



## UnitingWorld Experience Explained

Thank you for your interest in joining our team as a UnitingWorld volunteer. We are delighted to be able to share with you about this program and placements available with our overseas partners. We look forward to working with you in the future!

This document is designed to provide you with background information that will assist in your decision making. Please also feel free to contact us at any time should you wish to discuss anything.

We're here to help!

### Who is UnitingWorld?

UnitingWorld is an agency of the Uniting Church in Australia, with responsibility for relationships with overseas partners. Within UnitingWorld there are two units. The Church

Connections unit undertakes UnitingWorld's activities relating to Church Solidarity, Experience programmes and Australian Church Partnerships. The Relief and Development unit oversees UnitingWorld's

activities in relation to relief and development. Experience volunteers may work across these sections.



UnitingWorld works with Australian Church communities and our many overseas church partners across Asia, the Pacific and Africa, building links and changing lives. Much of our work is focussed on those on the margins of society. Many of these partners have been in relationship with the UCA (or its predecessors) for a long time – over 100 years.

### Why do we exist?

#### *UnitingWorld Experience Mission:*

Connecting people and church communities in Australia, the Pacific, Asia and Africa to partner in God's mission enabling discipleship and faith-filled action.

#### *UnitingWorld Experience Vision:*

A growing movement of people and church communities inspired, energised and transformed through global engagement with trusted partners.

## *UnitingWorld Experience Values:*

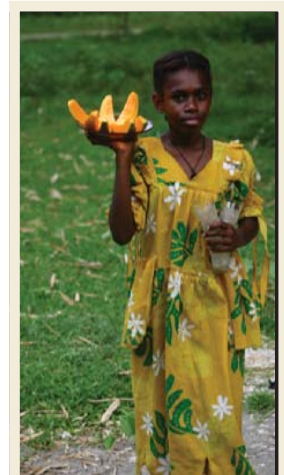
We commit to live and serve with overseas partners in God's mission and value:

- Trust in the Holy Spirit and in partners as we each discern how God is moving us in mission, praying for each other;
- The fullness of the Good News of Jesus Christ including personal witness, justice for people who are oppressed, compassion for people in need, rights for people who are marginalised, overturning systems that impoverish and accompanying people in being faithful;
- The complementary nature of God's gifts in the world-wide body of Christ so that every partner is encouraged in contributing gifts mutually and respectfully;
- Long term partnerships characterised by perseverance and sustainable commitments which support and encourage partners;
- Self-awareness of the context out of which we come, respect for the context in which our partners live, being sensitive to and addressing the issues of power that result from our differences;
- Our responsibility to each other: communicating openly, acting transparently, exercising accountability and speaking and hearing the truth in love.

Jesus invites us all to be part of the transforming work of God in the world. We are committed to engagement with our overseas partners and one aspect of this is through "people to people" programmes under the auspices of UnitingWorld Experience.

## Who are our overseas partners?

We work alongside 36 overseas partner churches and their agencies throughout Asia, the Pacific and Africa, together building links and changing lives. Much of our work focusses on those on the margins of society and that means that most of our volunteers go into unpaid positions, giving their time, energy and resources to serve on behalf of the Uniting Church in Australia.





## Who can Apply?

Adult Christians (and accompanying family members) who are willing to work within the ethos of the Uniting Church in Australia and our overseas church partners may apply.

People may include:

- Young adults wanting to do a GAP placement;
- Early retirees;
- Students after completing tertiary studies and commencing work;
- People with Long Service Leave;
- People "testing" out vocational direction;
- People offering professional skills in a cross cultural context;
- Students linking a placement with a tertiary course, e.g. we have some volunteers doing teaching internships or field placements with our overseas church partners;



Volunteer applicants must be:

- Between 18 and 85 years of age (Families with children are welcome to apply);
- Willing to work within the ethos of the UCA and our overseas partner church;
- Able to meet expenses through either self-support or fundraising;
- Open to the challenges and joys of living in another culture;
- Willing to live simply;
- Open to sharing faith and culture and to learn from others;
- Patient, flexible, adaptable (or at least willing to try!);
- Prepared to learn new things about themselves, God and others;
- Prepared to share their Experience story and the work of the partner church in which they serve on return to Australia.



## How long can I go for and when can I start?

There are a wide range of potential placements for you. Uniting World Experience places volunteers for anything between 3 weeks and 3 years plus.



Placements are available at any time of the year. There are no fixed entry dates. There are documents and pre-trip planning that need to be completed once your placement has been approved, and we usually recommend people expect that it will take approx. 3 months to prepare for a placement from the time of acceptance. This can sometimes be shorter, depending on the specific details of individual placements.

## What placements are available?

You can find specific placements on our website (<http://www.unitingworld.org.au/programs/experience/placement-descriptions-for-2011-2012/>)

However, there are always other opportunities available.

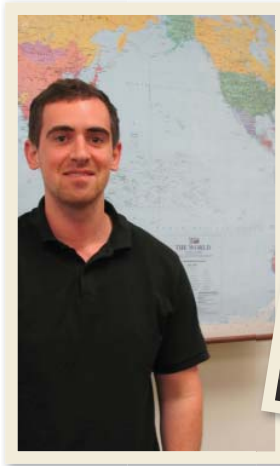
Placements may be short or longer term and will be matched with the skills, experience and interests of participants as these relate to our overseas partner church needs.



# Experience Program

Placement **examples** include those with a focus on:

- Teaching English (positions are available both for qualified teachers of any discipline and for people with no qualifications)
- Medical personnel – doctors, nurses, OT's, physiotherapists, speech therapists etc.
- Working with people with disabilities
- Water and agricultural projects
- Community health
- Community development
- ICT
- Theological education
- Practical skills e.g. trades
- Administration
- Office skills
- Electronics
- Animal husbandry
- At-risk children and youth
- Finance and accounting
- Recreation – arts, games, sports, music etc



There are four areas that UnitingWorld Experience covers:

1. **Experience Volunteers** – this programme is for individuals, couples and/or families who are interested in serving as volunteers with one of our overseas church partners.
2. **InSolidarity** – this programme is our short term Exposure Visit programme that offers support, training and assistance for a 2-3 week visit to our overseas church partners. These programmes are run by UnitingWorld to provide people with an opportunity to visit projects and engage in the life of our overseas church partners.
3. **Church hosting** – Increasingly, there are friends from our overseas partners who are keen to come to an Australian church community to share lives and have rich learning experiences. UCA churches can offer to support and host a volunteer from one of our overseas church partners for anything between a few weeks to a few months.
4. UnitingWorld is an **Australian Partner Organisation (APO)** with Australian Volunteers for International Development and some placement opportunities may be able to be linked into the government volunteer programmes, with support from UnitingWorld and the Australian government.

## What are the costs?

Most UnitingWorld Experience placements are self-funded or funded through the support of local church communities. The amount required depends upon:

- The nature of the placement;
- The host country and its living costs;
- The duration of the placement.

UnitingWorld Experience can give you approximate costs based on information received from local church partners as well as previous volunteers and other support agencies. This information is updated regularly but must be understood as approximate.

All volunteers must ensure they have adequate financial support for the duration of the placement.



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## What costs do volunteers need to cover?

- Pre service training costs (\$10 for online access and costs associated with any face-to-face training travel and/or accommodation if required);
- Travel costs to and from placement;
- Any fees associated with moving belongings to placement;
- Passport and visa costs;
- Vaccinations prior to travel;
- Local living expenses in placement.

## What does UnitingWorld provide?

- A designated account into which donations can be made;
- An at-call update on the status of the support account;
- Accommodation costs (in most instances);
- A personalized brochure to be used by the volunteer for raising support;
- Online (to be available soon) and/or face to face Pre-Service training;
- Insurance cover (full travel including medical and emergency evacuation) for the volunteer and any accompanying dependants;
- Facilitation of all arrangements leading up to the placement including liaison with host church partner, government agencies, sending church and Synod, support group; designation of and pre-service support for in-country supervisor; risk management prior to placement; provision of supportive policies and procedures; sending out liturgy/commissioning; all administration of the placement;
- In situ pastoral support – regular contact with volunteer (email, text, telephone, possible visits), regular Volunteer Newsletter;
- Critical incident/trauma support – membership of International SOS, telephone crisis counselling available; assistance towards the management of personal issues that may emerge; return to Australia facilitated as necessary through Insurance provider;
- Debriefing; return support information for sending church, Synod and support group;
- Alumni opportunities for ongoing engagement.



The cost of living in most overseas partner countries is likely to be lower than in Australia; however, this can vary from country to country. For approximate costs for specific placements, please contact one of the Experience personnel.



## How do I apply for a placement?

1. Prayerfully consider this decision and discuss it with trusted others, especially people you know who have had cross-cultural experience.
2. Complete the UnitingWorld Experience application form. This can be done online, sent by email or printed and posted to UnitingWorld Experience. Each application requires a deposit (\$250 for an individual and \$350 per couple) in order for it to proceed. Please read the application for details of how to provide this. The deposit is fully refundable should you not be offered a suitable placement.
3. When the form is received, an interview will be arranged in the home state of the applicant with a small panel of people with cross-cultural experience. This is designed to be an opportunity for you to ask a lot of questions as well as for us to get a better sense of what you are hoping for.
4. The interview panel makes a recommendation to UnitingWorld who then contact your referees and make the final decision relating to your suitability to participate in this programme. Our aim is to support you towards this end.
5. After you have been accepted as a volunteer, we will then negotiate with you a suitable placement in conjunction with our overseas church partners.
6. Once your placement is finalised, you will receive a Letter of Appointment to sign and then the organisation towards your placement will begin in earnest!

Please note: All people taking up a UnitingWorld placement must be prepared to participate in pre-service training.

## What happens when I am away?



UnitingWorld is deeply committed to providing supportive pastoral care for volunteers. You can expect contact at least once a month from someone in our Experience team and have 24/7 contact in case of emergencies.

As far as possible, any UnitingWorld staff or representatives travelling to the area of your placement will contact you for a face-to-face visit.

Volunteers receive a regular Newsletter updating them on what is happening for all current volunteers, providing news from UnitingWorld, and some pastoral and devotional resources.

You will be given a local in-country support person, who is working in a similar area to you, who can be of assistance 'on-the-ground'.

International SOS is a major logistics organisation and as a part of UnitingWorld, you will have membership of this. They provide in situ updates of any medical or security concerns and provide emergency medical and security evacuations for all volunteers if needed. They also provide access 24/7 to medical personnel via telephone.

UnitingWorld also recognises that for many people, returning home can be even more complex than going away! We offer organisational and personal debriefing by trained staff and resources for debriefing for individual volunteers and their supporters. All volunteers are offered a session with a counsellor of their choice on return, should they wish to take this up. We encourage this for all volunteers as a way of having an 'emotional health check up'.

## Who can I contact?

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## Some volunteer reflections

Cherice Anquetil (who did a GAP year as a volunteer with the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga):

*"Last week I went to the Tongan National sports Event that went over four days. It was fun and interesting. And yesterday as I was walking to the falekoloa, Marie (an Americal Peace Corp volunteer) & I stopped to watch some ladies beat tapa. Then we joined in and took some pictures. We thoroughly enjoyed it and she gave us a tapa mat too. The student are great, especially my Form 2 English class. I only have 8 student and only 1 girl. They are not that good at English apart from 1 boy who is excellent. Today we did a scavenger hunt, in which they had to collect items that were written on a page in English, such as a coconut, three ants, a mosquito etc. They really enjoyed it and had lots of fun. The weather here has not cooled down at all. Really the opposite. We had a huge storm the other night, the thunder was so loud. And now it is sunny and ssssooooo humid."*



Wendy & Peter Flahive (volunteers for 3 months & 1 month respectively, with the Kiribati Protestant Church in Tarawa, Kiribati. Wendy assisted the women of the KPC through the provision of workshops and other education opportunities relating to family health and well being. Peter assisted with general administrative work and many other on-the-spot oppotunities for partnership):



*"This photo is of the Eita Village Health Talk. The younger women with children attended the morning sessions when I focused on diseases and disorders of childhood. This smaller group of Elders stayed for lunch. We were provided with lunch and singing when we finished the three hours of work. Topics included what they had asked for - an overview of the menstrual cycles, reproduction, women's health problems, incontinence and pelvic floor exercises, diabetes and women's cancers, etc."*

*.....And then only 6 days later from Wendy's blog: .....  
and Tabaina (Women's Centre Co-ordinator) were able to teach pelvic floor exercises with little*



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*help from me on this second last village talk. They were able to speak confidently in the local language; a much better option than women listening to my English and then a sentence by sentence translation. Two more people trained to give this talk after I go home!!"*

- What a wonderful partnership, an invaluable use of Wendy and Peter's skills which will bear fruit in their absence, and a great boost to the faith and confidence of the Flahives to make new friends and make a difference at the same time.



## The Culey family: Ross, Carol and their 4 children

(who have just arrived to spend 7 months at the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga's Petani Primary School in Ha'apai):

*"We are all going well. They so blessed us with a warm welcome. Firstly the principal of both the primary school and college met us at the airport and took us on a little tour of some of the island.*

*We then arrived at the house. You should see it. It is so cute and very well set up. They extended it when they knew we were coming and we have an internal shower, toilet and kitchen. The kitchen even has a new oven (the girls have cooked banana bread and scones already) and there also is a new washing machine. Not only is the house lovely but the garden is planted with broccoli and tomatoes. Just think: whilst we were getting ready in Australia, they were lovingly planting and watering the garden with most of the plants over a foot high as we arrived!*

*After seeing the house we went back to the primary school (3 teachers, principal, 60 pupils) and they had put on a special breakfast for us. There were a few speeches of welcome and Ross did a good job of speaking in reply. We felt so honoured. Later in the afternoon and evening we had one neighbour bring us some green bananas (these ones stay green and they are cooked whole and not sweet), a family from the school bring a box with a dozen sweet potatoes, 2 hands of 'normal' bananas and papaya and this was all on top of the fridge being nearly full and a few tins of things. What a welcome!*

*The kids have now all been in school 2 whole days and Ross and myself have our own classroom which start taking groups of the children for English lessons next week!!!! Please pray that we do this important job well and learn from the teachers here and that we can come up with some fun and creative ways to teach.*

*The kids are going well and the majority of their classes are in Tongan. Our children are the only palangis (white people) and in fact Tara and Georgia are the only palangis to have ever been pupils at the college excluding some there on field trips! Could you please pray that they can find other things to quietly do when there is no way they can participate and also that God would help us all to catch on to the Tongan language quickly.*

*Finally we are aware of being culturally sensitive and I am trying to gauge what they eat in the sense of our wealth being shown off by what we buy at the shops or eat for lunch. Actually, my kids are some of the only few who actually have lunch at school and so they are trying to be subtle as well as get some tucker into their stomachs whereas Ross and I can go home for a bite to eat & for me to have a chai*

*latte! Still can't believe we're here.*



## Laura McGilvray (one of our AYAD co-placements, volunteering in Bali for 1 year developing a tutorial and life skills centre model for high school students for the Christian Protestant Church in Bali):

*"Up until recently I was pretty sure I was never meant to learn another language. At school I made Japanese flash cards, watched German sitcoms, sat through three years worth of French lessons, even went on an exchange trip to China, and after all that could say maybe one or two words in each language (but absolutely nothing in Mandarin). In Ghana I repeated greetings again and again, but everything refused to stick. Eventually I resigned to the fact that maybe I was just a one language kinda girl, very happy to stick to English. Not that I didn't feel that tinge of jealousy when I heard my friends chatting away in beautiful French, or twang of guilt when friends in South Africa asked me how many languages I spoke and told me they could speak four fluently. But I figured the mastery of foreign languages was just not in my future.*

*And then I decided to spend a year in Indonesia. Here I will fairly openly admit that I was not aware just how much Indonesian I would have to learn. My mum bought me a 'Conversational Indonesian' book when I was first accepted to the program, and in the months leading up to heading off, it was just a quirky little side project to learn a few words here or there. Before coming, the only sentence I remembered without fail was: "saya tidak mengerti" (I don't understand).*



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# Experience Program

*So when I finally arrived, I was clearly a little taken aback at how little English there really is here. And even more so when I found out the majority of my work would require a heck of a lot of Indonesian. However, in the past few months, a linguistic miracle has occurred. With the help of some amazing teachers, including small children in Balinese orphanages, I have been able to learn and retain enough Indonesian to get through whole conversations. It's absolutely a work in progress, and I am regularly and painfully aware of how much I still don't know, but every now and then it's nice to step back and realise that I am speaking a language that, four months ago, was almost entirely unknown to me.*



We have regular short-term volunteers like Greg and Peter, who facilitate and support the development of a Pastoral care and Counselling training course in Kiribati. They will visit for 2 weeks twice a year over the next 5 years.

We have highly qualified lecturers in specific areas of Theology who assist our partners by teaching regular course, such as Rev Dr Alan Morrison and his wife Judy (who also led a recent very successful InSolidarity trip to Tonga.) Volunteering obviously keeps you looking young, and NEVER tell the Lights that you're too old to be a volunteer!



We have textile specialists like Soomee Kim, who volunteer each year as consultants to projects initiated and run by our partners.



We have school leavers, Uni students, families, single people, retirees, people looking for a change of direction, people with some long service leave. People just like you, really...

So if you're ready for the Experience of a lifetime, fill in an application today, and take the first step .....

