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### **A Strong Start to the Semester**

The big challenge at the beginning of each new school year is trying to meet as many new students as possible as they arrive on campus and go through their orientation. We offer a lot of great welcome activities to help them have a little fun and learn more about our group. Our **Welcome Picnic**, held just blocks from campus, was welcomed with thunder showers which kept everyone under the pavilion. No one's spirits seemed to be dampened as they enjoyed fried chicken, trays of sushi, mac and cheese, salads and other tasty food! After sharing several pieces of trivia about Penn State, we had a drawing and awarded a dozen different gift cards to places like, Walmart, Starbucks and Panera.

Other activities that attracted lots of new students were hikes up nearby **Mt. Nittany**, an **ice cream social** especially for undergraduate students, a visit to **Penn's Cave**, and a big picnic at **Bald Eagle State Park** where we rented a pontoon boat so students could go tubing. We also brought along lots of great food and a couple of two-person kayaks – it was all lots and lots of fun. And because of your generosity, all these activities were free, or we charged only a nominal fee.

After the first week of classes, we took over 40 graduate students (in 5 vehicles) to **Niagara Falls** for the day. About 45 minutes into our trip I posed this question to the students in our van. I asked, **"Why do you think God put you on the earth?"** The students each chimed in with their thoughts but, to summarize, most really didn't have much of an answer. After a bit they asked me, "So why do *you* think God put you here?" That presented a good opportunity to share about my faith journey with Christ with everyone. A little later a woman from S. America asked a guy from a Muslim country if his religion required him to marry a virgin. That led to a very interesting discussion among several of the students about sex and religion. I jumped in and asked, **"Why do you think the Bible teaches that sex should be restricted to marriage?"** Lots of good conversation followed and we were able to explain God's purpose for marriage and sex.

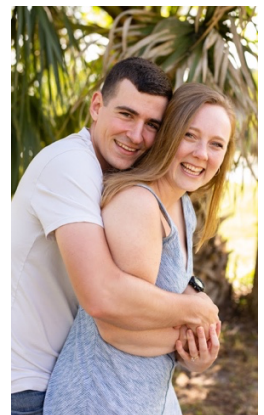
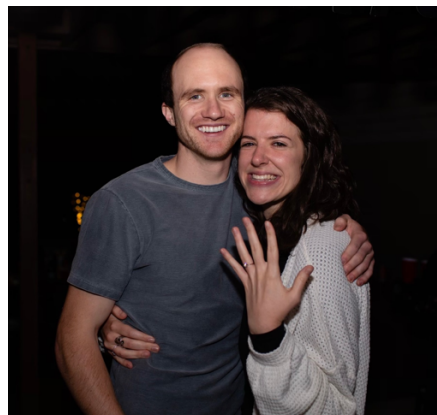
As we were driving home, after our day at the falls, the one student who seemed most interested in conversation asked, **"Can you tell me again how a person can get to heaven?"** I explained the Gospel and we talked a bit and then the conversation went in a different direction. We continue to have regular contact with most of these students, so your prayers are appreciated as we seek to develop relationships and invite students to consider Jesus.

With the welcome activities behind us our team is hosting two Friday dinners weekly – one is on-campus and the other one is in the home of one of our staff couples. We also have weekly Bible studies and we also do our best to meet individually with as many students as are interested. **Today I met for lunch with a PhD student from Bangladesh.** He's Muslim and he was eager to tell me about his life and his hopes for the future. He told me he became more earnest in his beliefs when he got to high school, and he now believes the highest good in life is to please God and help make the world a better place. In a few weeks his wife and daughter will arrive from back home and he was very happy for my offer to take him to the airport to collect his family and take them to their apartment when they arrive. Hopefully, this is the beginning of a friendship that will lead to natural opportunities to talk about my life and the hope of eternal life (1 Peter 3:15).

Recently I met with a visiting scholar from Brazil. During our first meeting to practice English, the topic of faith came up and he indicated he was curious to know how he could be sure of going to heaven – it felt like a divine appointment – and we had a good talk. **Please pray for us that would God guide our steps and create more "divine appointments"** with those whose hearts are hungry to know more of the Kingdom of God!



Pictures of our group at both **Niagara Falls** (top) and **Bald Eagle State Park** (bottom)  
**On the home front – continued from last month!**



**L to R: Josh & Eliza** are still in NYC. Josh is working in operations for a health care company and Eliza is still teaching and auditioning dancers for “Six” the Broadway musical, as well as teaching dance classes. **Jonathan & Kelsey & Thatcher** (2 y.o.) are running their coffee shop, Round Table Coffee, at 5830 Ellsworth Ave. Pittsburgh, PA. Kelsey also has a photography business and Jonathan still works at PNC. **Our big happy news is that Abby recently became engaged to her sweetheart, Sam!!! We’re so excited for them! A March wedding is in the works!** **Jesse & Margee** are living in Allentown where he serves as a Pennsylvania Game Warden and Margee works as a nurse in a surgical center. My health (Chris) is unchanged. I’m feeling mostly normal, and we are praising God!

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