SALT/YAMEN Service Opportunity

Assignment Title & Partner Organization: SALT/YAMEN: Research & Administration Volunteer – Sabeel

Term: August 11, 2020 – July 17, 2021  
FTE: 1.0  
Location: Jerusalem, Israel & Palestine  
Date Required: August 11, 2020

Program information and policies can be found at mcc.org/salt or mcc.org/yamen

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

An invitation to an assignment is contingent on the successful completion of a criminal background check.

Synopsis:

The SALT/YAMENer will serve with Sabeel, an ecumenical organization that strives to develop a spirituality based on love, justice, peace, nonviolence, liberation and reconciliation between different national groups and faith communities. The participant will assist with a variety of tasks such as research, editing English publications, dissemination of information, participating in workshops, etc.

Qualifications:

All MCC workers are expected to exhibit a commitment to a personal Christian faith and discipleship; active church membership; and nonviolent peacemaking.

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- Fluent English speaking, writing and communication skills.
- Interest in the Palestinian and Israeli social, political and religious situation.
- Interest in developing, disseminating and archiving resource material on the conflict and how events affect both the local and wider Palestinian Christian Community.
- Interest in theology, communications, social justice and advocacy.
- Knowledge of Liberation Theology.
- Strong computer skills related to web updating and word processing.
- Willingness to participate in all aspects of the Sabeel community.
- Willingness to network with, and make connections to, local clergy and the wider liberation theology community.
- A flexible, collaborative working style.

Assignment Narrative:
The SALT/YAMENer will report to the supervisor of Sabeel for all Sabeel work matters.

Sabeel is an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians. Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, liberation theology seeks to deepen the faith of Palestinian Christians and to promote unity amongst them toward social action. Sabeel strives to develop a spirituality based on love, justice, peace, nonviolence, liberation and reconciliation for different national and faith communities. The word "Sabeel" is Arabic for "the way" and also a "channel or spring" of life-giving water.

Sabeel also works to promote a more accurate international awareness regarding the identity, presence and witness of Palestinian Christians, as well as their contemporary concerns. It encourages individuals and groups from around the world to work for a just, comprehensive and enduring peace that is informed by truth and empowered by prayer and action.

Sabeel’s environment has support structures in place. There are weekly staff meetings, a weekly Bible study and a weekly open communion service. Volunteers are accountable to the supervisor and can work across multiple departments. The office is officially open from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm.

MCC workers often feel frustration at not being able to change a situation of deep systemic injustice. This position requires the ability to create and maintain healthy boundaries. It is important to acknowledge the need for self-care and to craft disciplines that enable one to cope in healthy ways. MCCers are encouraged to take time to observe spiritual and other practices such as: mediation, journal, spiritual reading and reflection, exercise – walking, yoga, Wednesday night volleyball on Mt. of Olives, available group hiking activities, local concerts in West Bank and East Jerusalem, and so on.

The SALT/YAMENer will be a full member of the MCC team, attending meetings and other activities. Creating a trusting, healthy MCC team dynamic is key to finding spiritual and emotional support. MCC Europe and Middle East (EME) allows one to 'get away' from areas of high tension from time to time, to relax and rejuvenate. There is a strong worker care ethos in EME that also offers debriefing with trained professionals, if necessary.

Duties:

Research

- Wave of Prayer: prepare and disseminate the newsletter by Tuesday of each week and maintain the email list.
- Research and summarize materials for use in speech-writing or written articles by the supervisor
- Archive written material by the supervisor and distribute these upon request.
- Develop material on theological issues raised in programs; especially develop local community links relating to liberation theology.
- Research background historical and contextual information for advocacy pieces.

Administration & Publications

- Send visitor information to FOS groups.
- Provide assistance in editing proposals and statements in English and preparing material for publication.
• Assist the local staff in the English language editing process for Cornerstone, Sabeel’s newsletter.
• Participate in workshops and information sessions.
• Participate fully in the life of the office and, as time permits, offer support and help in administrative and practical tasks.

Location Description:

Jerusalem is a city of religious and political diversity. Christians, Muslims and Jews all worship at holy places in the city. As the site of Jesus’ death and resurrection, Jerusalem holds special significance for Christians the world over; many communions and religious orders maintain holy sites in the city. While officially a unified city, the divisions between Palestinian and Israeli Jewish communities in the city are very real.

While East Jerusalem has largely been spared much of the violence faced by other cities and villages in the West Bank and Gaza, the military occupation is still present in the form of frequent checkpoints throughout East Jerusalem’s neighborhoods. Furthermore, Israeli settlements and checkpoints have increasingly separated East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. MCC workers living in Jerusalem must make a special effort in order to develop and maintain connections with persons outside of Jerusalem.

Arabic is the main language spoken in East Jerusalem, as it is throughout the West Bank and Gaza. Many Jerusalemites speak at least some English. Good healthcare is available in Jerusalem. In both East and West Jerusalem one can find a wide variety of Western goods, including food products, clothing, etc. Mail, phone and internet services are generally reliable and efficient.

There are no Mennonite congregations in Israel & Palestine. There are, however, many churches representing a variety of denominations. A wide variety of Arabic-language services are held in Jerusalem: Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches in Jerusalem also hold English-language services. There is a small Quaker meeting in Ramallah, north of Jerusalem.

Sabeel is located in East Jerusalem. As part of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, East Jerusalem poses some emotional challenges, but it is as safe as any large Western city. Excellent health and dental clinics are nearby. The organization works with the entire Christian community and can connect volunteers with whatever church community they are interested in attending.

The climate is cold, and at times rainy, in the winter (Nov. – Feb.). This means the temperature can drop to around 5 degrees Celsius but coupled with rain and an absence of central heating in homes and workspaces, it is important to have plenty of warm clothes. Sweaters for layering, rain jacket and warm rainproof footwear are important. The summers become hot to very hot with temperatures in Jerusalem in the mid 30’s Celsius. It is important to remain hydrated, wear a hat and of course, sunscreen. It cools down nicely at night.

Public buses have stops directly in front of the Sabeel office and run frequently, approximately every 15 minutes during the day. There is always the option to take a taxi if it is late at night.

The food in Palestine-Israel is excellent. There are lots of fruits and vegetables readily available, specialty breads, grains and spices. The food is just one of the many wonders of Palestine.
While any placement away from home can feel isolating at times, Sabeel usually has international volunteers which may reduce feelings of isolation. Security is a concern if one is in the wrong place at the wrong time, but Jerusalem is generally quite safe. It is important to remember that the situation can change. MCC guides workers in safety protocol that must be adhered to.

Challenges:

- Political instability. Living in a militarized society with disregard for the rules of International Law and where human rights abuses are visible on a daily basis.
- Handling bureaucratic and physical obstacles raised by the military occupation requires humor and patience. Examples: A high level of surveillance, security checkpoints and scrutiny of personal history such as travel, political involvement or criminal record.
- Living in a high-stress, densely populated environment.
- Extreme heat and high levels of pollution.
- Fish and seafood local diet.
- Occasional long days.
- Diverse group of stakeholders with complex can be difficult to navigate through.
- Visiting areas with aging infrastructure requires navigating uneven streets or sidewalks.
- Significant cultural/religious differences/perceptions of LGBTQ+ individuals. Local church and local area are not supportive to LGBTQ+ persons.
- 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".