

MCC Service Opportunity

YAMEN Service Opportunity

Assignment Title & Partner Organization: YAMEN: Intentional Community Participant & Teacher – Dandelion Community

Term: August 14, 2019– July 11, 2020

FTE: 1.0

Location: Dandelion Community, Won-ji, Republic of Korea (South)

Date Required: August 14, 2019

YAMEN program information and policies can be found at mcc.org/yamen

Synopsis:

The YAMENER will live together and engage in community life with the Dandelion Community, which seeks to serve the rural poor in Korea and in other Asian countries. They also strive to live simple lives, practicing voluntary poverty. The participant will serve as an English teacher to junior high and high school age students in the community's alternative school.

Qualifications:

MCC is an equal opportunity employer, committed to employment equity. MCC values diversity and invites all qualified candidates to apply.

- College or university degree in theology, biblical or religious studies or relevant field and previous work in church setting required for visa purposes.
- Interest in teaching English as a ministry.
- Interest and ability in working with youth whose English language ability ranges from beginner to intermediate.
- Willingness to study the Korean language, to live in community with others, and to participate in the life, work, and worship of the community.
- Willingness to regularly do manual labor (planting and/or harvesting crops, chopping and gathering wood, fixing equipment, feeding animals, taking care of chickens, cooking, kimchi making, etc.).
- Patience, flexibility, creativity, and good sense of humor.
- Interest or experience in woodworking, alternative technology, metalworking, farming, construction, animal husbandry, baking, or tailoring/sewing an asset.

Assignment Narrative:

The Dandelion community was established in 1991 in order to serve the rural poor in Korea and in other Asian countries. Community members live together and share resources. They also strive to live simple lives, practicing voluntary poverty. In order to connect their faith in God with simple living, the community actively finds ways to reduce its carbon footprint. Practical examples include growing most of their food, and solar panels for generating electricity, low-tech oven for baking bread, bins for

composting, greenhouses, traditional floor heating, bio-gas production, and burning wood for heating. Several buildings are constructed of straw bales and have a sod roof.

The YAMENer will be expected to participate in community life, help students communicate cross-culturally, and invited to participate in the daily life of this alternative Christian community in rural Korea. Community members meet daily for times of prayer, Bible study, and sharing.

The Dandelion Community School's school year runs from March to July, then September to December. The Dandelion Community School, with about 40 students, is a small alternative school whose purpose is to provide students an alternative education to the institutionalized, highly competitive, and pressurized public educational system. The Dandelion school seeks to be a positive alternative and attempts to provide its students with the vision to serve the poor and needy within the area and in other Asian countries. The school shares the philosophy and life style of Dandelion Community which can be summed up in three phases: simplicity, service, and Christian faith in action.

Students and community members work alongside each other to farm a variety of seasonal crops, operate a small chicken farm (eggs and chicken meat), run a bakery, and complete daily living chores such as fetching firewood and cleaning eggs. Most meals are very simple and are eaten together in a common room.

There are opportunities for the participant to utilize their unique skills and education with enough patience and initiative.

Outright battles have ceased between North and South Korea, but the two countries are still at war. The border between the two (also described as the DMZ—demilitarized zone) reinforces this fact as it is the most fortified border in the world. Historically, this region of the world (Northeast Asia) has been one of tension and conflict between neighboring countries. There are, however, a growing number of Christian groups interested in issues of peace and reconciliation. The Korea Anabaptist Center in Chuncheon networks with and provides resources for these groups and individuals who have interest in the Anabaptist/Mennonite perspective and history. The Dandelion Community is one of these groups.

Duties:

- Building relationships with members of the community.
- Farm chores, which could include chopping and gathering wood, fixing equipment, caring for chickens, packaging eggs, harvesting, planting, weeding, etc.
- Participate in school life as a staff member and go with students on field trips
- Participate in daily community meetings.
- Openness to work with Dandelion's alternative technology center (windmills, solar ovens, etc.).
- Designing and preparing lessons for daily classes, facilitating English classes for junior high and high school students, and tutoring students with specific needs, including correcting students' English writing homework.

Location Description:

South Korea is a small country and any point can be reached within less than a day of ground travel. Public transportation is plentiful, reliable and relatively economical. Korea boasts many historic sites,

cultural activities, hiking destinations, and rugged coastlines. Korea also enjoys four distinct seasons with spring and fall being particularly pleasant. Winters can be cold.

The MCC Northeast Asia office is located in Chuncheon, Gangwon Province, about six hours by bus away from Dandelion.

A local bus from the Dandelion Community to the nearest town, Won-ji (official name of the town is Hajeong-ri), 7.5 kms away, runs three times daily but a school vehicle is also available. Express buses run frequently from Won-ji to Seoul, Busan and other major cities. The closest city, Jin-ju, is 30 minutes from the Dandelion Community and has many modern facilities, including hospitals, pharmacies, bookstores, shopping malls, universities and colleges, and other facilities.

The climate of Won-Ji has relatively dry winters and hot and humid summers. August average daily highs range from 29-32°C, occasionally exceeding 35°C, and lows range between 22-23°C. Won-ji winter temperatures range from 6-10 C during the day and lows ranging 0 to -5°C. The participant should bring winter clothes along or purchase them in country.

The Dandelion Community meets each Sunday for a worship service. The church is inter-denominational, conducted in Korean (usually a translator is available), and its members are mainly composed of community members and students' parents. While it's not affiliated with any denomination, the Dandelion Church maintains good relationships with local congregations.

The Dandelion Community has easily accessible wireless internet access.

This is an excellent placement for someone who wants to have a significant inter-cultural experience, is able to take his/her own initiative, enjoys junior high and high school students, teaching, intentional community, outdoor living, hiking, photography, farm life, church and worship, and is interested in environmental and alternative technology.

The capital city of South Korea is Seoul. It is a large metropolis in the northwestern part of South Korea. Seoul proper is home to 11 million people and satellite cities around the capital add another 14 million people to this area, making it a very densely populated region. As a large city in a developed country, Seoul has almost everything one would expect in a world-class city – commerce, culture, religion, technology, education, etc. Many people have some knowledge of English and many desire to improve their English conversational skills. Dandelion Community is about 4 hours from Seoul by bus.

Korea is politically and socially stable and has a well-developed economy, so health and security risks are minimal. Theft and violent crimes are rare. “White Collar” crime is more prevalent, but it does not directly impact ordinary citizens and visitors.

Korea's health care system is very good and reasonably priced. Medical clinics and pharmacies are readily available in the cities, but less available in the rural areas. MCC Workers who have medical conditions which require sudden trips to a doctor should seriously consider the appropriateness of a rural placement such as this. If the MCC worker is required to take prescription medicine, he/she should be prepared to bring along sufficient quantities of medication because there are no guarantees the same brand and dosage will be found in Korea.

South Korea is a democratic republic. Presidential and parliamentary elections are held every five

years.

The diet is primarily rice and eggs as a staple, and a variety of meat, seafood and vegetables. The participant will not have easy access to familiar or comfort foods and snacks. Korean food can often be very spicy. Kimchi, a traditional fermented Korean dish made of vegetables with a variety of seasonings, is eaten at almost every meal. Eggs are an important source of protein at Dandelion.

Although Korea is very modern in a Western sense, it still retains its Korean culture in relationships, worldview, language, food and customs that are very distinct from Western culture. While Korea's strong traditional culture is gradually changing, relationships are still based on strong Confucian patterns, with deep respect for elders and deference to male leadership.

Challenges:

- Learning the language and culture are significant challenges. While many Koreans speak some English and many public signs are posted in both Korean and English, Koreans will speak Korean when in conversation with each other and for public events. While the Korean alphabet is easily learned, the language itself provides a real challenge. Daily conversation will mainly be in Korean, so the participant should expect to feel frustrated at not being understood or understanding daily conversations. Foreigners or English speakers are fewer in rural areas and outside of large cities.
- The participant will generally have less free (i.e. individual) time and private space than some cultures expect and appreciate. As the Dandelion community is in rural Korea the participant should expect very little night-life, be prepared for a slow pace of life, and expect feelings of isolation and possible loneliness. Introverts will be challenged by the intentional community life. The participant would need to take initiative in designing a schedule of activities that is energizing, without being draining. Many opportunities exist, but these would need to be developed based on the participant's interests.
- The participant may be challenged to find spiritual nourishment in worship services held in Korean. Spiritual growth will require a lot of self-care. S/he can mitigate difficulties by bringing along theological and devotional books and materials.
- Local area and church are not supportive to LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Managing frustration when things don't turn out as expected can be hard. While we do our best to determine and outline job responsibilities with our local partners, assignments really come alive based on the passions, skills, and giftings of an individual. Responsibilities may change or be refined over time in communication with supervisors to meet the ongoing changes and needs within a local context. As such, the greatest characteristics a participant can bring to an assignment are adaptability, flexibility, patience, a willingness to get your hands dirty, and humility to complete even mundane tasks.
- For those who are very task oriented, it can be a challenge to recognize the importance of "being" instead of always "doing" as building healthy relationships and mutually transformative learning is an important part of the participant experience. We hope participants will come with a desire to walk alongside our local partners, rather than see the assignment solely as a way to "get things done".