Thank you for putting time and energy into your **Lutheran Volunteer Corps** application. We believe you are a likely candidate for LVC and we hope to learn more about you and your desires to volunteer for a year during a phone/Skype interview. This document will help you prepare for that interview (you will be interviewed by LVC staff or Alumni, and the call should be about one hour long).

This document provides relevant information about the LVC program; this will help you understand what it means to be a Lutheran Volunteer (an "LVCer"). The interviewer will ask you questions based on the information below, so we ask that you read this document carefully.

1. The Values

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b. Social Justice
c. Simple Living and Sustainability
d. Spirituality
e. Journey to Inclusive Community (JIC)

2. The Support

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1. The Values

LVC has three Core Practices: Intentional Community, Social Justice and Simple and Sustainable Living.

A) INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY Core Practice

Intentional community involves living in a residential community designed to have a much higher degree of collaboration than roommates or family housing. Members of an intentional community share responsibilities and resources. In LVC, Volunteers live in intentional communities of, in most cases, four to seven people. The goal of intentional community in LVC is to find ways to support one another across differences.

Planned Community Nights are one of the biggest ways you will build intentional community with your housemates. Communities have at least one regularly scheduled night each week that is designated as Community Night. Of the four or five community nights that happen each month, one will focus on faith and spirituality, one will focus on community formation and be facilitated by a supporter, one will focus on a social justice issue of your choice, and the others will be for activities of your choice.

B) SOCIAL JUSTICE Core Practice

LVC understands social justice to be not only working directly with people to meet their immediate needs but also addressing the root causes of poverty, homelessness, and other systematic causes. Part of this work is external - what people do in their daily jobs - and part of it is internal - being aware of our own privileges, experiences with oppression, level of openness to discussions about racism, sexism, heterosexism, economic injustices, and other forms of oppression.

Whether you are participating in direct or indirect service, all LVC Volunteers serve at nonprofit organizations that address issues of social justice. We expect that you and your housemates will share what you are learning at your placements, exploring your relationships to privilege and oppression. Houses will structure community time to learn about and actively engage in social justice work in their communities.

Many LVC houses are located in communities with active neighborhood organizations working for justice locally. You are encouraged and expected to find your own ways to become involved!

C) SIMPLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING Core Practice

Living simply is more than not spending much money. In LVC, we relate simple, sustainable living to social justice. For its size, the United States uses a vastly disproportionate part of the world's resources. Living more sustainably is a way to refuse to participate in the inequality inherent in the dominant lifestyle in the U.S. Simple living relates to community and spirituality: living simply is a process of examining one's values and trying to live them more thoroughly.

In more practical terms, this means a commitment to:

- Become more aware of the materialism of society and ourselves.
- Be conscious of our use of natural resources: water, energy, recycling, fuel, composting.
- Make food choices that are healthier and more creative: e.g. cooking from scratch rather than using processed foods and eating out, eating less meat.
- Live less hectically to focus on community relationships and spiritual life.
- Seek creative entertainment choices, and finding free and low-cost activities in your community.

D) SPIRITUALITY

LVC Volunteers explore the spiritual aspects of justice, community and sustainability. LVC Volunteers in each household commit to a monthly dialogue about religion, faith and spirituality. Each community will be assigned a Spirituality Mentor.

LVC wants each participant to understand and act on their own truths more faithfully through their experience with LVC. In order to achieve this goal, LVC trains and engages its Volunteers in the Journeys Conversations discussion model, facilitated by the Spirituality Mentor. A journey conversation creates an occasion for participants to listen deeply.

- Listen within – to your heart and your deepest truths;
- Listen to your life – to your lived experience and where you are finding purpose and meaning;
- Listen to one another – to what you can discover and discern in community.

LVC will also provide resources to Volunteers as requested to build relationships with individuals and religious communities that can support your spiritual practices. In most cases, your house community will not meet all your spiritual needs; we encourage you to take initiative to meet your own needs in this area (such as joining a local faith community, exploring other faith communities, meditating, etc.).

LVC is open to people of all religious backgrounds. Volunteers do not have to be a part of any religious group in order to participate. On average, about 1/3 of LVC Volunteers are practicing Lutherans, 1/3 claim agnosticism, spirituality, or atheism as their beliefs, and are from other Christian denominations or faith practices. LVC contends that its religious diversity is the product of a Lutheran theology of radical hospitality.

E) JOURNEY TO AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY (JIC)

Lutheran Volunteer Corps is committed to fighting oppression in all its forms, and we have a particular focus on racism and privilege through a Journey to an Inclusive Community (JIC). JIC forms and strengthens alliances among people of many cultures and communities, and intentionally dismantles racism within LVC, the church, and society. LVC realizes that institutional racism profoundly impacts the social landscapes in which we live and work. You should expect LVC to promote diversity and community within its board of directors and staff, and LVC will expect similar behavior among donors, placements, Volunteers and the larger community.

While LVC is on a Journey to Inclusive Community, a lot of the people coming into LVC are female, white, from middle-class backgrounds, from the Midwest and right out of college.

- The majority of LVC participants are women. For the past several years approximately 1 in 4 or 5 are male.
- In the past few years we had roughly 20% volunteers of color. In earlier years, about 5% of our volunteers were persons of color. That has meant some volunteers have been the only volunteer of color in their city or even in the entire region.
- While the majority of volunteers are single and in their 20s, you may be living with a married or partnered couple or with people in their 30's or 50's in the program.
- You will likely live with people from different sexual orientations, and/or gender identities. 20-25% of Volunteers in a given year identify as LGBTQ. Since 1999, Reconciling Works has recognized LVC as a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) program because LVC is committed to welcoming people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender. We expect Volunteers and placement supervisors to join LVC staff, board, and committees in our effort to make LVC a place that is open, affirming, and safe for persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

2) THE SUPPORT

A) PROGRAM MANAGERS AND STAFF

Each LVC region or city has a Regional Program Manager designated to work specifically with Volunteers in that area. Responsibilities of Program Managers include providing program support, coordinating retreats, conducting reviews with each Volunteer, and recruiting placements. Program Managers connect with alumni in planning fundraisers, church visits and meetings. Program Managers are available for mediation and conflict resolution at placements and in community. You will see your Program Manager during retreats, during your one-on-one reviews and informally when they meet with your house. Regional staff travel to their LVC cities frequently through the year and are available remotely between those times.

LVC's National Office is located in Washington, D.C. Through the year you will interact with various staff members for various needs including and not limited to paying rent and receiving internet stipends, helping with recruiting efforts, fundraising, and more.

B) LOCAL SUPPORT

Support Congregations are local churches that are in touch with the LVC house community. Support congregations often provide food to a house at the beginning of the year, invite Volunteers to worship or host a commissioning service, ask Volunteers to speak with members of the congregation, and assist Volunteers with pastoral support in times of crisis. You are expected to visit your host congregation at least once early in the year to introduce yourself. Though some volunteers choose to, it is not expected that you regularly attend worship at your Support Congregation.

Local supporters help Volunteers get acquainted with their city, sponsors occasional social events and help locate household furnishings. The local supporters are composed of alumni and friends of LVC. They may also serve the overall LVC program by assisting with recruiting, locating housing, publicity and fund development, and can facilitate sessions with your community about goals and expectations, self-care, and conflict resolution. Each local support team is unique and your experience in relation to your local support will be different from the experience of Volunteers in another city.

Community Mentors visit the community monthly throughout the LVC year to facilitate conversations and keep in touch with Volunteers. The mentors will act as a resource for the community, address initial questions about the city, work through issues, or simply be available when you need a listening ear. Community Mentors can also serve as a link between the volunteers and other local supporters.

Spirituality Mentors facilitate monthly spirituality nights through a format called Journey Conversations.

C) TRAINING

National Orientation takes place August 5-9, 2017 in Chicago, IL for all Volunteers. Activities, workshops, panel discussions, and time with your community will give you a comprehensive introduction to LVC.

Local and regional retreats give you a chance to discuss LVC's Core Practices, have fun, and spend time with other people in your region. You are required to attend and participate in all LVC retreats/program days. Your placement is required to give you this time off and not count it against vacation or comp time.

LVC incorporates anti-racism training throughout the retreats. These sessions are facilitated by trained LVC staff and/or outside groups.

3) THE LOGISTICS

A) NEIGHBORHOODS AND HOUSING

LVC houses are composed of LVC Volunteers (anywhere from 4 to 7) who serve at placements in that city. We consider proximity to placement, composition of Volunteers, and other factors in making housing assignments. These houses are already furnished with beds, kitchen supplies and other furniture.

Living in an urban area can bring joys and learning opportunities. Be aware of your personal safety and the security of your home and belongings. Create good habits and accountability about communicating your schedules to your fellow housemates. It is common for LVC houses to be located in areas where others are experiencing homelessness, where crime may be visible, and where socioeconomic differences are apparent. In the past, some LVC Volunteers have experienced muggings, robberies, and physical assaults. While this is not common, it has happened.

You are expected to discuss your expectations around safety and community living early on with your house community. LVC does not provide renter's insurance, so it is a cost that housemates would have to share if you so choose to buy insurance. Or consider the option of not bringing expensive items.

B) STIPENDS

Placements pay Volunteers a lump sum at the beginning of each month, which covers the following:

- Rent and utilities
- Food stipend, pooled with housemates for the cost of groceries ($125 per person per month)
- $125 personal stipend per month (spending money)
- Local transportation stipend (enough for a monthly transit pass)
- LVC expects Volunteers to stay within the allotted stipend amount each month throughout their LVC year. It is doable with some intentional, conscious choices.

C) OTHER

- INTERNET
  - LVC reimburses houses for the cost of internet three times through the year.
- TRAVEL
  - Volunteers receive reimbursement for travel at the start of the year to National Orientation (in Chicago, beginning August 5th) and on to your LVC city and at the end of the year for whatever comes next for each Volunteer.
- INSURANCE
  - All Volunteers are covered by health insurance (from your placement or by staying on a guardian's insurance policy).
- VACATION and SICK TIME
  - All volunteers receive at least 2 weeks (10 days) of vacation and 3 sick days.

4) THE EXPECTATIONS

LVC provides volunteers with a structure and support. LVC matches its volunteers with a service placement, where they volunteer is expected to commit to for the entire year. Outside of the service placement (most typically follow the 9-5 work days 5 days a week) LVC volunteers are expected to commit to various aspects of the program. Please consider these expectations as you discern if LVC is right for you.

A) COMMUNITY LIFE

LVC's expectations of community life include and are not limited to:

- Spirituality Night via Journey Conversation format once a month
- Community night with your housemates once a week
- Sharing food/meals/chores/budget/talents/other resources
- Keeping your service hours to 40/week

Building community takes time and energy; it doesn't just come naturally from having a shared space. You need to be conscious of balancing relationships and activities that are outside of LVC so that you can be present for both planned and spontaneous moments that are inherent components of building community.

B) PROGRAM COMMITMENT

Your commitment to the year begins when the placement match is made (after your placement interviews – in March or May) until the end of July the next year. That means as an applicant, *once you accept a match with LVC, you will immediately withdraw all of your other applications to other programs, employment, school, etc.*

Your participation in LVC revolves around all aspects of the program – serving at your placement, being an active part of your community, making a sincere effort to live simply, being aware of your personal and spiritual needs, joining the larger LVC community at retreats, participating in LVC fundraising events during the year, and other opportunities as they arise.

Volunteers are expected to engage the core practice of financial sustainability by participating in LVC fundraising activities through peer-to-peer fundraising and community-building events during their LVC year. Please note, this is fundraising during your year of service, not as a prerequisite to participating in LVC. LVC staff will provide guidance and support in these Volunteer fundraising efforts.

C) PLACEMENT COMMITMENT

After your placement match, you will receive a 3-Way Contract to review and sign. That contract outlines in detail the expectations between LVC, you and your placement for the year (hence "3-Way"). That contract will also contain the specific amounts for your rent and monthly transportation amounts.
We expect a serious commitment level from LVC Volunteers. If between now and matching day you foresee the possibility of *not* finishing your year, we expect you to decline your spot. Again, the full year is one of growth and challenge, some of which can only be appreciated after completing the entire year.

EARLY DEPARTURE

Leaving LVC early carries some consequences:

- You will be asked to continue to pay rent to LVC
- You will forfeit your travel reimbursement
- More importantly, leaving LVC early adds stress and logistical hardships for the organization which ultimately affects the population the placement organization is serving.

D) INTERNAL WORK

Since 1979, LVC Volunteers have spent a year or two transforming their own lives living out the Core Practices. One reoccurring lesson has been very evident: the more work the Volunteer puts into their year, the more they get out of it. We call this Internal Work.

Intentionally living out these values can be challenging work, yet LVC provides you with an opportunity to explore how YOU, the volunteer, navigate in the world. This service year is about building good habits, learning about the realities of working for peace and justice, and reflecting on your growing edges. LVC wants to support you in doing that, but ultimately the work is on the Volunteer. The year will be challenging. Realizing this, LVC will expect you to stay committed to the program even when things may feel overwhelming and difficult. Time after time, volunteers who have struggled at different points in the year have expressed their appreciation for completing the full year.

Thank you for considering LVC and working for peace and justice. We look forward to engaging with you during the admissions process.