

Doorways

A great door for effective service is opened to us.

1 Corinthians 16:9

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A gift of furniture can start a beautiful friendship

Meeting Needs is Building Relationships

In September, thousands of young adults arrived in Canada to begin their journey as international students at our universities and colleges. Are we ready to reach the nations at our doorstep? How do we go about empowering these international students to impact the world through Jesus Christ?

Some of the easiest ways to connect with students are through the very practical needs the students face when they land in Canada. A friendly welcome at the airport. A kitchen table for their empty apartment. A meal they don't have to cook themselves. A warm jacket for the coming Canadian winter.



Welcome gifts ready to be shared

Sometimes, meeting needs is a one-time transaction. That's okay—we love and serve international students with no strings attached. But sometimes, that welcome gift or that furniture delivery starts a beautiful friendship. Sometimes it leads to chances to share your story, and sometimes these students, for the first time, start asking questions about faith.

Reaching students is done in the context of relationships as we make ourselves available to meet their real-world needs.

In this *Doorways* newsletter, you'll read how International Student Ministries Canada is facilitating meeting the needs of students and scholars across the country. Pray that these informal connections will develop into life-changing relationships—and check out how you can get involved!

Find opportunities for you or your church community to pray, volunteer and give at ismc.ca/get-involved



Jakob Koch

ISMC President

ismc.ca/staff/jakob-koch



Just a few of the ways ISMC's across the country are meeting the practical needs of International Students:

- Advice & Resources
- Airport Welcomes
- Bikes for Students
- Career Mentoring
- City Orientation
- ESL Programs
- Fellowship Dinners
- Furniture Ministry
- Social Activities
- Welcome BBQs
- Welcome Packages
- Winter Clothing Giveaways

Connect with your local ISMC team to discover what's happening in your area: ismc.ca/locations or info@ismc.ca

Support in a New Place

Now in her second year of educational assistant studies at Niagara College, Natalia exudes confidence. But it wasn't always like that. Just over a year ago, when she, her husband and two little girls arrived in Welland, Ontario, from Colombia, they weren't sure how to start making a life in this new country.

"From the first day of being here, we started looking for newcomer support groups," recalls Natalia. She came across Niagara International Student Ministries and decided to give it a try. "I felt quite nervous because they are people you don't know and you have language as the first barrier."

Ryanna Schlechter, the Welland campus coordinator for ISMC, received Natalia's message through the Niagara International Students Facebook page. She directed Natalia



Natalia & Ryanna enjoying an activity together

to the website with its many resources, and encouraged her to apply for a welcome package—hand-delivered fresh-baked goodies and other treats for newly-arrived international students.

A few days later, Ryanna delivered the gift to Natalia at their Airbnb. When Natalia mentioned they were moving to a new place and Ryanna realized the apartment was unfurnished, she connected Natalia with Niagara's on-going furniture ministry. "We quickly rallied volunteers and furniture donations to meet the need," says Ryanna. Natalia recalls how valuable this practical assistance was—things they didn't need to buy to equip their home with the basics.

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But Natalia is especially grateful for relationships that developed through these interactions. "The first help we received was furniture, clothes for our daughters and toys," says Natalia. "Then we began to meet more people by participating in the activities they plan, which on an emotional level is quite important. And they gave us spiritual support by inviting us to participate at church services in Welland."

Lineke, one of the volunteers who brought toys for the girls, became like a grandma to them. She invited the family to church, and soon Natalia was also attending the Bible discovery class that Lineke leads.



Lineke spending time with Natalia & her daughter

Growing up in Colombia, Natalia knew about God. But in Canada she learned what it means to have a relationship with Him. "We are much closer to God

every day," says Natalia, "seeing His mercy through the help we receive."

Natalia describes the kindness of those who helped them as an affirmation that God is near. "The truth is," she explains, "they cannot imagine what it is like to find this type of support in a new and unknown place. This makes us think that there really are good people and that God will always help us."

Check out Ryanna's ministry profile:

ismc.ca/staff/ryanna-schlechter

A Friendly Connection at a Busy Airport

Imagine stepping into Pearson Airport as a newly arrived international student—jet lagged, disoriented, and with limited English. You need to find your way through Canada's largest airport and figure out how to get from the terminal to your university.

Then imagine seeing a sign that says *Welcome Students and Can We Help?* Volunteers have a gift bag for you, and a laptop to help figure out transportation options. The volunteer walks with you to the transit point and makes sure the process goes smoothly



Welcoming committee at Pearson Airport

Anki* from the Netherlands was flustered when she arrived at the *Welcome Airport* booth and grateful for volunteers who explained her options to get to McMaster University.

When they brought her to the GO bus, she was even more grateful for help in navigating a glitch in the payment processing system that was much less daunting with a volunteer by her side.

ISMC is part of *Welcome Airport*, an informal partnership between many ministries working with the airport chaplaincy that ensures international students are suitably welcomed. "We are meeting and greeting and showing love to international students as they come off the plane and enter Pearson Airport," says Johnson Hsu, ISMC's Toronto city director. "We are building relationships with those who are open to it."

"Meeting people at the airport is culturally appropriate," explains Johnson "It's what family does."

Conversations through the airport can prove to be the beginnings of relationships, and students who feel comfortable sharing contact information are later connected to campus ministries. Besides a gift bag, there's information about international student resources and Bibles for those who want them.

Students like Singh from India, who had one more connecting flight, but stopped to chat anyways. Johnson welcomed him to Canada in the name of Toronto-area Christians, and gave him a gift bag. Singh saw the Bibles, and explained that he had always wanted to read one. "Thank you for this life-changing message," he said when Johnson gifted him a Bible. When Johnson left him at his departure gate with blessings for his journey, Singh was smiling.

In 2019, *Welcome Airport* engaged with over 300 arrivals. This year *Welcome Airport* was rebuilding networks and partners after a two-year Covid-induced hiatus. Still almost 30 volunteers connected with over 150 international students like Anki and Singh, holding out welcome bags and love at Pearson Airport.

"Really, we're just there to be a friendly connection at a very busy airport," says Johnson.

* names changed to maintain confidentiality

Check out Johnson's ministry profile:

ismc.ca/staff/johnson-hsu

New to ISMC



Jessica Mamouler

ismc.ca/staff/yosef-jessica-mamouler

Campus Director

ISMC Vancouver



Luke Ngo

ismc.ca/staff/luke-ngo

Housing & Homestay Coordinator

ISMC Toronto

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