oxford life.

One of the distinctive things about OICCU is that it brings together Christians (and those exploring faith) from a wide variety of denominations and backgrounds. Together, we can focus on how the simple Gospel of grace radically changes the way we live as students, and how best to communicate this to others in our colleges and courses.

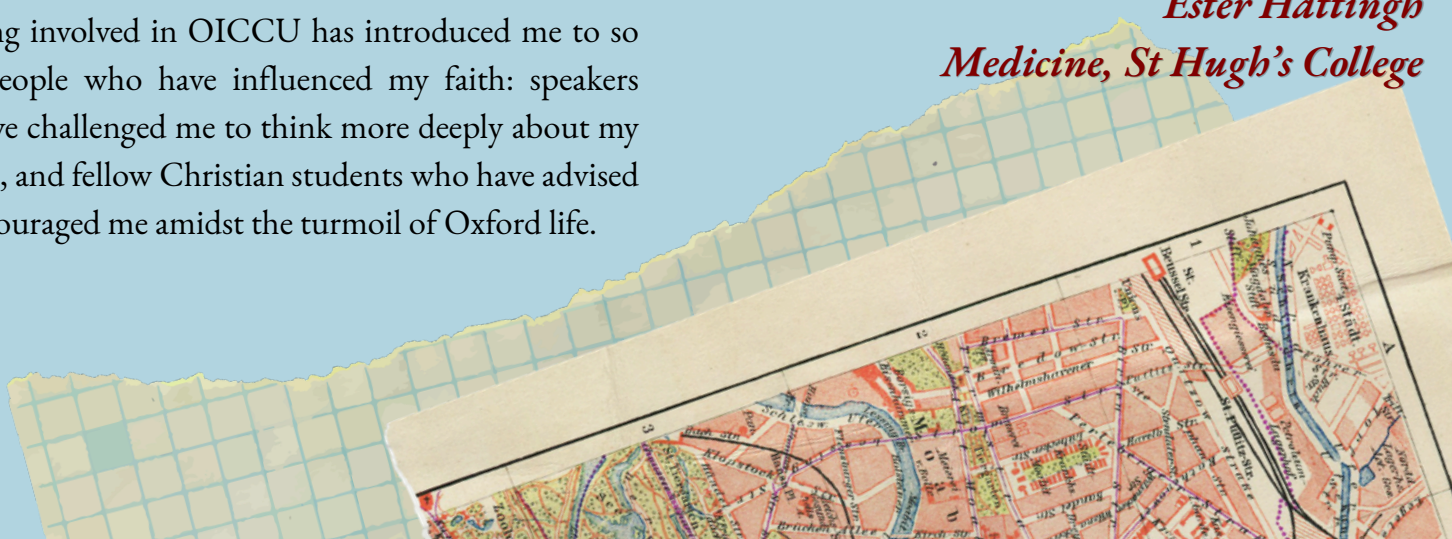
Other important voices have been those of non-Christians. Whether in conversations over free food, or out on the street, their perspectives and probing questions have pushed me to think more deeply and have emboldened me to speak about my own faith.

My hope for OICCU is that we challenge one another to know the God of the Bible more deeply and seek to bring glory to Him in our studies, sports and societies. We should be a group of people who love our neighbours well, inviting those around us in, remembering that we love because He first loved us.

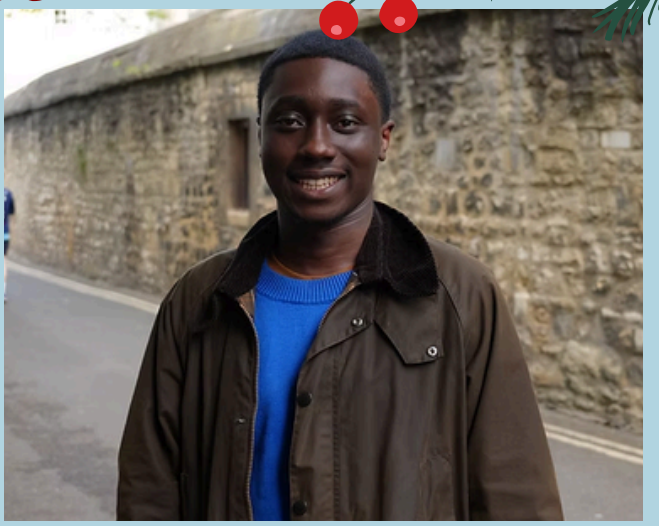
And what a privilege it is to come alongside one another in prayer, asking that God would bless our friends and reveal Himself to them more fully!

"Come to me all those who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest, take my yoke upon you and learn from me" (Matt. 11:28).

Ester Hattingh
Medicine, St Hugh's College



Looking towards CHRISTMAS



'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations'. These words from Christ come as a command to his Church. The instruction is simple: go out, evangelise, and draw in. Of course, OICCU is not a church, but as a CU that brings Christians together, united by one faith and sharing in that same Great Commission, these words are surely relevant to us too!

OICCU has wonderfully understood this privilege, and its commitment to Christ's words is found in its vision: 'to give every student at Oxford the opportunity to hear and respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.'

To be the Outreach Secretary is an amazing privilege because most things about my role are, in some way, connected to OICCU's vision.

Over the next few weeks of term, there will be a lot of outreach opportunities to get excited about, and my prayer is simply that each member of OICCU would develop an unquenchable desire to see the truth of Christ spread throughout the student community.

Not forgetting our weekly outreach, there are three main outreach events for which I would appreciate your prayer and enthusiasm: (1) Outreach Safeguarding Training, (2) the Oxford Big Questions event, and (3) the Christmas Carol Service.

Our Safeguarding Training will help equip OICCU members to evangelise wisely and lovingly, particularly when street evangelism brings us into potentially difficult situations. Then, in Week 5, our evangelistic Oxford Big Question will ask, 'Which path will you take?', considering the crossroads we face in life and, ultimately, the choice of whether or not to follow Christ.

Finally, our Christmas Carol Service is a wonderful opportunity to invite non-Christian friends: through familiar carols and a short Gospel talk, our prayer is that they might come away with a clearer understanding of the good news of Jesus. In all three, please pray that God would use our invitations and conversations to draw people to Christ.

In the first century, around the time of the early Church's conception, it was the joy of God's Gospel message to which the Apostles bore sustained witness. Peter says: *'for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard'* (Acts 4:20). I think part of the reason why we find OICCU's evangelistic events joyful is because they give us the opportunity, as with Peter, to speak of what we have 'seen and heard'.

Perhaps our Lord's commission comes to us as a shock. Perhaps, like Moses, our instinct is to say, *'Oh, my Lord ... but I am slow of speech'* (Exodus 4:10). The wonderful thing is that there isn't one way of evangelising, and the events OICCU hosts are designed to facilitate this. For some, it looks like conversations with friends; for others, it looks like wider discussion with peers; for some, it even looks like taking to the streets with Gospels and tracts.

Why not invite a friend to one of these upcoming events? Maybe they won't come, but see how God blesses your effort, pouring favour upon you!

May God give us all a love for outreach.

Ndinashe Furamera
History, Christ Church College

International undergrads in Oxford



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Made to Worship



Sung worship holds a very special place in my heart and many others'- it is tied to pivotal moments in life and faith, and I find it the easiest way for me to meet with God and open my heart to Him.

Worship as a whole, however, can be an incredibly vague word. Some people just mean sung worship, others are referring to reverent meditation, and still others define it as absolutely anything we do in honour of God. This is all worship, really, and it's done in many different ways, which is one of the reasons it is so incredible. For what worship can look like, and how it's been done throughout history, it's best (as for everything) to turn to the Bible.

The first thing lots of people think of is sung or expressive worship. Consider David dancing (2 Samuel 6:14), Miriam celebrating (Exodus 15:20), Paul and Silas singing (Acts 16:25), Paul's instructions for us to praise (Ephesians 5:19), not to mention shouting and exclaiming- especially in the Psalms, which were performed in music and with rhythm! Sacrifice and giving are also common themes of worshipping God, from animal sacrifices throughout the Old Testament, to the woman washing Jesus' feet with perfume (Luke 7:37-38), and the widow's coins at the Temple (Mark 12:42). These last two were not a big celebration or group event, but very personal and intimate things. Furthermore, meditation and prayer are seen time and time again, to express gratitude (Hebrews 12:28), awe (Psalm 96:9), and humility (Micah 6:8), to name just a few reasons. Acts of worship appear across the whole Bible, with people thanking God, celebrating Him, or giving to Him.

But there seems to be something so special about sung worship. Music itself holds a special place in human history, storytelling, and religion. It has been used to carry thousands of years of oral traditions and folklore, and even today it is one of the most widespread industries in the world! It's no wonder that music is a fundamental way of worshipping. It also has an incredible history. The oldest worship song we know of (with musical notation) is the Oxyrhynchus hymn, a Greek hymn discovered in Egypt in 1918. It is from roughly the end of the 3rd century AD, making it over 1700 years old, and is kept in the Art, Archeology and Ancient world library here in Oxford!

Christian worship music has gone through so much change (as you might expect) over 2000 years. Originating from the synagogical music of Jesus' time, it was mainly used for liturgy in the early church. A lot of Eastern churches, such as those from Byzantine and Ethiopian traditions, have retained this style, using centuries old melodies uniquely for liturgy. In the Western church, it also started from the same synagogical style, but went beyond just sung liturgy. From monophonic (single line melody) Gregorian chants, to parallel harmonies and polyphonic music, to congregational hymns in the Protestant Reformation. From there it developed into solo music,

fully fledged choral music, and then a particular explosion of styles in the 20th century (like Gospel and contemporary worship music). This saw the development of worship music into virtually every genre - like Indie, or even heavy metal (I personally recommend checking out metal worship). This doesn't even touch the incredible variety of ways worship has been expressed in other cultures, as Protestant churches have been birthed across the Global South over the last 200 years; from sung worship in the styles of Qawwli (a type of Islamic music) and Hindi and Punjabi devotional music, to originally Western hymns adapted to fit with instruments like the sitar, mandolin, and bongos.

"Because of the music I could open my heart and feel God with me"

There is such a range of content throughout all of these different styles, as you might expect in thousands of songs written to God. Liturgical songs that congregations have listened to for thousands of years carry such historical weight and tradition. Hymns capture scripture and deep theology with timeless melodies. More modern worship songs cover topics on people's hearts today like social justice, grief, and longing. Gospel music invokes immense tangible joy for the Lord. There is a song for any feeling, any situation that we could go through.

An example of this is one of my favourite songs: 'What a Beautiful Name'. I first heard it at a youth worship event, at a time when my mum was going through a difficult time medically. It was the first time I specifically remember feeling lost, anxious, and confused with the world. But that song reminded me of the power and strength in God's name. 'He has no rivals, He has no equals. Now and forever He reigns.' And I didn't need to fear, I could lay all my worries about my mum at His feet. I broke down crying at that worship night, and it was in that moment that I committed my life to God. Because of a song. Because of the music. I could open my heart and feel God with me.

Take some time to consider how you use sung worship as a way to connect with God. Do you simply sing along in church services? I encourage you to try using a form of musical worship throughout the week as well. Perhaps involve a time of praise at the beginning or end of a quiet time. Maybe meditate with worship songs on a commute or exercise. Could songs be another way to hear God speaking to you? Maybe worship music is your go-to background music already; do you actively welcome God into that time of study, or walking, or even just relaxation? I know I often forget how fantastic it is that I can talk to and listen to God with music, and just treat it like any other music to fill the silence. Instead, let's use it to tune our heart to God in the mundane moments, as well as using it to intentionally worship Him.

Ben Watson
Physics, University College



Following Jesus in UNIVERSITY SPORT

Where is it that you find friendship? Where is it that you find purpose? Where is it that you find joy? For thousands of students in our university, that place is on the sports field, on the team bus, or at the Wednesday night sport social.

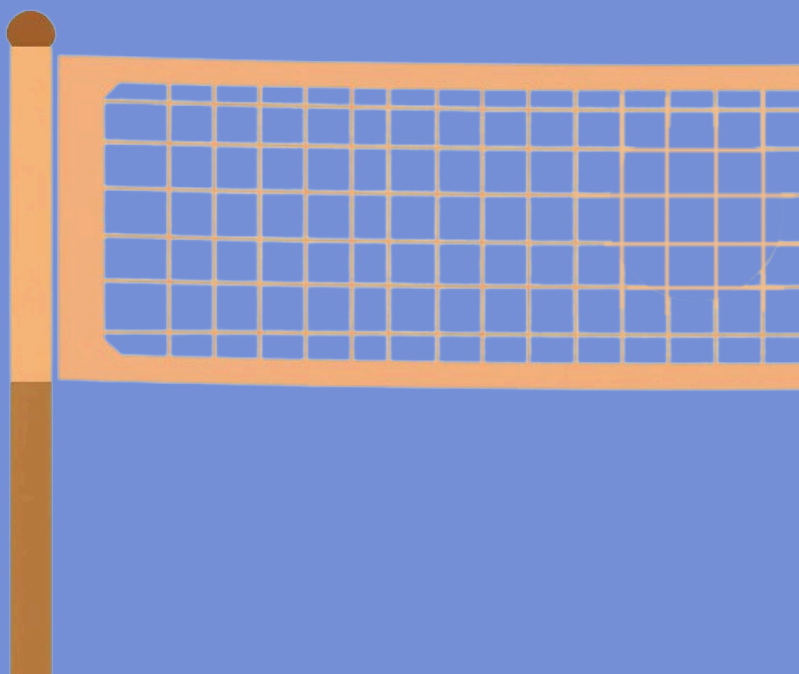
Sport is everywhere in this city. According to a recent survey by Oxford University Sport, 76% of Oxford University students engage with physical exercise or a sports team at least once a term. 84 sports clubs train together to represent the university in BUCS competitions across the country. And Oxford's many colleges boast over 200 active sports clubs and teams, from rowing to rugby to croquet. We are constantly surrounded by sport in Oxford, and many of us are in this exciting world. But that begs the question, how should we as Christian students approach this world?

Tennis has been a huge part of my life as long as I can remember. I always loved training, playing with friends and competing across the country. Despite being such an important part of my life, it was only when I came to university and got involved with Christians in Sport that I began to connect my sport and my faith. I saw sport as an opportunity in two vital areas of the Christian life: Worship and Witness.

Worship

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship"
Romans 12:1

God has created all things, and he has given each of us gifts, abilities, and things to do that we enjoy. Sport is a good gift from God, and as we play, we can thank him for the abilities that he's given us to run, jump, pass, shoot, hit and swim. Romans 12:1 tells us that we can worship in all that we do, by offering our bodies to him. But if you're anything like me, it's hard to do that in sport. I hate losing, and I find tennis the most frustrating thing in the world when I use it to try and secure identity and purpose from it, rather from than the good God who gave me this gift. Learning that sport is a gift from God, and that I can play to worship him, has revolutionised the way in which I approach sport, and has expanded my view of our wonderful God. Playing sport as an act of worship brings freedom by knowing that our identities rest in the unchanging giver, rather than our fluctuating performances. This is a joy, but a joy that very few of the thousands of competitive sportspeople in Oxford know- most sportspeople in this university don't know the peace that comes from resting their identities in Christ.

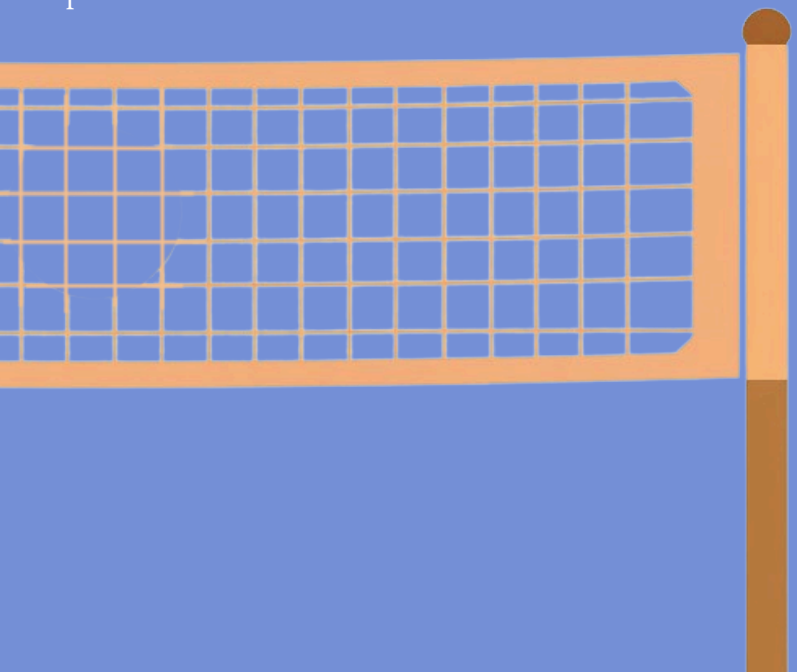


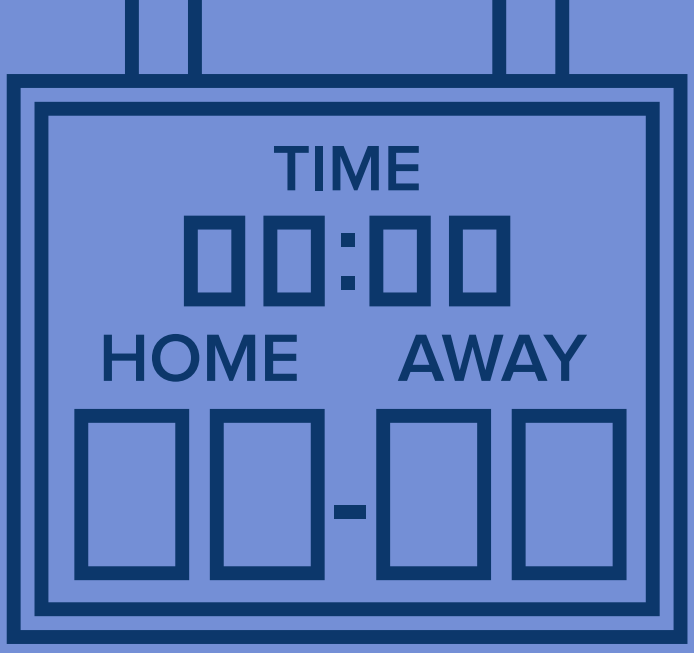
Witness

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God was making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christs behalf: be reconciled to God"
2 Corinthians 5:20

Because of this, God gives us a new role: As we are reconciled to God through Jesus' death and resurrection, we become his ambassadors. Jesus calls us to make him known by living for him in all places, including sport! And the shared goals, passion and time spent together in university sports teams makes it a fertile ground for Gospel witness. Christians can play their sport God's way whilst speaking about Jesus and praying for their teammates. University sport provides a wonderful opportunity to witness and proclaim to teammates the transforming hope of the Gospel. Few activities provide such a great opportunity for real connection, with training, matches, and socials taking up a considerable amount of time. Some of my closest friendships I formed during university were with people on my tennis team, many of whom I still meet to play with today!

But very few sportspeople in this university know Jesus, and many have not heard the good news of the Gospel. We only know of about 35 Christians across the hundreds of sports teams in this university! The harvest is plentiful, the opportunity for Gospel growth is huge, but the workers are few. So, how should we respond?





In light of this need, please pray. Pray that the Lord would send out more workers in the world of sport. And pray that Christians in Oxford sports teams would boldly worship and witness for Christ as they play their sport and love their teammates.

If you are involved in university sport at any level, I would encourage you to get involved with *Christians in Sport.* We meet once a week for 30 minutes to pray for the world of sport in Oxford, our teammates, and each other as we go out to worship and witness in our sports clubs and teams. We are called to strive together for the work of the Gospel, and by meeting to ask the Lord to work through us in university sport, we live out our new identities as Christ's ambassadors and partners in the Gospel.

So be excited and get praying, because the opportunity in sport is great, but we need the Lord's help to send out workers so that sportspeople in this university might hear and know the Gospel.

Toma Kerac
Formerly Geography, St Peter's College



To find out more about the Oxford uni group, follow our instagram @oxforduni_cis @christiansin__sport

Giving the GOOD NEWS!

If you'd asked me a couple of years ago what street evangelism looked like, I'd probably have pictured someone standing on a street corner with a microphone, condemning everyone to hell unless they repented. I'm not even joking.

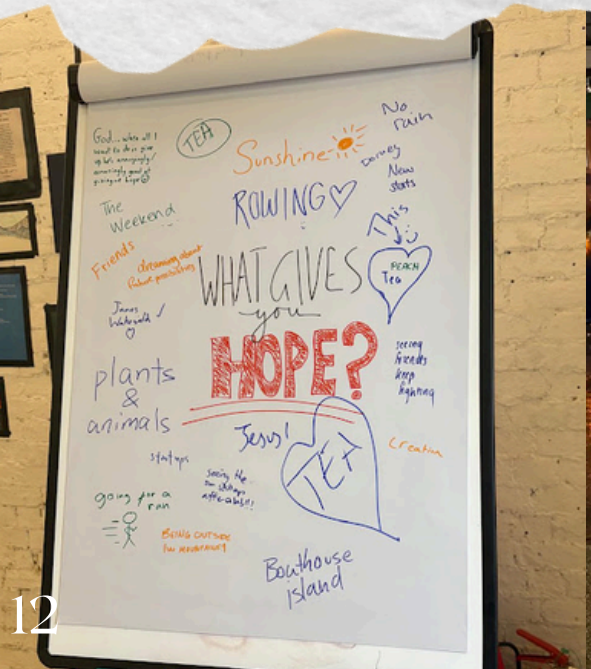
Before coming to Oxford, it was never something I imagined doing myself. It honestly felt intimidating and like an invasion of someone else's space. My two biggest fears were: what if I said the wrong thing? And what if someone asked a question I couldn't answer? It just wasn't very me. It felt like too much of a risk to potentially mess it up and let God down.

"Always be prepared to give an answer for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."
1 Peter 3:15

However, being in Oxford has completely changed how I think about evangelism. Not because I've got it all sorted, or because I know all the answers (I don't), but because I've realised it was never about those things in the first place.

When we do evangelism, we are not trying to convert people; we are trying to introduce them to a person who loves them and who can change their life. 1 Peter 3:15 says, 'Always be prepared to give an answer for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.' That verse reminds me what my role in evangelism is. My job is to share the hope Jesus has given me. And the second half of the verse matters just as much as the first. We must do evangelism with gentleness and respect.

One of the biggest lessons I've learned this year is that good evangelism starts with listening. Every person has their own story, questions, and experiences. Instead of assuming we know what they think or why they think it, we need to stop and understand where they're coming from.











This is how Jesus did evangelism. He met people as individuals, not projects. Sometimes the most loving thing we can do isn't to give a clever answer; it's to ask another question and genuinely listen. Sometimes, in the first instance, people don't need an immediate answer. Don't get me wrong: arguments for the existence of God were made for a reason. They help address doubts and questions, but that doesn't mean they're right for every conversation. That's something that has really challenged me and helped me when sharing Jesus with my friends.

Oxford is such an interesting place to do evangelism because it's full of people who are curious. I've spoken to students who've never opened a Bible but want to know who Jesus is. Some of the best conversations have been with people who approached us saying they'd felt drawn to go to church on Sunday for no obvious reason. Seeing someone encounter Jesus for the first time is what makes evangelism so exciting. I've also found that it has strengthened my own faith, especially during seasons when I've felt disconnected or as though I was just completing the Christian checklist.

Of course, not every conversation is brilliant. Some people just want an argument, and that can be discouraging. What's helped me most is remembering that I'm never doing evangelism alone. In fact, we shouldn't do it on our own. Doing evangelism with others is so much fun.

Whether our conversations go well or badly, we always pray together. Praying as a team helps us stay dependent on God and reminds us that he is the one at work, not us.

Finally, we are all called to share the good news. But that doesn't mean we all have to do it in the same way. Sometimes the best evangelism is unplanned, over that catch-up coffee you've been trying to organise for months. Sometimes it's through a message inviting someone to church. Sometimes it's standing on Cornmarket, handing out biscuits and flyers at one o'clock on a Wednesday morning (shameless plug for After Hours!).

Evangelism literally means "good news" in Greek. At its heart, it's simply sharing how Jesus has been good news in our own lives.

It doesn't need to sound perfect, because faith isn't perfect and we aren't perfect. Even Paul admits in 1 and 2 Corinthians that he struggled with sharing his faith. God already knows every conversation we'll have, every word we'll say, and the person we're saying it to. He sees the whole picture, not just the thirty seconds we get the privilege to be a part of.

So don't get caught up in the outcome or in what you think is at stake. Just start the conversation.

Always be prepared to give an answer for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect. Our job is to share the good news. God's job is everything that comes after.

Grace Keir
Theology, Wycliffe Hall

The Oxford World

Q + A on studying Geography at Oxford

Why did you choose to study geography?

I picked geography due to the breadth of topics I get to explore! I can go from studying philosophy and the history of science, to learning about the challenges of modelling tropical climates, from the relationship between Disney, the Nazis and the Space Race, to how sand dunes are made, and from UK housing policy to the use of music in nationalist revolutions. I feel like I get to dip my toe into loads of different areas, and subsequently learn a lot about the world! (Plus, I love to colour in!)

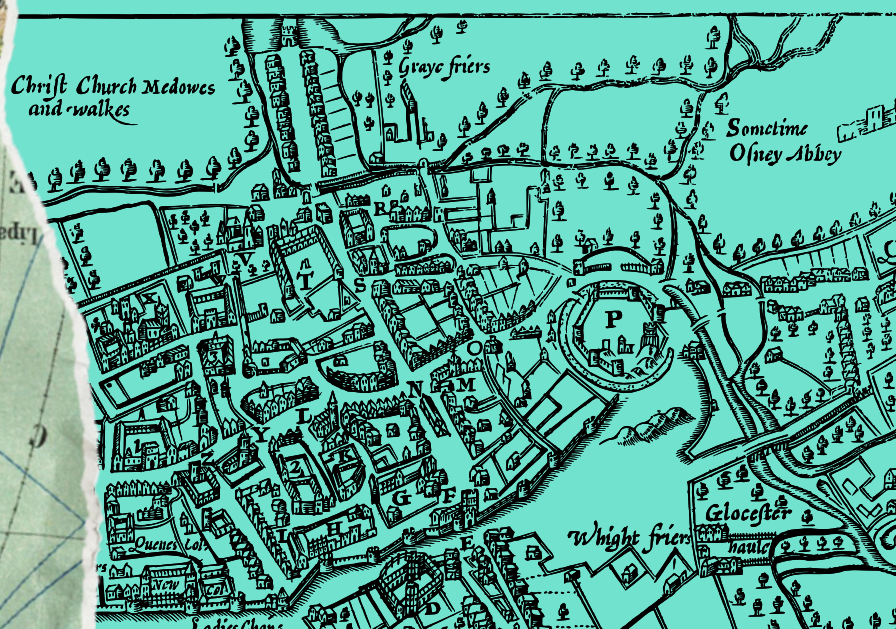
How does your Christian faith alter your view of your studies?

My Christian faith definitely makes me appreciate the diversity and awesomeness of creation. I think the area where this most struck me in physical geography has been learning about the global atmospheric circulation; how the different components fit neatly together to make this world habitable with unique regional climatic processes and features. In human geography, it informs the way I approach challenging (and sometimes bleak) topics such as systemic violence, oppression and abuses of power as I trust the Lord to bring ultimate justice combined with loving mercy.

Does your experience of studying geography differ from that of your peers?

I think it makes me more hopeful and optimistic in some ways, and more cynical in others, because I don't put my trust in humanity to make the world a better place! Instead, I admire how God has created the world whilst trusting Him to work through people (including non-Christians!) to bring light and hope to difficult situations. I know that no problem is bigger than the one God has already solved through Jesus. I am also happier to accept there are certain things I may never know fully (debates about the creation of the world, for instance, which is probably one of the biggest geography/religion crossovers from an academic perspective).





Have you faced any faith-related challenges through studying your course?

I have noticed there can be a tendency to criticise "Christianity" without much criticality. This is unusual for Geography, which is generally a very critical discipline. I think it is clear that the Church has a problematic history (and the name of "Christianity" continues to be used in problematic ways), but I'd argue that frequently this is a result of people misusing Jesus' name to justify their own self-centred actions and desires. It can be a challenge to see how "Christianity" as a social institution has caused and enabled harm in the world (in particular, I'm thinking of the complex relationship between Christianity and (settler) colonialism), and to know how to engage with these criticisms and not become cynical about the wider Church. However, I do my best to remind myself that the Lord will look after His name, that He will justify the oppressed and that He knows and will judge the hearts and intentions of all humanity.

How does your Christian faith shape/influence your approach to your studies?

In general, I try my best to rely on the Lord in my studies. This includes praying over my work, sometimes in the library, sometimes in Exam Schools, sometimes mid-tutorial. I do find this really helps, but (full transparency) I often forget. I find that once I remember, I feel a sense of peace and am better able to recognise the Lord's involvement in my work after bringing it to Him in prayer. Would recommend, ten out of ten.

Are there any Bible verses which influence your attitude towards your studies?

Many. So many!

"The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord." (Proverbs 21:31)

Do your best, and do your bit to prepare, but ultimately the outcome is up to the Lord.

"Sluggards do not plough in season; so at harvest time they look but find nothing." (Proverbs 20:4)

This one is a bit of an uncomfortable one most of the time. *However*, it is a good reminder that I can't expect to feel satisfied in my work without putting in work.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him and he will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

God cares about all my ways and invites me to submit them all to him, that He might guide me. It also reminds me that I shouldn't rely on my own perceptions of how things are going, and that I don't *have* to feel stressed to be following the right paths.

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens." (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

Gives me hope in times of extreme lock-in. I can remind myself that there is a set time to be working really hard, and equally a set time in the future to relax and have fun!

Julia Marshall
Geography, St John's College



'Non pour être servi, mais pour servir'

A YEAR WITH THE CHURCH IN BELGIUM

During my Modern Languages year abroad, I went to Belgium as an intern for the Église Protestante Évangélique de Louvain-la-Neuve. Approaching the end of this wonderful experience, I have been reflecting on lessons to be learned from the Belgian Church - for OICCU as we pray for our brothers and sisters, and for me personally.

The context of the Church here is complicated despite Belgium's small size. To begin with, multiple national languages means separate networks of Dutch and French-speaking churches. Most statistics agree that two to four percent of the population is Protestant, but even this small figure includes a whole range of denominations and beliefs. In this way, Belgium is similar to France: an historically Catholic country, increasingly secular in its culture and governance, with a small number of Protestants.





For the French-speaking Church, therefore, Belgium presents particular challenges and opportunities. From an evangelism standpoint, there are many who either believe that they do not need the Gospel, since they belong, however nominally, to the Catholic Church, or have become disillusioned with Catholicism and are reluctant to explore Christianity further. Above all, the Church faces the dichotomy spoken of by Jesus: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few".

Pastors and ministry workers across Belgium are often stretched very thin, because the need is so great and they are comparatively few. The Institut Biblique de Bruxelles (IBB), where I have studied this year, is one of the major Bible colleges in the francophone evangelical world, and receives only around ten new students each year. We can pray that God continues to raise up faithful, qualified Gospel workers in Belgium, whilst also giving thanks for, and supporting, those already serving there.



Indeed, the models of enduring service which I have witnessed in Belgium have been a great reason for joy and gratitude this year. Living sacrificially for others, proclaiming the Gospel in a context where the fruit can seem small, is an incredible witness which we can all prayerfully imitate. One of my favourite courses at IBB was a series on Mark's Gospel. As a class, we saw how clearly Jesus' identity as both God and Messiah is presented, but also how no understanding of this identity can be complete without also knowing Jesus as the Suffering Servant who came to die for us: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many". Once we have understood that the God who made the universe was willing to humble Himself and give His life to bear the punishment for our rebellion against God, the idea of living for Him no matter the cost becomes less difficult to comprehend. This choice is one which many brothers and sisters in Belgium make daily.

Of course, our efforts will be imperfect, something of which I have been reminded countless times this year (once I tried to give a talk to a group of teenagers on Jesus as the Bread of Life, without realising before that the word for 'bread' is youthful slang for 'crush'; the ensuing hilarity meant that attentiveness was low!).

"God meets us with the compassion and help we need as we struggle to take up our cross and follow Jesus"

However, reflecting on God's grace in classes at IBB, and the generosity of my church family here, has left me with a clearer picture of the love which moved God to send Jesus to us, which remains the same today and forever, and which we can consequently be sure of receiving if we come to Him. The first time I prayed in a group at IBB, I was embarrassed by my faltering, grammar-mistake-riddled prayer for the friend sitting next to me; yet he responded with warm, genuine thanks. Like this dear brother, God meets us with the compassion and help we need as we struggle to take up our cross and follow Jesus. Therefore, we can continue serving Him with assurance, wherever we are placed. Hopefully, you are inspired by this testimony of the Belgium Church to reach out with the Good News of Jesus to those in need.

Emma Aellan
French, St Hugh's College



memories of OICCU

With Chris & Elaine Sugden

On a sunny Saturday morning in May, Margaret and I stood on St. Michael's Street, intrigued. We were waiting for Chris and Elaine Sugden, who had contacted us after reading the first edition of the OICCU Magazine.

Chris and Elaine served on the OICCU Committee of 1968-9 as President and Ladies' Rep, and asked to meet with us to share some of their memories from their OICCU days. As they got out of the car, Elaine reminded Chris to grab something, and he emerged with a large folder full of pictures, leaflets, and lists from their time at Oxford. We sat down to talk in the Union Gardens, and slowly the solemn faces of the people in the black and white photographs came to life as we heard their stories, from their time in University and beyond.

Back in Chris and Elaine's time, the lineup of weekly events looked very different to how it does now. Main meetings took place every Saturday night in the North Gate Hall, with an evangelistic talk every Sunday evening at various churches. The OICCU calendar also included daily prayer meetings, talks from missionaries, theological meetings, and a 'Mission Week' every three years.

Yet it became clear very quickly that, although the timetable has changed, the heart and mission of OICCU has not. Just as we do now, they delighted in God together regularly, and longed for their fellow students to come to faith. Despite our differences in time and culture, we are united in our love for Jesus.

I asked Chris and Elaine how OICCU had influenced their time at university, and their answers revealed the profound effect OICCU had had on their lives. Chris talked about the way it had 'fundamentally shaped' his time in Oxford. "I think two things impacted me: one was the Bible studies we had on Saturday night, where it struck me very, very forcibly that with all the privilege we have got, and all the stuff fed into us, we really should share it. And that's when I thought, that was God calling me to work internationally overseas. And secondly, I found my wife."

Chris was involved in the CU 'from day one', but Elaine took a bit longer. 'I became a Christian through the college group. My family were Chapel people, and I had always been to chapel in Sunday school since the age of 3. When I left I said I don't want anything else to do with it. But the only other person on my landing said she was going to the Christian Union meeting, and would I like to come along? And being rather shy, I said yes and went along with her'.

After getting married, Chris and Elaine moved to India to serve for six years, but they weren't the only ones who did overseas missions. As Chris explained what the OICCU members in the photos had done with their lives, an overwhelming number of them turned out to be clergy and church workers, and almost as many seemed to have served God internationally, from Pakistan to Canada to South America. 'Lots of them went into ministry and mission.' Chris said, 'And I think that's an important thing to encourage people to do. Every term the OICCU held a Missionary Weekend with a speaker from a missionary society.'

"If you don't have a call to stay at home, you should go abroad"

Elaine picked up on this too. 'Quite a lot of people did go abroad. We had an International Secretary who said "If you don't have a call to stay at home, you should go abroad", rather than "you must have a call to go abroad". It's interesting how many people did go, whether that had anything to do with it or not'.

As we start this term under the roof of a newly refurbished North Gate Hall, my appreciation for it has grown as I have seen how much it means to OICCU Alumni. NGH used to belong to OICCU, and Elaine talked of the fondness they all had for it, and the 'heartache' of losing it - 'the whole thing was just home, in a way'. Back then, they had a book stall in the basement (something we are hoping to bring back in the form of an OICCU Library), where they sold IVP books for 3 shillings and 6 pence- that's less than £3 in today's money!

Towards the end of our time together, talk turned to Chris and Elaine's family. Their children have also faithfully served Christ, and many of their grandchildren too. Clearly, OICCU doesn't just impact people's lives for the three or four years that they are at university. It changes families, it changes career trajectories, and it changes people's eternities. Meeting Chris and Elaine showed us just how important OICCU can be to the Christians who are part of it, and that however imperfect we are, God uses our efforts to multiply his crop a hundred fold, spreading his kingdom across Oxford, and across the world.

Zoe Todd
English, Keble College



prayer MEETINGS



CENTRAL
Monday



UNITED
Wednesday



GLOBAL
Friday

reports from...
FORUM!



All's still on the Welsh border. Under the Milky Way's purplish glow, tents rustle in the wind's soft whisper.

Just hours before, this site was ablaze with singing, dancing, and the merry laughter of midnight friendships; very soon, dawn will greet the fresh hubbub of young campers hastily breakfasting and preparing for the day.

This is UCCF's Forum, a CU leadership conference where nearly a thousand students from across Great Britain gather for a week of teaching, singing, and training for the year ahead. The Quinta Christian Conference Centre in Shropshire hosts this annually, providing open fields for students to enjoy the chaos of close-knit camping, as well as a multitude of gazebos, marquees, and canopies.

The largest of these pavilions housed the morning and evening "celebrations." Here, Christians from a range of traditions could sing songs of praise, both old and new, reflecting the diversity of God's people gathered there. Framed by this singing were the talks, designed to encourage and spur on the students as they prepared to lead their CUs in the coming year. Jonathan Thomas preached the morning sermons from Romans 1-8, placing the spotlight on our unshakeable God. We were reminded that though we are weak and often feel shakeable, Christ is a firm foundation upon which to build our lives. Because He is unchanging, self-sufficient, sovereign, and almighty, nothing can stand against us, and nothing can remove the certain hope that we have. Further teaching was available in the form of seminars on (almost) every topic under the sun, from Christians in politics to creativity, and from Bible overviews to discussions of key questions in our culture. Dan Strange led a seminar series on how sociology points to our need for Jesus, and how we can use sociology to better understand those with whom we want to share the Gospel.

One encouragement was to hear CU members from various contexts discussing some of the challenges they'd met during the year, as well as the excitements and answers to prayer. Clearly God is working in many ways - some extravagant, some unseen- and it is a joy to participate in His kingdom-building.

The evening talks focused more explicitly on CU leadership, as UCCF staff workers challenged us to serve God with (1) freedom under His grace, (2) humility, (3) our whole lives, including our studies, and (4) a vision to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

And yet despite the jam-packed programme of teaching, there was still time for much raucous, and also subdued, fun, including a ceilidh, painting accompanied by mocktails, and a relay race (silent disco, anyone?). Students also improvised their own activities, with many a game of Spikeball being won and lost, and frequent impromptu trips to Maccie's.

When reflecting on Forum, two things are clear. There's nothing quite like fresh air, half-soggy tents, and chaos, to deepen friendships. And there's no one worth celebrating more than our unshakeable God.

Caleb Kościecha
German & Linguistics , St John's College

Keswick Convention

This summer, I went to the Keswick Convention for the first time. Coming from a charismatic background, I grew up going to festivals like New Wine and wanted to try a different style of gathering.

The open nature of the convention (you camp offsite) meant we were able to vary what we did - there were morning and evening meetings as well as a seminar each day, but we also had time to go on several hikes, swim in the nearby Derwentwater, and even do some cliff jumping!



A particular highlight was when the convention's speakers preached in local churches on Sunday morning. We went to hear Rico Tice, who gave an inspiring call to witness and talked about the importance of boldness in sharing the gospel.

The teaching at the seminars was also very useful. There was a particularly challenging talk on James 1 about sin, reminding us that the law is a law of freedom and often we are deceived into thinking sin is 'good' - when we see clearly with a godly perspective we see this for the lie that this is.

Overall, it was great to experience a different style of worship and congregation to other festivals. We all learnt a lot from the teaching, and there was a lot of free time in which we could encourage one another in fellowship. I'd recommend Keswick to anyone regardless of faith or church background- it will be one of the best weeks of your summer!

Samuel Crawford
Physics, Jesus College

Overseas mission

This summer I spent time in Lima and Trujillo, Peru, in a group of UK students with LatinLink, as I really wanted to experience church life in another cultural context and see how God is at work.

In Lima we spent a lot of time living with the church family, joining a team of volunteer builders to construct the foundations for a new church building. In Trujillo we visited lots of local communities leading evangelistic children's and disability-access talks and programmes with friends from the central church. I was so encouraged by how involved the church was in their community; putting on events every day of the week for so many different types of people. We were also taught basic mechanical skills so we could get stuck in with their biggest ministry: a clinic which serves people who come from far away to get their wheelchairs fixed at the church.

I was reflecting a lot on what it means to serve God 'wholeheartedly' as in Colossians 3:23. The Christians we met seemed to embody this so well in all areas of their lives.



They gave so much of their time and were so willing to open their doors to us, repeatedly reminding us to thank God as their houses belonged only to Him. This really encouraged me to think about my approach - seeing the things I have as gifts from God that should be used for His glory.

Being in an unfamiliar context with new people made it feel easier to rely fully on Christ for strength each day and hear God speaking to me directly with a more open and receptive heart. Those are definitely things that I've been challenged to keep praying about when returning to busy Oxford life.

Anjali Sivasundaram
Experimental Psychology, Somerville College

A note from the college CU's...

Magdalen-Hilda's

Over the past term Magdalen-Hildas CU has enjoyed fellowship through our weekly prayer breakfasts, fortnightly Bible studies on Philippians, and several exciting outreach events.

Our prayer breakfasts have become a great encouragement to us- praise be to God for both the new and old faces we have seen across the past term! Having this regularity in our gathering together is the highlight of our college CU life and we are ever thankful for it.

Studying Philippians in our fortnightly meetings has provided a time for fellowship and a time for delving into God's word, getting to know Him better. Philippians 2:11 states that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow". It has been an honour to do outreach within Magdalen and Hilda's and watching God work. Our first event of the term was fairly small as we raised awareness of both CU and the "Is it Worth it?" lunchtime session in May. Some interest was



Magdalen Chapel

expressed by people who passed by, thanks be to God. Our main outreach event was Cake for Questions where any question about Jesus and Christianity could be asked in exchange for a free cake. We did this alongside Teddy x Queens CU, spending an hour in each of the four colleges. It was a huge answer to prayer to have many deep conversations on a variety of topics, from questions of God's goodness in a suffering world to discussion on how Christianity differs from other religions. Please thank God for the people who heard about Jesus through this and please pray that seeds planted may bear fruit.

Prayer would also be appreciated for future outreach events we are planning in Michaelmas term. Please pray for God's help as we organize them and that we will feel encouraged through them.

Lily Webster
History, St Hilda's College



St Hilda's at sunset!

Worcester

When Rebekah and I were asked to take over Worcester CU, we were thrilled at the opportunity to serve those in our college and tell them about Jesus.

It was a slow start- rowing, exams, and various other engagements kept attendance numbers to a minimum- but we enjoyed the new addition of our weekly prayer meetings, 'Saturdays in the Psalms'. Trinity was also a great chance to get to know each other better within the CU, and spend time with our non-Christian friends, witnessing to them and getting ready to invite them to events!

This brings us to Michaelmas 2026, where Rebekah and I have upped the ante, ready for Jesus to be made known among our friends. Our weekly prayer meetings will continue, running alongside our new lunchtime events, where people can hear a clear explanation of the Gospel, and ask any questions they have.

Rebekah and I have integrated ourselves as much as possible into college life this year, so going into second year we are in a great position to invite others and make these events a really productive time.



Worcester College

However, we know that we cannot do this by ourselves, so we would love your prayers! Please pray that God would be with us as we meet and host these events, and that we would remember that it is through Him, not us, that people are saved.

Worcester is a place, like so many others, in desperate need of the light of Jesus. We can't wait to get going again, and we hope you will join us in our mission!

Freddy Glyn
Maths, Worcester College

Harris Manchester

The Harris Manchester CU meets weekly, often in the college chapel for bible study and prayer. We are a small group of about 4-5 regular attendees, coming from diverse denominational backgrounds. In fact, not a single one of us is actually Anglican, but we come from various Protestant and Orthodox backgrounds.

Unfortunately, due to time and size constraints, we did not hold any special events last term, but across the year we saw a handful of new Christian-curious friends join us for some of our bible studies. The CU has also (personally) been a useful conversation starter to invite friends to other Christian outreach events.



Sun on Harris Manchester

In the coming year, please pray that there will be Christian and Christian-curious freshers who will join us for the weekly bible studies and prayers, especially as some of our regular members have recently graduated. We hope to also explore other outreach and welfare activities so pray as we discuss how to approach that in the unique environment of a mature college!

Joakim Kang
History & Politics, Harris Manchester College

COMING SOON!

Carols in the Sheldonian
26 NOV
Thurs 5th week

International Christmas Dinner
27 NOV
Fri 5th week

!!

Getaway '27!
11-13 JAN
0th week Hilary
Booking opens in 5th week

EVENTS WEEK '27
8-12 FEB
4th week Hilary
Theme reveal in 7th week



a note from the editors...



Our names are Margaret, Zoe, Elliot and Emily, and we'd like to thank you for being a part of the 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.

Editor in Chief: Margaret McLean (English, St Edmund Hall)
Managing Editor: Zoe Todd (English, Keble College)
Layout Designer: Elliot Woods (History, St Anne's College)
Art Director: Emily Yates (History, Merton College)
Cover art by Ester Hattingh


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



OICCU TERMCARD MICHAELMAS 2026

Central Prayer

Start your week with prayer and praise! Snacks from 7.45am.

MONDAYS - 8AM - HERTFORD COLLEGE CHAPEL

The Search

Got questions about faith? Ask them here. Free cake & drink with a short talk and discussion time.

MONDAYS - 7:30PM - COSTA ON QUEEN'S STREET

United Prayer

A time to pray over our colleges and college CUs. Hosted by a different college CU in their chapel each week so see Instagram for updates.

WEDNESDAYS - 12:30-1:30PM

Equip

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

WEDNESDAYS, ODD WEEKS - 7:30PM - NORTH GATE HALL

After Hours

Bringing the love of Jesus through care and conversation with biscuits and sometimes hot chocolate!

WEDNESDAYS - 10:30PM FOR PRAYER AT COLLEGE CHAPELS - 11PM FOR OUTREACH

The Road Ahead

Where is your life headed? A talk inviting us to consider what the Bible has to say to us at the start of a new academic year, with a Q&A and free lunch!

FRIDAY WEEK 5 - 1-2PM - NORTH GATE HALL

Carols at the Sheldonian

Traditional carols and a short talk.

THURSDAY 7TH WEEK - IDENTICAL SERVICES AT 6PM & 8.30PM - SHELDONIAN THEATRE

Global Prayer

Prayer for our International student outreach, and for global mission.

FRIDAYS - 8AM - HERTFORD COLLEGE CHAPEL

Cafe 360

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

FRIDAYS - 7PM - FORMOSAN TEA BAR

International Christmas Dinner

A chance for international students to experience a free, authentic, British Christmas dinner, and hear about why we really celebrate Christmas.

FRIDAY 7TH WEEK - ST EBBE'S CHURCH

@the_oiccu
@cafe360_oiccu
oiccu.org