

HOPE Youth Corps Proposal

Proposal number: 0003a

Prepared for: ICOC Youth & Family and Campus Service Teams to submit ICOC Delegates

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Executive Summary

“Religion that God our father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” – James 1:27

Inspired by James 1:27, HOPE Youth Corps seeks to imitate pure religion. By engaging youth in international service to the poor and needy, we promote leadership growth, character development, and worldwide unity. HOPE Youth Corps (HYC) has sent thousands of youth across the globe since its inception in 1994, opening the eyes of volunteers who one day will or have already become great leaders in our movement. HYC has reenergized, convicted, unified, and brought back numerous young disciples and continues to be a force for good to this day.

It is the conviction of the HYC Advisory Committee (listed above) that **HYC is one of several key youth development programs that will shape the health and future of our fellowship.** Among church camps, campus internships, SwampCorps, and other ICOC or HOPE *worldwide*-sponsored programs which individually provide specialized resources and opportunities for growth, the HYC Advisory Committee also believes strongly that wherever possible every youth in the International Churches of Christ attend one domestic and one overseas (non-domestic) HYC program before they graduate from college or university to become fully-independent adults. Therefore, we are making this proposal in the interest of reframing HOPE Youth Corps as one of the tools necessary to bless the next generation of disciples.

In this proposal to the ICOC Youth & Family and Campus Service Teams, you will find the specifics of this Committee's ask. **Primarily, the Committee is requesting support in the form of three tiers:**

Tier One: Churches raise consistent awareness about HYC to the youth in their congregation

Tier Two: Churches provide financial assistance to local members so that at least 1 youth per 100 members can attend HYC each year

Tier Three: Host (sponsor) an HYC program in local area in collaboration with HOPE *worldwide*

It is the Committee's desire that every willing and able church ratify the proposal by pledging Tier 1, 2, or 3 level of support.

HOPE Youth Corps – A Brief Overview

HYC was established in 1994 to provide students (14 – 26 years old) an opportunity to develop their spiritual foundation and personal growth by showing them global needs through service. Linking each HYC with a HOPE *worldwide* program, HYC offers an outstanding international or domestic service opportunity interwoven with in-depth discussions, biblical devotionals, outreach, and team building or cultural activities. Each program includes various hands-on benevolent projects that engage volunteers with the local population while giving them an opportunity to discover the local community's culture through an array of fun and meaningful activities. With a dual purpose of fostering unity among the ICOC fellowship, HYC also gives participants the opportunity to worship and spend time with the local ICOC congregation serving as the host church.

HYC has proven to be remarkably effective at not only providing hope to those in desperation, but has shown to build the faith, zeal, character, and spiritual network of our movement's future. HYC participants return home stronger, healthier, inspired, and more connected after their involvement with the program. They return home stronger because of the opportunities they have to express their faith through outreach and service. They return home healthier because of the in-depth biblical teaching and interactive discussions that HYC facilitates. They return home inspired after seeing the same Spirit move around the world despite cultural or regional differences. They return home more connected after developing peer relationships with other strong disciples.

HYC has motivated many volunteers to become disciples if they have not done so already, and has also brought many others back who were considering abandoning their faith. HYC has inspired, HYC has healed, and HYC has laid the foundation for church-wide unity for decades to come.

However, since the early 2000's, participation in HYC has fallen dramatically from a high of nearly 820 volunteers in 1999 to 120 in 2012. Applications for HYC have plummeted even further, peaking at nearly 2,600 in 2000 to 130 applications received last year – a drop of almost 95%!

In response to this decline in participation, the HYC Advisory Committee and various HOPE *worldwide* staff began a review process to determine all possible causes for the absence of volunteers. Issues regarding program cost, availability of volunteers, application process, quality of teaching, marketing, ministry involvement, and partnership with local churches have been discussed and both the Committee and staff are striving towards long-term, sustainable solutions to meet these problems. We believe a concentrated effort to address these problems from our side combined with a strengthened commitment from our churches will maximize the impact HYC can have around the globe in the future.

While we have tried to include the opinions and expertise of many experienced church leaders in our proposal by having them in our committee (please see the list of names above), we welcome open dialogue from church leaders, and any member of the Committee can be used as an avenue to transfer thoughts and suggestions to help the developmental process. The HYC Committee strongly believes that the time is now to act, to be unified together, and to support one another and our local members so that the impact of HYC can again be great in the world.

Objective

The objective of this proposal is to educate, inform, and inspire ICOC Service Teams about HYC, which functions as one of several youth development programs (listed above), so they ratify the proposal to support the youth in their congregation to attend HYC through one of the tiers below. **This proposal is NOT asking for financial support of the HYC program.**

Tier One: General support and awareness

Tier Two: Committed scholarship provisions and budgets for local members

Tier Three: Sponsor (host) an HYC session in their local area

Tier One: General Support

HYC is a valuable program that not only benefits those it serves, but it edifies its volunteers and the congregations that host it as well. While there are needs for financial support of local members, **supporting the program through Tier One simply involves marketing the program and recruiting volunteers** during Sunday or midweek services, teen/campus events, parenting workshops, or whatever occasion a local congregation decides is most appropriate for advertising HYC.

The HYC Advisory Committee strongly believes that increased participation in HYC would help foster a mission mindset, a servant heart, and a renewed dream to change the world. Likewise, the Committee believes bolstered support of the program would serve as a platform to build relationships for college or university graduates to participate in the one year challenge.

Tier One: General Support would involve pledging to:

- a. Announce HYC program information and deadlines at local services, on church websites, in bulletins and calendars, etc.
- b. Distribute promotional materials provided by HOPE *worldwide*
- c. Provide opportunities for participants to share their experiences to their local congregations
- d. Communicate the intention for Tier One support to HOPE *worldwide* Headquarters

Tier Two: Scholarships Subsidy

In addition to marketing HYC locally (Tier One), those congregations desiring to do more may support HYC through **Tier Two, which involves providing partial or full scholarships to local members to give them an opportunity to participate in HYC and communicating this financial support to HOPE *worldwide* Headquarters for planning purposes.** Tier Two support provides at least one partial or full scholarship for every 100 members.

To instill a culture of hard-work and discipline, the HYC Advisory Committee encourages participants to fundraise and believes this aspect of the program helps volunteers develop perseverance and a sense of independence as they work towards their fundraising goals. It is for this reason the Committee recommends partial scholarships, although full scholarships would be necessary in certain situations as well. Local church resolutions regarding these scholarships will be fully respected and the Committee recognizes the diverse range of church ideology towards such decisions.

While program fees may vary due to geographical constraints or on-site needs, the average HYC experience costs \$400 - \$1500 per person excluding air fare. The Committee supports the view that such scholarship commitments are **an investment in the local church's growth and vitality.**

Tier Two: Scholarship Subsidy would involve pledging to:

- a. Determine monetary amount allocated towards scholarships (either partial or full) for local members to attend HYC
- b. Communicate to HOPE *worldwide* Headquarters the amount committed towards such scholarships for planning purposes

Example of a Tier Two congregation

The Green Valley Church of Christ, membership 750, would like to support eight local members to attend HYC and decides that each member will receive \$1,000 in financial support for a total scholarship fund of \$8,000. In return for the scholarship, the church asks the winning participants to report on their experience in video format and serve the local congregation with their stories of faith and service. They may also decide to involve those students in the promotion of HYC the following year.

Scholarships may be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis, random lottery drawing, anonymous essay contests, or however the congregation deems is most appropriate. The Green Valley Church of Christ communicates their intention to provide Tier Two support for their members to attend HYC to HOPE *worldwide* Headquarters and the amount budgeted.

Tier Three: Global Sponsorship (Host a Youth Corps):

Finally, the HYC Advisory Committee desires to expand the program across the globe so its impact is felt in every corner of our fellowship. Those desiring to support HYC through **Tier Three would apply for HYC Sponsorship as a host city**. These congregations would bid for the opportunity to impact their local community by bringing in energetic and passionate youth from around the world. The HOPE *worldwide* staff will coordinate and support these endeavors in conjunction with the local ministry staff or Chapter director. This will provide low cost opportunities for any country around the world to have an HYC experience. Great examples of this model are the HYC experiences that have been hosted in the UK, India and Mexico.

Tier Three: Global Sponsorship would involve pledging to:

- a. Apply to host an HYC in your local area
- b. Collaborate with HOPE *worldwide* to coordinate the local program

***A more comprehensive plan that includes the budget, curriculum, best practices, inspirational DVD, marketing materials, and a frequently asked questions sheet are in production and will be available upon request. ***

Conclusion

Imitating James 1:27, HYC has inspired thousands of young people towards service and many have aspired towards a life in the ministry and working with HOPE *worldwide*. This valuable program enables cross cultural relationships essential to the future of our church, and it is one giant leap for our international family to strengthen our collective efforts to evangelize the world. As this program is one of several key youth development programs that will shape the health and future of our fellowship, please consider supporting your local members to attend HOPE Youth Corps!

Godspeed - The HYC Advisory Committee