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To What Extent Can a *Friends International* Local Centre for International Students Be a Holistic Diaconal Ministry?

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Abbreviations

COCM	Chinese Overseas Christian Mission
CoN	Church of Norway
CU	Christian Union, the local body of UCCF
EU	European Union
FI	Friends International
HEI	Higher Education Institution/s
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
IFES	International Fellowship of Evangelical Students
IMC	International Missionary Council
IS	International Student/s
ISM	International Student Ministry
IVF	Inter Varsity Fellowship, same as
IVCF	Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship
JPC	Jesmond Parish Church in Newcastle
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
UCCF	Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship
UK	United Kingdom
UKCISA	UK Council for International Student Affairs
WCC	World Council of Churches

I. Introduction

A. *Presentation of theme and focus*

The Bible challenges our attitude towards the stranger. “I was a stranger and you invited me in,” Jesus says is one of the tests of a true believer (Mt 25: 35). The Triune God calls us to become welcoming hosts to anyone we meet on our way (Lk 14: 15-24). Friends International is a mission organisation that wishes to take this seriously, and the agency is the focus of this dissertation.

1. Field of study

There are about 1 million international students (IS) studying in the United Kingdom (UK) at any time, a number which is expected to rise in the coming years.¹ Government, educational institutions and other agencies define IS as students who are *not* British citizens or residents.² Thus, students from the European Union, other European countries, Africa, The Middle East, Asia including China, Australia, and South and North Americas are all included. A large number of the world’s countries are represented in the UK.³ Both the possibility to improve English language skills and the quality of courses on offer are attractive to students from around the world.

There are IS in all the four countries of the UK; England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, in many different kinds of institutions and at all levels: Language schools including short and long term courses, further education programmes, undergraduate and postgraduate courses, PhD studies and visiting academics. This means that the UK has a wide range of IS: From those who only take a 2 weeks’ language course being as

¹ Friends International [website], S. Coughlan, “Overseas students ‘to increase in UK universities’, BBC News [website].

² UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) [website].

³ Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) [website].

young as 15 years old, to mature students who complete their PhDs after 6-7 years of studies.

Several Christian organisations work among IS in the UK. For most of them it is part of their outreach to students in general. *Friends International (FI)* is different: Their sole focus is IS. FI cooperates with several of these other agencies, particularly *Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship* (UCCF).⁴ However, it was recognised in the beginning of the 1980s that IS face particular issues, and a dedicated ministry would be helpful and strategic.

FI is an inter-denominational evangelical Christian mission agency that was established in 1985 in the UK.⁵ Their aim is to reach IS with the message of Jesus Christ while they study here, and their primary method of work is through local churches. At present there are about 75 staff workers in 35 university cities, with an aim of continuous growth. FI see their ministry as fourfold: 1) Hospitality, 2) evangelising, 3) discipling, and 4) supporting returnees, that is the students who have returned to their home countries after finishing their studies. Most FI local centres run a combination of social activities such as cafes and trips, bible studies, training events for local Christians and follow up of returnees.⁶

2. Motivation

I came to England as an international student in January 2002 to study English at the University of York for a semester. I enjoyed York so much that I settled in the city from September 2003. Since then I have done two other university courses in the UK. Although I was by 2004 a UK resident, and therefore not an IS, I still had the challenge of adjusting to a different academic culture. In addition, for four years I taught and supervised Norwegian further education students (17-18 year olds) on a one year

⁴ FI [website].

⁵ Weston, C., *Mission Possible, Reaching the world on our doorstep* (Ware: FI, 2006), 22.

⁶ FI [website].

programme here in York. In short, I have quite a lot of personal experience of what it means to be an international student in Britain.

In 2007 I got engaged in international student ministry (ISM) in the church I was attending. I was part of the steering group that sought to develop this work. In 2010 York was established as a FI centre, and I was appointed as a part-time staff worker. My role is to mobilise and equip local churches and Christians for ministry among IS in the city.⁷

As a novice I have seen glimpses of issues that are of concern for FI and anyone engaged in ISM. During my study of diakonia, which has been parallel with starting this post, I have come to see that ISM can be part of a local church's diaconal ministry. FI could be a support in developing this kind of ministry. In addition, FI could in itself be studied with reference to diakonia.

B. Focus and resources

1. Focus

Two questions that soon faced me, and that FI staff workers ask themselves, are:

- a. In our ministry are we particularly good at hospitality and befriending, while the other three parts of reaching out to IS, evangelism, discipleship and support of returnees, play a secondary role?

- b. Are we stressing evangelism to the extent that real discipleship is not happening, and students do not retain their faith on return to their home countries?⁸

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Burt, Susan C., *Returning Home a Christian*, MA Dissertation, ANCC (Hertfordshire: 2006), referring K. Pratt., *An Evaluation of Discipleship amongst International Students in the UK*, BA Dissertation: ANCC (Hertfordshire: 2004), 1. There is evidence that as many as 70% of IS leave their faith when they face challenges at home.

Both of these questions represented the matter of *balance* between the four core aspects of Friends International's ministry. This could, I believe, be expressed in the term of *holistic* ministry. The question I therefore will try to answer in this study is:

To what extent can a Friends International local centre be a holistic diaconal ministry?

2. Resources

To explore this question I will use four groups of sources:

- a. FI resources
- b. Interviews with FI staff
- c. Literature written specifically about diaconal ministry
- d. General theological literature

a. Friends International's resources

Under this heading we find formal documents, web entries, training material, magazines, and general promotional material. As a staff worker I am expected to be familiar with much of their content. In addition, training events and conversations with other staff workers have also given me input. In the following essay, all this material might not be directly quoted, but serves as a backdrop to the insight I have gained, and should therefore be recognised as informing my discussion.

One document, however, will be studied closely: FI's statement of their vision, mission and values, where the organisation states its purpose and aims. It is a natural starting point to answer my question.

b. Interviews with Friends International staff

Another resource will be interviews with FI staff workers. I have chosen to interview three of them in three different local centres. Each centre has its own characteristics. In addition, the three staff workers represent somewhat different perspectives according to their background and responsibilities. This will provide for a richer reflection on the topic.

c. Literature about diaconal ministry

Among the literature that I have read during my course, three authors need to be mentioned particularly: Kjell Nordstokke, Neil Pembroke and Henri Nouwen. Nordstokke is a Norwegian theologian who has written extensively on the subject of diaconal ministry both in the Norwegian setting and as a contributor to the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Nordstokke has given me many helpful tools for perspectives and angles into the focused field. Pembroke and Nouwen have helped me with particular tools to explore the aspect of hospitality, community and pastoral care. I have enjoyed their development of Greek terms, and their imagery displaying these issues.

d. General theological literature

At times I found it appropriate to add perspectives from other theological sources than specifically diaconal anthropology, especially concerning mission. David J. Bosch must be mentioned. His comprehensive *Transforming Mission* has been essential in my writing.

II. Methods

A. Analysis of vision document

The starting point for this thesis is FI's Vision statement. Although it consists only of one A4 page it is crucial in understanding the organisation and its ministry. My interest is to see it through my chosen diaconal perspectives. The fact that FI relatively recently changed the wording of their vision complicates matters somewhat. I therefore found it necessary to reflect on this change, the differences, and any possible implications.

B. Interviews

1. Semi-structured and in-depth interviews

As the main element of this research I have chosen to interview three staff workers in three different local centres of FI. Diaconal ministry is a highly practical way of serving the community and it is therefore crucial to get the practitioners' views and experiences presented. It is 'out in the field' one learns whether reality fits the theory, i.e. the vision and mission. Tuckman describes the interview as a research technique which provides:

[] access to what is 'inside a person's head', [it] makes it possible to measure what a person knows (knowledge or information), what a person likes or dislikes (values and preferences), and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs).⁹

There are different types of interviews, and one way of outlining them is on a sliding scale of 'open' to 'closed' or 'unstructured' to 'structured' interviews. The so-called semi-structured in-depth interview will serve the purpose of this paper best. The semi-structured approach gives the ideal combination of having planned beforehand a certain

⁹ Cohen et al., *Research Methods in Education*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007, 6th ed), 351, quoting Tuckman (1972).

set of questions the researcher wants answered, at the same time as one can pursue unexpected and interesting matters that come up during the interview. This can give a rich variation in the material. The drawback of this approach is that one can end up getting 'side tracked' and not receive a full response to questions the researcher considers important. This then could lead to less opportunity to compare responses from different candidates. The more closed or structured an interview is, the simpler it is to organise and analyse data.

In-depth interviews indicate engaging fewer persons, which again mean less travel, and less time and money spent should I have done more interviews. These are the practical realities of conducting interviews. More importantly, however, is that the issues I wish to study lend themselves more easily to in-depth interviews. I am looking for thorough, also theologically, reflections from the candidates. This would be less possible if I was carrying out a greater number of interviews or alternatively done a questionnaire.¹⁰

2. Student perspectives

To make the picture more complete one should obviously interview the receivers of the ministry, in this case, the IS. This would be a much more complicated matter and go beyond the scope of this thesis. The most challenging issue to address would be which students to interview. There would be endless variations to consider, like for instance different local centres, ethnic and cultural background, language skills, short or long term studies, regular or ad-hoc attendance at FI activities and so forth. Although the lack of student perspectives is, on one level, a significant limitation to the analysis, it is on the other hand a natural and realistic restriction.

¹⁰ Ibid., 351-353.

3. The researcher – observer or participant?

Cannell and Kahn observe that the interview is ‘a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information [].’¹¹ The key word here is *conversation*. The advantage of this method, is that the interviewer is present and ‘able to answer questions concerning both the purpose of the interview and any misunderstandings experienced by the interviewee [].’¹² Another strength of the oral interview is that it is not dependent on peoples’ literacy skills. However, because this is an interpersonal encounter, the disadvantage is the interviewer’s tendency to subjectivity and bias.¹³

In my case, I am aware that the reality that I am a staff worker for FI represents strengths and weaknesses. On the positive side, I have easy access to resources, both in terms of people and written material. Secondly, I am well motivated to do the research because it is related to my daily ministry. I hope to gain helpful insights from this research, and also hope it will be of use for my colleagues.

On the other hand, because I am an ‘insider’ I could easily have blind zones and be tempted to ‘cover up’ less positive information. To counter this danger, though, I believe FI has a healthy attitude towards learning, training and keep developing their staff and the ministry to IS.¹⁴

4. Anonymity and confidentiality

‘The essence of anonymity is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity.’¹⁵ Considering the research method I have chosen anonymity is not

¹¹ Ibid., 351, quoting Cannel and Kahn (1968).

¹² Ibid., 352.

¹³ Ibid., 355.

¹⁴ FI expect their staff to attend training events regularly, provided either by themselves or other organisations.

¹⁵ Cohen et al, *Research*, 64.

really obtainable or desirable.¹⁶ Three employees in a small Christian organisation with a narrow mission purpose are being interviewed. Whether I name the persons and their city or not, the information will be easily traceable when they start referring to concrete activities that happen in their localities. Furthermore, some of the information revealed by the interviewees will certainly be stated in different documents such as minutes, reports etc. at the local centres. In that sense they are already historical facts.¹⁷

Confidentiality is closely linked to anonymity. Cohen et al observes that

[Confidentiality] means that although researchers know who has provided the information or are able to identify participants from the information given, they will in no way make the connection known publicly; the boundaries surrounding the shared secret will be protected.¹⁸

Although this explanation is helpful, the issue of confidentiality is more complex than this. The US Department of Health and Human Services recognises that any qualitative research will confront ongoing and sometimes complex ethical matters concerning the information received.¹⁹ It is beyond the scope of this paper to enter into a discussion of this. However, the most obvious boundaries that needed to be in place for my research is that private information about the interviewees and the identity of IS would not be revealed. The challenge has been to make this clear to the participants before obtaining their consent. With all interviewees I agreed that they would be given the possibility to read what I had written from there contributions.

5. Interview procedure

To help me make an informed selection of cities to visit, I sought my line manager in FI for advice. We considered places that had a variety of activities going on, which could be part of my training and which at the same time would not be too far for me to travel to

¹⁶ Ibid. D. Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research* (London: Sage, 2010 3rd ed), 167.

¹⁷ Ibid, refers PhD student Patrick Brindle's experience of people not wanting to be anonymised when he was doing oral history interviewing.' [The interviewees] regarded their interview as public testimony [].

¹⁸ Cohen et al, *Research*, 65.

¹⁹ Ibid. Silverman, *Qualitative*, 168, from a guidebook on fieldwork.

from York. We decided on Nottingham, Newcastle and Edinburgh, and I approached staff workers in these cities. I had met all three of them 2-3 times at staff training events, but did not know any of them very well. It is possible to argue that these cities represent a geographical limitation of central and north east of Britain, and that the South and the West of the country should also be visited. Whether this would impact the research in any significant way is hard to tell without carrying out interviews in these areas. However, as so often, finances and time set the limits.

I conducted the interviews between May 17th and June 7th 2012. Each visit took a day, and the interviews took about 3 hours each. The interviewees gave me some background details before we recorded the actual interview. The interviews were transcribed before being analysed. Information sheet for the participants, consent form, background and interview questions may be found in appendices 1-4.

III. Terminology and criteria for the study

A. Terminology

It is clear that all churches are doing diakonia even if not all of them use the word. Instead, they may talk about “social ministry,” “health services,” “caritas” or “development work.” [] Christians believe that in Baptism, they are empowered by the Holy Spirit to participate in God’s mission for the healing of the world. If that is true, every church and every congregation has the basic resources for diaconal commitment. Very often this work naturally pours out of the daily life of the church, without being planned or reflected. [] Diakonia seems to be “easier done than said,” which is different from so many other things in the church that quite often are “easier said than done.”²⁰

This quote from Nordstokke clearly shows that the term *diakonia* can be quite complicated to try to grasp. Both translation issues and varying use in different contexts, also historically, add to a possible confusion.²¹

1. New Testament background

The Greek word *diakonos* means servant, but not in the sense of being a *doulos* (slave).²² The *diakonos* would be respected both because of his relationship with his master and the tasks he had been given. ‘His *diakonia*, which can also be translated “mission” could be that of being a messenger, mediating contact and confidence. He could also have a role during religious meals, as a waiter or as divine messenger.’²³ Nordstokke observes that these two words, *diakonos* and *doulos* are often used synonymously in the New Testament (NT) (Mt 20: 26-27, and parallels), ‘but the point is that both are committed to subordination and obedience under the master’s will,’²⁴

²⁰ K. Nordstokke (ed), LWF, *Serving the Whole Person*, Documentation 54/2009, (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2009), 9-10.

²¹ LWF Studies No. 01/2006, 82.

²² K. Nordstokke, *Liberating Diakonia*, (Trondheim: Tapir Akademiske Forlag, 2011), 66.

²³ Ibid. referring to J. Collins (2002), 90-91.

²⁴ Ibid.

prepared to give up their own interests when serving. Jesus is the ultimate example of this attitude as described in Philippians 2:7-8: '[] he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – [].'²⁵

The image of the deacon as the humble waiter at the tables, very much builds on the story of ‘the first deacons’ in Acts 6, has been questioned by recent researchers, initially by John Collins. Collins believes that a deacon in the early church had much more the task of being ‘the ear of the bishop’, a ‘go-between’ ministry making sure the leadership of the church knew what was going on in the community and maybe particularly at the margins of the community. In this perspective he or she would be ‘a pathfinder in realizing the mission of the church.’²⁶

Diakonos in the NT is used a few times in more general terms like in the parable of the royal wedding (Mt 22: 13) and the wedding in Cana (Jn 2: 5.9). In both cases *diakonos* is used about the servants. Jesus uses *diakonos* when he speaks about discipleship, for instance in John 12: 26: '[] where I am, there will my *diakonos* be also.’ In Matthew 20: 26 (and parallels) he announces that ‘whoever wishes to be great among you must be your *diakonos*’.

While Jesus refers to all disciples as *diakonos*, Paul is more specific. In his letters this term reflects a person given special assignments. Most frequently ‘they are called God’s servants or servants of the Gospel’²⁷ and will perform certain tasks. Furthermore, this is how the Apostle Paul presents himself and also his co-workers, for instance in 1 Cor 3: 5, 2 Cor 6: 4, Eph 3: 7, 1 Tim 4: 6. In two, possibly three, instances *diakonos* is used as a title, indicating a position in the church (Phil 1: 1, 1 Tim 3: 8-12, Rom 16: 1).²⁸

The above presentation of the word *diakonos* and related word *diakonia*, most often translated *ministry* in English (i.e. Acts 6: 4(NIV), 2 Cor 9: 12), clearly reveals that these

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid. 66-70. Referring Nordstokke & Collins (2002), 110-111. It is most likely that there also were female deacons.

²⁷ Ibid. 67.

²⁸ Ibid.

concepts are multi-facetted. It might be possible to say that different movements through church history also reflect these variations.²⁹ Let us now turn to the present.

2. Present definitions

In 1997 a UK Ecumenical Diaconal Consultation in 1997 noted a converging vision for diaconal ministry as:

Christ-focused, people-centred and lived out in a lifestyle both active and contemplative...We increasingly perceive our role to be pioneering and prophetic, responding to needs, proactive in opportunity through commitment to mission and pastoral care within and beyond the Church. Opening doors of opportunity, encouraging others to take risks, the contemporary diaconate acting in its capacity as 'agent of change', engages imaginatively and collaboratively with issues of justice, poverty, social and environmental concerns. We often find ourselves spanning boundaries, especially official ones of Church and society.³⁰

However, the above statement suffers from too many words, and I found Tormod Kleiven's outline of the main intentions of diaconia helpful. Kleiven lists four aims for this ministry. They are as follows:

1. *Charity*: To reach out to those in need and on the margins of society. At the same time the Christian fellowship should be recognised by its mutual and equal care for each other.
2. *Solidarity*: To accompany and suffer *with* those who are in need, and struggle for justice and empowerment for those who are oppressed.
3. *Prophetic*: To call attention to, disclose and criticise injustice and abuse of power. This is the *go-between* ministry that makes sure that different parties listen to each others' voice, but it is diaconal ministry's particular task to

²⁹ S-E, Brodd, «Diakonin genom kyrkans historia: fem ekklesiologiska modeller» i Brodd, S. E. (ed), *Diakonins teologi* (Stockholm: Verbum, 1997), 11-44.

³⁰ Methodist Diaconal Order (MDO) paper *What is a Deacon?* Quoting "The Windsor Statement on the Diaconate", 1997, (Birmingham: MDO Centre), § 4.1[website].

interpret the situations in the perspective of the weak and needy.

4. *Eschatological*: Our hope is not just a future heaven with no injustice and suffering, but our hope is also for change here and now. This hope should underpin everything in our ministry.

Kleiven concludes by saying that “all these [] aims may be understood as following Christ, a following of Christ that wish to convey Christ’s presence.”³¹

A final word about my use of terminology in the rest of the dissertation: I will use *diakonia* and *diaconal ministry* interchangeably.

B. Diaconal criteria for ISM and a FI centre

The challenge I now face is to choose some perspectives through which to study ISM and particularly FI. As the diaconal ministry is so diverse it is only possible to look at a few aspects of ISM. My starting point for selecting diaconal and theological perspectives was FI’s vision statement (appendix 5), which will be presented in chapter VI, and my own understanding of the ministry from the point of view of an employee. For a local centre to fulfill its vision it needs to have three functions:

- 1) FI local centres need to provide hospitality.
- 2) FI local centres need to be missional.
- 3) FI local centres need to provide pastoral care for individuals.

I am certain there are other aspects that could be discussed, but I think these are the key issues, or at least the starting point for this diaconal ministry. Let us now turn to the diaconal perspectives on these topics.

³¹ T. Kleiven, *Intimitetsgrenser og tillitsmakt*, (Oslo: Det teologiske Menighetsfakultet, 2008), 59.

IV. Diaconal perspectives

A. *Hospitality*

An important starting point for any Christian fellowship to provide inclusivity and community is hospitality. Not only is it a starting point but a *fundamental attitude* every Christian and Christian community should be recognised by, Nouwen writes. It is not to be understood just in a “literal sense of receiving a stranger in our house – although it is important never to forget or neglect that! – . [Hospitality] can be expressed in a great variety of ways.”³² Nouwen defines hospitality as “the virtue which allows us to break through the narrowness of our own fears and to open our houses to the stranger, with the intuition that salvation comes to us in the form of a tired traveler.”³³

Margaret Guenther also uses the image of the weary traveller:

Since the expulsion from Eden we have been a people on the move, despite attempts at self-delusion that we have somehow arrived. We follow in the footsteps of our Lord, always on the way, our faces turned resolutely or reluctantly towards Jerusalem. Mobility is our way of life. [] We are travellers and we are homesick. We are travellers and we are weary.³⁴

To make it ‘home’ or to our ‘destiny’ we are dependent on hospitality on our journey. We are dependent on hosts who will take the strangers in and offer them food, cleansing, shelter, comfort and safety. This is what we are all looking for, and challenged to give. In giving hospitality the host discovers that the stranger is no longer a stranger but a fellow human being.³⁵ Simply said: “Hospitality is a gift of space, both physical and spiritual.”³⁶

³² H. Nouwen, *Reaching Out* (Glasgow: Collins, 1976), 65, 63.

³³ H. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer* (London: DLT, 1979), 89.

³⁴ M. Guenther, *Holy Listening* (London: DLT, 1993), 7-8.

³⁵ Ibid., Nouwen, *Reaching*, 63.

³⁶ Guenther, *Holy*, 13.

Hospitality is a rich biblical, theological and spiritual term. Many authors have found this a helpful metaphor for God's attitude and action in the world. In the following exploration I will use hospitality as the overarching concept and theme. I will look at it from these perspectives:

- 1) God's concern for the stranger
- 2) God as the ultimate host
- 3) The Triune God as our model

1. God's concern for the stranger

a. In The Old Testament

Early in the Old Testament (OT) we can see God's concern for the stranger. He gave the Hebrews laws to regulate their relationship with the strangers amongst them. The laws gave the foreigner (Hebrew: *zar* = stranger, *ger* = immigrant, *nokri* = foreigner) legal and financial security and protection. There was an awareness of both short time visitors, like businessmen, and permanent immigrants, and different rules applied to each group. But the point is that their vulnerability economically and socially was recognised. They were far from family, friends and a social system they knew. The immigrants were given opportunities to integrate into the Hebrew society, by for instance celebrating Jewish festivals (Job 19: 14-15, Zech 7: 10, Deut 26: 12f).

Furthermore, God challenged the Israelites' attitude towards the aliens. Deuteronomy 10: 17-19 commands:

"For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accept no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourself were aliens in Egypt."

Here it says directly that ‘you are to love the immigrant’ and two reasons are given for this. The first reason is that they should model their lives on God himself, and his character and attitudes are those of love and no partiality.

Furthermore, the Hebrew word that is used for partiality is *nasa panim*. It literally means ‘to lift your face’, and is used about judging a human being on external things, like appearance and social status. God does not treat people differently depending on who they are. He does not have any favourites.³⁷

The second reason for loving their neighbour in the Deuteronomical command is the appeal to the Israelites’ own experience. God reminds them of their own history: They came to Egypt because of drought and hunger, became a threat to the rulers because of their numbers and were oppressed and enslaved. ‘Remember how it was,’ God says, ‘you were dependent on other peoples’ goodwill’. Several places in the OT it says: “Do not oppress an alien; you yourselves know how it feels to be aliens, because you were aliens in Egypt.” (Ex 23: 9).

b. In The New Testament

Most of what is said about strangers in the NT is linked to hospitality. Two factors indicate their importance: Firstly, the many exhortations in the letters to be hospitable and the requirement of bishops to be hospitable (Rom 12: 13; 1 Pet 4: 9; 1 Tim 3: 2; Tit 1: 8). The early believers had a reputation for hospitality as several non-biblical sources mention this as a characteristic of the Christians.³⁸ Secondly, Jesus’ encounters with ‘strangers’ and his teachings and care for those who are ‘different’. We will look at this in the following section in the perspective of God as the ultimate host.

³⁷ R. Hvalvik, “Den fremmede”, *Credo*, (Oslo: Credo Forlag, 1994), 9.

³⁸ Ibid., 24-26. For instance Josefus and 1 Clements.

2. God as the ultimate host

a. *The visitor becomes the host*

The Christian community believes that to be at home in the world one must live according to the vision of the Realm of God. Jesus came into the world to invite others to share in the life of God's Realm. We might say that he came as the ultimate expression of the hospitality of God. A primary characteristic of Jesus's ministry was its radical openness. The call to life in God's community was given to *all* people. Life in the Realm of God is not just for the righteous, for the privileged, for those with status and power; it is for all. People are invited to come as they are to receive God's grace.³⁹

The above quote is from Pembroke, and he continues this exploration of God as host by referring to Brendan Byrne. Byrne contends that 'Hospitality, in a variety of expressions, forms a notable frame of reference for the ministry of Jesus.'⁴⁰ In the Gospels Jesus is presented as the visitor from God inviting people into the community of God. The important question is: How will this guest be received? The crucial point here is that those who receive him are brought into a much wider hospitality, namely the 'hospitality of God'.

The One who comes as visitor and guest in fact becomes host and offers a hospitality in which human beings and, potentially, the entire world, can become truly human, be at home, can *know* salvation in the depths of their hearts.⁴¹

Byrne uses the story of Zacchaeus to illustrate his point (Lk 19: 1-10): Zacchaeus experiences exclusion both because he is short in stature but also more importantly because he is a tax collector and therefore in collaboration with the occupying Romans. Jesus, however, shows that he does not accept these attitudes of exclusion and invites himself to Zacchaeus' home (v. 5). There he pronounces a wonderful word of healing and liberation: 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this one too is a son of

³⁹ N. Pembroke, *Renewing Pastoral Practice* (Ashgate: 2006), 31.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 32. referring Byrne (2000), 4.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Abraham' (v. 9). This, says Byrne, is a biblical way of saying: 'He's one of us; he's at home in the People of God; he's included within the community of salvation.'⁴²

God sent Jesus into the world to call people into the community of salvation. The meeting between Jesus and Zacchaeus is an example of God's hospitality, and should be a model for the Christian community of welcoming and inviting. Zacchaeus' experience of divine visitation, healing and love challenges the community to be an outstretched arm of the kingdom, 'where lost human beings can find welcome and new life in the grasp of a hospitable God.'⁴³

b. Jesus' teachings

i. A different kind of hospitality

Concerning Jesus' teaching there are at least two texts we should pay attention to. Jesus challenges his listeners to a different kind of hospitality in Luke 14: 21. He says that instead of inviting family, friends and rich neighbours, one should 'invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,' and we could add 'the stranger', Hvalvik writes. Their hospitality should first and foremost be towards those who need it. They should not be concerned about being repaid, because their blessing and reward will be in heaven.⁴⁴

Many stories in the Gospels relate that Jesus was living out his own message. All kinds of people, but particularly outsiders and 'those who are marginal to the Jewish establishment'⁴⁵ are invited into a new life of forgiveness, healing and community: The servants (Mt 8: 5-13); the demon possessed (Lk 8: 26-39); the poor (Lk 16: 19-31); the lepers (Lk 17: 11-19); the blind (Lk 18: 35-43); the rich (Lk 18: 18-25); the religious elite (Jn 3: 1-21); the Samaritans (Jn 4: 1-42); the adulterous women (Jn 8: 2-11), and many more. Bosch relates that the reasons for the affliction of many of those on the periphery

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Hvalvik, *Fremmede*, 32.

⁴⁵ D. J., Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 27.

of society, is the same as today: Oppression, discrimination, violence, and exploitation. They are victims of the society:

The point is simply that Jesus turns to all people who have been pushed aside: to the sick who are segregated on cultic and ritual grounds, to the prostitutes and sinners who are ostracized on moral grounds, and to the tax-collectors who are excluded on religious and political grounds.⁴⁶

Everyone is invited, “so that my house may be filled”, as the host of the parable of the *Great Banquet* announces (Lk 14: 23).

ii. Attitudes to the stranger – and Jesus

A second key text is Matthew 25: 31-46, where he teaches about the final judgement. One of the things people will be tested on is hospitality: “I was a stranger and you invited me in,” Jesus says. What is extraordinary here, is that Jesus one hundred percent identifies with the stranger. However, the crucial message is not whether his followers do good deeds or not, but ultimately about their relationship with Jesus. Because Jesus’ compassion is the one of identification with the poor, the fatherless, the sick and the stranger, it is about what they do for Jesus, how they love and care for Him. As Jesus said when he sent out his disciples on their first mission: “He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me.” (Mt 10: 40). Their relationship with God is reflected in their relationship towards human beings. Hvalvik reflects that this type of identification is found in Proverbs as well: “Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but those who are kind to the needy honour him.” (14: 31, see also 19: 17).⁴⁷

This is part of the mission perspective in OT, according to Bosch. The purpose of Israel’s election as God’s own people is to serve the marginal in its midst: The orphan, the widow, the poor, and the stranger. “Whenever the people of Israel renew their

⁴⁶ Ibid, referring Hahn (1965).

⁴⁷ Hvalvik, *Fremmede*, 32-39.

covenant with Yahweh, they recognize that they are renewing their obligations to the victims of society.”⁴⁸ Without this service the election loses its meaning.

c. Summary

We have found that Jesus is the guest and stranger who through his invitation into the community of God becomes the ultimate host. The life-giving community Jesus invites to is radically inclusive and accepting.

Jürgen Moltmann’s term for this unconditional embrace of the other is ‘open friendship’. Genuine friendship involves ‘respect for the other person’s freedom with deep affection for him or her as a person’. To offer ‘open friendship’ to another person means that one wants to share life fully with her, while at the same time granting her space to be.⁴⁹

According to Moltmann Jesus is the perfect example of this ‘open friendship’. He was even accused of being ‘a friend of sinners and tax-collectors’ (Matthew 11: 19). Through his actions and attitudes he called people out of their self-isolation and ended the social prejudice they suffered. He created and modelled an ‘encouraging and supportive atmosphere of open friendship among men and women.’⁵⁰

B. *Missio Dei*

1. God as the ultimate missionary

A similar idea to God as *the ultimate host* is the concept of God as *the ultimate missionary*. The first seed of a theology of God’s mission, *missio Dei* (not the exact term) was articulated by Karl Barth as early as 1932, but it emerged clearly at the 1952 Willingen conference of the International Missionary Council (IMC).

⁴⁸ Bosch, *Transforming*, 18.

⁴⁹ Pembroke, *Renewing*, 33, quoting Moltmann (1992), 255-259.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 255.

Mission was understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It was thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine on the missio Dei as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another “movement”: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.⁵¹

The point for the Willingen conference was that there is no mission without God’s sending. God is the initiator, and the church is invited to participate in his mission.

In the new image mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God. [] Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission. There is church because there is mission, not visa versa. To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love.⁵²

It follows that the church’s mission is not necessarily the same as God’s mission. The church’s mission is only ‘true’ mission when it reflects and serves the *missio Dei*. The church must bear witness to the hope and promise of God’s reign and participate in the ongoing struggle between God’s reign and the powers of darkness, death and evil.⁵³ In other words, “God’s own mission is larger than the mission of the church”,⁵⁴ it embraces both the church and the world.

Some authors have argued that the concept of *missio Dei* renders the church superfluous. God does not need the church to articulate himself or assist him in his missionary endeavours. Although there is truth in this, I agree with Bosch when he concludes that mission is ultimately the work of the Triune God, and it is the privilege of the church to participate. “Mission has its origin in the heart of God. [] [T]here is mission because God loves people.”⁵⁵

⁵¹ Bosch, *Transforming*, 390.

⁵² Ibid. referring J. Aagaard (1973) 11-15. A. M. Aagaard (1974), 421.

⁵³ Ibid., J. M. Hull, *Mission-shaped Church, A Theological Response* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 5.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 391, LWF 1988:8.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 392, LWF 1988: 6-10.

These two theological concepts should be held together: God is the ultimate host. He wants to fill all the places at his table, to once again return to the image of the *Great Banquet*. Therefore he sends his servants out with invitations to anyone and everyone. All are welcome at his table (Lk 14: 15 -24; Jn 14: 3).

2. Mission and diakonia

For the purpose of this paper it would be useful to reflect on the relationship between mission and diakonia. Nordstokke sets out two possibilities, depending on how mission is defined.

When mission is being defined as the all-embracing task of the church, diakonia should be considered a fundamental dimension of mission. There are long traditions of seeing liturgia, kerygma and diakonia as the three main dimensions of Christian koinonia. An important task for missiology would then be to find the integrating point of this identity, in a way that is ecclesiological and not merely functional or practical.⁵⁶

The second option is to view mission as identical with evangelisation, kerygma. It is then a question of working out what the relationship between mission and diakonia is or should be. They are both distinct movements and at the same time mutually interdependent of each other. One could say that the first aims at faith and the second at transformation. “Faith,” Nordstokke writes, “is an intrinsic part of and a basic condition for transformation.” While transformation deals with the realities of human life, such as injustice, suffering, empowerment of those who are on the margins or excluded, respect for human life, and creating a more sustainable society.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Nordstokke, *Liberating*, 108. Greek: *liturgia*: liturgy, *kerygma*: proclamation, preaching; *koinonia*: communion, fellowship.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Both of these above definitions are equally possible and should result in witness (Greek: *martyria*) and service (diakonia) being “seen as distinct, but inseparable, mutually necessary expressions of God’s mission to the world.”⁵⁸

Nordstokke continues with the idea that the diaconal dimension of mission can make the Christian witness more incarnational. This is really the issue of contextualisation and has traditionally been understood as interpreting the Gospel message in different cultural and religious settings. It could be however, that doing, serving, rather than just speaking is a ‘better’ way of contextualisation. Jesus is a good model for us. Through his diakonia, especially his care for the poor, sick and marginalised, his mission was manifested. When Jesus had raised the son of the widow in Nain from the death, the people who witnessed it proclaimed: “God has come to help his people.” (Luke 7: 16, NIV; GN: save; Norwegian: *visited*). “To them, incarnation was revealed as a real saving presence in a context of death and grief.”⁵⁹

In the same way, our diaconal actions should be an expression of the Good News, of God’s incarnated presence in people’s lives and struggles, as an expression of God’s mission, the *missio Dei*, in which the church is called to participate. This is how the first Christians saw it: To care for the destitute and sick was a way of bringing the Kingdom to earth, pointing to the eschatological hope. Nordstokke questions whether Christian mission is possible without this ‘incarnatory contextualization’.⁶⁰

Especially Lutherans have wrestled with how to hold these two aspects together: How do we understand the relationship between word and deed? Lutherans have been concerned that too much focus on good works takes away the power of God’s grace. Referring to for instance Ephesians 2: 8-9 they are concerned we get confused about how we are saved. (See also Rom 3: 26; 5: 8; Heb 9: 14). It has been essential for Lutherans to stress that good works follow our salvation. They are the fruit of our faith.

⁵⁸ Ibid. Bosch, 511-512, summarises how different conferences in the past century have tried to hold all these dimensions together in a theology of mission, indicating that mission is a multifaceted ministry.

⁵⁹ Nordstokke, *Liberating*, 109.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

When we realise how much God loves us, that he sacrificed his Son Jesus Christ, we would want to reach out and touch our neighbour.

Stephanie Dietrich has followed the process in the Lutheran Church of Norway (CoN) as they sought to find a new vision for the diaconal ministry. In CoN's vision of 2008 it is said that diakonia "is the Gospel in action".⁶¹ Dietrich contends that CoN's new position can be defended by holding *Confessio Augustana*'s articles V, VI and VII together.

One might dare say that the proclamation of the Word, the administration of the sacraments (CA V) and good works (CA VI) are essential elements of the Christian's and the church's call (CA VII). They are juxtaposed, even though in their very specific order they complement each other, without compromising the belief that justification is the Triune God's work alone.⁶²

It is important to note that also the Roman Catholic Church agree with this, as expressed in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, a result from the international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue.⁶³

Summing up, there is no doubt a close relationship between mission and diakonia. However, it is possible to argue for different understandings of their interdependence. In our context of ISM contextualisation of the Gospel is a key issue.

3. Mission and transformation

It is necessary to expand on the concept of *transformation* linked to mission. In the above section I explored the interdependent relationship between mission and diakonia. I referred to Nordstokke and wrote that it is possible to say that mission aims at faith and diakonia at transformation. He meant that "Faith is an intrinsic part of and a basic

⁶¹ CoN, *Plan for Diakonia*, [website].

⁶² S. Dietrich, "Ecclesiological Reflections on the Diaconal Ministry: A Norwegian Perspective", in *LWF Studies* No. 01/2006, 72. See also S. Dietrich, "Diakonitjenesten i Den norske kirke i et økumenisk perspektiv", in Johannessen, I. K., et al. (ed) *Diakoni: en kritisk lesebok* (Trondheim: Tapir akademisk forl., 2009), 47.

⁶³ Ibid., 71-72.

condition for transformation,” while transformation deals with the realities of human life, such as injustice, suffering, exclusion and sustainability.⁶⁴

I agree with Nordstokke: Faith *is* a basis for change. We need to have an internal image and hope of what can be and what situations can become for us to be willing to act. Believing that things can change is the first step in seeing transformation in people’s lives and conditions. Paul appeals to the Romans that they renew their minds so that transformation can happen (Rom 12: 2).⁶⁵

However, faith in itself is a type of transformation. To become a believer, to be converted, is to be transformed. We leave the old life and the previous outlook on life behind and take on a new identity in Christ. “Transformation is at the very root of our Christian faith. It is at the heart of the saving, redeeming and sanctifying acts of God.”⁶⁶ Jesus says Nicodemus has to *be born again* to enter the Kingdom (Jn 3: 3, 7 (NIV)), and no expression can be stronger than that for transformation. Paul uses a host of expressions to indicate the change that happens: One has become a new creation (2 Cor 5: 17; Gal 6: 15), passed from death to life (Rom 6: 4, 13; Eph 2: 4), gone from darkness to light (Eph 5: 8; 1 Thes 5: 5; 1 Pet 2: 2b) are a few examples which indicate that conversion is a dramatic change for anyone.⁶⁷ Furthermore, baptism is a powerful symbolic action of this new state for the new believer, but not only that; for Paul it is essential that the new life in Christ through baptism and by the Holy Spirit is an inclusion into the community of believers, God’s family. This new community is radically different: All the usual divisions such as race, gender and financial status are gone:

[] [F]or in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Gal 3: 26b-27; see also Eph 3: 6).

⁶⁴ Nordstokke, *Liberating*, 108.

⁶⁵ Nordstokke, *Diaconate*, 121.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 110. Referring Melanchthon (1998).

⁶⁷ Bosch, *Transforming*, 143-145.

And it is exactly in and through this new and ‘revolutionary’ fellowship, which Jesus modelled brilliantly, that transformation can and will happen. Change in social relationships and self-understanding will impact not only the Christian community but also the wider society.⁶⁸ Through Christians’ witness and service it is possible to influence for good: See the oppressed set free, include the marginalised, support the broken hearted and create sustainable living space.

A final and important point to remember is that the ultimate transformation will happen at the end of times, when Jesus Christ returns to establish a new heaven and earth (Rev 7: 13-17; 21: 1- 22: 5). The early church and particularly Luke interpreted salvation in comprehensive terms: The termination of economic, social, political, physical, psychological and spiritual suffering *in the present* (Lk 4:21; 19: 9; 23: 43).

Paul, on the other hand, mostly speaks about salvation as a *process*, which begins in this life, ‘initiated by one’s encounter with the living Christ, but complete salvation is still outstanding. [] We are saved in hope (Romans 8: 24).⁶⁹ Although Paul still awaits Christ as saviour (Phil 3: 20), he at the same time believes that the believer may experience radical personal and social renewal in the here and now (Rom 8: 14f; 2 Cor 5: 17). However, the overarching framework for Paul is the eschatological expectation.⁷⁰

We have so far looked at God’s care and compassion for the stranger, and how God himself is the host who gives room for everyone at his table. We have also explored the Missio Dei who, because of his love, sends out invitations to his Kingdom. Our third aspect of the theme of hospitality is the Triune God as our model of community.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 167, 394.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 393.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 393-394. M. Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts Then and Now* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press 1996), 112 – 132.

C. The Triune God as our model of community

1. The Trinity – a relationship

Relationships have been the recent way theologians have sought to renew the doctrine of the Trinity, Pembroke writes. They look at relationality both within the Godhead and in God's saving encounter with the world. It gives opportunity to explore mysteries of love, personhood and communion. He adds that some theologians make use of Augustine's model of *vestigia trinitatis* (traces of trinity) to explore Trinitarian theology. This model argues that by studying human relationships we can find parallels in the dynamics in the life of the Godhead. Particularly human beings' familial and communal aspects might give us 'clues' about the Trinity.⁷¹ He finds the so-called Cappadocians' contributions most helpful in explaining this.

According to the Cappadocians, the triune God is one *ousia* [substance] but three *hypostases* (realities). The genius in this formulation is that it maintains both the unity of God and the full and complete being of each of the persons. The Trinity [] consists of 'persons in communion' (*hypostases en koinonia*). Through the use of *hypostasis* they ensured that each person was granted full being. The unity in the triune God was protected through the employment of *koinonia*. Through a new approach to personhood in the Trinity, the Cappadocian theologians were able to develop a relational understanding of God. [] It is God as Father [] who begets the Son and breathes out the Spirit.⁷²

Catherine Mowry LaCugna asserts that in the same way as the Triune God consists of persons in communion humans exist for communion. The true nature and meaning of human life is when persons come together in a fellowship of love. This is the key aspect of the Trinity: "God reaches out to the world in Christ and through the power and presence of the Spirit calling all creatures into a loving communion of human and divine persons."⁷³ Said more simply, God is love and it is therefore the nature of God, his

⁷¹ Pembroke, *Renewing*, 7.

⁷² Ibid., 9. The Cappadocians were Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus. They lived in the second half of the 4th century.

⁷³ Ibid., quoting LaCugna (1991), 1.

desire, to communicate Godself to every living creature. In the same way human beings are called and have the ability and desire to love, to reach out, to communicate and be in relationship with others and God. This fundamental reality and desire for communion is the basis for pastoral care, which is our next point.

2. Pastoral care and space

We will here focus on the core aspect of pastoral care: Managing space. Again, Pembroke is very helpful, but he is not on his own. He makes use of two central characteristics of the Trinitarian communion that needs to be models for us, *kenosis* and *perichoresis*.

a. Kenotic love

Kenosis points to the fact that authentic relational life requires an emptying of the self in order to be receptive to the other. It also speaks to our relationship with God. If we are to participate in God's grace, we need to make space for divine action in our lives.⁷⁴

Kenosis is derived from the Greek verb *kenoo* and means 'to empty'. "It refers to leaving a place or deserting it, to pouring out or making void."⁷⁵ In a theological context it is most often referred to in relation to the incarnation. The Son emptied himself in order to take on human form. Philippians 2: 6-8 is the key expression of this:

Though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.

Hans Urs von Balthasar, and other theologians, stress that *kenosis* is not only related to the Son and the incarnation, it is a Trinitarian event. Balthasar focuses on what he calls

⁷⁴ Pembroke, *Renewing*, 43.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 44.

the ‘double character’ of the divine love that is expressed in the cross of Christ. Christ the Son in his love empties himself to be ready to receive the burden of the world’s sin upon himself. However, he cannot put this burden of sin onto himself. He is dependent on someone else to do it. This is God the Father, who in his love empties himself to “prescribe what is absolutely opposed to God” to effect with the Son the redemption of the world.⁷⁶ Against God’s nature he places the world’s sin on the Son’s shoulders. The cross is the ‘second and truest kenosis’.⁷⁷

The ‘first kenosis’ is the creation. Moltman develops it as follows: Before creation God was the fullness of existence. All is God; there is no empty space. Therefore for God to be able to create something outside of himself, he has to make space within himself. This contradiction within God is called *zimsum* by Isaac Luria.⁷⁸

Thus, we ‘meet’ God’s self-emptying, *kenosis*, in the creation, in the incarnation and in the cross. God in his self-humiliation makes space for our sake. Here is our model for true communion: In our meeting with others we must be willing to make space for them. If true communication and connection are to be experienced I must give up my own concerns and self-focus. In genuine conversations there is a creative emptiness where community is born between individuals.⁷⁹ Nouwen calls this creating of space for hospitality. In his rich imagery he says it well:

The paradox of hospitality is that it wants to create emptiness, not a fearful emptiness, but a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and discover themselves as created free; free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances; free also to leave and follow their own vocations. Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt the life style of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find his own.⁸⁰

The challenge remains: True hospitality can only exist where there is true *kenosis*, a creating of a free, friendly, open and safe place where the strangers can find rest,

⁷⁶ Pembroke, *Renewing*, 44, referring von Balthasar (1989), 207-28.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid. referring Moltmann (1981), 108-14. Nouwen, *Wounded*, 91.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 45.

⁸⁰ Nouwen, *Reaching*, 69.

refreshment, opportunity to share their stories, listen to their own inner voices and find their way in life. It is in this open receptive place that salvation, redemption, healing and new life can happen.⁸¹

b. Perichoresis

Perichoresis is the second central characteristic of the Trinitarian communion that should be a model for us. The word *perichoresis* means ‘being-in-one-another’, interpenetration, mutual indwelling, or ‘mutual reciprocal participation’.

The divine persons participate together in the intimacy of love and self-giving. The metaphor of dancing is commonly used to express the meaning of *perichoresis*. The Three flow together in a continuous movement of love. [] There is eternal order and symmetry in this dance, but at the same time there is diversity.⁸²

Furthermore, it ‘refers to the fact that there is both closeness and open space in the triune God []. The divine persons form a unity in love, but if there were no distance in their relational life their particularity would be lost.’⁸³

Although I do accept that there is a unique opportunity for us as Christians to experience intimacy and unity in Christ, I think the principle of mutuality and reciprocity is true in any genuine relationships, including friendships with IS. The challenge is to balance closeness or intimacy with respect for individuality and personal freedom.⁸⁴

Pembroke believes that we in the modern western world have stressed individual and independent freedom in relationships at the expense of intimacy and communion. This was not the case in ancient times, at least up to the Middle Ages.⁸⁵ Arne Johan Vetlesen expresses this notion in slightly different terms. He says that Western culture and

⁸¹ Ibid., 72-73. Guenter, *Holy*, 13-23.

⁸² Pembroke, *Renewing*, 48.

⁸³ Ibid., 43.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 50-51.

society often favour autonomy over care; people want to make decisions about their own lives and not be dependant on help.⁸⁶ Despite somewhat different terminology and focus, both authors express concerns about the development in interdependent relations.

In the context of cross-cultural mission, which ISM is, this is significant. In many so-called ‘hot-climate cultures’⁸⁷ the stress is on community often at the expense of individuality. In these cultures to belong to a family, a tribe, a village is more important than personal opinions or needs. This leads to an inclusivity, unity and reciprocity in a certain kind of way.⁸⁸ We could possibly say there is a ‘mutual reciprocal participation’, *perichoresis*, according to a certain set of rules, like

“You must behave in a way that brings honor, not shame, to the family name. We all take care of each other. No one stands alone.” There is a group mentality that says, “We are a community and must share our food, private lives, homes and even opinions, to serve the whole.”⁸⁹

We conclude that in the Triune God there is mutuality. The three persons in the Godhead participate in reciprocal intimacy and self-giving, at the same time as the three persons do not merged into one, but are given space for each of their differences. In the same way we are called to give each person we meet space to be him- or herself, at the same time as there needs to be a mutual giving and receiving for there to be a genuine relationship to take place. What this reciprocal participation might look like in different cultures might vary, but the principles are still the same.

⁸⁶ O. Fanuelsen, “Kirkens omsorgstjeneste” I K. J. Johannessen et al (ed), *Diakoni – en kritisk lesebok* (Trondheim: Tapir Akademisk Forlag, 2009), 144, referring Vetlesen (2004), 27.

⁸⁷ S. A. Lanier, *Foreign to Familiar* (Hagerstown: Maryland, 2012, 2nd ed), 15-21: ‘Hot-climate’ cultures are relationship-based, while ‘cold-climate’ cultures are task-orientated. Geographically the division is generally according to climate, with exceptions, i.e. the white population of Australia is a ‘cold-climate’-culture, the southern USA is a ‘hot-climate’-culture.

⁸⁸ Pembroke, *Renewing*, 42.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

c. Pastoral care and listening

I have argued in this section that pastoral care is really about the managing of space between persons. In this space both *kenosis* and *perichoresis*, self-emptying and mutuality are needed. We must put our selves aside for a moment, and pay attention to our guest, the stranger, in front of us. For there to be a genuine relationship both partners must take part. A common way to talk about this is to say “we need to listen to each other”, and “we need to develop listening skills”. Nouwen writes:

[] listening is an art that must be developed, not a technique that can be applied as a monkey-wrench to nuts and bolts. It needs the full and real presence of people to each other. It is indeed one of the highest forms of hospitality.⁹⁰

I would also like to add what Barry and Connolly says is required of the spiritual director: They call it a “surplus of warmth”. By this they mean that one must love people in “an earthy, honest, felt way”, being willing to commit one’s time, one’s resources, and oneself to help the person in front of them. The spiritual director must make an effort to understand the person, at the same time as they continue being themselves and sharing their own feelings, thoughts and hopes when this is helpful.⁹¹ Again, I think this is relevant in any relationships that matter.

d. Practical care

An important part of pastoral care is what I would call practical care. In principle this can be anything and everything. It can span from providing food, drink and a bed for a weary traveller or a homeless person, to helping with daily or necessary tasks. In our context of international students, it might mean proofreading essays, help filling in application forms or give a lift somewhere.

⁹⁰ Nouwen, *Reaching*, 89.

⁹¹ W.A. Barry and W. J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1982, 2nd ed), 132-135.

Practical care is really about the idea of holistic ministry, which diakonia aims to be. In our pastoral care for individuals we are not only interested in their spiritual or emotional wellbeing, but also in everything that makes up their lives in physical terms.⁹² We know that we are whole beings, where concerns about exams, health and money matter, and might influence us spiritually, mentally and emotionally.

The biblical story to underpin this holistic approach must be *The Good Samaritan* (Lk 10: 25-37). The Good Samaritan first and foremost cared for the battered traveller in practical ways: He nursed the man, took him to a safe place, and made sure he had everything he needed including financial support and a caretaker. Actually, there is no indication any ‘spiritual conversation’ took place at all. Most likely the unfortunate man had enough just trying to breathe without too much pain, as he is described as ‘half dead’ (v. 30).⁹³ The Samaritan knew, as most people would, that practical care had to come first. Maybe on his return they did have a conversation where the Samaritan and God were thanked for their kindness and rescue? We do not know, but the Good Samaritan showed that he was trustworthy in caring for the whole being of the injured man.

This concept is linked to God as creator. God created the world, including humans, and therefore he cares for his creation, in every aspect (Gen 1). We also are called to this holistic care, to both give and receive (v. 26). *Eurodiaconia* explains it in the following way:

God has given us human beings the role of protecting, preserving and prolonging God’s creation. As human beings we are stewards of Creation. The Creation belongs to God and we cannot claim ownership of what belongs to God, but are called upon to be responsible for what God has created as if it were our most precious possession.⁹⁴

⁹² Eurodiaconia, *Diakonal Identity – Faith in Social Care*, (Brussels: Eurodiaconia, 2010), 10-11.

⁹³ K. B. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*, (London: SPCK, 2008), 294-297.

⁹⁴ Eurodiaconia, *Identity*, 10, quoting Eurodiaconia (2004). See also Fanuelsen, *Kirkens*, 149.

D. Summary of diaconal perspectives

We have in this chapter looked at my three chosen diaconal aspects: Hospitality, mission and pastoral care. We have studied some biblical and theological perspectives on these topics. There is no doubt that both the Old and New Testaments reveal a God who cares about the stranger and outsider. He provides for them and includes them in his people. God is the ultimate host who invites anyone to his table and his Kingdom.

God is also the ultimate missionary, the *Missio Dei*, who invites the church to be part of his mission, to be his messenger who invite people, including the strangers, into his Kingdom. The Triune God is furthermore our model for close relationship and care. God emptied himself in the creation, in the incarnation and in the cross, to be in communion with human beings. The three persons in the Godhead also have a reciprocal relationship, where they give and receive from each other. This mutuality in giving and receiving is the basis for pastoral care. Finally, I made a point that practical care must also be part of pastoral care.

V. Presentation of Friends International

Having explored the criteria for a local FI centre and the diaconal perspectives I wish to use in my analysis, section V will present statistics about IS in the UK, facts about FI as an organisation, and thirdly, a closer presentation of the three chosen centres and the interviewees.

A. *Statistics about international students*

Every year there are about 1 million international students in the UK and about 160 countries in the world are represented. One in ten higher education students are from overseas. *Figure 1* gives an overview of the top sending nations for the academic year 2010–11. The nation sending most students at the present is China, followed by India and Nigeria. Americans and Malaysians make up the last two of the five top sending nations. There are many students enrolled from the European Union (EU), but young people from the rest of the world outnumber them 2-3 times.⁹⁵

In addition, 86,000 international students enter further education institutions every year, with Poland, India, Ireland, China and Spain, being the top five senders. It is also estimated that about 600,000 students are studying in English Language Schools.⁹⁶ The whole field of educating IS is a growing business, with an estimated global demand for 150,000 – 250,000 new student places for international students in the UK by 2020. Very many educational institutions have set themselves defined targets to reach by then, for example York University is aiming to have 25% international students of the total student population. There are no doubt financial gains to be had, with a year's

⁹⁵ HESA, [website], February 2012 press release.

⁹⁶ FI [website]. HESA 2010-11.

study costing a non-EU student between GBP 12,700 - 16,500, substantially more than a UK resident student.⁹⁷

Top sending nations for year 2010 – 11:

Non - EU Countries	Numbers of Students	EU - Countries	Numbers of Students
China	67,325	Ireland	16,855
India	39,090	Germany	16,265
Nigeria	17,585	France	13,325
USA	15,555	Greece	11,630
Malaysia	13,900	Cyprus	11,320
Hong Kong	10,440		
Saudi Arabia	10,270		
Pakistan	10,185		
Thailand	5,945		
Canada	5,905		
All other Non-Euro	101,915		
Total	298,110		69,395

Figure 1. Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). (See map appendix 6).

B. Friends International facts

FI appointed their first full-time staff worker in 1987. However, it is important to note that ministry to IS in Britain goes back to before World War II. At that time it was just a few elite scholars, but after the war the number of overseas students steadily increased. They were mostly from previous colonies, coming mainly to London. In 1950 there were possibly about 10,000 overseas students in the UK.

⁹⁷ York University, [website]. *The Telegraph* [website] claims that UK universities are using foreign students as 'cash cows' to fill budget holes.

A more organised form of ministry to IS started in 1947 by Inter Varsity Fellowship (IVF), known today as UCCF. They set up the *Hospitality Committee*, which focused mainly on welcome receptions and visits to homes at weekends. From then on both the number of students and the ministry has grown steadily. In the sixties and seventies work was really expanding in several cities like Edinburgh, Bournemouth, Cambridge, Bristol and Cardiff. One major step was that churches started taking responsibility for this ministry, and not just leaving it to student organisations.

In 1985 *International Student Christian Services* (ISCS) was established. This was the start of FI, which had its name change in 2002.⁹⁸ Since then the organisation has grown to more than 75 staff working in 35 cities across the UK, with the continuous aim to reach new cities.⁹⁹

FI presents itself as an interdenominational evangelical mission agency with the aim to reach international students while they are studying in Britain. They say about themselves:

There are many organisation committed to bringing God's word to students in the UK and overseas, []. Where Friends International differs is that our sole focus is on international students in the UK. Our primary method of working is through UK churches.¹⁰⁰

The organisation's aim is to encourage and equip churches and Christians to engage and minister to IS. They seek to support IS, 'whatever their faith or background, during their stay in the UK.'¹⁰¹

Furthermore, they express a clear priority to people groups from so-called 'restricted areas', that is countries where there are less chances to hear the gospel, such as

⁹⁸ Weston, *Mission*, 4-10, 18-20, 22, 29.

⁹⁹ FI [website].

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ FI, *Handbook*, 1.

China,¹⁰² Iran and Saudi Arabia, and others. The organisation sees their work as a strategic opportunity to reach students from these nations through friendship and sharing their faith with them. The core tools FI uses to accomplish their mission are hospitality programmes, different ways of exploring the Christian faith, supporting Christian IS to grow in their faith, and training Christians for ministry amongst this student group.¹⁰³

C. Local centres and staff

I have in chapter II shown how I chose the centres and staff to focus on in my research. I explained the method of semi-structured interviews and how I carried out the interviews. In this section I will present the centres and staff in more detail.

The three cities I visited were Nottingham, Newcastle and Edinburgh, and in *figure 2* are some numerical facts about each city.

1. Nottingham

Nottingham is a city in the Central North of England. FI's centre run or support a host of activities run mostly in local churches: 3 cafes, a group for wives and children of students, hospitality scheme, different social events, trips, bible studies for both seekers and believers, and training events for volunteers. The work started over 20 years ago, when a church member in a church close to one of the university campuses, was so burdened by the growing numbers of IS.

Liz Middleton is the centre leader in Nottingham, and is the first staff worker I interviewed. As a centre leader she oversees and co-ordinates the work in addition to

¹⁰² China is difficult to understand concerning religion, and mixed messages are given both by the Chinese government, ordinary Chinese and Western media. FI's experience is that interpretation of regulations is up to local government, and many Christians still experience persecution.

¹⁰³ FI, *Handbook*, 1.

being involved 'on the ground'. Liz is also part of the chaplaincy team at Nottingham University with special responsibility for IS. She is from the city and has worked just over 6 years in the centre. She first got involved with IS when she was a student. She has a background as English teacher, and previously worked 12 years in China, initially as an English teacher, and later caring for abandoned children. She speaks and reads Mandarin, and functions as a knowledgeable resource for the whole of FI's community.

Facts and figures from three cities

City	Nottingham	Newcastle	Edinburgh
City population	303,000	279,000	500,000
Universities	2	2	4
Total university population	60,000	45,000	58,000
IS in universities	11,000	8,500	15,800
Language schools	5	3	12
Language school students*	1000	200-1000	2000-5000
Total IS in the city	12,000	10,000	20,000
Most represented nations**	China Malaysia India Middle-East Africans	China Malaysia France Germany Ireland	China Spain France Germany
Focus groups	Chinese Muslims	Chinese	Chinese
Churches involved***	13	16	19
Christian organisations involved	2	2	4
Staff workers	2	3	5
Reach volunteers ¹⁰⁴	2	0	2

Figure 2. Statistics from 2009-2011.

* Estimates. Varies with season, most in the summer.

** This is experiences of the staff workers.

*** Involvement varies.

¹⁰⁴ The Reach programme is an opportunity for graduated students to give 1-2 years to ISM in a local FI centre, trained and supervised by staff. Both British and international students take part in the programme.

2. Newcastle

My second visit went to Newcastle, a large traditionally industrial city on the North East coast of England. The situation in Newcastle has been quite special in that much of the work amongst IS has been run by one large resourceful Anglican church, Jesmond Parish Church (JPC). This is partly due to its being in close proximity to the two university campuses. The last two years the interviewed staff worker has made a major effort in getting more churches onboard with this ministry. The *Globe Café* in Newcastle was started in 1997 and attracts 100-120 IS every Monday through most of the year, and is probably the largest café run by FI staff. In addition to running very similar things as in Nottingham, Newcastle offers conversational English classes and weekends away.

Philip Ballard has been involved with the *Globe Café* for 12 years. Two years ago, after retiring as a lawyer, he took on the responsibility for the café working two days a week. He has especially spent a lot of time networking with both churches and educational institutions. With many more volunteers coming from many different churches, he believes Christians in the city are catching the vision for the ministry. Philip's sole focus is the development of the café. There are day trips and weekends away running out of the café where he has responsibilities, but all the rest of the work is overlooked by the fulltime staff worker.

3. Edinburgh

I did my third visit at the beginning of June 2012, and my destination was Edinburgh. Edinburgh is the capital city of Scotland, and the start of FI in the city began in the mid-1990s. One church particularly and IFES were already quite established with ministry to IS. The interviewed staff worker characterised FI's work in Edinburgh as a 'hands off' approach, which I understood as churches and local Christians taking very much responsibility for ministry to IS. The FI staff worked mostly in supportive and facilitating roles. Many activities are offered.

Lindsay Capper has worked four years for FI in Edinburgh. She left about two months after the interview, but I still think her perspectives are valuable. She is the youngest of my interviewees, both in terms of age (31 years old) and time as FI staff. She started engaging with IS when she was a student. She later worked as administration assistant for IFES based in Oxford, where in her free time she was heavily involved in helping to set up an international café. As part of her degree in European studies she spent some time in Spain, and has a special concern for European students. During her time in Edinburgh she had a particular responsibility for support of the Christian Unions (CUs)¹⁰⁵ and training *Reach* volunteers for the whole organisation.

D. Summary

In this section I have presented a short overview of the factual situation of the ministry to IS in Great Britain as a whole and in three specific local centres. I would say that just the sheer number of students, diversity of cultures represented and the transient character of the situation indicate a great opportunity and challenge in this mission endeavour. I found it reassuring that Christians in Britain early became aware and offered hospitality and Christian fellowship to overseas students from the British colonies.

The three centres I have visited have in common that they are quite well established, having run between 15-25 years since they first began. This means that they are past the first pioneer period with all its uncertainties. They are therefore able to both look back at how the work has developed and at the same time plan for the longer term. At the same time the variations between the centres and their staff give diverse viewpoints and input for the next chapter.

¹⁰⁵ CU is the term of the local student body of the UCCF.

VI. Analysis

I have now arrived at the heart of this thesis: Analysis of FI's *Vision Statement* and interviews of three staff workers out on the 'mission field'. The main question to be answered is: To what extent can a Friends International local centre be a holistic diaconal ministry? The support question is whether there is a balance between the four operative areas in FI's ministry, or is there in reality a stress on evangelism? The aim is to see these four sources through the filter of my three chosen diaconal aspects: Hospitality, mission and pastoral care. How do they relate to each other? To what extent is there correlation between theory and praxis? These are the questions anyone, both practitioner and academic, should be asking. I will in every section first present the interviewees' viewpoints, although the three of them do not always elaborate on the same topics. My own additions and conclusions will conclude each section.

A. Friends International's Vision

In FI's *Staff Handbook* we find their *Vision* statement, followed by a *Mission* statement where they flesh out their core activities, and finally a listing of the charity's *Values*. The full text can be found in appendix 5. What is of particular interest in relation to the *Vision* statement is that it changed in January 2011. Possibly the previous statement was created when the organisation changed its name in 2002. It is only the *Vision* wording that was changed in 2011, the text of the *Mission* and *Values* are exactly the same. With the excuse of being new in the job, I did not realise this change before I seriously started working on this assignment. My intuitive reaction was: "We've lost something!" With that in mind I decided to explore this with my interviewees.

I wish to ask three questions in this part of the paper: 1) What are the differences in the two statements? 2) How does it matter? 3) How does it relate to my diaconal perspectives?

1. Present Vision statement

The *present Vision* is stated in the following way:

The purpose of Friends International is to see international students transformed by the good news of Jesus so that they fully engage with the mission of the church in the world.

If we look at the first half of the statement, all three interviewed staff think the word *transformation* in the present vision is a good and appropriate one. It reflects what the organisation is about and what they wish to see in students' lives in a two-fold understanding. Lindsey explains:

When I think about transformation I think of the transformation Jesus brought to people's lives, particularly the individual encounters. There was a wide variety of people [that Jesus met] and just how powerful that transformation was in their lives, in different spheres of their lives; like health, attitudes to money, [the question of] living by rules or by grace. So, lots of different areas of transformation, both physical and spiritual. In the context of the vision it is both a one-off event where you are transformed by an encounter with Jesus, so the idea of being born again [], and then it is the continuous process of being transformed as you walk with Jesus. [You are] being transformed in all areas of your life, in your heart, body, mind, soul.

Philip makes use of the concepts of *head* and *heart*. He is concerned that many IS can understand the Gospel just in an academic and intellectual way. The Gospel message needs "to move [from their heads] into their hearts", and from there actions will "flow":

I don't think it is enough for any Christian to say I believe and not act on what you believe. God calls us to serve; he calls us to look upon the material world in a very different way than everybody else would look at it. [As a Christian] I should live my life with compassion, with love and care [for others].

Furthermore, both Philip and Liz elaborate quite a bit on the fact that the level of transformation they wish to see for those who become Christians, is a sacrificial giving and serving in their relationships, in church and mission when they return home. They

both give examples of Chinese students they know and are in contact with, and the challenges and risks they face back home. Liz explains:

Let's say that someone comes from China to the UK from a one child background; they are used to the attention of their parents and two sets of grandparents, so there are six adults giving all their attention to this one child growing up. In one sense they have received everything, and in another sense they have great expectations put on them. They have not been used to thinking about sharing very much, because they have not had any brothers and sisters, and been used to always having everything they wanted. They are very focused in their vision: Because their parents and grandparents are expecting them to get a very good education, and then go on to get a very good job and earn a lot of money.

So the aspect of thinking of others might be quite limited. If they are growing up being taught that there is no God, and that life is just the here and now, then they might have a very materialistic outlook on life. [] I can think of Chinese people I know that have realised that previously their lives have been quite self-centred, and self-focused, and now become a Christian, have realised they need to think more widely, obviously about God, but 'I need to be thinking about other people'. And I think a big challenge for someone from China, would be to go a bit further and have a vision for the poor and the marginalised, [those that are beyond their own sphere of quite well-off people].

Philip has a slightly different angle:

I'm very mindful of the fact that for many students when they go back, if they are fully engaged with [the] mission [of the church], they are sometimes putting their lives at risk, most definitely putting their family and relationships at risk, putting their work prospects at risk. There will be suffering if they are willing to be fully engaged with sharing the Gospel with people in their own countries.

For example, you've got to understand Confucianism to understand Chinese culture, because you've got to understand that prior to becoming Christian the primary relationship they have is with their parents. On many occasions they say that their parents will choose their job, choose their partners, and that is nothing unusual for them. Then suddenly to go from there to, - although they must honour their parents -, to God [now being] their primary relationship above all other things [is a big step]. That will lead them into conflict, also with their family.

This takes us on to the second half of the *Vision* statement: *so that they fully engage with the mission of the church in the world*. Lindsey stresses that FI's ministry needs to

teach believers that being part of the Church also means being called “to make disciples of all nations”, as the *Great Commission* says (Mt 28: 19). They need to prepare the students to find and become part of a Christian community back home, and engage and use their gifts in the mission of the church they return to.

Liz has two further aspects in mind: Firstly, to encourage students to become “world Christians” with a “world wide outlook”. Students need to be made aware of “God’s heart for the nations, and the place of every Christian in world mission.” Again, she points to the fact that it is a very alien idea for a Chinese person to be thinking about other people groups. Secondly, to train Christian IS in how to “live a life of integrity and be a godly Christian witness in their workplace.”

2. Previous Vision statement

The previous Vision reads:

Our vision is that every international student in the UK should have a Christian friend, giving them the opportunity to respond to the message of Jesus Christ and return home with the desire and skills to spread the Gospel in their own country and throughout the world.

Although this statement is longer than 2011- vision, the four distinct areas that FI operate in are clearer here:

- 1) Hospitality and befriending
- 2) Evangelism
- 3) Discipling
- 4) Returnee ministry, which means preparing and supporting students before and on their return to their home country.

The one element that really is the difference between the two vision texts is the part about friendship; *that every international student in the UK should have a Christian*

friend. Philip was very passionate about this and believes something is lost by this alternation:

I was incredibly disappointed when they omitted that from the new statement. Because I think as a Christian I should be offering friendship to students no matter whether or not they should wish to respond to the Christian message. I have many friends who are Muslims, very devout Muslims, who I have great friendships with, and we have had some great discussions. In the end of it I give them a copy of the Bible in English and Arabic, and I am given the Quran in English and Arabic, and we have agreed to disagree. I think those friendships are very important; because it shows that we are not just looking for students who we think will respond to the Gospel message. I think friendship is far more than that at the *Globe Café*¹⁰⁶. I think it is good for Muslim students to go back to their own countries and say that Christians are very welcoming to people of different faiths. I think that has an enormous impact.

[]. I think friendship is at the very heart of what we do. [] And you never know how God's going to work. Say, in years to come they might open up the English-Arabic Bible, read it and email me and say: 'What does this mean?' [] There are just all sorts of opportunities for that. I just feel that to omit [friendship] from the mission statement is short sighted.

Lindsey tells me that when the change happened they had a lot of discussion with one particular church in Edinburgh. They were wondering whether FI was changing its focus. She, however, still thinks the concept of friendship is included in a way in the word *transformation*, because friendship really is the base of what FI wish to do. Although she wonders if the new vision is more open to misinterpretation, she hopes that Christians would see the dynamism and excitement by the use of *transformation*, and that it actually is about "a whole person transformation, not just faith based." The old vision does not have this kind of excitement about it, of something "powerful and alive, a living, ongoing thing".

Liz expresses that she is more comfortable with the new vision statement because she thinks it is more realistic. Stating that their aim is *that every IS should have a Christian friend* could just make "one feel a total failure". Even with lots of volunteers and many hospitality programmes it is impossible to meet all the thousands of IS in the city. "[] at

¹⁰⁶ *Globe Café* is the name of the IS café in many of the FI centres.

the end of the day you are aware that there are lots of IS who yet haven't made a Christian friend." On the other hand she does think the idea of friendship is fantastic and the necessary beginning for the ministry, which she believes is reflected in the name of the mission agency as well.

3. Summary and diaconal perspectives

In my view the interviewees have together presented the pros and cons of the two vision statements. In other words, both visions have strengths and weaknesses. In my opinion the pre-2011 vision is more concrete and more clearly expresses how FI works. The newest version is more abstract and needs interpreting, and in that sense is dependent on explanations given under the *Mission* and *Values* statements, like *We aim to achieve our mission through [] providing programmes of practical care and hospitality* and *Caring for the whole person*. Even then the concept of transformation is not explicit, and nowhere does it say that transformation for the whole person is meant. It is hoped that the biblical perspective is understood by church members and others.

However, one element or 'tool' which supports this all-encompassing transformation, and the ultimate aim the mission agency wishes to see and work towards, is probably their so-called strap line which is used in much publicity: *transforming students – transforming nations*, like shown in the logo below:



This strap line captures the essence of the ministry very well: The aim is to influence IS for good. Many IS will become future leaders in their home countries. In many cases it is the most resourceful young people who come to the UK, and they will become leaders in

education, business and politics, with a possibility to influence many others. If the students also become Christians, they might become leaders in local churches. In addition, it is hoped that they also will take part in God's mission to their nation, both in terms of the community and people group they belong to themselves, and in terms of other people groups or 'needy' groups in the country, or even that some of them will be called to be missionaries in other countries. This is a big vision, in many ways it *is* the vision of the Christian Church. It is the *Great Commission*, and for a mission agency nothing less is acceptable.

If we do assume that the concept of *transformation* in the present vision statement entails a whole person focus, I would say that it has a holistic diaconal perspective of hospitality, mission and pastoral care. However, I cannot help the sense that something is lost by taking out the *friendship* part. I have the same concern that Philip has that by omitting the *friendship* aspect the organisation gives the signal of solely focusing on conversion and world mission. I believe that by becoming friends with someone you are telling them that you value them as a person as they are *now*, not just the person they *might become*. Deut 10: 19 indicates you are to love the stranger while he is still a stranger. A question rises: Is it possible to love someone without, at least, being willing to become a friend?

Friendship also reflects an engagement with and care for the whole person; emotionally, practically and spiritually, and a mutuality of giving and receiving. Liz elaborates:

If you are going to be a friend to somebody, then you are going to reach out to them and express an interest in them, and there will be expressions of hospitality, and expressions of genuine interest in the person's welfare, getting to know a person, [], going through the ups and downs of a person's life, []. I think friendship is something that grows. [] As the friendship flourishes and you're getting to know each other there is mutuality about it. []. I believe one needs to be able to receive as much as one gives. As friendship develops and flourishes barriers are broken down and trust grows and the level which sharing occurs will deepen. So people are much more likely to share their deeper thoughts and vulnerability once they know someone well.

Lindsey makes the point that there is a limit to how many deep friendships you can maintain, in the way Liz reflects above. This is true, but I still think friendship is the word that best conveys hospitality, a whole person care and reciprocity. I do not think that *transformation* entails this mutuality, the transformation that most likely will happen to the giver as well as the receiver as they continue to meet. In this sense, *transformation* is a one-way word, and lacks the ‘dynamic dance’ of friendship, to refer to the metaphor previously used to describe the Trinity.

Finally, I would contend that friendship is an *incarnational* reality. It is a way of contextualising the Gospel: Like God became human to show us who he is, we can become someone’s friend to show them who Jesus is. This is *martyria* through *diakonia*. Many who are involved in ISM can testify that it is a very powerful witness maybe especially to people from non-Christian cultural backgrounds. Philip tells this story:

The first time I came to a *Globe Café*, it was 12-13 years ago nearly now, I remember a student sitting opposite me, I was a lawyer then, so I was incredible busy, and we were chatting away. He said ‘What are you doing?’ I said: ‘I’m a lawyer’, and he said to me: ‘Then why do you do this?’ I thought: ‘What a wonderful question to be asked.’ That’s for me success. It is so important to be in such a position that you make these people think ‘What is different about you, that you would do this thing, - for no money of course, as well?’ For me that’s what drives me on.

Friendship seems to me to reflect powerfully the cost and the willingness “to be broken” for each other, like Christ was “broken for us” (Isa 53: 4-5, Gal 3: 13, 1 Cor 11: 23-24). It conveys a willingness to go beyond our safety zone and sacrifice of ourselves and our resources.

To sum up, both visions in discussion are useful tools, and both have inherent dynamism linked particularly to the two concepts transformation and friendship. However, I am inclined to feel my intuitive reaction has been affirmed: By leaving out befriending, the vision is weaker in terms of a holistic diaconal ministry.

However, some would say what really matters is how the ministry is carried out and experienced by the people ‘in the field’. We have in this section explored the theory, the aims of the mission agency. It is now time to turn to the interviewees’ reflections about their ministry linked to my diaconal perspectives.

B. Three field workers and centres

1. Activities

a. Great variety

It is natural to initially comment on the range of activities happening in the three focused centres; Nottingham, Newcastle and Edinburgh. As noted before, they are well established with many activities on offer: Cafés, hospitality schemes, English classes, trips, weekends away, social events, women’s groups, various bible studies and church services. My impression is that in every local centre how many churches are involved and to what extent they are involved will vary. They will also most likely only have resources for 1-3 organised activities. Running cafes being one of the things churches often cooperate in because of the resources required.

The first comment relates simply to the sheer numbers and diverse activities taking place. Many similar things happen in several of the long established FI centres in the UK.¹⁰⁷ With regard to activities mentioned: On the surface level it is possible to say that all four key areas are represented, however there are probably more activities in the hospitality box than any of the others. Entering them into a simple table might look like *figure 3*.

The aims and details of how a certain activity is run will imply which box it will fall into. We also know that reality of life and ministry seldom is this orderly. For example, a café

¹⁰⁷ FI, [website].

might have hospitality as its main object, but if a volunteer develops a deeper relationship with a student, she might be able to share her faith with the student. If the student then becomes Christian the café might be a meeting place where continued conversations about faith take place. These conversations could be part of both discipling and preparation for return. However, constructing such a table might be a helpful tool as one reflects on how one develops the ministry in a local centre.¹⁰⁸

Activities and Ministry Areas

Ministry / Activity	Hospitality	Evangelism	Discipling	Returnee Ministry
Café	X	X		
Social events	X	X		
Hospitality scheme	X	X		
English classes	X			
Trips	X	X		
Women's group	X	X		
Bible studies	X	X	X	X
Weekends away	X	X	X	X
Church services	X	X	X	X

Figure 3.

Furthermore, it makes sense that hospitality ticks more boxes than the others; simply because this is the starting point for the ministry. Social events, trips and cafes are the ‘wide net’ to try to attract as many students as possible, make them aware of what the local centre offers, and start relationships. Liz describes the ministry as concentric circles with different levels of contact, where for example a day trip to York, which attracts 200 students, represents the outer circle. The next circle is represented by the

¹⁰⁸ P. Thomas, Training Module: *Developing Vision and Strategy*, FI [website].

Globe Café, where some students come very regularly and others just once in a while. The third circle is possibly a bible study group for some students (See *figure 4*).

I get the impression that Liz thinks any Christian ministry needs to consider these concentric circles, and what the balance is between them. It can be easy and tempting in many ways to provide or stay in the outer circles, and not move relationships on to a deeper level both psychologically and spiritually.

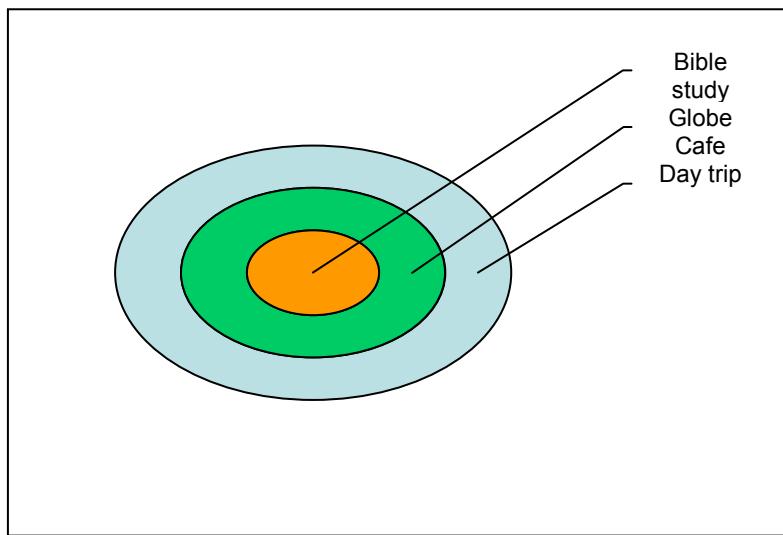


Figure 4. Activities with different levels of contact with students.

b. Pastoral care not visible

Of my three diaconal filters one of them does not easily fit into a table or a figure of concentric circles. Activities with hospitality and mission as their objectives are much more concrete and definable. Pastoral care, on the other hand, is not easily made visible. The staff workers' responses clearly reflect this, preferring to relate stories more than anything else.

Liz is part of the chaplaincy team of Nottingham University with particular responsibility for IS. At times she might be referred students from the university's counselling services. Here is one of her stories of a student who hid, in his room, I presume:

David had been suffering from quite severe depression, and hadn't been making friends. I was contacted and asked if it was possible for him to be introduced to the *Globe Café*, and he also said he wanted to study the Bible. [] A number of us got to know him quite well, and he would talk quite openly at times about his struggles. I definitely needed to listen, and try to get him out of his shell and out in contact with other people: So sometimes trying to encourage him to take initiative [himself], try to build his confidence again. That's just one example of one person. I guess in David's case it was multi-faceted, [] a mix of practical and spiritual support, and friendship.¹⁰⁹

In Newcastle the key church and where the café is run has a group of mature couples who they call on when needed. This, I think, is in more severe cases, where individuals need quite a bit of follow up. Philip and his wife seem to do quite a bit of 'crisis management' and have students staying over at weekends when they need a listening ear and a shoulder to cry on.

However, I think pastoral care is best described as something running along side or in the middle of all the activities on offer. It is difficult to pin down, but it is 'lots about just being there' and listening to people, as Lindsey says. Liz adds that the extent of pastoral care given is really dependent on volunteers and their awareness and skills.

2. Assessment of the ministry

As much research in the sociological and anthropological fields show many factors are difficult to pin down when trying to assess a 'mission' or 'ministry'. The respondents mention aspects they look at when evaluating what they do:

- 1) How many students come to activities?
- 2) Do students return to activities?

¹⁰⁹ Most Chinese students take an English name to make it easier for everyone.

- 3) Do students bring their friends?
- 4) Are genuine conversations taking place?
- 5) Are relationships being formed between volunteers and students?
- 6) Are activities meeting students' needs?
- 7) Do students move on from social activities to bible studies?
- 8) How many students are converted or baptised?

The interviewees agree that it is easy to focus on numbers as an indication of success, but that it really is about relationships. Are people making friends and are needs met? I find it striking how high up on the agenda relationships and friendships are for the field workers. All centres do quite a bit of training on this, both in terms of focusing the volunteers, but also in terms of giving them skills in cross-cultural communication and in building relationships.

Philip recognises that they use 'different measures of success', as listed above, but that there is one ultimate 'test':

I think for me success ultimately is: Those students who have an interest in understanding the Gospel have an opportunity to do that. And I regret to say that, even if we are somewhat successful, we could be a lot better at doing that.

Two further aspects concerning assessment are mentioned: Lindsey asserts:

You're not doing it because of results anyway. You're doing it because you're called to serve, but the results are important in terms of being effective and knowing what to change and what not to change, and so on.

Liz probably expresses a notion that many people in Christian ministry think and feel:

Most of the time I feel like I'm just touching the tip of the iceberg. A lot of the time I feel like I should be doing a lot more. [] I just feel like people are slipping through my fingers. That might be too much of a human response, and not trusting in God being in control at the end of the day. But I do quite often think: Am I on the right track? Are there better ways of doing things?

It is encouraging when you hear about people becoming Christians or being baptised. But I don't know that we always know the results of what we are doing, because you don't always get feedback from everybody, and you don't always know about the seeds that are sown. They are not all going to sprout immediately. For some people we are *one* [link] in the chain, and next time they meet someone they might be more responsive when they hear the Gospel.

Summing up, it is clear that all three staff workers are involved in evaluating what they do in terms of ministry. None of them mentions any kind of formal evaluation such as questionnaires, interviews, reports or meetings, which probably indicates that much evaluation happens informally in conversations and debriefing in team meetings and similar, and takes the form of anecdotes. This is a weakness, but most likely it indicates the difficulty of designing accurate tools for assessment in this field. However limited it is though; it keeps informing the development of the ministry in their city.

3. Hospitality

a. A student's story

It should be clear by now that all three centres provide many activities and training of volunteers to facilitate hospitality. There is no doubt that relationships are being formed and that the staff workers model this in their own lives. Lindsey gave a lovely definition of hospitality:

[The way God shows us hospitality] in terms of welcoming us into his family [] very much informs my understanding of hospitality: Something that's very welcoming to all people, particularly outsiders and making people feel secure and comfortable in your presence and extending [an] attitude of grace and openness towards them. [] Jesus includes those who are the outcasts or on the edges of society and eats with them, very much welcomes them into his presence, and it doesn't matter if they're clean or unclean.

One of the limitations I set for this assignment was the student perspective. However, at this point it would be helpful with an example of how FI's ministry works from the experience of a student. Deborah from Columbia tells her story:

I was walking through a park in Cambridge when I was given a leaflet by a young woman. It advertised an international café where I could practise English and meet other international students. I am a very shy person, but unlike me I decided that I would go.

When I arrived I did not expect to meet such wonderful people. I met a girl who I was able to speak with for most of the evening. She was a Friends International volunteer and has since become a great friend. When I met her I found it easy to express my feelings despite my level of English.

At the café I began to ask questions about the Bible and Christianity as they were the topic of that evening's discussion. I will never forget how my friend explained to me that first we have to be willing to accept God's love in our hearts and then we can find what God's purpose is for our lives.

Since experiencing God's love for me there have been many changes in my life. Before I was troubled with who I was and I felt empty inside. Thankfully I know that His love for me is everlasting. Living by his side everyday makes me so happy.¹¹⁰

Of course, not all contacts or friendships lead to conversion, but I think this story gives a good picture of how hospitality and friendship are facilitated by an international café, in addition to the evangelistic aspect. FI publicity often features similar testimonies, so this is not just a one-off story.

b. International students as strangers

The interviewees' outworking of hospitality in their own lives and through equipping others demonstrates deep reflections to the extent that it has become part of their identity. Philip states this most clearly:

[Hospitality] is part of who I am as a Christian, in that I am called to welcome the stranger. It is a fundamental part of who I am and [what I] should do as a Christian. I would say it doesn't matter whether they are IS or anybody. It must affect everything you do. That comes back to those qualities of compassion and love for people. You are reflecting that in offering hospitality to strangers and welcoming them as equals. I make no distinction, whether wealth, class, religion.

¹¹⁰ FI, *Opportunity*, January – March 2013, 2.

None of those things are important. God calls you to be even handed in that way, to everyone.

Lindsey and Liz are both deeply motivated by two factors: Firstly, that God is the host who invited them to be part of his family, and secondly, by the fact that they have lived abroad themselves, and experienced the ups and downs of being a stranger. Liz explains how it informs her:

Living abroad I so valued the love and the friendship of many Chinese people, and they were hugely generous. These were not just Christians. Lots and lots of Chinese people were hospitable to me, [] In one sense I feel really challenged. There are so many people here in the UK, and in Nottingham, who have come from other countries, and generally speaking I don't think they receive such level of hospitality as I felt I received when I went [to China].

I think that must be quite shocking to them, because I think in their culture you show respect and hospitality to guests. []. Therefore I think it is a huge opportunity for Christians to take up that challenge, and to extend the arm of friendship, and show genuine respect, love and care for those who come from so far away. Also, Jesus spoke volumes about this, and I find [the biblical] texts inspiring, and what made me motivated to be involved in this ministry.

When I asked them how they would characterise the IS as strangers, Lindsey mentions the typical things:

Lots of things: Different culture, different ways of doing things, different language, different values, different behaviour. I think all these things, in effect it's just the different culture, isn't it? - You behave differently to other people and so then you're an outsider. Not one of us, in that sense.

I wonder whether Lindsey's question mark, *it's just the different culture, isn't it?*, indicates something. I got the sense with all three staff that although they are aware of cultural issues, and enjoy the experiences they give in relationships; somehow it is not where they focus their energy. The whole matter of relating cross-culturally has become second hand, and really part of who they are as people. They have learnt to live with a very open mind and not assuming anything about others. Philip explains how he thinks about it:

I suppose everyone is a stranger in a way. My next door neighbour is a stranger in a way. Again I wouldn't say that there is anything about IS particularly characterises them as strangers. I suppose they are more different to us. But I think that basically my next door neighbour, who is not a Christian, has exactly the same needs as the IS, because of all the clutter in their lives, [] that separates them from God.

So I think, in a sense, that the stranger is anyone who doesn't know Jesus Christ and who is lost, and that is so many people. I would say culturally it is more difficult to relate to international strangers, because you don't understand as well as you understand your own culture. But I think they are all in the same position in the sense that they are all incredibly lost. I think a lot of them are desperately looking for something, and they don't know what it is, but we do. That is a call for all of us.

Gauging their sentiment I had to ask them whether they think FI in their publications focus too much on IS being vulnerable, lost and lonely as they adapt to a new culture. Liz thinks that possibly quite a lot of students experience loneliness and vulnerability. The two others would be aware that it might be the case for some, but would not think of IS as a group in these terms. Philip sees many students as quite the opposite; resourceful, ambitious and articulate. Lindsey reflects that settling into a new culture goes in stages:¹¹¹

I definitely know people who would fit those descriptions. I think maybe particularly in the beginning that I would see them as lost or vulnerable, because they very much are. Maybe it's different at different stages of the year in terms of how you view them. [] I think it does go in cycles. I was an international student myself in Spain and those things kept coming up, and then you go through a period when you think: "Oh, I feel more settled and happy and part of everything," and then you feel like you're not again, so

c. Community and fellowship

A way of dispelling loneliness is to feel that you belong to a community. This is the next or deeper level of hospitality. In the OT immigrants were invited to take part in the Jewish festivals, and this was a way to show them that they belonged to the community.

¹¹¹ FI, *Think Home* (2009), 9. "Culture shock" goes in four stages labelled *Fun*, *Flight*, *Fight* and *Fit* indicating how the person is coping during the transition. How long this lasts will vary from person to person, but up to two years is possible.

In the same way, many centres use the Christian festivals as opportunities to connect and invite people to events and homes. Particularly at Christmas many students receive an invitation for a meal in a Christian home, and this is very popular. Regular activities such as cafes and bible studies are probably even better at creating a sense of community. Philip gives us a glimpse of what that looks like:

Community, that's the café, which we continuously are inviting students to come to. It is a community in the sense it is a place where they feel welcome, safe, that people are interested in them as people, rather than just numbers coming through the door. We have time for them; we have time to share our culture and language with them. That creates that lovely sense of community.

So many people have come into the café [], and they see there is a real buzz of what is going on: Smiling faces and laughter. [I think] this is God working really craftily in this group of people, and that is wonderful to see.

Lindsey also gives the café as an example of community:

Community is that sense of belonging which comes through a café []. It builds up the relationships, and [it does] build a sense of community. [It's about] coming together over the same thing that you're doing, so kind of a bonding thing. Out of that, things like Facebook groups can help strengthen or encourage that sense of community.

For Lindsey and Liz the key word is belonging. Lindsey says:

I [think] of [community as] having a sense of belonging and being loved and loving others, and serving and being served. [It is] an environment that's safe and secure and encouraging, with encouraging, loving relationships that's also truthful. [It's] a sense of co-dependency on each other.

Liz elaborates in this way:

I think [community] is a place where people feel they belong, where they feel at home, where they feel they can be themselves, where they feel accepted and loved, and also where they can play a part and use their gifts and their skills. So if people are building one another up, - if we are talking about Christian fellowship; there is an element of learning together, worshipping together, being together in

Christ, praying for each other, reaching out with a common purpose, reaching out to others with the love of Christ.

Both Liz and Lindsey use the biblical image of the body (1 Cor 12) to explain the interdependency and reciprocity they think characterises community and fellowship. Philip thinks there is a difference between community in general and the Christian fellowship, which he holds to be special. He stresses that a returned student is still part of their fellowship in the UK: "She might be hundreds and hundreds of miles away, but she is part of our fellowship." He goes on to explain the responsibility he feels in supporting a young Chinese Christian as she faces a lot of challenges back home.

The internet gives ample opportunities to stay in touch and keep students linked to community and fellowship after they have returned home. For many this is very important, maybe particularly if they have become Christians while they have been in the UK. In addition, if they come from a so-called 'restrictive country' they might struggle to find a Christian community at home. To then be able to stay in contact with Christian friends in Britain will be essential. This happens despite security issues linked to any activity on the internet. All three staff workers keep in touch with people after they have left through Facebook, emails, phone calls and visits, reflecting their commitment to the individual, and the vision and values of the organisation.

Another thing I find striking in the quotes above is that all three staff reflect the ideas of *safe and welcoming space* and *reciprocity*, and it happened without my prompting. This correlates to the two ideas of *kenosis* and *perichoresis*. I interpret this to mean that they are aware and wish to create in Nouwen's words "a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and discover themselves", "sing their own songs" and "dance their own dances".¹¹² Sometimes they feel they see this, and they know that for true community to be built mutual hospitality and care must take place. Lindsey says she encourages students to take initiative themselves, like to cook or plan events. Liz thinks it is part of

¹¹² See chapter IV, 2. C. a.

helping people to feel that they belong, that they are contributing, in getting involved. Often they are asking: "How can I help?" I think it is giving people an opportunity to be involved, to feel that they are important and valued and needed.

Philip and Liz both give examples of how they have received from international student friends they have made.

4. Mission

The second of FI's areas of operation is evangelism. In the table I set up in figure 3 all activities except English classes had a tick under evangelism. The extent of this happening will depend on the volunteers' confidence and abilities in sharing their faith in all kinds of circumstances, but the possibility is there. Discipling, which I see as part of Christian mission, takes place through bible studies, church services and individual mentoring. Again, what is of interest is how the informants reflect on their ministry.

a. *Exceptional opportunity*

You can think the local churches know, but I suppose you need to keep reiterating [], that challenge [of ministry to IS]. Perhaps especially at present, because this is a period of history where so many people from so many different nations are coming to the UK. - We don't know how long this door of opportunity will be open. [We] can't necessarily take that for granted. We don't know how long that will [last].

The above quote is a deep sigh from Liz, and her concern and compassion is shared by Philip:

In terms of relating to my church, I would see it as identifying this incredible need: To share the Gospel with [international] students. It is a once in life time opportunity for them. They have this one opportunity to hear, and we have this one chance to share our faith with them. If it doesn't happen at all, then it is very unlikely that it will ever happen again. [] It breaks my heart to know that there are students, who come to the UK, and they come to study and they never ever get the chance to hear the Gospel.

Lindsey also expressed the need for churches and Christians to be made aware of “this opportunity on our doorstep”.¹¹³ At the same time she came from a different angle as she thought about the mission aspect:

[Our ministry is] an expression of our future hope, – in terms of the Revelation 7 passage: That we'll be worshiping with every tribe, nation and tongue, and so what we're working towards now is with that goal in mind. [Therefore we should be] strengthening the cross-cultural family bonds now, preparing for the future, that future dynamic, and helping the volunteers and the IS we're working with to have that understanding of being a global Christian. That's what Christianity's about, - having that global perspective.

Liz also speaks about being a ‘world Christian’ although she is “not sure to what extent to expect for everyone to be involved with ISM ‘hands on’,” but everyone should at least be able to say ‘hello’ and talk to IS when they see them in church.

There is no doubt these field workers are sharing in God’s love for the nations, and they have picked up God’s invitation to participate in his mission. They believe that the Christians in Britain have been given a unique opportunity at present to be involved, as representatives from many countries of the world are arriving on their shores. Fortunately, some churches have caught the vision, but as Liz sighs: “There does seem to be a lot more to do!”

b. Word and action

FI’s mission statement is similar to the vision statement in content: *To make known to international students in the UK the Good News of Jesus Christ by word and action* (Appendix 5). In our context one key phrase stands out: *by word and action*. FI sees its ministry as sharing the Gospel through both evangelisation and diakonia. The three interviewees express support for this sentiment. In their experience different churches will have different strengths, and it is about working with this, encouraging what works well. This is also part of how the mission statement is explained:

¹¹³ This expression is used quite a lot in FI publicity.

We aim to achieve our mission through [] motivating, mobilising and equipping churches and their members to share their lives and faith in Jesus Christ with international students in their local area [].

Philip mentions several times that what he wishes to see in the café, is that IS will notice the qualities in the volunteers, and start asking: "Why are they different?" In this way he reflects the idea that we as Christians are "letters" to the world. Again, this can be understood as the incarnational character our lives have, as Paul writes: "[] you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts." (2 Cor 3: 2-3). In addition Philip speaks at length about 'getting the balance right' in the café between evangelistic inputs and providing a friendly social place to meet.

Furthermore, they all three talk about giving practical help as part of their ministry. I will come back to that in the next section. However, Liz is the only one who elaborates thoroughly on the balance of 'word and action':

If it is possible to share the Gospel verbally, then try to do that, and not pushing them, but giving them the opportunity to hear. Demonstrating by the way we behave, what the Christian life is about. - None is perfect so we can't live a perfect life before them. We can only live a real, - in a sense a flawed life, but that helps people understand the grace of God. []

I think explaining the concept of grace [and forgiveness] is quite important, because a lot of people would have come from a background where grace is neither understood, nor a way of life they've ever experienced before. I think it is [about] giving people opportunity to hear the proclamation of the Gospel, but also to give people a chance to experience the lives of real Christians.

Later in the conversation she adds this:

If we truly love God, we do need to be aware of the needs of others and be reaching out in Christian love. I would definitely be careful of just doing good works, and not rooting it in why we are doing it. A poor person; of course they have physical needs, but actually at the end of the day they also have spiritual needs. They also need Christ as Lord and Saviour. I would never want it to be encouraged to be separated from the proclamation of the Gospel. If people are

going to be reaching out in mercy ministries it always needs to be with Christ as the corner stone. It's Christ's love which compels us.

c. Returnee ministry

FI has the past year had a special focus on follow up of returned students. Susan Burt is responsible for this area in the organisation and has conducted several training sessions in 2012. She has written a MA dissertation on the topic related to Taiwanese students. Unfortunately, both hers and others' research indicate that many students, who became Christians while they were in the UK, find it hard to retain their faith back home. Often the pressures of conformity to family, work life and the wider society are too difficult to withstand. If the student in addition comes from a country with restrictive religious freedom, pressures are added. They might find it hard to link up with other Christians locally for instance, to be able to continue to grow in their faith.¹¹⁴

Staff workers have become aware of these issues, including the three I interviewed. I did not get a proper picture of what the different centres provide in this field, but some training of volunteers and individual mentoring are taking place, including personal contact after students have returned.

In Nottingham Liz cooperates with the local staff worker from Chinese Overseas Christian Mission (COCM), an agency well-known for good support for Chinese students. In Edinburgh they have just started thinking about this area, but Lindsey is encouraged that churches are starting to ask for help in how to deal with returnee issues.

In Newcastle the fulltime staff worker works closely with Burt, with a particular responsibility for the so-called international track at a big Christian students' conference which happens at Easter every year. The *New Word Alive* conference emphasise discipleship and returnee matters. Students are given opportunity to gather in groups

¹¹⁴ Burt, *Returning*, 3-5. Little research has been done in the field of ISM in general, and when it comes to returnee issues much of it is anecdotal linked to ISM workers visiting returned students.

according to nationality and language. Here they can discuss relevant contextualisation of the Gospel in their culture and link up with others from their home country, and in this way hopefully support each other back home. These camps are usually fully subscribed every year, and in 2013 they are adding a second week because of the demand. This indicates how useful both students and staff find it.

My informants agree on two things concerning returnees: Firstly, there is much more to be done, and time is a crucial issue. Churches and volunteers need to be much more prepared to deal with relevant topics in their relationships with IS. Secondly, time is always a challenging aspect in this ministry. The majority of students are only here for a short term, between 3-12 months. With the added pressure of performing well in their studies that most students feel, bible studies and similar will not necessarily be their first priority.

Thirdly, discipling takes time. Change does not happen overnight. World view and habits are quite engrained. Conversion is one thing, transformation another. Philip, Liz and Lindsey all see returnee ministry as part of this transformation, a transformation that will make them *effective witnesses for Christ*, as the mission statement says. However, they believe that the transformation is not just about becoming a Christian witness, but in holistic terms, as a person as well. Liz says that even if students do not become Christians while they are here, they can still become agents for change and impact for good in their home situation. She thinks their time in the UK can be 'a very formative time'. She says:

I am very challenged about people going back home and just being sucked into familiar paths. [] How can we be preparing them, equip them to return home? This should actually be starting from the word 'go', even if somebody hasn't become a Christian. It doesn't just happen after discipleship. Will they go back home with a new outlook on life? Will that impact the way that they live at home with their family, in their work place, in their community, with their outlook on their nation and the world, and in their church?

Both Philip and Liz give examples of what issues might come up for Chinese students when they think about return. Philip first:

I had a student recently, who has gone back to China, and she has been in touch with me, because her mother is furious that she is a Christian, and furious that she will not do what her mother tells her to do in terms of a job. Her mother has lined up a very nice man who is not a Christian, and she is saying, 'I can't do that'. She wants her to join the Communist Party. She will not do that. She was aware of it before she went back, but the reality of it is still very different from having that discussion in a very safe and comfortable surrounding, to where she is on her own, in a very antagonistic situation. I think you've got to make that clear to them as much as you possibly can. I don't know how you can actually do it fully, but you must make them aware of that there will be those issues. And just try to help them deal with it.

Liz tells about a Ph. D-student:

One of her questions is: I am a member of the Communist Party, now I've become a Christian, what on earth do I do when I go back to China? [] There is no way I can make that decision for that Chinese lady. We can look at different principles in Bible teaching, but at the end of the day she has to make that decision, because she has to own it and live with the consequences. [] So easy it is for us to say: 'You should do x, y, z,' when we don't have to pay a very high price that she might have to pay. I think it is about that we need to equip people, so that they can make the decisions themselves in the situations that they find themselves.

d. Summary

Under the mission heading I have shown the opportunity and burden the staff workers have for reaching IS. They seek to get the balance right between word and action as they relate to the students. Missional and diaconal activities are taking place in the local centres. The key matter, though, is preparing the students for their return home.

Fortunately, FI has identified this area and have started to give it much more attention in their work. Here is the acid test: To what extent have the students changed, and how can they not only hold on to new things they have learnt, but also impact their surroundings back home? Ultimately, this will be the sign of a holistic ministry: For a Christian student to live out her faith with integrity must be the aim. However, at the end of the day we need to remind ourselves, that only God really knows to what extent this happens. Partly, because it is impossible to follow up every IS whom Christians in

Britain have had contact with, and partly, because God is the only one who knows people's hearts.

5. Pastoral care

a. All-encompassing

In the beginning of this section I set up a table of activities (*figure 3*), and showed how pastoral care is not easy to pin down and make visible. Much of it happens informally along side everything else that is going on. The informants' definitions of pastoral care indicate this as well. Philip simply says it is "all the issues and problems people might have in their daily lives." Liz thinks "it is about looking at a person's well-being not just physically, but also emotionally and spiritually, and relationships." Lindsey finds it difficult to explain:

[It is] caring for the whole person. [] I see it as everything, which is probably quite big. [] It's hard to narrow it down, because your faith is all aspects of your life. God's in everything, so in that sense you need [pastoral care] in all areas, because your faith should be affecting all areas.

Their responses reveal two things: It is about relationships and an all-encompassing care for a person. Before I present more of their thoughts on this, let me relate some of the examples given.

b. Examples of pastoral issues

Philip contends that stress is the main thing they deal with in Newcastle:

I feel that many IS come and study here with English that is *not* sufficient to do the courses. [] I know a lot of them struggle enormously with reading the textbooks and writing the assignments. [] Again, for Chinese students: Their parents are paying for them to be here. They are only children. No doubt they have to be incredibly successful. [] If they don't do well the family and the student

lose face.¹¹⁵ That's a big issue. That's enormous stress. [] Last year we had a Chinese student who committed suicide in Newcastle. [] She threw herself from a window in a university building. That was through stress of work.

Liz tells of a very different kind of situation. She got to know Lesley from China quite well:

She's had TB,¹¹⁶ so she was very worried that if people got to know [] that she would become ostracized. In the end she had to seek medical help. She was very seriously ill and had to spend long periods of time in the hospital. It provided a huge opportunity for members of the church and members of the Chinese fellowship, - so not just Chinese people, but local people as well, and other international students, to really get behind her, pray for her, visit her, [] show love to her, and be with her through down times [].

It is fair to say that Liz' story is less common than Philip's. Philip points out that his wife often deals with the emotional side of students' stress, while he helps with essays. Although he defines proofreading as practical help, he sees both that and psychological support as pastoral care. Lindsey and Liz also see practical help as part of the pastoral aspect. Things they mention are: Helping people move, lending things like cookery pots, letting students use the shower when theirs has broken, offering a bed overnight if they need it. I am sure many others could have been mentioned.

c. Presence and listening

From many of the quotations from the interviews it should be clear by now that the informants see their ministry much in terms of availability. It is about being present for the students, sharing their lives and listening. As shown, these qualities can be 'categorised' under friendship, hospitality, building community and fellowship and pastoral care. The 'lines' between these are rather blurred, which I think often is the case in diaconal ministry. Although neither Lindsey nor Philip would characterise

¹¹⁵ Wikipedia [website], quoting M. Carr, "Lose face", which is an expression for loss of honour, respect, status, reputation, social acceptance is a big issue in Chinese culture.

¹¹⁶ TB = tuberculosis.

themselves as particularly pastoral, they do speak about “offering unconditional love” and “just being there for them”. Here is Philip:

Then there are other things like *sharing* things. I've been recently to dinner with a group of Iranian students who invited me over, and we just spent an evening together. It is time you make available to people, because it is just good to be with them. It is not because there are any problems for them, but they just like to sit down and talk about politics. They would like to understand English politics, and I can understand Libyan, Iranian and Syrian politics. It's this sharing. I think it is part and parcel of caring for the person.

Lindsey mentions prayer as part of pastoral care, to pray with and for people. She continues:

[I think pastoral care is about] lots of listening. [] Just [giving] support, [empathise and sympathise with what they're going through], just being there, spending time with people and being a presence with them as things are huge and they struggle.

Liz speaks about that pastoral care just seems to happen “a long the way”. It is not something she is seeking out or advertising, “but it does happen that people quite often seem to want to talk”, and Liz is a willing listener. However, she is very aware that it is not just about her:

I think pastoral care can only happen when anyone who is involved with IS are aware that students have needs []. But with so many IS you are really dependent on other team members to be aware, be alert to what students are going through, especially be a listening ear, having time for the students. When we do training we talk about the need to be aware in friendship.

d. Friendship the overarching perspective

During my conversations with all the three staff workers it soon became clear that friendship is their overarching perspective. It does not mean that they or the volunteers become close friends with all students they meet, but that they are willing to offer it. And in this context; through the ‘glasses’ of friendship they offer pastoral care. They find it

hard to separate the two, and say explicitly that they feel friendship covers the holistic approach in their ministry. Philip says: "I've really used the word friendship to cover that whole-person thing. We like for people who come to the café to think that we are interested in them as a person. That's the holistic side of it." Lindsey explains:

I find it hard to separate [pastoral care] out from genuine friendship [].Genuine friendship is holistic and so if that's what you're promoting and basing everything on then, hopefully it's part of all of your planning, implementing and carrying out [of the ministry]. Obviously, that's the ideal and doesn't happen all the time. In terms of asking yourself: "Is this holistic or is this not?" I don't do that. I think it's just something that's a mindset already, because it comes from that idea of genuine friendship. That's the model that Jesus gave; [that it includes] all areas of life. How much we achieve it, is another question.

When Liz tries to think about having a holistic ministry her guiding compass is: What are the students returning to when their time in the UK is over? How can I give them input to take home, things that will help them "live with integrity when they return"? as she says. For this input to have impact they will need to trust her, and that happens through friendship.

e. Summary

My assessment is that the interviewees have a high consciousness, willingness and joy in giving of themselves and their resources to IS. They also wish to encourage their volunteers to this self-emptying love and care. In their mind and attitude their care flows naturally in the relationships they form. Although at times it takes effort, like visiting Lesley regularly in the hospital for months, they recognise they also are receivers: They are invited for meals, they share good and hard times together and friendships grow. They might have the joy of sharing the Gospel for the first time with someone, and see them come to Christ.

As friendship is the basis for FI's ministry and in the staffs' mindset, it follows that pastoral care will have an informal character to it. Staff across the country will have

varying degrees of formal and informal links to universities, i.e. Liz is a chaplain at Nottingham University. Similar kinds of arrangements are not in place for language schools, most likely because they often have their own hosting and social programmes, with dedicated employees to provide this. With chaplaincy responsibilities pastoral care might at times be more formal, as student contact is not necessarily based on existing relationship. The local staff worker and key volunteers might be called upon by churches as well, possibly more in an advisory role.

It is positive when churches and educational institutions recognise FI and their capacity, but could the organisation offer more, possibly in a more formal way? I see the potential for the agency to provide cross-cultural training for university staff. Although human beings at the core are the same and often struggle with the same things, how people interpret them and cope might depend on which culture people are from. I am not certain church pastors or universities' welfare services acknowledge this. Good networking and resourcing of staff will be required for professional training courses to be offered.

A second idea would be to have a formal counselling service for IS, where students could make an appointment with a trained person. In theory I think it could work, but for many students from so-called hot cultures this is an alien idea. In these collective cultures it is natural to seek help from family and friends, through the relationships they know. In addition, it would not have the holistic approach which friendship has.

VII. Final reflections and conclusions

The topic of this thesis has been ministry to international students in Britain. I have concentrated especially on the mission agency Friends International, which specialises in reaching this group of 1 million students. I chose three diaconal criteria to discuss in relation to this ministry: Hospitality, mission and pastoral care. Three local centres; Nottingham, Newcastle and Edinburgh, received a visit, and three field workers in these cities shared their experiences and reflections with me.

A. *Reflections on methodology*

Four different kinds of resources gave the basis for the exploration: Theological and diaconal literature, various FI resources, particularly the vision, mission and value statements, and semi-structured interviews. In the analysis of the vision statement I only discussed the two core concepts of friendship and transformation. There are definitely other aspects to look at, for instance what does 'the good news of Jesus' actually mean for IS? Or 'to fully engage with the mission of the church'?

Since one of my motivations was to learn from colleagues with more experience than myself, I conducted three semi-structured interviews with three staff with different responsibilities and length of service in FI. I think this was a good choice of methodology, and the three field workers represented a reasonable variation. My only regret is that I should have encouraged much more examples from encounters with students. Real life instances support arguments in a very helpful way.

Secondly, a fourth interview would have been useful, simply to bring even more material to the discussion. The reason for this is twofold: I experienced that one of the respondents was not very articulate, and I found myself talking more than the candidate, trying to draw things out of the person. This might of course reflect that my questions

where too ‘high-flying’ or theologically formulated. In addition, sometimes one candidate did not reflect so much on one question, and then there were fewer perspectives available for deliberations. Overall though, I am satisfied that the sum of what the candidates ‘brought to the table’ reflects the main concerns of the mission agency.

Finally, it is necessary to remind ourselves that I have in this paper only related staff workers’ perspectives. Other possible groups that could have been interviewed or questioned are IS themselves, volunteers, Christian leaders, top leaders in FI, and supporters of different kind. These are for a further study.

B. Reflections on criteria

I set out in the beginning of this dissertation stating that for a local FI centre to fulfil its mission as it is expressed in the vision it needs to provide hospitality and pastoral care, and be missional. Now, at the end of the study, I still believe these are the core diaconal aspects of FI’s vision and mission. It could be argued that transformation and friendship would have been possible criteria. Friendship seems a very unruly concept.

Transformation, on the other hand, could make for a powerful exploration, and according to Nordstokke it definitely is linked to diaconia and mission. I understood the vision as having a missional stress on this aspect, and discussed it accordingly.

It should be said that when I planned my interviews I wished to look at a prophetic perspective on ISM, and made a set of questions on this. I wanted to see whether ISM could be understood as ministry to a marginal group of society, with the staff worker and volunteers making church leaders aware of this group and their needs, in other words the ‘go-between’ ministry of the deacon. My experience is that many Christians know very little about IS as a group, and the fact that there are so many of them in their neighbourhood. Unfortunately, the interviewees found this a very unfamiliar concept, and the outcome was less fruitful. With better questions bridging the gap between academia and ‘real life’ I still think there are issues that could be explored here as “motivating, mobilising and equipping churches” is part of FI’s core activities.

C. Conclusions

The question and title of this dissertation is: *To what extent can a Friends International local centre be a holistic diaconal ministry?* The supporting questions have been: 1) Is there a balance between the four operative areas of FI: Hospitality, evangelism, discipling and returnee ministry? And 2) Is there in reality a stress on evangelism?

Let me start with the supporting questions: If we assume that our three sample centres are representative of the organisation, I would say there is a reasonable balance between the four operative areas of the ministry. In reality there will always be variations linked to how long the centre has been established, how many churches and people are involved, and what resources are available. I also think it is natural that there will be more students and volunteers involved in social activities (which give opportunities for evangelism) than in discipling, simply because this requires less of all involved. On the other hand, this is exactly where one needs to ask the questions: Are we doing enough to disciple students and prepare them for return to their home countries? Fortunately, FI has put this higher on their agenda, and we will have to wait and see how it will be worked out locally. Most likely it will require training of bible study leaders and mentors. It is also encouraging that FI recently published a new discipleship course.¹¹⁷

Now to the main question: In terms of FI's vision, I think both the present and previous statement show diaconal and holistic qualities, especially as represented in the concepts of friendship and transformation. I concluded earlier that omitting friendship from the vision text was a loss. The main reason for this is that friendship conveys an incarnational quality that is less obvious in the idea of transformation. In friendships Jesus is made visible in Christians' lives, hopefully leading people to Jesus and salvation. Friendship is a core value in the organisation and maybe it is possible to say that through friendship they wish to see transformation in IS lives?

¹¹⁷ FI, *I.D. A Discipleship course for international students* (Ware: FI, 2013).

The three field workers identified strongly with the ministry of hospitality. Through hospitality and friendship they are inviting students into community and fellowship. They see this as a key character of any follower of Christ and every Christian community, with the Triune God being the best model for us. In his Kingdom no one is a stranger, all are invited and included. With friendship as the overarching principle they seek to offer a safe and friendly space both physically, socially and spiritually, and provide pastoral care for the IS they meet. Friendship represents for them the holistic approach in all parts of their ministry: How they meet students, present the Gospel and disciple them.

With the reservation that I have only interviewed three staff workers of about 75 in total in the organisation, I will conclude that Friends International's ministry is very much diaconal and holistic. It has a genuine understanding and interest in international students as whole persons, and realise that to reach them and support them it needs to consider multiple approaches. Ultimately, it is about every person involved taking on God's own quality as host, and following his call "to love the stranger" amongst us.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Title of project:

To what extent can a Friends International local centre for international students be a holistic diaconal ministry?

This is an MA dissertation research project. I wish to explore Friends International staffs' understanding of their ministry in their local centre. I wish to see this in relationship to Friends International's Vision, Mission and Values' statement, and through four aspects of diaconal ministry; community, pastoral care, mission and prophetic ministry.

To help me in my research I wish to interview a few Friends International staff to learn about their experiences. The interview will take between 1 - 2 hours. It will be recorded and transcribed before being analysed. There will be confidentiality and anonymity as far as possible in such a small sample of studies. The data will be part of a written dissertation to be submitted in the autumn of 2012. If opportunities arise data might be part of publications. Original recordings and transcriptions will be safely stored and then destroyed at the end of the dissertation project.

I am doing my Masters degree in Diakonia [Norw. *Diakoni*] at The Norwegian School of Theology in Oslo, Norway. My research has been approved by supervisor Knud Jørgensen. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me:

Ingvild Hovda
hovdai@yahoo.no
0795 1517 365

Thank you very much for taking part in my research!!

Appendix 2: Consent form

Title of Project:

**To what extent can a Friends International local centre
for international students be a holistic diaconal ministry?**

(The participant should complete the whole of this sheet himself/herself)

*Please cross out
as necessary*

Have you read the Participant Information Sheet?

YES / NO

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and to
discuss the study?

YES / NO

Have you received satisfactory answers to all of your questions?

YES / NO

Have you received enough information about the study?

YES / NO

Who have you spoken to? Dr/Revd/Mr/Mrs/Ms.

Do you understand and consent to recordings and transcripts
being destroyed at the end of the dissertation project?

YES/NO

Do you consent to participate in the study?

YES/NO

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study:

- * at any time and
- * without having to give a reason for withdrawing and
- * (if relevant) without affecting your position in
the University, your church or your community?

YES / NO

Signed **Date**

(NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS)

Appendix 3: Interviewee's background questions

Interviewee's Background Information

Personal:

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Highest finished education:
4. What church are you a member of/ attend at present, and how will you briefly describe it?
5. How long have you worked in international student ministry?
6. Have you worked in other similar ministry before?
7. What is your job situation at present? Full time, part time, associate, affiliate etc.
8. How long have you worked for Friends International?
9. Do you have particular 'areas' of the ministry you are responsible for?

About the local centre:

10. When did Friends International start in your city?
11. Was there any ISM prior to that in the city that you know of?
12. What kind of activities are you providing at the moment?
Link this closely to the list FI has set up.
13. Do you have concrete plans to implement new activities in the near future?
14. How many international students (IS) are you reaching at the moment, or in a year?
15. How many churches or Christian agencies are involved in one way or other with FI's work in the city?
16. How many churches are involved in ISM in the city?

Appendix 4: Interview Questions

Interview Questions for Friends International Staff

I. Questions linked to the Vision

Vision 2011:

The purpose of Friends International is to see international students transformed by the good news of Jesus so that they fully engage with the mission of the church in the world.

Vision before 2011 (2005?):

Our vision is that every international student in the UK should have a Christian friend, giving them the opportunity to respond to the message of Jesus Christ and return home with the desire and skills to spread the Gospel in their own country and throughout the world.

1. Present vision: How do you understand the concept of *transformed* in this context?
2. What does it mean to be *fully engaged with the mission of the church in the world*?
3. Previous vision says: *that every international student in the UK should have a Christian friend*, and is probably the main difference between these two vision statements.
How do you understand the concept of friendship?
4. Are there specific biblical text or theological concepts that inform you?
5. How do you work with friendship in terms of your ministry?
6. Do you see other activities as a possible way of 'providing friendship'?

II. Questions linked to my diaconal perspectives

- A) Diakonia as invitation to community/ fellowship
- B) Diakonia as 'care for souls'/ pastoral care
- C) Diakonia as mission

A) Diakonia as invitation to community and fellowship

7. *The stranger and hospitality* is a big topic in the Bible.
How do you use these concepts to reflect on your own ministry?
8. What characterises the IS as a stranger?
9. What does community and fellowship mean to you?
10. What biblical text represents this in the best way, you think?
11. How do you implement hospitality and community in your ministry?
12. How do you assess the results of what you are doing?

B) Diakonia as ‘care for souls’/ pastoral care

13. What do you understand by *pastoral care*?
14. How do you provide pastoral care for IS in the centre?
15. Do you think you personally have gifts in this area, in case, how do you try to use them?
16. One of the value statements says *caring for the whole person*.
In recent jargon in many settings the term *holistic* has been used, such as *holistic support*, *holistic ministry*, *holistic discipleship*.
To what extent do you think in these terms when you plan, implement and carry out your ministry?

C) Diakonia as mission

FI's Mission:

To make known to international students in the UK the Good News of Jesus Christ by word and action, lead them to a personal faith in him and train them to become effective witnesses for Christ in their own countries and among all nations.

17. How do you understand the mission statement?
18. Which of your activities would you say is missional or evangelistic?
19. What is the biggest challenge the way you see it?

Appendix 5: Friends International's Vision Document

Friends International Staff Handbook

Friends International is an evangelical mission agency dedicated to encouraging and equipping UK churches to reach international students for Christ. We seek to help international students, whatever their faith or background, during their stay in the UK.

Our Vision:

The purpose of Friends International is to see international students transformed by the good news of Jesus so that they fully engage with the mission of the church in the world

Our Mission:

To make known to international students in the UK the Good News of Jesus Christ by word and action, lead them to a personal faith in him and train them to become effective witnesses for Christ in their own countries and among all nations.

We aim to achieve our mission through the following **core activities**:

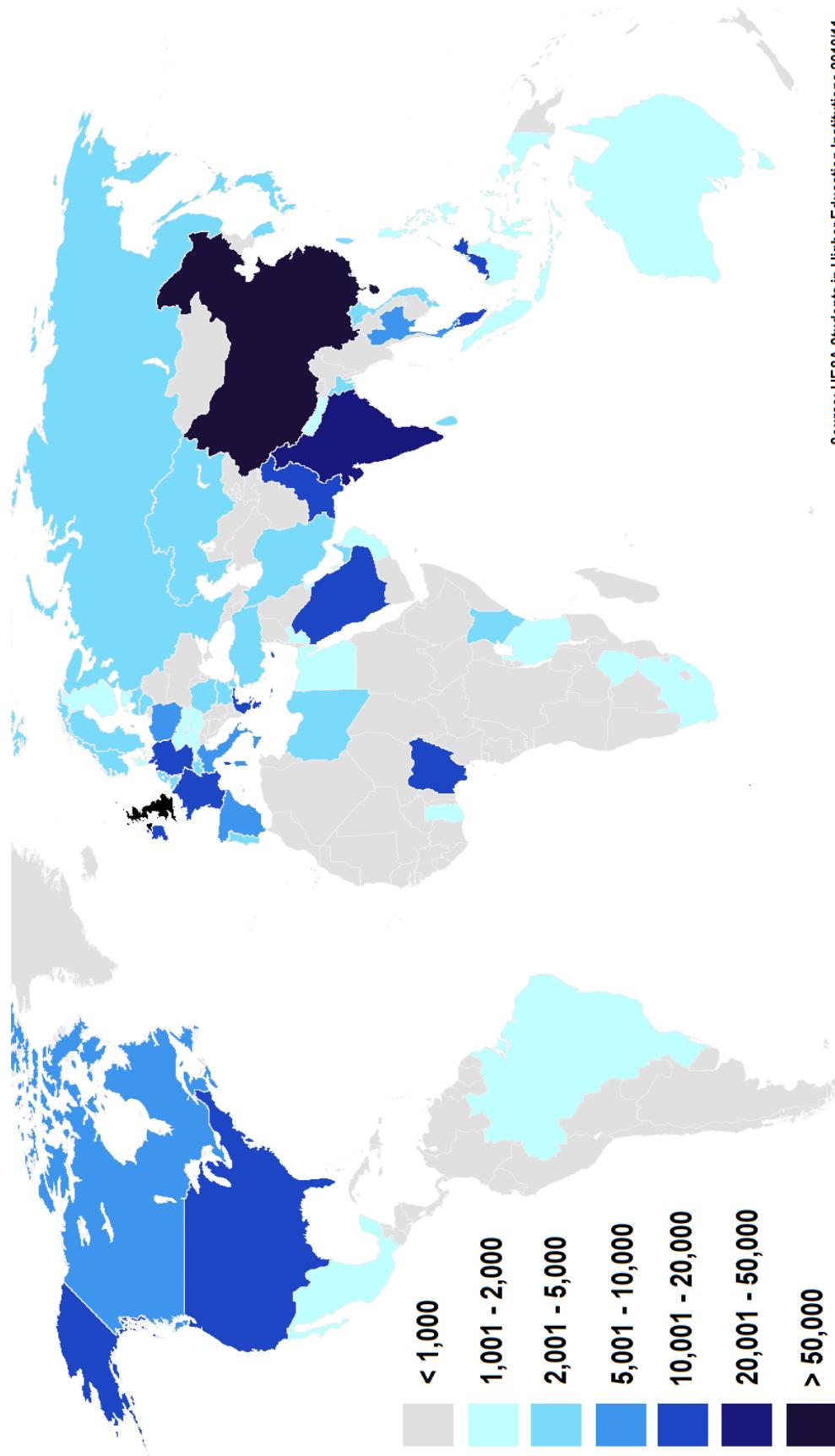
- Motivating, mobilising and equipping churches and their members to share their lives and faith in Jesus Christ with international students in their local area by
 - Providing programmes of practical care and hospitality for international students
 - Teaching international students the good news about Jesus Christ
 - Encouraging, nurturing and training in their faith those who are already, or who become, Christians
- Promoting effective partnerships with churches & other appropriate Christian agencies to develop such ministry among international students in their area and beyond
- Facilitating the encouragement of Christian international students in their spiritual growth after they have returned home through personal contact and by developing networks of Christians in other countries who will share in this task

Our Values:

- Prayerful dependence on God for everything we need to fulfil our vision
- The Bible as our source of teaching and models of ministry
- The vital role of the local church in sharing the Gospel with the nations
- Cooperation & partnership in the expansion of God's kingdom
- Caring for the whole person
- Giving equal respect to all cultures
- Cross-cultural sensitivity in all relationships
- Giving priority to people groups which have least opportunity to hear the gospel in their own countries
- Servanthood, openness, consultation and mutual commitment in all of our relationships
- Giving all staff and volunteers the opportunity to use their unique, God-given gifts to their full potential

Appendix 6: Map of IS by country of domicile

Non-UK domicile students at UK HEIs by country of domicile 2010/11



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