

A BRIEF HISTORY OF STUDENTS IN MISSION

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1517



Europe - Reformation

1517 – Martin Luther

▲ is converted 'by the gospel of grace' and preaches the teaching of justification by faith to his students at Wittenberg university, Germany. The gospel of Jesus begins to spread throughout universities in Europe.

1520s - Thomas Ridley secretly gathers students from Cambridge University at the White Horse Inn to read the New Testament and Luther's writings.

1520-30s – John Calvin is converted at Orlean university, France, writes his hugely influential 'Institutes', and sets up the Geneva Academy, training and sending out missionary pastors into Europe (including John Knox to Scotland).

1630



Europe - Germany & Holland

1630s - Three German law students sail for Africa with the gospel, including Peter Heiling who spends 20 years in Abyssinia translating the Bible before being martyred.

1716 - Nicolas Ludwig Von **Zinzendorf** ▲ establishes regular prayer meetings for overseas mission at Wittenberg in Germany and Utrecht university in Holland.

1732 – Zinzendorf commences the Moravian missionary movement by sending two missionaries to the West Indies.

1726



UK - Oxford

1726 - Brothers Charles + **John Wesley** ▲ form a Christian society (known derisively as the 'Holy Club') at Oxford university to 'know God better'.
1735 – The Wesley brothers, convicted by the gospel and inspired by Von Zinzendorf, sail for North America to preach Jesus to its unevangelised indigenous peoples.

1806



USA – Williams College

1806 – Samuel Mills and four other students at Williams College commit their lives to foreign missionary service at the Haystack prayer meeting. This moment is often considered the birth of the American foreign missionary movement.

1808 – *The Society of the Brethren* is founded at Williams College with the aim of taking the gospel throughout the world.
1810 – *The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission* ▲ is founded at the instigation of Mills (along with other students).

1812 – The first American foreign missionaries (including Adoniram Judson) are sent to join William Carey in India.

1811



UK - Cambridge

1811 – Charles Simeon establishes the *British and Foreign Bible society* at Cambridge.

1857 – After David Livingstone delivers a stirring missionary address, the *Cambridge University Church Missionary* is established.

1877 – *The Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union* (CICCU) is formed.

1883 – After evangelist D.L. Moody speaks at Cambridge, **seven students** ▲ (including C.T. Studd) sign-up for the *China Inland Mission*. Before they leave, they share their vision for overseas missions on campuses throughout England and Scotland.

1885 – The seven sail for China, followed by many other students who caught their vision for global mission.

1886



USA – Student Volunteer Movement (SVM)

1886 – **100 students** ▲ volunteer for overseas missionary service at the *Mount Hermon Bible Conference*.

1886-87 – Two students from Princeton, Robert Wilder and John Forman, travel to 167 campuses to share the vision of world evangelisation. 2106 students volunteer for overseas mission service.

1888 – *The Student Volunteer Movement (SVM)* is formally organised by John Mott, with the catch cry: 'The evangelization of the world in this generation'. SVM challenges students across America to sign a pledge card, stating 'It is my purpose, if God permit, to become a foreign missionary'.

1891 – The first international student missionary convention (sponsored by SVM) is held in Ohio. These conventions were run every 4 years until the 1940s.

1890s - Similar student movements to SVM are planted in Denmark, France, Switzerland, India, Germany & Scandinavia.

1924-1940 – With the general decline in missionary interest between the world wars, SVM begins to decline as an organisation, changing its focus from overseas mission to political and social reform. Nevertheless, up to this time, some 20,500 American students have already left for overseas mission.

1959 – SVM ceases to exist as an organisation, merging with the ecumenical *University Christian Movement* (which then folded itself in 1969).

1928



UK, Canada, Australia & NZ – Inter-Varsity (IVF)

1928 – The UK *Inter-varsity Fellowship* is founded, seeking not only to bring the gospel to every university in Britain, but furthermore to commence other IVF groups around the world.

1929 – Howard Guinness, student president of the CU at London, is sent to Canada & pioneers IVF groups in its colleges and universities.

1930 – Guinness founds IVF student movements in **Australia** ▲ & New Zealand.

1938



USA – Inter-Varsity (IVF)

1938 – Disillusioned with SVM, the *Student Foreign Missions Fellowship* (SFMF) is established.

1939 – *Inter-Varsity USA* is founded by Canadian students.

1945 – SFMF becomes the Missionary Department of IVF.

1948 – IVF USA launches their first international missionary convention: *The Urbana Missions Convention*. ▲

1940-50s – More American students become foreign missionaries than any other period in history.

1946-2000 – More than 200,000 students are challenged to consider overseas mission at *Urbana*, with conference attendances reaching 25,000.

1947



World - IFES

1947 – *The International Fellowship of Evangelical Students* (IFES) is formed with 9 national movements as its founding members: Australia, Canada, China, France, Great Britain, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland & the USA.

1948-2007 - Indigenous IFES student movements are founded in almost 160 countries throughout the world: Africa, the Middle-East, the South Pacific, Asia, Eurasia, Europe, North and South America. However, to date, 17 countries still do not have an IFES presence. IFES movements in Taiwan, Korea, Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria, Kenya and India hold regular mission conventions.