

Spring 2021
Issue 11

Friends of Leadership Network





Adapting again

Connie Keep, LN Co-ordinator

As I met with the network leadership team before Christmas, we discussed plans to organise small in-person conferences for each network in the spring. Perhaps I was being naïve, but at that point it looked like these gatherings might be possible as a replacement for the larger Word Alive conference that normally takes place at Easter. This conference, alongside UCCF's national student leader training conference, Forum, is a hugely significant time for the networks where we connect with new students, deliver top quality seminars and have the opportunity to mentor students one-

to-one. As the new year dawned however, it became increasingly clear that this would not be possible.

Growing opportunities

However, the pandemic has provided many opportunities for the networks. Our usual practise is to bring students together at conferences and then resource them through the year with the network website. In place of these in-person conferences, we have managed to connect with students from all across Great Britain at regular national training events. The team have done a wonderful job of adapting and taking the material that would have been delivered at in-person events online.

As you read this edition of *Friends of Leadership Network* you will see other ways that we have adapted to the current climate with online book groups, investment in Relay Workers, written resources online and more. But as the pandemic goes on, the networks are feeling the effect of this prolonged time of being unable to gather and it is increasingly challenging to continue with solely online events. So, it is with joy that as I write we are planning to run a physical Forum in August 2021, where we can meet with and train students in-person again.

Please pray for wisdom as we continue to adapt and plan to gather students for this event.

Music Network

Tom Chevis, MN Co-ordinator



Some students at the MN training event on how to reach fellow musicians with the gospel.

Training for evangelism

On 22 January, the Music Network (MN) hosted an online training session on how best to reach fellow music students with the gospel. Music students from across the country gathered to watch Sam Chan's (Christian author) 'post-Covid playbook' videos. These prompted discussions on cultivating intentional friendship with other music students in this time of social distancing, and how to guide conversations to provoke discussion on deeper issues. Those who came were challenged by what they heard. One student, a composer in the Royal College of Music CU, said, 'It was really encouraging, I came away feeling very inspired!'

'I have no doubt!'

Wonderfully, Tom, a Christian Union (CU) leader at the Royal College of Music, has been reading Uncover Mark (a copy of Mark's Gospel with eight accompanying Bible studies) this year with two flat mates and another music student on his course. In February, one of these house mates came up to him and declared, 'Tom, I have no doubt in my faith!' Tom was overjoyed. Pray with us that Tom's witness would help his coursemate and other flat mate to also commit their lives to Christ.

Changes in leadership

Just before Easter, many music college CUs and MN hubs handed over leadership to new students, while current leaders stepped down. MN Co-ordinator Tom says, 'Please pray for those graduating from music colleges this year, who have seen the industry all but collapse over the past year and face a very uncertain future. Pray for them to hold fast to Christ.'



Royal College of Music CU students at the start of the year.

Growing in understanding

Throughout the spring, seven music graduates continued to meet fortnightly for their online training through the new MN Profundo Programme. In one meeting, a graduate exclaimed, 'It just kinda clicked – when I sit down to write a song I'll now be thinking about how I glorify God and point to Jesus in all my writing, not just if I'm writing an "evangelistic" song.'

Grappling with Post-modernism

At the time of writing, MN assistant Becky Chevis was working in collaboration with the Theology Network to produce accessible resources for students that help them grapple with Post-modernism as a Christian. These drew on Kevin Vanhoozer's (American theologian) book 'Is there meaning in this text?'



MN Co-ordinator Tom and MN Assistant Becky speaking at a CU evangelistic event in February on Covid, music and faith.



SN Co-ordinator Emma speaking at Manchester CU's mission week.

Science Network

Emma Nicholls, SN Co-ordinator

Training for evangelism

The Science Network (SN) continued to produce online resources throughout the spring term to equip science students to engage friends with the gospel, such as a series of blog posts on their website. A particularly striking article was their blog on the topic of 'Can a Scientist believe in the Resurrection?' which was released just before Easter.

At the time of writing, a group of SN students were planning to tune in together for a conference called 'Engaging with Science' run by Keswick Ministries and the Faraday Institute on 23 April. They are looking forward to receive key teaching on how the gospel speaks into science, creation care and human identity.

Active hubs

Several SN university hubs continued to meet online during the spring term, such as the Cambridge hub. They regularly met to read through a book called 'God in the Lab' by Ruth Bancewicz. Those who attended found it to be a great experience, which helped bolster their faith. Georgia, a natural sciences student, said, 'It was such a helpful book. Not only did it teach me about how science enhances faith but it gave me a real insight into the life of a scientist, which is something I've been struggling to imagine and haven't had the opportunity to find out first-hand. It was cool to know that when I was reading it that others were doing the same thing too. A friend and I actually called a few times during term too to discuss particular bits which was great!'



Southampton CU's mission week event, with SN co-ordinator Emma.

Missional science events

In the spring, several CUs across the country ran science-themed lunchbars or evening events as part of their mission weeks (weeks of high-profile evangelistic events designed to reach the wider university with the gospel). Cambridge Inter-Collegiate CU, for example, ran an event titled 'Did Darwin make Atheism credible?' which was watched over 700 times! Guy's CU in London saw many students tune in for their event, 'Has science killed a loving God?' and Southampton CU held a talk called 'Does religion provide any truth in our scientific age?' Reflecting on this, SN Co-ordinator Emma Nicholls says, 'A great thing about these events being online is that there are now lots of recorded science apologetics talks available on Youtube and social media, so hubs and CUs can continue to use and watch them beyond this term.'

Politics Network

Tom Kendall, PN Co-ordinator

Civitas

The Politic Network's (PN) new nationwide online discipleship sessions, Civitas, continued this term – they ran four meetings with visiting politicians and political theologians where they read through the book of Daniel together. PN member Anna says, 'It's been such a joy to be involved with Politics Network over the past term. As a final-year politics student the network has been so helpful for me in thinking through how to live out my faith academically and personally. A lot of this used to be restricted to places like Word Alive, Forum and the website, but the nature of this year has meant we are able to meet on Zoom and so have been able to properly meet and encourage one another relationally throughout the term rather than just seeing people once or twice a year!'

Ongoing book group

The Civitas book group met regularly in the spring. They read through Jonathan Leeman's 'How the Nations Rage'.

Mission weeks

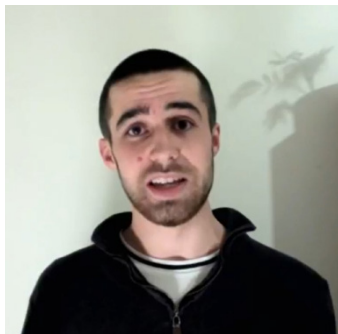
This year, a number of CUs ran politics themed events during their mission weeks (a series of high-profile evangelistic events designed to share the gospel across campus). PN Co-ordinator Tom Kendall spoke at Aberystwyth CU's mission week, for example, on the topic, 'Defined by my vote: does my allegiance to the left or right encapsulate who I am?'. They saw several students tune in. Reflecting on this, Tom says, 'It was great to see the CUs recognising the importance of politics to many in our society, and creating events in which we can speak of the political hope the gospel provides.'

Politics students exploring the gospel

Politics student Claudia from York University had the joy of sharing the gospel with her coursemates last term. She reports, 'As a politics student, debates were frequent among my coursemates and I. Yet with regards to the topic of faith, it has consistently been a very dry conversation. Praise the Lord, all three of them attended the Black Lives Matter talk during York CU's mission week, and all three of them had a lot to say. One even invited her whole flat to the official Q&A with the speaker and had a personal chat with myself. It has been a real joy to see them engage with God's Word when they had chosen not to take me up on the invitation to attend an in-person event in previous years. One has since started reading the Bible with me! Please pray all three of them come to know the Lord Jesus for themselves and see his glorious majesty.'



The Civitas book group.



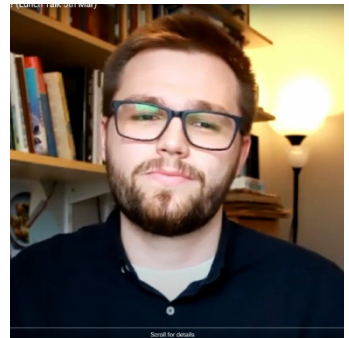
PN Co-ordinator Tom speaking at Aberystwyth CU's mission week.

Theology Network

Michael Williams, TN Co-ordinator

Committed hubs

Across the country, Theology Network (TN) hubs continued to meet on Zoom in the spring term. In these groups, theology students encouraged each other to continue studying with Christ and the gospel at the centre, supported each other through lockdown, and encouraged them to share their faith with their coursemates. In February, the hubs in Scotland joined together to form one main online hub, headed up by second-year Edinburgh TN member Harry. This was to help support the hub leaders in Scotland after a particularly tiring year, better equip and support students in Scotland who do not have a local hub, and to give the students a taste of what a hub could be like in their own CU.



TN Co-ordinator Michael speaking at UCL CU's mission week.



Violence in the Old Testament

Engaging with difficult texts as Evangelicals
1 March || 5-6:30pm

Violence in the Old Testament

A particular focus of the TN this term was to help students engage with difficult, and often violent passages in the Old Testament. They did this by running a training event on 1 March with Eilidh Cook (former CU Staff Worker), which saw an encouraging number tune in and discuss how the Bible is not only true, but also good. They also produced a series of follow-up articles on the topic on their website.

Publicity for the TN event on Violence.

Change in leadership

TN hub leaders handed over to new student leaders at the end of the spring term. TN Co-ordinator Michael says, 'They all face a particular challenge this year, as most of these new leaders have also not been able to see a 'normal' year in the life of Theology Network. We are also looking for pastorally-minded theology postgraduates to come alongside students in a couple of hubs. Pray as we identify and raise up people in these supportive roles.'

Mission weeks

Several CUs across the country ran theology-themed events during their mission weeks this term (weeks of high-profile events designed to share the gospel across the university). University College London (UCL) CU, for example, invited TN Co-ordinator Michael to speak on the uniqueness of Christianity compared to other religions.

Looking ahead

At the time of writing, TN Co-ordinator Michael was exploring how best to support and equip students who's particular focus is the study of Religion. He was also working on a booklet that will provide vision and practical guidance for running Theology Network hubs well and starting new ones.

Arts Network

Lois Adams, AN Co-ordinator

Spring term training

The Arts Network (AN) ran regional training events in the spring. They aimed to run more localised events than national ones than in the previous term, to help students build friendship with students in the arts around them.

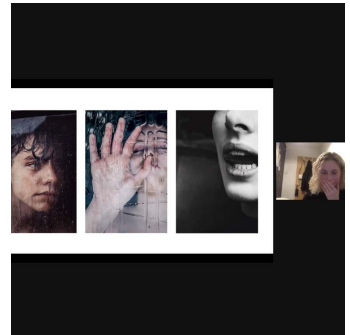
The group in London began with an online event with speaker and artist Makoto Fujimura. Wonderfully, they had over 45 tune in for the evening. Reflecting on it, AN Co-ordinator Lois says, 'Makoto spoke so elegantly, at their level and it was obvious that he had so much love towards students. Students asked many great question and many found the experience really beneficial.' They ran a few further sessions, including an interview with Ruth Yimika Afolabi (Magnify Collective) and a 'show and tell' evening where students presented their artwork.

Reaching out with the gospel

The AN students in Scotland also ran a couple of events. One was called 'Place for artists in the biblical narrative' with Lois Adams, which saw three students come and enjoy digging deeper into theology and the responsibility of being an artist. The second was an evangelistic event run by four students in the Glasgow School of Art CU. They invited Architect Brian Park to speak on 'Art, Architecture and Spirituality' and saw over 50 tune in! Many were intrigued by what Brian said, with guests staying for an extra half an hour to ask questions. One Relay Worker exclaimed that he had been 'inspired seeing how his Christian worldview impacted the way Park lived and designed'.

Relay Elective: update

On 8 February, the AN ran their second conference for the six graduates on the AN Relay Elective programme. They had an encouraging time. Ally Gordon and Cully McCulloch from Morphe Arts came to deliver teaching on the first day. The following day they had 'crits', where Relay Workers showed their work and received feedback and guidance about their art career.



A London AN student sharing her artwork during a show and tell evening.



Publicity for the Brian Park interview.



Artist Makoto Fujimura

Coming up

In the summer term, there will be a series of AN events across the country including a creative workshop in Leeds, a session on 'faith and the arts' in Glasgow, and a talk by Ted Turnau (author of 'Popologetics') in London. Becca Numes will also help the AN produce a new resource called 'Why engage with art of non-believers?' for arts students.

Network wide updates

Staff training

In March, all Leadership Network staff met on Zoom for a two hour training session, given by Head of Strategic Research Tim Laurence and Strategic Research Associate Anja Lijcklama a Nijeholt. This helped provide them with a theological framework, which then informs the equipping they pass on to undergraduates.



All the Leadership Network staff on a Zoom call meeting.

Law Network

The Law Network (LN) is run as a partnership between UCCF and the Lawyers Christian Fellowship (LCF). As we mentioned in the last edition of *Friends of Leadership Network*, LCF are currently restructuring and are still in the process of appointing two new members of staff to work with students and head up the Law Network. In the meantime, do pray for the LCF ministry associate Damoila Makinde as she creates resources to equip Law students this year.

Change in leadership: updates

In January, Ben Harding (current UCCF Relay Co-ordinator) began a six-month period of handover with LN Co-ordinator Connie Keep, in preparation for when he becomes the new Head of Relay and Leadership Network in August. Thinking about the future and wider direction of the LN, Ben says, 'I'm excited for the gospel opportunities ahead, as we look forward to welcoming new members to the LN team and even investigate expanding the number of networks we have. While we have no desire to remain online, we have learnt much over the past year and want to use the technology we have grown accustomed to help use resource students nationally as well as invest in individuals through the expertise and encouragement of network staff. As we invest in individual students, we trust God will use them to reach their course mates and campus with the gospel and in time shape culture for the glory of God.'

Stay in touch

We hope you've enjoyed this latest edition of Friends of Leadership Network. If you'd like to receive more regular updates throughout the term, do also sign up for our monthly CU News emails which include stories and encouragements from each Network. You can sign up via our website, here: www.uccf.org.uk/publications/cu-news