

Washington DC Young Adult Volunteers

Sarah-Dianne: New York Avenue Presbyterian Church & NEXT Church

“I love relationship building!” was Sarah-Dianne Jones’ response when asked what she enjoys most about her work as a Young Adult Volunteer (YAV). Sarah-Dianne is one of four YAVs serving here in Washington, DC. The YAV program is an opportunity for young adults aged 19-30 to spend one year in intentional service. YAVs live simply and in community while serving. Each YAV is placed at one or more service sites and spend that year getting to know not only the ins and outs of the service site organization, but are also exposed to some of the hardest problems in the world (like poverty and racism) while exploring the very nature of their call and faith.

Sarah-Dianne is like many YAVs, serving for a year between their undergrad years and seminary. During the selection process she was immediately drawn to the joint position serving both New York Avenue Presbyterian Church and the NEXT church program. She likes doing both because it allows her to work both at the congregation level and at the connectional level, gaining deeper insight into the nature of the Church as a whole.

In her time at New York Avenue Presbyterian Church she is a key figure in the operation of three of their outreach programs. On Sunday mornings she helps staff the Radcliffe Room, a program started in the 60s to assist the homeless population of Washington, DC. It is a place where homeless can come and get a warm meal, some clothes, toiletries, listen to some piano, and on occasion, get to hear Sarah-Dianne sing. More than anything though it is a chance for folks to get off the streets for a few hours and relax in a safe setting.



On Thursday evenings she helps out with the Community Club tutoring program. Another historic program at New York Ave PC, students from DC public schools gather to meet with a mentor, get tutoring help on any subject they might be struggling with and build community together, a community that helps create pathways to college.



Sarah-Dianne’s responsibilities also include following up with folks who request assistance through the church’s benevolence fund. Every week the church gets requests for assistance with rent or medical bills, Sarah-Dianne makes sure that the requests are legitimate and that any funds go directly to the appropriate party.

On Sundays during worship she spends time with the young children of the church and their parents, which she has described as a great way to get to know the congregation better.

Through NEXT Church she gets to apply her energy and enthusiasm to helping the program develop deeper relationships with those interested in the mission of NEXT Church. She also serves on a few of the organizations committees and gets to add her voice, an important one, to the discussions around where NEXT Church is headed.

The National Capital Presbytery helps support the DC YAV programs by providing some funding for their housing. Many individual churches in the presbytery give directly to the program. Sarah-Dianne’s work is not only testament to the YAV program’s ability to assist in community outreach and development, but also in preparing leaders like Sarah-Dianne for a career committed to service.

“TOGETHER WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE”