



National Benevolent Association

XPLOR
FAITH, JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY

NBA XPLOR

NBA XPLOR is a prophetic movement of and for young adults who are discerning lives of care and service. The Residency provides 10-month professional development and vocational discernment opportunities for 21- to 30-year-olds to live simply in community and engage in direct service and justice work. Through NBA XPLOR, we partner young adults with Disciples congregations, regional and general ministries, and wider communities—positively engaging neighborhoods, the congregations, and the young adults.

FOUR CORNERSTONES OF NBA XPLOR

- **Hands-on Service/Justice Work:** Residents intern with nonprofit community-based agencies for 30 hours per week to empower local mission efforts while gaining a professional skillset and increasing their awareness of and response to systems of injustice.
- **Simple Living in Community:** Residents learn and practice faithful, intentionally simple, and culturally competent communal living.
- **Spiritual Discernment on Vocation:** Residents strive through spiritual disciplines to discern the purpose for which their souls are made.
- **Disciples Leadership Development:** Residents work with spiritual companions and host congregations to live into their Disciples identity by exploring the life of faith and the work of justice, unleashing their capacity to be leaders in the church and world.

Additionally, NBA XPLOR is committed to the solid foundation of diversity as a major component of intentional community living. Ongoing anti-racism, cross-cultural communication, and anti-oppression training are integral components of NBA XPLOR.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is NBA XPLOR?

NBA XPLOR is a faith-based, 10-month, congregationally hosted Residency for 21- to 30-year-olds who are discerning lives of care and service. The Residency runs mid-August through mid-June.

2. What does an NBA XPLOR Residency involve?

Residents live under one roof within a diverse community of peers, where they engage in communal and personal spiritual practices ranging from prayer to simple daily meals together. They care for and learn from others in community-engagement internships, and they relate to their Host Congregation. This communal lifestyle is not typical in our culture, and yet it helps Residents examine and live out their values more intentionally and faithfully.

3. What does a typical week of Residency look like?

A Residency week makes time for all facets of the Residency experience: 30 hours per week of direct, hands-on learning and work in the Community Engagement Site; weekly Sabbath time for personal and collective spiritual reflection, along with an experienced Spiritual Companion; free time for personal care (grocery shopping, laundry, entertainment, and rest); and about six hours a week serving and worshipping with the Host Congregation.



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4. Do I have to be a Disciples of Christ church member to apply?

No, but Disciples may understand and experience NBA XPLOR in unique ways. This program does give preference to Disciples candidates, but the most important requisite is for the young adult to be curious how and where God might be calling—and they are ready to explore that call within a Disciples context.

5. What if a Resident is still sorting out religion/spirituality?

NBA XPLOR is intentionally formed to help Residents engage in “discernment”—intentional asking of how and where God might be calling someone in his/her personal, professional, spiritual, and relational life. We don’t assume Residents have all the “big questions” figured out. On the contrary, sorting out religion, theology, and spirituality is a life-long quest. NBA XPLOR helps Residents realize that and equip and affirm them in that journey.

6. Who would make a good Resident?

NBA XPLOR Residents are young adults who want their lives to make a difference but may not be certain as to what steps to take in that direction. They may have served in the military and want to explore a new service opportunity. They may have finished an undergraduate degree, but classroom education wasn’t enough to make their vocational path clear. They may feel a call to an ordained ministry of one sort or another, but going to seminary or pursuing a not-for-profit or social work degree seems premature. They may have started work right out of high school and now want a new opportunity that allows them to really consider how they want to engage in the world. NBA XPLOR provides an “in-between” time to reflect, discern, and decide what is next.

7. How much does it cost to be a Resident?

This Residency costs a sincere commitment to see where God may be calling, but Residents do not pay for their time in NBA XPLOR. Houses are set up to allow Residents to live modestly on a monthly stipend, with housing and utilities provided by the Host Congregation(s).

8. What about health insurance and deferment of student loans during NBA XPLOR?

Residents who are not otherwise covered by a health insurance policy may become part of a group policy through the Catholic Volunteer Network. For student loans, NBA offers guidance for approaching a lender to request student loan deferment. Although loan deferment is not guaranteed, programs like NBA XPLOR have had great success in achieving deferment.

9. What is the application process for NBA XPLOR?

If you are interested in NBA XPLOR, please submit the online interest form, and we will contact you promptly. The online application for the 2017-18 Residency will be available in November 2016.

***Interested in learning more about NBA XPLOR? Are you a young adult interested in applying?
Are you part of a church community interested in getting involved? Contact us!***

Rev. Bonnie Osei-Frimpong, Director of NBA XPLOR
boseifrimpong@nbacares.org or (314) 993-9000 ext. 3368

nbacares.org/xplor



Resident Introduction to NBA XPLOR

WHO IS A GOOD CANDIDATE FOR NBA XPLOR?



NBA XPLOR candidates include young adults (21- to 30-years-old) who want their lives to make a positive difference—but they may not be certain what steps to take in that direction. Maybe they have finished an undergraduate degree, but classroom education wasn't enough to make their path clear. Maybe they are feeling a call to ministry of one sort or another, but going to seminary or pursuing a social work degree seems premature.

Maybe they started work right out of high school or entered military service and they want a “restart” that affords time to really consider how they want to engage in the world.

Residents come with one thing in common: they need focused time to figure out their wisest way forward. XPLOR provides an opportunity to take this time to learn and reflect on what's next and to gain professional and vocational skills to pursue a goal of a deeply meaningful, transformative life of faith and service. This program gives preference to Disciples of Christ and United Church of Christ candidates. As space permits, XPLOR welcomes others who seek a faith-based, congregationally-hosted, intentional-community experience.



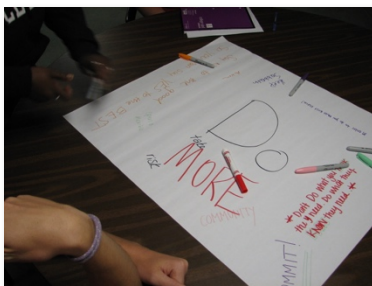
NBA XPLOR is designed to help young adults structure their lives around faithful reflection and community engagement. This involves caring for others and opening oneself to receive from others. XPLOR places Residents in a context of service and relationship, to both bring their unique gifts and to receive gifts from the communities in which they live and work.

This program is designed to help Residents engage in “discernment”—deep reflection to sense from one’s deepest center, the gravitational pull of the Holy—even as they learn from the people they serve in the world around them. We don’t assume Residents have this all figured out. Residents can expect to spend a good deal of time, maybe more than they have ever devoted, on spiritual discernment, along with other Residents and each House’s spiritual companion. XPLOR is designed to equip and affirm Residents in the ongoing journey of faithfulness and service.

WHAT CAN RESIDENTS EXPECT?

NBA XPLORE offers young adults (21- to 30-years old) an opportunity for intentional reflection in a time of transition—a time to explore their faith and engage in meaningful service work while living in simple community. Residents can expect to:

- ✓ Work in an unpaid internship for up to 30 hours during four week days in an XPLORE community engagement site. Each Resident receives a \$475 a month stipend from the host congregation/partner.
- ✓ Covenant both personally and communally to live this shared experience in close quarters.
- ✓ Serve in the community and alongside the local host congregation/partner to discover and create special projects at the intersection of the Resident's passion and interest, and the needs of the host congregation/partner and the community it serves (about six hours each week).
 - Projects might include, but not be limited to:
 - Community hunger and food security initiatives (meals, garden, etc.)
 - Learning and teaching conversation-style decision-making models to help faith communities engage in meaningful conversation that leads to wise action
 - Assisting congregations/partners in updating communication strategies using emerging media
 - Participating in the worship life of the community through music, preaching, reflections on the XPLORE experience, etc.
 - Assessing and addressing some of the Christian education or congregational care opportunities in the host congregation/partner
 - Helping the host congregation/partner strive for greater cultural competency through engagement with a diverse neighborhood
 - Accompanying the congregation/partner in practicing mutual respect in community organizing, engaging efforts that empower underprivileged neighbors to resist oppression
- ✓ Participate in weekly Sabbath/spiritual reflection time with assistance from a trained Spiritual Companion.
- ✓ Treat service as a calling and vocation.
- ✓ Live simply and conscientiously in community with other Residents.
- ✓ Participate in living covenants of mutual respect and accountability, which are articulated early in the program and revisited regularly.



- ✓ Journal as a spiritual discipline; share at least two reflections during the time of service, to be edited and shared with the wider church community.
- ✓ Share gifts, skills and commitments and receive and honor gifts, skills and commitments from others, including those the Resident serves.
- ✓ Practice good self-care and take appropriate precautions during the term of service.
- ✓ Residents in each House will work together to create a sustainable House budget.
- ✓ Practice responsibility throughout the program, including these practical areas:
 - Transportation expenses, including the commute from the Residence to the community engagement site and travel from the host site at end of service. Public transportation and safe biking routes are available in some areas. When a car is required for the travel to and from the community engagement site placement, a small transportation stipend will be provided.
 - Manage expenses (including insurance) related to one's personal vehicle, if one desires or is required to have one for the placement.
 - A \$100 deductible for program-related health insurance, and for any health care costs incurred that are not covered by insurance. Program-related health insurance requires a 20% copay for in-network coverage, up to \$2,000 for the 364-day service year. (Residents may waive the complementary program-related insurance coverage by offering proof of health insurance from another source, such as a family plan).
 - Work in an internship for up to 30 hours, over the course of four days each week, in an XPLOR community engagement site.
 - Manage any required student loan repayments, unless a case can be made for "hardship deferment." For more information visit: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/repay-loans/deferment-forbearance> (NBA continues to lobby, along with similar volunteer programs, for service deferments, such as those granted to AmeriCorps members).
- ✓ NBA will arrange travel for Residents from their homes to Laboratory and to their host site at the beginning of the XPLOR year.
- ✓ Residents receive a \$400 stipend to get from their XPLOR house to their next destination at the end of the XPLOR year.



SELECTION OF RESIDENTS

The National Benevolent Association facilitates the selection and placement of Residents, through a reading and placement team of volunteers from each host site. Applications for the 2017-18 year will be processed as they are received between these deadlines:

Early Decision Deadline: December 5, 2016, notified by December 19, 2016. Applicant interviews and reference calls will be conducted between 12/6 – 12/18.

Cornerstone Deadline: January 17, 2017, notified by February 1, 2017. Applicant interviews and reference calls will be conducted between 1/18 – 1/30.

Extended Deadline: February 15, 2017, announced by February 28, 2017.

Applicant interviews and reference calls will be conducted between 2/16 – 2/27.

The selection and placement team evaluates applicants based on applications and references, with respect to:

- ✓ Articulated interest in learning through service work in a community engagement site
- ✓ Articulated interest in living cooperatively and simply in intentional community
- ✓ Articulated interest in vocational exploration and leadership development
- ✓ Previous relationship or articulated interest in religious/spiritual deepening
- ✓ Demonstrated leadership and service involvement
- ✓ Articulated desire to commit fully to the transformative possibilities of this opportunity
- ✓ Responses of references and information received through background check
- ✓ A criminal history does not automatically disqualify any applicant from participating in NBA XPLOR.

Interviews and reference calls will occur virtually or by telephone. Two members of the reading team will conduct applicant interviews, one of whom will then conduct the reference interview. All applicants will be personally notified of the status of their application (Accepted, Not Accepted, Additional Information Needed) by the dates listed above.

Each Resident will work with a different nonprofit organization in the community. More importantly, each Resident will be able to support each other in their work. We show compassion by lifting up the ministry of the Church and sharing God's grace with the people we meet.

Mid-March: Incoming Residents read, pray over, sign and return the Covenant of Commitment to participate fully in NBA XPLOR, which runs from mid-August through mid-June.

Mid- to Late-April: Work site placements will be arranged through the community engagement site liaison at your placement site, and will involve an interview and job description. You may anticipate a placement by the end of April.

RESIDENT PLACEMENT

A Resident's placement is determined based on the housing capacity of the host site, diversity components with each Residence (House), and potential matches to community engagement sites. We make every effort to create dynamic, beneficial placements for all parties, but we can not guarantee that every Resident will be placed in their preferred location. NBA XPLOR staff will make final placement proposals, with input from the reading and placement team and in cooperation with each host's community engagement site liaison. In some cases a Resident may need to be reassigned to a new Residence (House) if we are unable to make an appropriate match with a community engagement site.



In April: A representative from the community engagement site will interview their prospective intern, virtually or by phone. The community engagement site determines whether to extend an invitation to the Resident within one week of the interview. Residents will respond immediately whether they accept the invitation, and the placement process will commence. If either the community engagement site or the Resident is not open to the invitation, the Resident will participate in a subsequent interview with another community engagement site.

In early May: Placement matches made and job description and service contract are signed.

To provide an idea of the types of placements available through NBA XPLOR, here is a listing of the 2016-17 community engagement sites by location:

North Hollywood, CA

All Peoples Community Center
Hope of the Valley
AIDS Project of Los Angeles
North Hollywood Interfaith Food Pantry

Tucson-Marana, AZ

Marana Community Food Bank
Interfaith Community Services
Reunion House (Our Family Services)
Las Abuelitas (Primavera Foundation)

Hiram-Mantua, OH

Little Village Early Learning Center
Hiram College
Mantua Restoration Society
Family and Community Services

East Dallas, TX

Juliette Fowler Communities
Northway Christian Church

St. Louis, MO

Union Avenue Christian Church
Hylton Point/Centennial Plaza
Neighborhood Houses

Golden Gate/Bay Area, CA

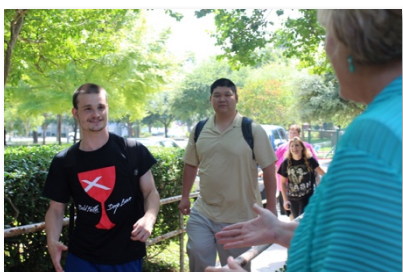
Christian Church of Northern CA/NV
Christian Church Homes
Oakland Peace Center
East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy
Faith Alliance for a Moral Economy
Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity
Street Level Health Project

ROLE OF THE RESIDENT WITH THE CONGREGATION/PARTNER

Working with the host life and leadership team member, Residents will come to mutual agreement regarding how to allocate the six hours per week of service with the host congregations. The list of special ways in which a Resident and a host congregation/partner can mutually journey into new arenas of witness is endless. Yet, the key for a successful relationship will be to match the congregation's needs and opportunities to the Resident's interests, passion and potential for growth.

Residents have regular contact with the life and leadership team member to track how aspects of the agreement are progressing, and what, if any, changes might improve the mutual relationship and the learning experience it offers. A Resident might volunteer for regular short-term ministry opportunities such as:

- ✓ Teach church school for three weeks on a specific topic
- ✓ Train church staff in some additional computer skills
- ✓ Sing in the choir for an Advent or Lenten cantata
- ✓ Join a praise team for special services
- ✓ Co-chair the church's involvement with an event like a CROP Walk
- ✓ Assist the social action committee to obtain signatures for an important ballot initiative
- ✓ Help plan a Martin Luther King, Jr. observance



But many opportunities exist beyond typical or existing ministries. We encourage congregations and Residents to think together toward what their potential ministry might be. What ministries whet the Resident's appetite for service?

- ✓ Walk the neighborhood with members of the congregation/partner. Talk with service providers and other ministries present. Talk with neighbors. What do you see in terms of the strengths and unmet needs of these neighbors? What needs do some of the existing services in the neighborhood already address? Which needs fall between the cracks? Are there ongoing community organizing projects to support, or is that something the congregation could support, with help from the Residents?
- ✓ How serious is the congregation in caring for its aging members? What might a Resident create to be sure that these "saints" are reminded of their great worth?
- ✓ Is there a contemporary social issue that forever seems to create division and dissention in the congregation? What models of Sacred Conversations could a Resident introduce, and provide training to address this concern?
- ✓ Does the congregation have a deep awareness of the global impact of the Body of Christ? Might a Resident lead the members into dynamic new relationships with Christians around the world?

INVENTORY OF RESIDENT READINESS

Consider the following descriptions and rate each as indicated. In the case of a scale of one to five, determine how well the statement fits you, with five being the best match.

1. You are between 21 and 30 years old, and you want your life to make a difference in the world.

Yes No
2. You are at a time of transition, such as one of these: finishing college without a strong sense of what's next; in the midst of considering a call to ministry or another life of service; interested in moving out of your parents' basement, but not sure how to make the shift, etc.

1 2 3 4 5
3. You are part of a Disciples or United Church of Christ faith community, and/or you are intrigued by a faith-based, congregationally hosted, intentional-community experience.

Yes No
4. You are open to devoting a lot of time to spiritual reflection.

1 2 3 4 5
5. You consider a life of service a possible calling/vocation.

1 2 3 4 5
6. You are willing to live simply and conscientiously in community with a group of your peers who are on a journey similar to yours.

1 2 3 4 5
7. You value diversity and are open to receiving the God-given gifts of others, regardless of their differences from you.

1 2 3 4 5
8. You are willing to discover and engage in community practices, like developing a covenant of mutual respect and accountability.

1 2 3 4 5
9. You are interested in sharing with others in writing a bit about your experience .

1 2 3 4 5
10. You are aware that the people one serves are not just "recipients" of one's gifts, but are worthy of your respect, and endowed with their own abilities and gifts.

1 2 3 4 5
11. You are willing to practice good self-care and take appropriate safety precautions with regard to your surroundings.

1 2 3 4 5
12. You are willing to develop self-awareness, and take responsibility for yourself, even as you participate in community.

1 2 3 4 5
13. You are willing to work up to 30 hours a week in direct service and justice work as part of your learning experience.

Yes No
14. You are willing to devote up to six hours a week to the congregation that hosts you.

Yes No
15. You are willing to deeply explore the intersection of privilege and oppression and discover how God might position you to respond.

Yes No