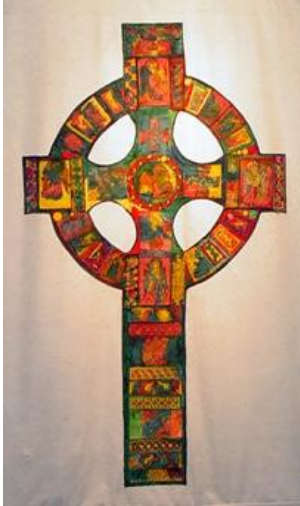


# Presbyterian Church USA - Young Adult Volunteer Program



Designed for those 19-30., the YAV program has sites in the US and internationally, including Northern Ireland

## There are a number of Common Components in the YAV Programme Worldwide:

- ❖ 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 / Commitment to Social Justice

## NORTHERN IRELAND PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

### **Cross-cultural Mission** (experiencing, understanding and interpreting another culture)

While English is used in Northern Ireland and it is part of the western / developed world, there are still plenty of challenges for YAVs at this site in terms of understanding and functioning in a different culture! For many YAVs the biggest cross-cultural challenge is not living and working in another country but in a different (lower) socio-economic setting. Given the history and present reality of Northern Ireland, there are also great opportunities to understand how various kinds of difference lead to division and observe efforts seeking to transform destructive conflicts.

**Discipleship Formation** involves being challenged to put one's faith into practical action, learning to rely on God and others in so doing, wrestling with questions which service and involvement in a local community and its issues raise, and reflecting individually and together on all of this. Opportunities exist for YAVs to engage in Bible study and attend short courses on youth ministry leadership, community relations and other topics.

### **Intentional Community / Group Life**

The YAV group, including the Site Coordinator, form an intentional community of support and reflection. By accepting a place in this program you commit yourself to build and sustain caring mutual relationships with other YAVs. In the Northern Ireland site this is aided *and* challenged by the fact that each volunteer lives with at least one other YAV and all live within a few miles of each other.



The YAVs spend several days together for in country orientation before beginning in their respective placements. Thereafter they meet with the Site Coordinator every two weeks for a mixture of sharing from our placement experiences, worship/faith reflection/Bible study, exploration of current issues, and encounters with individuals who have particular experiences to share around ministry or peace-building in this setting. Sometimes the meetings are outings away from the city for recreation and informal chat. There are also three three-day retreats in different parts of Ireland built into the year.

### **Participation in a Worshipping Community**

Each volunteer is assigned to work with a local congregation on Sundays (and in most instances at a few other times during the week.). Given that the volunteer has an assigned role in the congregation it is generally easy to find a sense of belonging relatively quickly.

### **Service in a community of need:**

*What is the need?* Northern Ireland is known for its tragic history of inter-community conflict. These have left behind serious economic, emotional and spiritual needs, particularly in urban-working class districts. Although the level of violence has reduced dramatically, deep sectarian division remains. YAVs bring an 'outside' perspective to communities in which they serve.

*What form does the service take?* Each YAV is assigned part of the week to a local congregation and the other part to a community based project. Within congregations YAVs lead youth fellowships and open youth clubs, Sunday morning youth programs, and, in some instances, assist with worship and other pastoral duties.

In community ministries they assist with after-school tutoring for children and youth, organising recreational & discussion activities for youth, supervising drop-in activities and befriending young people, working with senior citizens, parents and pre-school children, women's groups, literacy, computer training, website-development and administration. YAVs may also have opportunity to support / participate in cross-community reconciliation initiatives and learn from those involved in community development and peace-building.



### **Simple Lifestyle / Exploration of and Commitment to Social Justice**

While at least one the communities in which volunteers resides or works will be 'low income' with various kinds of social deprivation, Northern Ireland is a developed nation. YAVs have access to a wide-range of consumer items, entertainment, health-care, etc. Accommodation and the living allowance provided are a step above basic in line with what Northern Irish students living in self-catering accommodation might have. Each volunteer has a private room. Generally, volunteers share a house or apartment with 1-3 other YAVs. Occasionally a volunteer may share an apartment with a Northern Irish young adult serving at the same placement as them



However, volunteers are strongly encouraged to live within the allowance rather than draw on other funds and live responsibly in terms of energy use, waste and recycling. The biggest 'simple lifestyle' challenges for many YAVs are learning to walk instead of use a car and cope with basic heating systems in a much colder climate than they are used to experiencing.

**Orientation** for living and working in a different cultural context is provided for volunteers in the US prior to departure and specific orientation relating to Northern Ireland is arranged upon the volunteers' arrival. Throughout the year opportunities are used to broaden volunteers' experience and understanding of Northern Ireland beyond their work settings.

**Supervision** In each congregation and each community-based ministry/project there is one person responsible to provide regular overall direction and to meet occasionally with the YAV to reflect on her/his experience. In addition, the Site Coordinator meets individually with each volunteer to discuss issues, insights, and questions arising out of his/her placement experiences.

**Site Coordinator:** is the Rev Doug Baker, PCUSA Mission Co-Worker and Regional Liaison for Ireland and the United Kingdom ([www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/profiles/bakerd.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/profiles/bakerd.htm)) Doug first served in Northern Ireland for two years as a young adult in the early 1970s and has been living and working there since 1979. The YAV programme began operating in Belfast in 1994. An average of 5-6 volunteers have participated each year since then.

### **MORE INFORMATION AND APPLICATION:**

Contact Shannon Langley, Young Adult and National Volunteers Office, 1-502-569-5024 - or look online: <http://www.pcusa.org/yav> or Doug Baker, [doug.baker@dnet.co.uk](mailto:doug.baker@dnet.co.uk)  
To apply: <http://www.pcusa.org/yav/apply.htm>