

Partners in Service



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Why do we serve others? UCC Volunteer Ministries often uses the gospel story in John 13 of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. The logo of the towel and basin emerges from this story. Jesus knelt and washed the feet of his disciples and then told them to do likewise. So, why do we serve others? Because Jesus told us to wash one another's feet. Yes. But we might also back up in the story for our motivation to serve. Perhaps, we serve others, not only because of Jesus' directive, but simply because Jesus first washed those feet and we can't help but respond in service. It is a motivation of gratitude and response to grace. Service is a joy, not only a responsibility. This subtle difference is one reason why in "volunteer-speak" we often refer to "opportunities for service" or "volunteer possibilities." (Look at headlines in this very newsletter) Service in such an attitude of joy and thanksgiving moves us away from the tendency to "compassion fatigue" because we are responding freely and not out of externally-imposed obligation. This attitude of gratitude shines through in the reflections of many volunteers on their time of service.

"I think there are times in our lives when we are called to let go, to take a risk, to step out in faith." Dee Ettinger, Volunteer 1984	Why do you volunteer? "It was time for payback." Bob and Helen Liska, Volunteers 1993-1996
"It was time to step out of my comfort zone." Kristen Elmes, Volunteer 2002	

Thank you to all who serve others. We respond gratefully, even as we act as Jesus directs.

Annual Gathering for Long-Term Volunteers January 13-18, 2008

Reminder: If you are a volunteer serving a 10-12 month placement assignment, and have received a note from the Volunteer Ministries Office, be sure to make your travel arrangements now.

Welcome New and Returning 'Partners in Service' Volunteers



International 'Partners in Service' volunteers:

Zsolt Bonyai, Hungary at United Church Neighborhood Houses, St. Louis, MO

Placed Again U.S. 'Partners in Service' volunteers:

Thomas Gorchman, South Dakota at South Central Conference Disaster Recovery, New Orleans, LA

Margaret Jacobs, Kentucky at Back Bay Mission, Biloxi, MS

John Small, Indiana at Back Bay Mission, Biloxi, MS

Pam Small, Indiana at Back Bay Mission, Biloxi, MS

Allan Thiele, Michigan at South Central Conference Disaster Recovery, New Orleans, LA

Roberta Thiele, Michigan at South Central Conference Disaster Recovery, New Orleans, LA

New U.S. 'Partners in Service' volunteers:

Joseph Conn, North Carolina at Lake & Sumter Counties, FL

Long-Term Disaster Recovery Committee, Mount Dora, FL

Jillian Glasgow, Oregon at JOIN, Portland, OR

Emily Nguyen, Oregon at JOIN, Portland, OR

Thanks to 'Partners in Service' Volunteers Recently Completing their Service



Dosia Carlson at
Abernethy Laurels, North Carolina

Dosia Carlson, Arizona at Abernethy Laurels, NC

Scott Kons, Wisconsin at Back Bay Mission, Biloxi, MS

Leah Lyman, Illinois at Back Bay Mission, Biloxi, MS

Robert Waidman, Ohio at Heifer Ranch, Perryville, AR

Connie Waidman, Ohio at Heifer Ranch, Perryville, AR

Highlighting Volunteer Possibilities

Baby-Boomers - Use Your Professional Skills & Experience

Interdenominational Theological Center (Atlanta, Georgia)

is seeking a *Partners in Service* volunteer for assistance in coordination of marketing communication projects including public relations, special events management, advertising and creating brand awareness. ITC is a consortium of denominational seminaries whose mission is to educate Christian leaders for ministry and service in the Church and the global community. The ITC is establishing itself as a nationwide resource on the Black Church's role in the renewal of American society.

New Placement Site—Great for Young Adults

JOIN: Connecting the Street to A Home (Portland, Oregon) is seeking a volunteer as "House Coordinator" beginning in July, 2008. JOIN serves homeless individuals and families through street outreach, basic services, and rapid permanent housing placement. A volunteer coordinates the delivery of vital basic services in the drop-in center (the 'House'), a community space governed by principles of non-violence that offers homeless individuals and families access to showers, lockers, restrooms, and a place to build relationships.

See "Partners in Service" booklet for more opportunities. Available at www.ucc.org/volunteer or by calling United Church of Christ Resources at 800-537-3394

General Synod 2007 Service Project Teacher Appreciation Packet Thank Yous

During last summer's UCC General Synod volunteers participated in various service projects in the Hartford, CT area. One of those projects was to collect donated items and assemble them into packets for teachers in the Hartford Public Schools as a way of thanking them for noticing the gifts of their students, for expecting much from each of them, and for giving so much to help these young people in their care.

A Sampling of some responses from Hartford:

"Thank you so much for the lovely gift of a tote bag and supplies. We, Hartford teachers, scrimp and try to make the most out of very little. Your thoughtfulness is greatly appreciated."

Gerri Kaizer, MD Fox Elementary School

"As a teacher in the Hartford Public Schools, I want to thank you for sending so many of us teachers "goodie bags." I received a children's dictionary, some highlighters, post-its, a super pen, and a great canvas bag. My 4th grade students and I will use these things happily this year. Thank you again for your thoughtfulness." Victoria Fuchs.

"Dear United Church of Christ Members, Thank you for the bag of supplies! It was a great surprise!"
Ann Milner, Hartford Teacher.

"Thank you so much for the lovely goody bag that I received. It's wonderful to be appreciated."
Sincerely, Rose Vouthounes, Grade 4

ALONG THE WAY... NEWS FROM VOLUNTEERS

Katie Hochstedler, Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests



Katie served as a UCC “Partners in Service” volunteer with Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests, finishing in August, 2007

“Farewell From Katie”

This August, I finished my final year as the BMC volunteer and moved on to begin a culinary arts program at Saint Paul College. When I began working at BMC two years ago, I was freshly graduated from Goshen College, idealistic and ready to make a difference. In weak moments of grandiose naiveté. I even imagined that, if I put in my time, maybe the church would be about right in a year or two.

These two years have been a great experience for me. A highlight has been meeting and spending time with some of the best people in the church (and some who aren't in the church anymore). Many of these lgbtq people, families, allies, and whole congregations have been involved in the work of BMC for 10, 20, even 30 years. The strength, courage, generosity, hospitality, humor, and joy of these new friends inspires me. I also encountered many who were newer to BMC and sometimes just coming out.

These bring fresh energy and a sense of urgency to push forward when we all feel frustrated and worn down. I've met young people growing up in an increasingly open time. They live more free of the burdens of shame, fear, and homophobia as they have queer friends, relatives, and mentors.

My experiences with BMC gave me hope and have shown me what the church can and should be. I move on from my job at BMC more convinced than ever that it is inevitable that the Church will welcome and affirm the lgbtq community; it is just a matter of time. I also leave with a greater sense of urgency and impatience for that change to happen. I know that institutional change takes time, but I wonder if it will be 5, 10, 20 or more years. What is lost as time passes? Could it pass us by? Will we be too late?

When I started working at BMC, I thought of my work as a service and ministry to my lgbtq and allied community. I have now come to see it also as an important service and ministry to the church. BMC has a lot to offer the broken church in the way of healing, and I am glad to have been able to be part of that. Thank you.

(From BMC newsletter “Outspoken”, Autumn 2007, p. 4)

Disaster Recovery Mission Trip—Eastern Ohio Association in New Orleans

“Let Us Rise Up and Build” Nehemiah 2:1

“Absolutely awesome!!!” is how one mission worker described the work week in New Orleans sponsored by the EOA Church in the World Department where 45 volunteers from 14 churches were truly “church in the world” in covenant with Disaster Response Ministries of the UCC and our mission partners in New Orleans. During the 2 weeks, 10 different homes received some work. The workers were literally “red hot for Jesus” (a sign on an east New Orleans storefront church) as they tirelessly worked in the heat and humidity of October. As they reflected after five days, mission workers from Eastern Ohio and Western Reserve Associations gave thanks for stories shared, for lives changed, for hearts touched, for faith lived, for lasting friendships, for porta potties, for St. Paul United Church of Christ (an aging congregation hosting up to 40 volunteers and serving an authentic Cajun meal to volunteers each week!), for learning to play euchre, for being in New Orleans, and for the United Church of Christ, our wonderful denomination dedicated to hope! “When will we be coming back?” was the question on everyone's lips as vans were loaded for the trip back to Ohio. *(From “Eastern Energy,” Eastern Ohio Association, UCC, Nov. 2007)*

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For over 50 years, Volunteer Ministries has provided opportunities for people to share their gifts of service and witness to others. Through the act of foot washing, Jesus makes clear God's call to serve others. We are invited to ministries of service that reflect God's love by responding to the needs of the world and involving ourselves in efforts to challenge injustices. The logo of the towel and basin remind us of God's call to serve.

Check out the new look on the
website!
New Address too
<http://www.ucc.org/volunteer>

PARTNERS IN SERVICE
MISSION TRIPS
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