
Careforce – faith at work

Henry Dixon

What is Careforce?

Careforce is a non-denominational but evangelically based volunteer agency. It places young volunteers in positions of spiritual and social need, where they can use their gifts in service to relieve hard pressed staff. Careforce is sponsored by UCCF and several other evangelical societies, but it operates independently financially, relying on the gifts of trusts and individuals. It is 'young' as an organization, starting three years ago with fifteen volunteers. Since then, it has grown and there are now about 50 volunteers working in a wide variety of areas throughout the country.

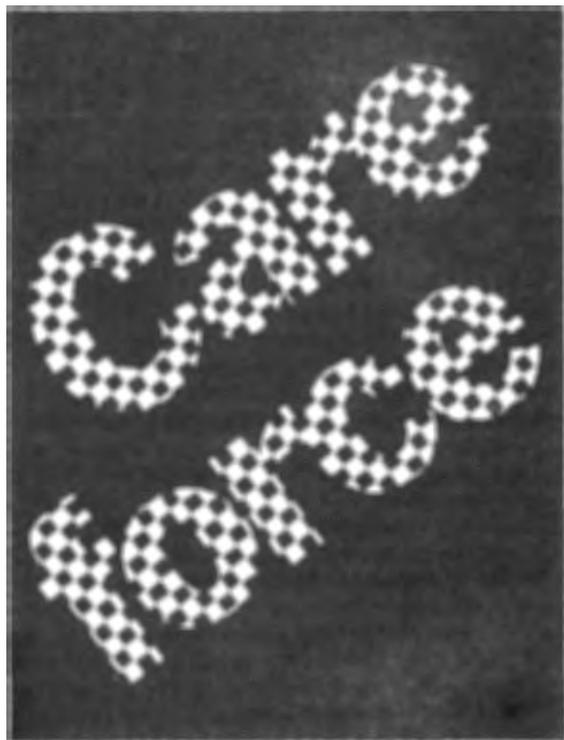
Many of the volunteers are placed in churches, often in the inner city, where they provide valuable 'extra pairs of hands' to the workers in those situations. Others are sent to institutions which care for the mentally and physically handicapped, or which specialise in youth work. As judged from the reports of 'employers' at the end of placements, the great majority are very grateful for the help given by their volunteer. Volunteers also seem, on the whole, to benefit from their placements, which give them first hand experience of situations which otherwise would be totally alien to them, and alter their perspective on life.

My experience as a Careforce Volunteer

I first heard of Careforce when, as a third year undergraduate in Cambridge, I was seeking the Lord's will about what to do after graduation. I came to believe that the Lord was leading me to work as a volunteer for a year, preferably in an evangelising church in the inner city. As I made enquiries through various channels, Careforce seemed to fit the bill exactly in what I was looking for.

After an initial application and interview, I was put in touch with the Lighthouse Baptist Church, Bow

(East London) as a possible placement. When I visited the church for a weekend I knew that this was where God was calling me, and the church felt the same.



During the year my main work was to have one-to-one Bible studies with young Christians and non-Christians on the fringe of the church, with the aim of teaching them the basics of the Christian faith and to lead them to a position of committed discipleship to Jesus Christ. I was also involved to some extent in practical work, since a house which the church had leased needed to be restored to its original condition before being returned to its owners (!)

By God's grace the work was quite successful, and some did come to faith in the Lord and grew in their discipleship. Over the last three years the number of people committed to the church has grown from around 35 to 70 and a fair proportion of this growth has been by conversions.

The experience was immeasurably helpful for myself. Before coming to Bow I had had virtually no contact with the inner city and was very bad at communicating with 'working class' people. The Lord has used the experience not only to help me get to know and love people whom I would have found impossible to relate to previously, but also to change my entire expectations about my life and its aims. I had been expecting to work for only a year in the area and then go on to further study. But the Lord made it clear that I was to stay. So I have continued working for the church; I am now married and well settled in the area, living in a council flat right by the church.

How can a Christian graduate be involved?

Many graduates live in relatively affluent suburban areas with large and 'flourishing' churches. You

may know of someone in your church who is just leaving school or university and has a strong commitment to Christ, who may be able to spare nine months to a year in voluntary service before doing something else. On the other hand, you may be part of a church which is struggling in an inner city area. Perhaps you may suggest to the leadership that they ask Careforce if it is able to send a volunteer worker.

Careforce has not inconsiderable administrative and training expenses. It is also seeking to expand a 'placement fund' which pays the pocket money of volunteers in certain situations in order to ease the burden on the needy churches to which they go. Gifts from graduates would be most helpful.

If you wish to know more about Careforce, to give to the work, or receive information for prayer, please write to Philip Thompson, at Careforce, 130 City Road, London EC1V 2NJ.

Henry Dixon is currently working for the Lighthouse Baptist Church, Devons Road, Bow, London E3 3RB.

MR C. STACEY WOODS

10 September 1909—10 April 1983

The death of Mr Stacey Woods is a great loss to the whole worldwide family of UCCF movements that form the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. In the earlier stages of IFES Dr Douglas Johnson was the moving spirit and organiser. In 1946 when the IFES was officially created, Douglas Johnson and Stacey Woods were appointed joint secretaries, and it was not long before Stacey became sole secretary and gave himself with his enormous energies to the development of the work. Since he was for several years at the same time General Secretary of the Canadian IVCF and of the then infant IVCF of USA, he managed an amazing amount of work. The world was divided up into pioneering spheres. Britain was asked to pioneer in Africa, while Stacey personally concentrated at first — with the North American movements — on the rest of the Americas; but he had a very important rôle in the growth of the work in a great many countries.

Right through to 1972 when he retired, he gave himself unstintingly to the IFES. He travelled constantly and with remarkable wisdom found staff to lead the work in one country after another. He was an excellent delegator, a brilliant administrator with a colossal capacity for work. But these gifts he combined with a rich spiritual

ministry in Bible exposition.

All who knew him will remember his unique collection of 'horror comics' — hair raising stories of the work worldwide which were both hilarious and often most instructive. Those who knew him better will remember his unusual ability to keep to priorities. He made sure that even in the midst of massive organization problems for conferences, speaking tours and training programmes etc., the spiritual aims of the work, the place of prayer, and the authority of the Bible were never pushed out of the central place.

Stacey was an Australian by birth. In 1962, when the growing work required a more 'neutral' location, he moved with his family to Lausanne where he also died last April. In Lausanne he became a leader in an independent Assembly and right up to the month of his death he was heavily engaged in a fruitful preaching ministry there.

His wife, Yvonne has always played a vital rôle in supporting and encouraging him. He could not possibly have done what he did without her. We express our sincere sympathy to her and to the rest of the family on their great loss. We thank God for a remarkable pioneer, the fruit of whose labours is absolutely worldwide in the lives of individuals and movements.

O. R. Barclay