

Christ Presbyterian Church
2017 Mother's Day Special Offering
Jessica Reese, CPC Member and Young Adult Volunteer,
Presbyterian Church (USA)

From Jessica:

I *found* myself for the first time when I was fourteen years old, sitting on a bus in the middle of Belize City. The doors were open and no one was moving- this was counterintuitive to me- so I simply stood up and walked off the bus. To my surprise everyone else followed. Adults, pastors, and older students surrounded me but I was the one who moved first. The one who organized a game of tag with the local kids, learned their names, and taught them songs. I was not confused, I was not scared, I knew what to do and I acted. I loved. At 14 I realized that everyone around me had stepped out of their comfort zones and I had stepped *into* mine.



That story about Belize may ring a bell. 10 years ago I received your support on my first large scale mission project to Belize City. I didn't know it then, but that trip, through CPC, would guide and shape my life. It has been through service, action, new situations, and new places that I have come into my own. I have been called to and sought out these opportunities to grow and serve throughout the past 10 years. However, it has not been until now, that I have once again needed to ask for your help in my journey to follow God's call. I have spent the last year and a half discerning God's path for me. Doors have opened and closed, leading me to follow God in new and different ways. This February, I accepted a position as a yearlong mission ambassador for the Presbyterian Church. I will be serving as a Young Adult Volunteer in an underserved neighborhood in New Orleans, Louisiana.



As soon as I had finished my interview with the Program Director in NOLA I told my mom, "This is where I am supposed to be". There have been moments in my life where I have had an epiphany, a feeling of "this is right" or "I am exactly where I am supposed to be." But I have never had this feeling *before* I was fully living the experience. Now I have. I am one hundred percent at peace with my decision to serve for the PCUSA this year. Is it frightening? Yes.

Is it overwhelming? Of course! However, there is a need and I have the skills and heart to fill a portion of the gap. I have no doubt that I am about to thrive.

If you would like to receive the updates I plan to journal about my time as a YAV, please email me at jessica.reese113@gmail.com. I will reply to you and add you to the distribution list for my update letters. I have a lifetime of gratitude for the support and love you have sent my way during my journey and it will only continue to grow. It would mean the world to me if throughout this time you would keep me, the work I am doing, and the city of NOLA in your thoughts and prayers. I will take as many prayers and good wishes as I can get! Thank you for believing in me and the path that God has sent me on.

I have enclosed pages (below) that contain information about the YAV program and specifically the New Orleans site. Although I still don't know what my work placement will be, I have included information on several sites I might be assigned.

Love Always,

Jessica Reese

From the CPC Mission Committee

As Jessica's church family, we have the opportunity to support Jessica in her work with our prayers and with our dollars by providing the essentials of her living expenses while she volunteers in mission.

Donations are being collected through the church, and are, of course, tax deductible. Please make your check out to **Christ Presbyterian Church** and write **New Orleans** on the memo line. Donations are welcome anytime but most helpful by June 11.



Presbyterian Mission Young Adult Volunteer (YAV) Program

<http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/yav/>

The Young Adult Volunteer program is a one year service opportunity for young adults from 19 to 30 years of age. YAVs live in intentional Christian community, deepening and developing their faith while serving alongside partners in sites across the United States and around the world. YAVs serve for one year, August—July, as they explore God's calling in their lives.

Volunteers are placed in community agencies or local churches, with jobs depending on the needs of partners and the skills of the Young Adult Volunteer. YAVs are exposed to some of the hardest problems in the world—poverty, violence and reconciliation, and sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ—while living and reflecting with other volunteers on the meaning and motivation of their Christian faith.

Each YAV experience is different—but all YAVs will participate in a mutual discernment process to be a part of the program, work closely with mentors and peers, and participate in vocational discernment activities.

New Orleans YAV Site

Though geographically and by measure of population, New Orleans is a smaller city- it has all the problems of a large city. A Broken Education system, gun violence, gang violence, a huge disparity between the rich and the poor, explicit and systemic racism, poor access to healthy food, and they are still continuing to heal from the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Though I will have many opportunities to dance in the streets and celebrate life with my neighbors, I will also find myself weeping with those same neighbors as I live and work together with them in the tension of sorrow and celebration. Throughout my YAV year I will find myself in the midst of this tension which will be used to help me engage and deepen my faith. For as I have been taught there is no Easter without Good Friday and the city of New Orleans has the ability to welcome me deeper into this concept that is so important to the Christian faith.

YAV Community Life

- The New Orleans site tends to be one of the larger YAV sites and generally hosts 8 YAVs each year.
- All of the YAVs live in an intentional community, (in the large green house pictured here). This house is a four bedroom house with two kitchens- so if you do the math- all YAVs in NOLA have a roommate for the year.



☑ YAVs meet for community meetings on Tuesday night, during this time the community will discuss books being read, pray together, discuss community things, ect...

☑ YAVs meet on Thursday Night to share a community meal and do to spiritual practices. Each month the community will choose a different spiritual practice to do together.

☑ Every Third Saturday of each month is community day. On community day the community does some sort of activity together that is a service, cultural, or educational experience. On community day we will eat all our meals together.

☑ New Orleans is the only site where each YAV has a host family, we do not live with our host family, but this is a family that will welcome and introduce me to the city of New Orleans. They will also be companions to me on my journey through the year. I am very excited about meeting my host family.

Possible work placement sites where I will work 35-40 hours per week for me are:

Mid City Ministries: As a YAV I would tutor and mentor at-risk children and youth in the mid city neighborhood through this organization. As a YAV I would provide leadership and compassion to students who participate in the after school program, weekly character development program, summer camp, and ACT Prep program.

Encore Academy: Encore Academy is a local charter school in which 90% of the student population is on assisted lunch. As a YAV I would work in one of two placements a member of the reading and math intervention team, or the assistant to the creative arts team.

Eden House: Eden House is the newest community partner, and offers a two-year residential program to adult female victims of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, which includes outreach, housing, food, mental and physical health care, job training, education, legal services, and spiritual support. The Young Adult Volunteer at Eden House plays an integral role at Eden House, supporting the staff and residents, and helping spread the good work of Eden House in the community at large.