



PCUSA YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NORTHERN IRELAND

This is the sixteenth year for the PCUSA Young Adults Volunteer Program in Northern Ireland. A total of seventy-seven volunteers have served in the past.

Northern Ireland is known for its tragic history of violence and conflict between the majority Unionist (largely Protestant) and minority Nationalist (largely Catholic) communities. Thankfully the violence has been greatly reduced in recent years. However, thirty years of “The Troubles” have left behind serious economic, emotional and spiritual needs - particularly in urban working-class districts.

Volunteers work with a variety of inner-city church and community projects offering a range of activities for the very young to the elderly: Parent/Toddler Groups, After-Schools Clubs, Tutoring, Computer Classes, Women’s Groups, Advice Centres, Youth Clubs, Senior Citizen’s Lunches, informal worship opportunities, Drop-in Centres, opportunities to meet with those from “the other side,” Keep-Fit and the list goes on and on. Which means that there are plenty of possibilities for volunteers to match their particular skills and interests to the particular needs of their placement site - as well as having to find or develop new skills to tackle unexpected challenges!

Positions for this year:

1. *Elizabeth Cluff from First Presbyterian Church, Bryan TX will serve with **The LINK Family and Community Centre** in Newtownards: Ten miles east of Belfast the LINK connects local churches and the local community through a drop-in centre and programs for young people from low-income areas of the town. Time will also be spent working with youth and other programs of **Regent Street Presbyterian Church** in Newtownards.*
2. *Joel Pier-Fitzgerald from Central United Methodist Church in Traverse City, MI, will serve with **Cooke Presbyterian Church** working with youth from the congregation and the community in a mixed area of south-east Belfast and assisting with worship and other pastoral duties. Several days each week will be with **The Vine Community and Advice Centre** in a low-income inter-face area in North Belfast. The Vine provides a comprehensive range of community services to all age groups including after-schools tutoring/study support, youth clubs, women’s groups and senior citizen’s clubs.*
3. *Hannah Williams from First Presbyterian Church in Lynchburg, VA will serve with **Dundonald Methodist Church** located on the edge of a large – predominantly Loyalist - housing estate in East Belfast and involved in providing youth ministry and other outreach to this area of social need through the **Dundonald Family and Community Initiative**, some of whose activities are shared with nearby Church of Ireland and Presbyterian congregations.*
- 4 and 5 *Jessica and Kevin Crossan from Donegal Presbytery in PA will serve with **Fortwilliam Macrory Presbyterian Church** in a mixed part of North Belfast. This will involve support for young people in the congregation and with a cross-community project. For Kevin part of the week will be spent with youth and after-schools projects at **The 174 Trust**, an inter-denominational group operating a community and youth centre in a low-income Nationalist area of North Belfast. For Jessica part of each week will be **Home Start**, which supports young families, and with senior citizen and learning disabled groups in the community around Fortwilliam Macrory .*

6. *Alex Creager from Kent Presbyterian Church, Kent, OH, will serve with **Whitehouse Presbyterian Church**, situated in a 'no man's land' between housing areas identified with Loyalist and Republican factions in North Belfast. Whitehouse engages in creative cross-community work with those areas. His work will be with youth ministry, a cross-community project for older adults, assisting with worship and linking with various schools in the area, through one-to-one remedial work, and support for religious education and creative learning aspects of the curriculum.*
7. *Megan Buff from Northminster Presbyterian Church, Spokane, WA, will serve with **Kilmakee Presbyterian Church** located in a large lower income housing estate on the outskirts of Belfast. She will assist the congregation in developing a youth strategy, worship leadership (including drawing on the congregation's musical gifts), creative approaches / servant models of outreach appropriate to the community, and creative approaches to prayer life in the congregation. Kilmakee's youth fellowship has strong links with a group of Catholic / Nationalist youth through St Louis House.*
8. *Emily Wilson from Broad Street Presbyterian Church, Columbus, OH, will serve with **Harmony Hill Presbyterian Church** in Lambeg, which is cooperating with nearby Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland parishes in providing a youth drop-in and after-schools centre for those ages 10-18 called **The Base**. She will also support existing youth ministries within the congregation, assisting in worship, link with a fairly unique Sunday afternoon Christian Education program for those with learning disabilities, and support a Parent/Toddlers pre-school program two mornings each week.*

Common Components in the YAV Programme Worldwide:

The YAV Program has a number of common components that are integral to it - no matter where in the world volunteers serve:

- ❖ Cross-cultural mission - experiencing, understanding and interpreting another culture
- ❖ Discipleship Formation
- ❖ Intentional Community / YAV Group life
- ❖ Participation in a Worshipping Community
- ❖ Service in a community of need:
- ❖ Simple Lifestyle / Exploration of and Commitment to Social Justice

MORE INFORMATION: For further information on serving through the Young Adult Volunteer Program in Northern Ireland or in other locations, contact Shannon Langley, Young Adult and National Volunteers Office, 502-569-5024 or look online: www.pcusa.org/yav or the Site Coordinator:

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To apply: www.pcusa.org/yav/apply.htm

TO SUPPORT FINANCIALLY: Individuals wishing to support the Northern Ireland YAV program can send contributions to Presbyterian Church USA Individual Remittance Processing, PO Box 643700, Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700; or if by churches to Presbyterian Church USA Church Remittance Processing, PO Box 643678, Pittsburgh, PA, 15674-3678. Write Northern Ireland Young Adult Volunteer Program and the Extra Commitment Opportunity number E047997 on the subject line of the check and on your cover letter. Send a copy of the cover letter to Europe Office, World Mission, 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202.