

# Faith-based Community and Spirituality



## ***What are the living arrangements like?***

VTC members live in co-ed communities of 7-10 people in converted rectories (former priest residences) and convents (former nun residences) on the South and West sides of Chicago. Each Corps member will have their own bedroom, but share common living, dining, and eating areas with their housemates. Other features of community living include:

- eating dinner together four or five nights a week
- planning household budgets as a group
- completing household chores together (shopping, cleaning, etc.)
- meeting together regularly to discuss community issues
- monthly community events (movies, bowling, etc.)
- bi-monthly reflection meetings
- attending weekend retreats four times a year to strengthen community and reflect on experiences as a teacher in the inner-city.

## ***How safe are the areas where we live and work?***

There are no safety guarantees anywhere, particularly in urban areas, however ICTC places high priority on the promotion of safety for Corps members. Consequently, ICTC takes proactive measures by:

- providing safety training as a part of orientation
- equipping all ICTC vehicles with roadside assistance memberships
- carefully selecting residential neighborhoods that have been screened for safety
- having residences located on Parish grounds associated with the Church; traditionally respected areas of the community
- providing Corps members with a staff phone tree in case of emergencies

## ***When are the breaks? Can you go home during the year?***

Very similar to college, you will be able to go home during major breaks. You will follow the calendar of your school, but can essentially count on breaks around Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. Corps members have many options when it comes to what they do in the summer between their first and second years. Some go home for the summer break if they so desire. They simply have to be back in Chicago around the second week of August. Some choose to stay and enjoy Chicago, continuing to live in their community while completing 5 weeks of summer service. Some examples of summer service are: being a counselor for our Books 'N' Hoops summer program, assisting staff in the ICTC office, helping with summer school programs, or working in another volunteer agency. Masters coursework can also be continued at Northwestern during this summer if you so choose.

## ***What do 'faith-based' and 'spirituality' mean to the VTC?***

Individualism and competition are highly esteemed social values in our modern culture. Faith-based community and spirituality offer an environment for reflection and spiritual development, where Corps members can find support with others experiencing the same challenges. ICTC welcomes volunteers of all faiths and backgrounds. Some of our volunteers are very devout in a specific faith, while others are still exploring. All that is required in terms of faith and spirituality is a willingness to discuss and explore your spirituality with others, especially those in your community. It is also important that you are willing to respect and be open to the faiths and spiritual paths of others. Through reflections and retreats, we endeavor to use a number of prayer and reflection formats to allow you to pause, gain perspective, and take stock of your volunteer experience in a spiritual context.

## ***On Community Life...***

*"Living in community in itself is a challenge, but a fruitful one. Going through this experience alone would be close to impossible. Your community provides a net to catch you when you fall and get you back up again. They truly know what you are dealing with, even better than family and close friends."*

*Dominic Basile, Bentley University*