

a season for sowing

Oluwatosin Haastrup and colleagues at St George's encourage us in evangelism on campus

The last year at the St George's (SGUL) Christian Union (CU) has been a year in which God has demonstrated to us that prayer is powerful and that he is faithful to answer when we pray. I say this partly as encouragement; it may seem such a long time since you noticed tangible results in your life or the lives of others that could be directly attributed to your praying. Scripture offers examples of when God has been faithful in providing for his people. Much of the Old Testament details Israel's repeated straying from God's commands, and his continued grace in providing for them. We also see God working through other believers, for example in the collection detailed in Philippians 4.

The CU at SGUL as a whole has witnessed a great shift in recent times. The last term of the previous academic year saw the CU at a low in terms of participation and activity. The summer term often sees such changes, as senior students are sent further away on clinical firms and the rising panic begins amongst first year

students as end of year exams approach. However, God showed us he can do great things through only a few people. All who remained got the opportunity to observe the great faithfulness and abundant provision of God for his people.

We started the year with a pre-term outing, a residential weekend trip for the new first years. It provided the opportunity for new students at the university to experience fellowship with other Christians and so begin to put down roots at a time when everything is new and daunting and the lure and hedonism of university life are perhaps most attractive. Advertising via Facebook, supported by a video produced with help from a local church, enabled the students to hear about the event before they arrived at university.

The event was a breakthrough, the beginning of a godly tradition. The students had fun; Christians and non-Christians were treated to some great activities. We played games - skittles, archery, pedal go-karting, and went paintballing on the Sunday. The young

students also had the chance to meet some more senior students who provided great advice on how to survive as a medical student! Crucially, behind all the fun and games the gospel was clearly presented. The success of the event was not in the numbers - there were about twenty attendees. Rather its success could be measured in terms of the relationships and friendships that were built. In the words of a nominal Muslim who attended, you could always feel at home with the CU; within us he found a family.

A successful undertaking is always one built upon strong foundations with a great commitment to looking after the 'fresh bricks' today that will stand as the pillars tomorrow. The weekend trip away was supported in prayer by a number of local churches who dedicated their time to prayer walking around the University campus, praying that many who studied there would come to know Jesus Christ for themselves. Likewise we benefited from our predecessors at CU who provided a platform of unity and commitment

amongst CU members. One of the CU members remarked that,

Friendship within the CU helped us grow stronger as a CU and our friendship with others fed our desire for them to know Jesus Christ and to see a revival in our campus. It never fails to amaze me how Jesus the Son of God calls us sinful men his friends, and it doesn't stop there! John 15:13 says 'Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friend'. We believe he is calling us to do the same - to be like Jesus, the visible image of our invisible God!

This event and the things that followed would not have been possible without sacrifices of time and energy from a handful of faithful individuals. Their example should lead us to consider whether we are prepared to lay down our time, our energy, our imaginations and talents so that God can use them to save our friends at university and beyond.

There were challenges as well as successes for the CU. As a committee we were a group of different but intensely

passionate and opinionated people, all busy medics with one equally busy physiotherapy student. This could have led to a lack of unity and fellowship as a CU. However we have held on to God's promise to the divided Israelites in Ezekiel 37. He said that he would unite the northern and southern factions by taking the stick of Judah and that of the house of Israel, and they would become one in his hand.¹ As God did for the Israelites so he has done for us! Not only has he united us, but he has also graciously provided for our needs when we have stepped out in faith. At the beginning of our mission week entitled S.W.A.Y., we had just enough money to host two meetings, barely £100. However, we continued in faith that God would provide and he did!

S.W.A.Y. was a great success. Highlights included a 'FREE' black and white dinner, (launching the 'FREE' Mark's gospels produced by the

Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship), a testimony night given by Ian McCormack and a variety show amongst other things. We saw numbers in attendance like we had never witnessed before, with people actually wanting to hear this gospel, to stay behind and ask questions, 'what was all this fuss about?', 'why on earth were these people so excited?'

Daniel 10 illustrates how an ordinary man like us can pray, and God will answer. Daniel contended in prayer for 21 days fervently awaiting his answer from God, meanwhile the messenger sent to bring him an answer fought fervently for those 21 days with determination to deliver his message.

Laurence Crutchlow, managing editor adds ...

St George's is just one of 40 medical schools in the UK and Ireland, all of which have the potential for mission work on campus. For those in London, UCCF are co-ordinating with a number of London CUs to host the first London-wide university mission in many years in January 2010.

CMF staff members have recently given several talks as part of the CU mission on King's College London's Guy's campus, and are keen to do more of the stimulating and important work.

Why not consider organising events aimed specifically at medics when your CU has its mission week? Other recent evangelistic events have included debates on topics such as euthanasia, dialogue dinners (or curries!), and provocatively titled talks (such as 'is love just a chemical reaction?' in Brighton earlier this year).

CMF also continues to run the 'Confident Christianity' and 'Answering Other Faiths' training days to help you grow more confident in your witness. See www.cmf.org.uk and click on 'events' for details of upcoming events in 2010. If you are keen for a member of CMF staff to speak at an event, please contact us in the CMF office.

He was opposed and delayed because his message brought truth,² likewise we have been given truth with the power to set the captive free in the form of the gospel.³ So, people of the most high God, it is time to pray and wait expectantly for God to move.

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REFERENCES

1. Ezekiel 37:15-19
2. Daniel 10:19-21
3. John 8:31-32