

I.001 Report
NEXT STEPS FOR THE YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTEER PROGRAM
PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY BOARD
March 22-24, 2017

Presenting Question: What are the next best steps for the Young Adult Volunteer program?

Members: Marci Glass, Gina Meester, Sinthia Hernandez-Diaz, Joe Morrow, Steve Asher, Brenton Thompson, Mary Jorgenson, and Richard Williams.

Recommendations:

The “Next Steps for the Young Adult Volunteer Program” Ministerial Team recommends that the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board:

- 1. Encourage members of the Board to increase their awareness about the Young Adult Volunteer Program, if they are not familiar with it.**

Rationale:

A number of people in our team were unfamiliar with the program when we began, which may speak to bigger issues in the PCUSA of getting news out about good ministries.

- 2. That the Board have some conversation about two additional topics and consider whether to use one or both of them as future ministerial team topics:**
 - a. Engage retired PC(USA) members in mission and service through PMA programs such as the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Program.**

Background:

We have a lot of retired and retiring baby boomers in our congregations who have money and time. We used to have a Volunteer in Mission program for short term mission assignment for such people. The YAV program and goals seem very different than the VIM program and goals were, so just adding spots for older, short term volunteers into the YAV program doesn't seem to be the right thing to do. Is there a way we can harness those people in mission and service through another program (World Mission, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, etc.?) or could the VIM program come back in some form? Jesuit Volunteer Corps now has a program similar to what our old VIM program was. <https://jvcnorthwest.org/get-involved/joining-jvc-encorps/>

- b. Broaden the goal of the Young Adult Volunteer Program by finding ways for the formation programs of the PMA (UKirk, Triennium, Young Adult Volunteer, and Young Women's Leadership) to collaborate with programs offered by seminaries (or PCUSA).**

Background:

The YAV program is really about formation through service for young adults. Having it housed in World Mission makes it look like it is a Mission co-worker type deployment for young adults, when that's not its whole scope. How could the formation programs of the PMA – UKirk, Triennium, YAV, Young Women's leadership - and others (seminaries for example) work better

together for this broader goal? While we know the PMA staff is a nimble enough to cross those lines for collaboration, we still think it might be worth exploring to know how these formation programs can better collaborate.

Team methodology and reasons for implementation:

We looked at all aspects of the YAV program and would like to commend Richard Williams for his attention to detail and his vision for the program. After his initial presentation to us in September, we came up with a number of questions, ideas, and musings. Here are the questions we came up to explore during our time together. We determined some of these questions were “above our pay grade” and expertise, but perhaps they will be helpful to the right people. We organized those questions into 4 categories:

1. COSTS AND FUND DEVELOPMENT

- In terms of impact, how does budget compare to other formation activities? (UKirk, Triennium, Curriculum, etc.)
- Are five staff members the right number for 80 YAV compared to other areas of PMA’s staffing levels?
- How do we communicate differently with mid-councils for support (recruitment and funds development)?
- How do we have this great program when people in the pews still don’t know it exists 20 years in? Where is the communication disconnect?
- Is there a way to “preserve” money unspent from 2016 toward 2017 because of fluctuation of projected budgets? (2016 is fine. 2017 is low. 2018 is higher).

2. YAV SITES

- How do we address site safety?
- What needs to be done (is being done) for Site Coordinator accountability? (these two questions had already been addressed by staff, and came from previous experience of a YAV alum)
- What is the process to be a YAV site?
- What untapped potential is out there?
- Do we need more rural sites? Or do people really want urban?

3. RECRUITMENT

- Number of people who are offered spots but don’t accept has been rising. Is this a blip or a trend? Is it a problem or just the way it is?
- Would there be seminary students who could use a YAV year before they graduate? How can we partner with seminaries?
- How do we communicate differently with mid-councils for support (recruitment and funds development)?
- In the switch from VIM to YAV, we lost opportunities for short term mission, and for mission other than for 19-30 year olds. With the increasing number of boomers who are retiring, do we need to look for opportunities for them?
- What would it do to the program to open it up to older people?
- Or to have a parallel track for retiring boomers?
- Are people post seminary, waiting for calls a market for YAV? Sabbatical supply?
- Look upstream—who are we targeting? Recruiting? Why do they seem to come from particular areas? R/E?
- Bringing in people from other countries for cultural exchange? (Like the Koreans).

4. ONGOING EVALUATION

- What do we learn from YAV that can be transferred to other areas of PMA?
- What do we want YAVs to learn and do beyond their year of service?
- Are we asking the right questions in the surveys?
- Are we surveying the right people? (People who gave money? People who turned us down? People who didn't finish? People who started applying but didn't finish?)
- Why could research services not email people who had given money to support YAVs? (*This question was answered. Will not be a problem going forward.*)
- If YAV is about young adult formation, why is YAV in World Mission instead of TWE (Christian Formation)?

Observations:

We had a few conference calls, but it was very difficult to get everyone's schedules together and do our work remotely. (Would be curious to know if conference calls worked well for the other teams. They were really not helpful for us).

From the questions we discussed in our time together, it appeared that Richard Williams and his team had things well in hand. He was responsive to our suggestions and often our discussion prompted questions from him too.

Follow-up to be Done:

None.

As a result of this work, do you have any suggested questions for future Ministerial Teams?

Overall, we feel this is a solid and successful ministry that has helped the young adults who have participated in it to deepen their understanding of vocation and call. We hope the entire Board will become champions for this program in their own congregations, presbyteries, and synods so the young adults who God may be calling to the ministry will be able to hear the call.

See also Recommendation 2 above