MCC Service Opportunity

Assignment Title: SALT/YAMEN: Hospitality Assistant – Anafora Retreat Centre

Term: August 10, 2017 – July 14, 2018
FTE: 1.0
Location: Anafora, Egypt
Date Required: August 10, 2017

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

Synopsis:

Program details at mcc.org/salt or mcc.org/yamen

This SALT/YAMENer will become part of the community at Anafora Retreat Center, a place for quiet reflection and mutual encounter between different traditions. S/he will work closely with other Anafora volunteers and employees to assist with hospitality, housekeeping and food preparation as required mostly at the Anastasia Training Center which is part of the Anafora Complex.

Qualifications:

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

- Strong English language writing and communication skills
- Strong organizing and administrative abilities.
- Demonstrated leadership ability, able to work with minimal direction, and function well as part of a multi-national, multi-cultural team.
- Sensitivity to a variety of cultural and religious norms and practices.
- Ability and experience with food preparation, entertaining foreign guests and general housekeeping tasks as needed.
- Flexibility and patience in working with others and the variety of practical tasks presented.
- Interest in learning Arabic.

Assignment Narrative:

MCC Egypt works in partnership with the Coptic Orthodox and Coptic Evangelical Churches, to support their life and witness in working to improve their communities. Egyptian Christians, who trace their history back to the gospel writer St. Mark, live as a minority of approximately ten percent of the population in a Muslim society. Churches provide pastoral care for their members and reach out to neighbors with services such as education. They serve as gathering-places for their communities, extended social and family networks.

This SALT/YAMENer is with the Coptic Orthodox diocese of el Qosseya, which is a town in southern Egypt. The placement itself is at a retreat center, Anafora, northwest of Cairo, 6 hours from el
Qosseya, on the desert highway to Alexandria. Anafora is a place for reflection and prayer and is a place for encounter between western and Coptic Orthodox Christians. As part of this community, the participant, the Coptic Orthodox colleagues, and Christians from other countries and traditions will learn about a shared commitment to Christian nonviolence together.

Anafora also has a training centre for church and other individuals, called the Anastasia Training Center. As well, it has a farming community called Arofana that, with the implementation of irrigation and organic techniques, has reclaimed large portions of the desert to grow a large variety of fruits and vegetables.

Bishop Thomas, who is in charge of the diocese, understands that the peace witness of Egyptian Christians has been important throughout this history of the Christian Church. He finds commonality with a Mennonite peace stance and hopes that a SALT/YAMENer will help members of his church find common ground and mutual encouragement across wide cultural divides. Bishop Thomas wishes to include MCC in increasing the capacity of Anafora by drawing on the experience and support of a participant in the area of grounds and building maintenance and farming, hospitality.

The MCC Egypt team consists of about 7-10 people, although numbers fluctuate. Most workers are based in Cairo. The team endeavors to be supportive of each other and to create a good spirit of cooperation, mutual service and fun. The whole MCC group gathers monthly for events such as worship, business meetings, parties, retreats, lectures and field trips.

Duties:

- If the person is a native English speaker, or speaks very good English, and feels comfortable in leading small groups, s/he will offer basic and conversational English classes to interested Anafora staff members, with the aims of increased communication and understanding between students and English-speaking guests/friends of Anafora and also giving students greater access to vocational opportunities.
- To oversee and maintain the Anastasia Peace Library so that it is a functioning resource for students in training modules. This could include cataloging incoming resources, keeping track of checked-out items, returns, renewals, and other general library tasks.
- To provide support to the Anastasia Training Centre office, staff and module instructors. The participant would be responsible for gathering resources need for each workshop, keeping track of student files, writing up reports on each module and other administrative duties as assigned.
- To do other “hospitality” tasks (cleaning, housekeeping, laundry, decorations, etc.), as training and celebratory events occur.

Other duties include:

- Intentionally participate and become a part of community life, relationships and daily routine of the staff and volunteers and Anafora.
- Observe and learn about Anafora Retreat Centre and Anastasia Training Centre.
- Assist Anafora volunteers and staff with daily hospitality tasks, housekeeping, and food preparation, as needed.
- Assist the Program Coordinator of Anastasia Training Centre in implementing community trainings if needed.
• Model non-violent peacemaking in the workplace and community through respectful interactions with others.
• Attend MCC meetings and events as appropriate, including devotional and prayer time led by staff.
• Attend evening prayers.

Location Description:

MCC Egypt is based in Cairo, a bustling metropolis of 20 million people with an abundance of consumer goods and entertainment possibilities. Workers placed outside of Cairo spend time in Cairo for language study and MCC orientation at the beginning of their term. It is important to know that Egypt’s government and services are highly centralized there.

The Anafora retreat center and organic farm is most easily reached in about two hours from Cairo in a private car. It is located in a desert setting but is becoming less remote and isolated due to development happening all around it. Staff and visitors often make trips to Cairo and the MCC worker may be able to get a ride frequently; otherwise, Anafora staff use public buses which run from Sadat City to Cairo.

The Coptic Orthodox Diocese of el Qosseya, approximately a six-hour drive from Anafora, runs the Retreat Centre and the related Training Centre. Egyptian staff and workers at Anafora are mostly from the town of el Qosseya or surrounding villages.

Challenges:

• The setting of the Anafora Retreat and Anastasia Training Centre is idyllic and beautiful, especially for someone who enjoys a rural setting, quiet time and a reflective space. This, however, can present challenges for those who enjoy the bustle of city life.
• Internet is not always available, but cell phones will work. There is provision for the participant to visit Cairo in a limited way where all the amenities of North American life are available.
• A high number of international volunteers pass through Anafora and many speak English. Because of this, the SALTer would need to be diligent in fostering relationships with the farm workers and other hospitality and maintenance workers whose English might be limited.
• 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".