

PRONE TO WANDER

*"Seek the wisdom that will untie your knot.
Seek the path that demands your whole being."*

-Rumi



Taken off the coast of the North Sea in the seaside town of Filey, England.

Where Am I?

This year I will be serving in the city of Hull, located in the region of Yorkshire and the Humber in the north of England, which is part of the United Kingdom. Hull's formal name is actually Kingston Upon Hull, a name coined in 1299 (Kings-town Upon Hull) by King Edward I. Hull was aptly named for its position on the River Hull where it joins with the Humber estuary, and is about 25 miles from the North Sea. In addition to being named the U.K. City of Culture of 2017, Hull is also known for its prominent role in the abolitionist movement in 18th century Britain, and holds a Freedom Festival every fall to commemorate the end of slavery in Britain and to celebrate freedom in all its forms.

What Am I Doing?

In addition to serving with Young Adults in Global Mission, I also have the unique opportunity to serve with a U.K. based organization called Time for God (TfG for short). In place of the traditional format of country coordinators directly associated with the YAGM program, I will be working with both TfG field officers and program administrators, as well as my site supervisor. I will be primarily be serving with the Hull United Reform Churches Team, which is made up of four different URC congregations in Hull and the surrounding area. While I know I will be involved in youth and administrative work, I will have to wait for the arrival of my three roommates in the next few weeks before my exact role is determined!

Discomfort and Hospitality

My journey to the U.K. began with a week-long orientation at The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago in Chicago, Illinois. While it was overwhelming after six weeks at home, I felt connected to my fellow YAGM very quickly, and we wasted no time in delving deep into our pasts, the challenges and joys that were most impactful in our lives, and the suffering that the world seems plagued by now more than ever. Soon, we were all faced with the uncertainty of this year: "what will I be doing?" "will I be making a difference?" "what makes 'mission' such a loaded word?" It was definitely easier to focus on others and their fears rather than my own, but like it or not I was soon forced to confront them in the form of a 6 ft-plus Englishman named Tony.

He held up sign that said "Rosina," with a smiley face in place of the "o" and a photograph pulled from my application printed out on the back. Without hesitation, he came forward and gave me a massive hug. I think he knew far better than I did how much I needed it. Afterwards, he drove me the "long way" through the center of the country, where sheep herds, lush pastures, and plummeting cliffs brought me out of my jet-lagged stupor. Thus began a whirlwind of new people, new customs, delightful accents, and endless hospitality.

I was astonished by the amount of food that was cooked, the number of times I was asked if I'd rather have a lie down or some time to myself, because I must be exhausted. I felt totally out of place, as I knew I would, but there were just as many moments that made me feel loved and valued. Whether it was snuggling with my site supervisors two Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, being offered cup after cup of tea, or attending an LGBTQ-inclusive communion service with an elderly couple (almost certainly in their 80's), it hit me with a force I couldn't describe. I began to understand what called these people to one another, and what has called me here.

While their church communities are aging, they continue to increase their fellowship opportunities and involvement in the community. While they are uncertain about the future of their congregation and their denomination, and in many ways their very way of life, they are committed to making a positive impact. They decided to take a chance on four young adults under 25 not because they knew we could fix anything, but because they so deeply desired the fellowship that comes with reaching out towards someone unlike yourself. They are seeking the accompaniment that Jesus gave, which lives in the mundane and the profound, in the holy and the profane. I can only rise each morning with the hope that I will be able to meet them where they are.

"Anywhere there is suffering, that is where I want to be, doing what I can."

-Diana, Princess of Wales

Imperfection, Doubt, and Diana

Those who know me best will know that I struggle to believe that I am capable, that I am good enough. It's been a challenge for me ever since I was a little girl. I always had to do more, to be smarter, work harder, to be perfect. During college I realized just how impossible that would be, and in response, I gave up. Depression and anxiety told me that I couldn't be the person I wanted so desperately to be, so I just gave up. That was easier. For a long time, that was easier.

In many ways, making the decision to take this journey was a significant step towards living a life of active hope and compassion. As I am writing this, it is just after midnight on August 31st, 2017, the 20th anniversary of the death of Princess Diana, and while I was only 3 years old when she died, I can't help but feel that her compassionate spirit has walked with me and, in many ways, deeply affected the way I view my own place in the world and in this YAGM year.

Diana was an extraordinarily ordinary woman who had no shortage of imperfections or barriers, and yet she chose to take the power and position she was given at such a young age and used it to spend her life empowering and advocating for the most vulnerable and downtrodden among us. She understood that being with others in their suffering is perhaps the only thing in this world guaranteed to remedy it. She was not simply The People's Princess because of her playful smile or her down-to-earth personality. She continues to be so because she represents what this world so desperately needs: empowering, imperfect, radical hope.