

**PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH USA
YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTEER PROGRAM
NORTHERN IRELAND**

This is the fourteenth year for the PCUSA Young Adults Volunteer Program in Northern Ireland. Seventy-one volunteers have served in the past in eighteen different placements.

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!

The YAV positions for September 2007 – August 2008 are as follows:

1. ***Bethany Therriault from Eastminster Presbyterian Church, York, PA*** is working with **Garnerville Presbyterian Church and The LINK Family and Community Centre**. She works with youth and other programs of **Garnerville Presbyterian Church** situated at the interface of middle-class private housing and a low-income housing estate in East Belfast. She also helps to strengthen connections with local schools and engage in building relationships with the nearby housing estate. The other part of her assignment is with **The Link**, an inter-denominational initiative which connects town churches and the local community through a drop-in centre and other programs for young people from low-income areas of Newtownards, ten miles east of Belfast.
2. ***Melissa Wheeler from First Presbyterian Church, Canyon, TX***, is working with **Cooke Presbyterian Church and The Vine Centre**: At Cooke this includes working with youth from the congregation and the surrounding community in a mixed area of south-east Belfast. She is responsible for a Sunday evening youth fellowship, Sunday morning education time for teens, and exploring ways to support uniform youth work within the congregation (Boys Brigade and Guides) as well as reach out to community youth. There is also potential responsibility in worship leadership and pastoral visiting. **The Vine Centre**, located in a low-income inter-face area in North Belfast, provides a comprehensive range of community services to all age groups. Melissa works with after-schools tutoring/study support and youth clubs, and a senior citizen's club.
3. ***Maureen (Mo) Wilson from Second Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis, IN***, is working with **Fitzroy Presbyterian Church and Mornington Community Project**: Both are located in a mixed area of south Belfast. At **Fitzroy** her position involves youth work with children from the congregation and the surrounding community and a weekly late night outreach to students. The position also includes youth and community work (women's group; senior citizens lunch club, etc) at **Mornington Community Project**: in a Catholic/Nationalist inner-city district of south Belfast.

4. *Alex Wirth from Grace First Presbyterian Church in Long Beach, CA*, is working with **Fortwilliam Macrory Presbyterian Church and the 174 Trust** both of which are located in North Belfast. This congregation is actively engaging with all sections of the community. His post involves leading a Sunday evening youth fellowship, The Point, and other support for young people in the congregation. There are also opportunities for involvement in outreach and cross-community project in the mixed area around the church. **The 174 Trust** is an inter-denominational group operating a community and youth centre in a low-income Nationalist area of North Belfast. The volunteer position focuses on youth and after-schools projects, assisting with administration and magazine production, and the PHAB Club for physically disabled and able-bodied.

5. *Sarah Craven from Covenant Presbyterian Church, College Station, TX*, is working with **Strand Presbyterian Church**. Located in a modest residential district of East Belfast, Strand has become a pilot project in urban mission through the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. It is planned to replace its traditional building with a multi-purpose community facility, more likely to connect with the local community. Sarah works alongside existing children's and youth ministries within the congregation, a statutory youth provider in the district, and links with local schools to help develop an after school drop-in project.

6. *Jessica Samoy from Immanuel Presbyterian Church, Tucson, AZ* is working with **Whitehouse Presbyterian Church** in North Belfast and outreach to surrounding schools. **Whitehouse** is situated in a 'no man's land' between housing areas identified with Loyalist and Republican factions. It engages in creative cross-community work with those areas and is developing a vital program for all age groups. Jessica works with youth ministry, the cross-community project for older adults, and assists with worship and general pastoral duties – as well as link with various schools in the area, through one-to-one remedial work, and support for religious education and creative learning aspects of the curriculum.

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

For further information on serving through the Young Adult Volunteer Program in Northern Ireland or in other locations, contact PCUSA Mission Service Recruitment at 888-728-7228 ext 2530 - or online at www.pcusa.org/msr,

or the Site Coordinator:

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