

SALT Service Opportunity

Assignment Title & Partner Organization: SALT: Administrative Assistant – Hope School

Term: August 14, 2019 – July 11, 2020

FTE: 1.0

Location: Beit Jala, Israel and Palestine

Date Required: August 14, 2019

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

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

Synopsis:

The SALT/YAMENER will assist Hope School, a unique educational institution that promotes values of love, peace, tolerance, human dignity, and justice. The participant will assist with administrative and donor-relations tasks.

Qualifications:

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

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

- Strong English language skills.
- Excellent writing and communication skills.
- Strong commitment to Christian faith-based education.
- Strong defender of the right to education for all people, especially needy and destitute children.
- Ability to network with other charities.
- Equipped to deal with children with diverse social and religious backgrounds.

Assignment Narrative:

Hope School is a non-government, non-profit and charitable organization was founded in 1962 by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to provide suitable and quality education for orphans and disadvantaged children in the Bethlehem area and the Palestinian territories. Fifteen years later, the Arab Charitable Society was founded to replace the Mennonite community in running the school.

The Charity, along with Hope School are committed to a unique vision based on Christian values of Love, Peace, Tolerance, Human dignity and Justice. These values are the driving force of all the school activities through which the Christian message is conveyed to students and the local community at large.

The SALTER will work with the director of the school assisting according to the school's need. The school is located in Beit Jala. The participant will likely live on the grounds of the school.

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 SALTER 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 for 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:

- Write school activity reports.
- Correspond with donors and help to acquire new donors.
- Manage and schedule the director's time and meetings.
- Make presentations about the school and welcome groups visiting the school with the director.
- Write & design newsletters.
- Filing and archiving.
- Help the boarders in English lessons

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.

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 work spaces, 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.

The food in Israel & Palestine 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.

Security is a concern if one is in the wrong place at the wrong time, but Jerusalem is relatively 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 LGTBQ+ 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".