

Autumn 2021
Issue 13

Friends of Leadership Network





A vision for the year

Ben Harding, LN Co-ordinator

Resourcing students

What a privilege it is to be able to write to you at the end of my first term leading the Leadership Network. It has been a total joy to get to know each team member and see how God has uniquely gifted them for the ministry He has called them to.

Across the Networks, we continue to resource students to consider how the gospel enriches their studies. To that end, every Network now has its own dedicated website and social media channel. So, whether students are Instagram scrollers or a webpage trawlers, they can be resourced with quality content in an accessible format. Do check them out yourself: leadershipnetwork.uk.

Resourcing staff

UCCF has staff working alongside students in almost every university institution across the country. So, the Networks seek to not only make resources available for students as they live and speak for Jesus in lecture halls, seminar rooms and tutorials – but also help UCCF staff know what resources are available, and how to best support students. Over the autumn, Network team members helped equip staff in regional teams. All first-year staff spent time hearing about the work of Leadership Network, and at our conference for all UCCF staff in January we will be laying out a vision for how the work of Leadership Network enriches the wider ministry of UCCF.

Reaching the university

As we look forward to the term

ahead, we are gearing up for spring mission weeks. These are hugely important for the Networks. We will be speaking at evangelistic events in Nottingham, London and across the country. It's thrilling to see the ways in which Leadership Network gives us apologetic and evangelistic breadth to show how the gospel brings light and life to the questions students are asking.

Enriching the Church

Beyond mission weeks, the spring term concludes with Word Alive (a biblical conference for the wider Church) where all the Networks will be hosting and delivering tracks. Please do be praying that the content we provide will help students and others consider how the gospel shapes their everyday, as Christ's Lordship takes hold of their hearts and minds.



Science Network demonstrating some creative first-contact evangelism for students at Forum 2021

Science Network

sciencenetwork.uk

Emma Nicholls, SN Co-ordinator

Science Network at Forum

The Science Network (SN) were delighted to see several students attend their seminars at Forum this year, where they aimed to equip young scientists to live and speak for Jesus. After the first seminar, many hung around to chat about how they could run better evangelistic events for scientists in their universities. The Q&A session with John Lennox (Professor of Mathematics at Oxford University) was also especially valuable, with questions sent in on a variety of topics.

Book club: 'Maximum life'

The SN ran a book club in the autumn, where students discussed Julian Hardyman's book 'Maximum Life', which is about bringing glory to God with all aspects of life. Excitingly, they then hosted a conversation on Zoom with the author and geologist Dr Amy Donovan to discuss how this principle applies specifically to science.

One-to-one discipleship

Science Network (SN) Co-ordinator Emma regularly met with a Master's student also called Emma during the autumn term. They discussed the challenges she faces as a Christian student in science and read through key Bible passages that talked about the natural world, through Genesis to Job to Colossians. Emma said, 'This was to uncover how Scripture shows us that science is a fundamentally Christian undertaking! I'm actually hoping that these one-to-one studies will form the basis of a series to be released on the website that students can use independently or in groups.'



SN Co-ordinator Emma and Professor John Lennox at Forum 2021

New programme: Sparked

In the autumn term, the SN launched a new mentoring programme for final-year scientists hoping to enter scientific careers: Sparked. Ten students joined the programme, and they met twice over Zoom with a team of Christian scientists who agreed to be mentors, Jon, JJ and Krista. The theme for the term was 'excellence': in the first session they considered how the gospel motivates us to do excellent science for God's glory, and the second session delved into how Christians can thrive in a working environment often driven by selfish ambition. After each session, the students went away to work on a response to what they'd learnt – producing a blog post, Bible study or video. One mentee commented, 'It was really helpful. I hadn't heard anything like Jon's talk before, it was so refreshing to have a gospel perspective on the crazy competitive nature of academia.' Next term, their theme will be 'ethics', considering the appropriate limits of science, and how to hold fast to Jesus' standards as scientists.

Politics Network

politicsnetwork.uk

Tom Kendall, PN Co-ordinator

Politics Network at Forum

Forum was exciting for the Politics Network (PN). They ran a series of seminars called 'A Christian Manifesto: pursuing gospel driven politics'. They had over 60 students come along and think about how the gospel changes their foundation for politics. They then ran a networking lunch to link politics students up with one another, and with all the resources and events on offer from the PN throughout the year. Reflecting on the conference, PN Co-ordinator Tom said, 'It was so encouraging to see students gathering to pray at the end of the networking event, out of their own volition. Let's pray they are faithful and live for Christ on the political frontline.'

Civitas: 'we have a higher, shared goal'

The PN restarted Civitas in the autumn term. Three times during the term, politics students across the country gathered together to consider how their faith impacts their studies and political beliefs. They were encouraged to have 14 come along to their first one. Reflecting on Civitas at the end of the term, one student called Lachlan from the University College of London said, 'Civitas has helped me to think through what it would look like to live for Jesus in the political world where He is largely absent or derided. Through meeting fellow students whose voting patterns and political views might be different from my own, my convictions have been tested and refined and it's been so encouraging to see that despite differences in our politics, we have a shared higher goal of making Jesus known on our campuses and in our nation.'



The Civitas book group.



PN Co-ordinator Tom speaking at Aberystwyth CU's mission week in November

'Being the Bad Guys'

From November, the PN also restarted their regular book group. Students gathered together to read Stephen McAlpine's 'Being the Bad Guys', where they considered how culture today views Christianity not only as odd, but as bad.

New groups, new resources

As well as running a central book group and Civitas meetings, the PN continued to provide resources to equip politics students and hubs across the country. Excitingly, two new hubs began in Aberdeen and in South Wales. They went through a new PN Bible study series called 'Awaiting the King' together, which gave them a thorough understanding of the political story at the heart of the Bible.

Theology Network

theologynetwork.uk

Michael Williams, TN Co-ordinator

Forum: equipping theology students

Like the other Networks, the Theology Network (TN) ran a track of seminars at Forum. They explored how the gospel forms the foundation for their theology and shapes how they speak about God. It had a positive impact on the 30 students who came! Existing hub leaders were equipped with a new booklet that covers all the basics of running a hub. One Cambridge hub leader reflected, 'After a year of university being mostly online, I was quite nervous about the transition of Theology Network to being fully back in-person this term. However, the sessions at Forum were so helpful and made me feel both equipped and excited for the term ahead. It was really encouraging meeting with other Christian theologians from across the country.'



Theology Network at Forum



New Cardiff Theology Network hub

Hubs get back on their feet

TN Hubs met in Oxford, Cambridge, Aberdeen and Edinburgh this term. It was the first full term of meeting for the new **Cambridge** hub and they really enjoyed it. They began the term with a social. Abi, who leads the hub, said, 'Our social was such an encouragement. The day before, I'd just met two more theologians who were keen to join and they both came along and seemed to really enjoy it!' The hub has students from a mixture of backgrounds, so it they found it commended the gospel to those around them. They even ran a Christmas evangelistic event at the end of term! The **Edinburgh** TN hub continued to meet online in the autumn, so that students were able to join easily wherever they were (one student at Glasgow University who is studying remotely joined every week). They alternated between a Bible study in Colossians, and looking at key issues for their faith in theological study.

New hubs

Excitingly, after attending seminars at Forum and being inspired by what she saw, a student called Emily began a TN group in Cardiff. TN Co-ordinator Michael spoke at their launch event, reminding them of the centrality of the gospel.

Central events

To help equip and grow it's many hubs and theology students, the TN ran a series of online events in the autumn term. These covered the foundational issues facing theology students today. In October, the first session discussed what place faith has for guiding and shaping theology and interpretation of the Bible. Students joined this in groups from Nottingham and Cambridge, and discussed the different aspects of our culture and church backgrounds that influence their approach to theology. The talk was recorded and later released as a resource that other hubs could use in their meetings to provoke discussion and help them join up their thinking with their faith.

Arts Network

sciencenetwork.uk

Dohyun Baek, AN Co-ordinator

Arts Network at Forum

At Forum this year, the Arts Network (AN) ran a lunch for creative students. AN Co-ordinator Dohyun reflected, 'It was great seeing creative students from all over the country encourage one another in their art and faith.' Dohyun was particularly encouraged to meet a student called Najhae, who told him how positively impacted she'd been by the Christian Unions and the AN. She said that she'd previously been making art out of pain from oppression that she'd felt as a black woman, but that the friendliness of CU and love of God had changed her view. She was excited to start her journey as a Christian and wanted to make art that glorifies God.

Hubs across the country

Across the country, AN hubs began to meet together in the autumn term. The **Dundee** hub had an encouraging term together, running sketching sessions in a local coffee shop that were followed with Bible studies. They considered what Scripture said about creativity and living as a Christian artist. Meanwhile, in November, the arts students in **London** joined together to go on a weekend away! Reflecting on this, Arts Co-ordinator Dohyun said, 'We spent a fantastic time in the countryside of East Sussex bonding as a Network. It was a great opportunity to think together about mission and evangelism on campus and also to discuss deeper questions.'

Interact back up and running

The AN's monthly training event for arts students called Interface restarted in the autumn term in London. Their first event was a talk by artist Ally Gordon on why art matters. Excitingly, through Zoom, students from different parts of the country such as Norwich and Manchester were also able to listen in. Students gave encouraging feedback, saying that the talk was thought-provoking and made them reconsider the art that they were making.

Coming up

AN students are currently preparing work based around 2 Peter which will be exhibited at Word Alive in April 2022. Their theme is 'meditations of artists on faith and hope', and will reflect on big questions encountered during the pandemic. This is an opportunity for students to exhibit and sell their work with their peers and create a space for discourse for the wider church.



London arts students on their weekend away



Interface meeting in London



Some AN students preparing for their exhibition at Word Alive



TN Co-ordinator Katie teaching at Forum 2021

New: Teaching Network

teachingnetwork.uk

Katie Shaw, TN Co-ordinator

This year, UCCF were delighted to begin a new Network: a Teaching Network designed to help student teachers live and speak for Jesus. Former CU Staff Worker Katie Shaw was appointed to lead this Network. She reflects, 'Having worked as a teacher myself, I'm looking forward to helping students join the dots of what it means to be a Christian and how that works out in taking the register, leading an assembly, or teaching about Ancient Egypt.' Read more about how this Network developed in the autumn edition of our termly Impact magazine.

Teaching Network at Forum: giving confidence

Forum was the first chance the Teaching Network (TN) had to connect with interested education students. They were delighted to see over 40 come to their seminars over the week, where they discussed how to use time wisely, and view teaching as a Christian. Matt, a CU Staff Worker in the North West, reflected on how this had impacted a student in a CU he worked alongside, 'I think they felt seen and understood in a way that they wouldn't have been otherwise and were certainly given confidence for their placements and studies going forward.'

Meeting together

The TN ran its first online gathering at the beginning of November. 15 turned up on Zoom for an hour, where they received teaching and connected with one another and Christians already in the profession. The TN are looking forward to more gatherings like this in the spring.

One-to-one discipleship

Each week throughout the autumn, TN Co-ordinator Katie met with Lucy to read the Bible. Lucy is studying for a BA in Primary Education. They discuss life, calling, and teaching as they read through the book of Isaiah. Katie says, 'Soon we're going to meet up with her house and maybe some others in the city to continue the conversation about teaching more widely. It's simple, but simple works. We come together to see God in Scripture together, think and pray through how it applies to us and allow it to encourage us.'

Law Network

lawnetwork.uk

Felipe Carvalho, LN Co-ordinator

New Co-ordinator appointed

The Law Network (LN) is run as a partnership between UCCF and the Lawyers Christian Fellowship (LCF). LCF's Director of Students and Young Lawyers, Felipe Carvalho, has been appointed to run the Law Network in the coming year. He will seek to equip all law students to integrate the Christian faith with the legal studies and practice in the coming year.



Music Network

musicnetwork.uk

Tom Chevis, MN Co-ordinator

Becky Chevis, MN Assistant

Music Network at Forum

The Music Network (MN) kicked off the year by running two seminars at Forum. Both were on how to effectively and practically reach fellow music students with the gospel. They considered the unique ways in which music students think and act, and how this presents specific gospel-sharing opportunities. Alice, from Cambridge, said that she hadn't realised 'just how practically useful it would be'.

MN autumn gathering

In October, music students from eight different cities, from Falmouth to Glasgow,

Becky Chevis teaching Music Network students

came together in Birmingham for the Music Network's autumn gathering. They prayed, sung and ate together and received teaching on the topic of Christlikeness in Philippians 3, considering how to live like Christ in the world of music. Student Phil from Surrey CU reflected, 'I really appreciated having the chance to chat to music students at conservatoires and to grieve together about some of the real difficulties of following Christ there. I'm very thankful for the day. How refreshing to be reminded we are made like Christ, to know Christ, imitate Christ, follow Christ and be like Christ!'

Getting online

Last term, the Music Network ran a monthly series of short videos on their new website, answering questions in under five minutes on subjects that are at the interface of faith and music. Online material like this can have a big impact on students. This was made clear when Naomi, a music student at Huddersfield University, got in touch with MN Co-ordinator Tom out of the blue. She said, 'I stumbled across the Music Network, sort of by accident, I had no idea about it! I was so excited to read the articles about how we can serve God best as music students. It honestly was like a pot of gold for me, exactly what I needed!'

Training for mission: CU weekends away

The MN team (Co-ordinator Tom, Assistant Becky and music CU Staff Worker Niamh) joined the London music college CUs on their weekend away in the autumn. Tom spoke on Isaiah 52-55 looking at the suffering servant, while Becky and Niamh delivered seminars on answering seekers' questions.



Tom Chevis and Becky Chevis during a seminar at Forum

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