



Brethren Volunteer Service Annual Report

Sharing God's Love Through Acts of Service

Working for Peace

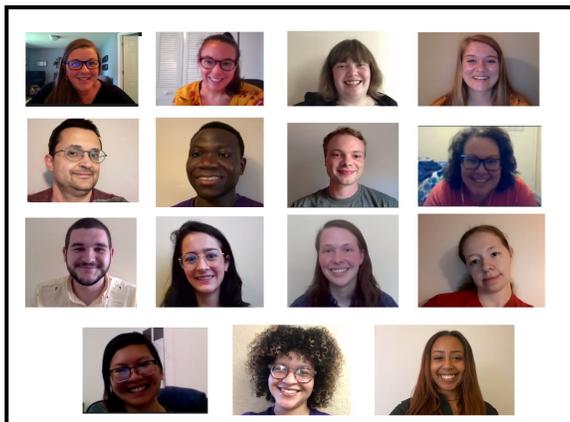
Caring for Creation

Advocating Justice

Serving Human Needs

BVS ended 2020 with 20 volunteers:

- who served in 6 countries: El Salvador, Japan, Northern Ireland, Ireland, Nigeria, and the U.S.;
- placed in 13 U.S. states and Washington, D.C.;
- 54 volunteers served throughout the year.



Unit #325, Summer 2020: Volunteer group photo taken over Zoom

In 2020:

- BVS hosted three orientation units this past year. One was hosted in Newmanstown, Pa., and two were hosted virtually via Zoom due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Partners in Service Award

Each year, BVS presents a Partners in Service Award to an individual, group, or organization that has shown exceptional commitment to the work of sharing God's love through acts of service. The 2021 award goes to Harrisburg First Church of the Brethren and bcmPEACE in Harrisburg, Pa.

Since receiving their first BVS volunteer in 1960, Harrisburg First Church of the Brethren and bcmPEACE have hosted nearly 60 BVS volunteers. They began their partnership with BVS in hopes of being helpful to the migrant community in the area and continue to host BVSers to serve their community today.

The Partners in Service Award is usually presented at the Annual Conference Brethren Volunteer Service Luncheon each July. However, this year it will be acknowledged at the BVS Networking Session on July 1 as part of the 2021 virtual Annual Conference.



Alyssa Parker (unit #321.1) singing with the Harrisburg First choir



New European Coordinator: Sara Cook

Sara Cook began working with BVS as the European coordinator in January 2020. Sara is based in Northern Ireland where she served with BVS from 2001 to 2003 as a part of unit #246. Since her time as a BVSer, Sara has worked to support Northern Ireland's peace process. Her work has included facilitating dialogue encounters between former security forces, paramilitaries, and those bereaved or injured by conflict-related violence. In recent years, Sara has also supported the work of international women peacebuilders and the resettlement of Syrian refugees.

As European coordinator, Sara will continue Kristin Flory's work of supporting BVSers based in Europe, with a current focus on projects in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Though the COVID-19 pandemic brought challenges soon after Sara began her work, she is "really enjoying working with current volunteers based in Belfast." She says, "BVS changed my life. My peacebuilding work, my life in Northern Ireland, and so many of my perspectives and values are due to my time as a volunteer with BVS. It's a privilege to work with current BVSers as they serve with BVS."

BVS During COVID-19

In March 2020, along with the rest of the world, BVS was forced to shift all of its programming to a virtual format in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The first pivot was the annual volunteer mid-year retreat becoming an online experience. Volunteers and BVS staff gathered virtually for a day of fellowship, games, and respite.

BVS staff then got to work at shifting its 2020 orientations to a virtual format. Instead of a three-week, in-person orientation, the summer unit #325 and fall unit #327 were hosted via Zoom. Volunteers and BVS staff met weekly in the month preceding orientation for pre-orientation, a time of connection and project discernment. Volunteers then traveled to their project sites and attended orientation virtually for 14 days, which doubled as a quarantine time. BVS staff will carry some of the changes from this year forward as they continue to seek innovative ways of training volunteers.

Amidst the programming changes, BVS also experienced a transition in staff. In addition to the usual turnover in staff volunteers, in July 2020, Jocelyn Siakula resigned from her role as orientation coordinator, a position she had held since 2015. Pauline Liu, unit #319, stepped into the role of interim volunteer coordinator following Jocelyn's departure. Pauline served with L'Arche Kilkenny in Ireland as a live-in assistant during her BVS term in 2018-2019. She remotely joined the BVS team in May 2020 as the orientation assistant before taking on the role of interim volunteer coordinator. Pauline holds a B.A. in Psychology with a minor in Leadership Studies from the University of Colorado Boulder, and recently completed a master's degree in Educational Psychology – Human Relations at Northern Arizona University.



Photo courtesy of Alex McBride



Photo courtesy of Deb Wilson

Alex McBride (unit #322) at SnowCap Community Charities in Portland, Ore. (left), and Deb Wilson (unit #327) wrapping gifts at Project PLASE in Baltimore, Md. (right).

Workcamp Ministry Name Change



In November, the workcamp ministry changed its name to Faith Outreach Expeditions (FaithX). This name change came from a several-year process of determining the future for the short-term service program. In the new name, the word "faith" expresses that these experiences are a place for theological exploration, discernment, and spiritual growth. The word "outreach" speaks to the experience of becoming the hands and feet of Christ to the world. The word "expeditions" emphasizes the sense of adventure and fun that we hope all participants experience while serving.

The breadth of the new name speaks to the hope of expanding short-term service opportunities beyond the summer programming for youth and young adults. Additionally, for those outside the Church of the Brethren, or those not as familiar with the short-term service program, this name encompasses the program's mission and goals. The name Faith Outreach Expeditions speaks to the spiritual component of the program, the emphasis on service, and the sense of adventure that is promoted as participants travel to new places and try new things.

FaithX Update



Chad Whitzel and Alton Higgs (at right) are serving as the FaithX coordinators in the BVS office. They began their work in August of 2020 and are part of the first group of volunteers to live in the newly-purchased Elgin BVS house located near the general offices.

The 2021 theme is "Step Out: Seeking New Paths," and Chad and Alton are working to plan eight in-person and virtual FaithX experiences for the 2021 summer season.

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BVS is a ministry of the Church of the Brethren