

Prayer

Creator God, we pray for all those who are on higher education courses for degrees and vocational programmes.

We pray especially for those for whom this is a new start... We know this can be a time of great change, so we humbly ask that you uphold and guide the students at this time of transition.

We pray for the tutors and chaplains in universities - loving God, give them the wisdom, clarity and patience to support the students and staff with compassion.

Living God, we pray for the parents, carers and church families who know and care for students. Give the parents, carers and our churches the courage to support and guide students.

Majestic God, as students aim higher and develop their God-given potential, give students firm foundations in your wisdom, rooted in your love and stability. In Jesus' precious name, **Amen**

"I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

- Philippians 4:13 (NRSV)



Links:

Student Christian Movement
<https://www.movement.org.uk>

Fusion
<https://www.fusionmovement.org>

University and Colleges Christian Fellowship
<https://www.uccf.org.uk>

Pray for your local universities and those from your congregation who are studying at university

Student Sunday
<https://www.movement.org.uk/resources/student-sunday>

It is marked on the third Sunday of February every year, serving as a tangible sign of our common life, connecting student movements and WSCF friends across the world.

World Student Christian Federation
<http://www.wscf.ch>

Education Sunday
www.cte.org.uk/educationsunday

Education Sunday is annually celebrated on the 2nd Sunday in September.

You can read more about the work that FCG have been doing in the field of HE and why it matters to our churches here:
<https://www.freechurches.org.uk/higher-education>



Free Churches and Higher Education (HE) – serving local communities



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What is higher education and why is its contribution important?

Most people would claim they are familiar with what universities are and would say they knew what went on in them. However, this may actually be a rather simplistic impression of a group of buildings scattered over a large area within which there is a range of “ivory tower” activity – somewhat disconnected with the day to day world. In fact universities play an important role in society. Universities are economic engines and can change the face of cities. They attract global talent and build international connections. Universities help address societal challenges and foster creativity and open debate. In short, higher education (HE) improves lives.

So universities potentially benefit everyone in their contribution to the economy and through enriching and stimulating our culture. Above all they are places focused on the discovery of new knowledge and the transmission of existing knowledge.

Universities and Free Churches support

Over half the young people in this country are likely to go into higher education, at a university or college or via the internet. For them higher education should be an enriching experience enabling them to reach more of their God-given potential.



It can also be a challenging experience as new situations and ideas are encountered. Many students will experience personal, social and emotional needs whilst going through HE. The transition from schooling or gap year to university life can be both daunting and disorienting. Despite living in a social media age, young people can find this transition emotionally and socially challenging. Moving to university can prove to be a critical time in the spiritual journey and church life of students who have been part of local church communities.

Christians with a sound background to their faith will not only be able to deal with these challenges, but also be best prepared to take advantage of the opportunity of sharing their faith with those who as yet do not acknowledge Jesus as Lord.

Free Churches have, for many years, supported an open approach to education which means that many different ideas can be discussed in the belief that the truth will triumph. Our experience of persecution leads us to affirm strongly the importance of the opportunity to experience higher education. Free Church values resonate strongly with the ethos of higher education in emphasising commitment to toleration, respect and freedom of speech and belief.

Higher education institutions such as universities are often large communities of importance to the town or city where they are located. It is likely that universities and colleges will manage access for religious groups on to campus and regulate this through a senior chaplain or student services manager. Pastors and others will often find that their presence on campus is welcomed provided the approach is made through the correct channels.

Local churches and students

There are many ways churches can support students and indeed be enriched by what they bring to church life. As well as young people, there are significant numbers of ‘mature’ students who

are over 21 when they start their studies. A number of students come from other countries all over the world. Churches are one of the few places where they can meet safely with British people and families, which they long to do. Churches will find there are great benefits from befriending these international students. Many come from countries where church life is vibrant and can be a real asset to a worshipping and witnessing community. Some come from countries where access to the truth of the gospel is made difficult and so bring to church a real hunger to know more about the God we serve.

What can your church do?

- Churches can provide guidance and prayerful support to those within their communities who are about to embark on university life.
- They can set up social media forums through which their young people can continue to keep in touch with each other and with their home church communities, after they leave to attend universities elsewhere.
- Churches in university towns and cities can offer support and friendship to students who may be experiencing life away from home for the first time.
- Churches that practise hospitality to students may find that they are feeding hungry souls as well as hungry bodies.
- Churches can get to know local university chaplains and provide support for their work.
- Churches can establish links and practical support for the work of university Christian groups.
- Churches can support ‘mature’ students who have caring responsibilities and stay at home whilst studying by offering child care or in other ways.
- Churches can befriend, welcome and draw on the rich contributions from international students.