



## Chris & Karen Cunningham

Bridges International at Penn State  
*The International Student Ministry of Cru*

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September 3, 2021

### Almost back to normal

The new semester has started with an indoor mask mandate in place at the university, but other than that, things are pretty much back to normal with crowds of people shopping at Walmart, lines of cars snaked around big downtown apartment buildings waiting for parking spaces, long lines at the food-court in the student union (I caught one girl as she fainted while standing in line at Burger King), and lots and lots of students swarming the outdoor Student Organizations Fair. Life here feels the way it was pre-pandemic except for a few things...

The new student orientations were held both in-person and online. For international students, **many of them participated in their orientation online** so they didn't come by our information table in the student union - therefore, we met fewer new students. Also, there are significantly fewer Chinese students and scholars. We've heard anecdotally, from some students, that there's a backlog in China for getting a visa to the US.



### Niagara Falls

We took a group of students to Niagara Falls last Saturday. Most were new students, and in my van, I was the only one who didn't speak Arabic. While driving, I had an interesting conversation with one student who told me about recently losing her grandparents. Sensing this might be a moment to talk about spiritual things,

I asked, "What do you think happens to a

person after they die?"

She replied, "I'm a Muslim, but I don't take the Quran too literally. I have my own interpretation of things. I think that after a person dies, they go to heaven or hell. After they are in hell for some time, they eventually come to be with everyone else in heaven."

"So, you think hell is remedial?"

"Yes. I also think all holy books are very difficult to understand and it's difficult to know *what* to believe. You have to decide *for yourself* what you are going to believe."

"O.K. that's interesting. Thanks!"

After a moment of silence, she asked, "What do you believe?"

I replied, "Death comes to all of us, so this is a question I think we all ask at some point. The Bible is very clear on these things. In summary, the Bible teaches that everyone will be raised from the dead, there will be a final judgment, and those who were in hell will be judged and thrown into the Lake of Fire. The Bible does not teach that hell is remedial..."

We spoke for a few more minutes, but soon it was clear that she wanted to speak about other things. She enjoyed our trip and she's already signed up for some of our other activities.

### **Our weekly on-campus dinner**

At our weekly Friday Dinner, which is now held on-campus, we had students from Oman, Egypt, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, India, Mongolia, S. Korea, China, Kuwait, and Iran. After dinner we played a little game that got everyone moving around and meeting one another, and then we had time around our tables introducing ourselves and discussing this question, "Do you think God is real? Yes, No, or I don't know" This question was designed to be non-threatening and, at my table, everyone seemed fairly comfortable sharing their opinions/experiences. We're looking forward to more conversations about faith and Jesus in the weeks ahead. Please pray that lots of students will come to our weekly dinners.

### **And more...**

Other upcoming outreach events include **a party** to watch (on TV) the first Penn State football game and learn about American football, an **overnight campout**, a **Labor Day picnic**, and a trip to a nearby **Farmer's Market and Livestock Auction** (doesn't that sound like fun?). In addition, our **weekly Bible studies** (which often include dinner) are up and running and we're inviting new students to join us! We covet your prayers as we, and our students, meet and befriend new students. May God send many new folks our way!!!

### **A health update**

**My health remains unchanged** since our last newsletter. The bone scan that I had a few weeks ago showed that the hormone therapy is working nicely. Sometime around Thanksgiving I'll have a PET scan which will give a very clear picture of the cancer activity. Here are some ways my life has changed... I no longer mow our lawn - I simply don't have the stamina. For exercise, I walk, I no longer jog or run. I don't pick up/carry heavy objects - my bones have been weakened. On our recent trip to Niagara Falls I had to remember to pace myself and stay hydrated, and I felt soooo stiff when I got out of the van. All things considered; I'm doing well! Praise God and thanks for your prayers!

Finally, I'm continually reminded just how common suffering and loss are to all of us -- but we have the victory in Christ! For the Christian, our circumstances needn't control our outlook or our attitude, rather, it's our standing as sons and daughters of our King and heavenly Father that gives us the grace and strength to trust him in every situation. We need not fear the future because He's got us right in His hands and close to His heart. Praise God that help is just a prayer away!

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