

ON THIS JOURNEY CALLED LIFE



Amy Gulliksen - Young Adults in Global Mission - Jerusalem

Christmas 2014

Kol Senna Wa Entu Salem

"May every year bring you peace", a greeting given at Christmas, New Years, Easter, Eid, and birthdays. The wishes for a joyful and peaceful Christmas abounded from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish friends this year. Spending Christmas Eve at the birthplace of our Lord was an experience I'll never forget, and I was humbled (as always) by the hospitality of friends. While remembering the beginning of Christ's human life, I witnessed and experienced the community and compassion Christ strived to teach us. What a way to spend Christmas.

Na'eeman- *A word used after taking a shower or getting a haircut, literally meaning 'bliss'*

Bliss is what I feel in this place. I feel refreshed, like the feeling after taking a shower. The resilience and determination of the people here have shown me that the will to live persists, even in seemingly hopeless situations. The life giving properties of water are like the life giving properties of a renewed, restored, and clean soul.

Bliss is what comes from change. Like hair cuts, change can be scary. But with hope from God, we persist in pursuing positive change in our world. Always reflecting, always examining, always connecting, we as people of faith strive for the Kingdom of God on Earth. And that requires a lot of change!

*“... Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light.
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight...”*

*Phillips Brooks
“O Little Town of Bethlehem”*



The 'Little Town' of Bethlehem

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Celine helps me get through a scary rendition of Silent Night

Helen Keller School

I've been so fortunate to continue to accompany the students and teachers at HKS. We've grown together, from uneasy afternoons of rising tensions in Jerusalem to screams of laughter while making cupcakes. The students are extremely receptive to learning, especially when it comes to games and music, and I always look forward to spending my days with them,

A Story of Accompaniment

As we prepared for the Christmas program, Ms. Iman, the music teacher overheard me singing Silent Night. She immediately decided for me, "Ah, you will sing this for us at the program!" "Oh, no, no, no," I responded, "I can't sing, I'll play it on the piano for you." "No, you sing it." There was no arguing with Ms. Iman.

So the Christmas program came, and it was time for me to sing. I took a deep breath and nervously began one of my Christmas carols. My shaky voice stumbled over the pitches, but Celine, a kindergartener who loves music, started clapping as she heard my voice. Relieved and inspired, I walked to Celine, lead her out of her chair (as she is completely blind), and brought her up on my hip as she helped me through the rest of Silent Night.

I've never seen anyone trust like Celine.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God.

John 14:1

To the Galilee!

As part of our fall YAGM retreat, we traveled north to the Galilee, the place where Jesus lived out his ministry. Our journey brought Jesus to life— we were able to touch the stones of Sepphoris, where Jesus worked. We walked along the shores of the Galilee at Capernaum, hiked on the Mount of Beatitudes, and camped at Magdala.



Nazareth replica olive press

It's easy to see Jesus as a far away divine figure, but as we learned more about his life, his situation didn't seem so different from our own. Jesus lived under occupation in a time of revolt. He witnessed deep hatred and divisions between peoples. Yet from Jesus came a message of peace, nonviolent yet active resistance, and radical love. What can we learn from this?



On the Galilee! photos: Jeff Von Wald

Prayer Requests

Let us pray for any person who is denied access to the land that they call home. May we create structures that grant everyone the freedom of movement.

Let us pray for the children of HKS, looking towards a year of new beginnings and possibilities.

Let us pray for all those who celebrate religious holidays in secret, may they be given the freedom to express their faith openly without fear.

Let us pray for safety in winter weather, and remember those who do not have access to electricity or heat in times of frigid cold.

Let us pray for the YAGM in countries all over the globe, that they continue to feel God's presence in the communities they now call home.

Let us pray in thanksgiving for the ways in which God is revealed to us— from the feeling of na'eeman to surprising relationships to a newborn's cry to beautiful sunsets. Allah akbar (God is great).



Making mamoul cookies at Aida Refugee Camp All photos on this page: Danae Hudson

Life in the Holy Land: Refugee Camps

In 1948, more than 800,000 Palestinians were displaced from their homeland that became the State of Israel. Many were forced to resettle in refugee camps, and some left the country. Today the number of refugees has grown to over 5 million. Can you contemplate that number? Refugee camps were hastily set up, and are now overcrowded to a breaking point. The camps are regularly bombarded by IDF soldiers, utilities like water and electricity are not reliable, and freedom of moment is restricted.

A woman named Islam, of Aida Camp near Bethlehem, has decided to make change for her family. Her son was born with a developmental disability which makes it impossible for him to be in a mainstream school. There are no resources for children with disabilities in Aida; they are forced to look outside for private schools, which are very expensive. Islam and other mothers of disabled children started working together in a cooperative, the named Noor (which means light) Women's Empowerment, making crafts and offering cooking classes to internationals who want to learn more about life in Aida.

I was welcomed into her home as we made mamoul cookies (a traditional cookie made at holidays), baked bread and made lentil soup.



Making cookies with Pr. Carrie and Islam

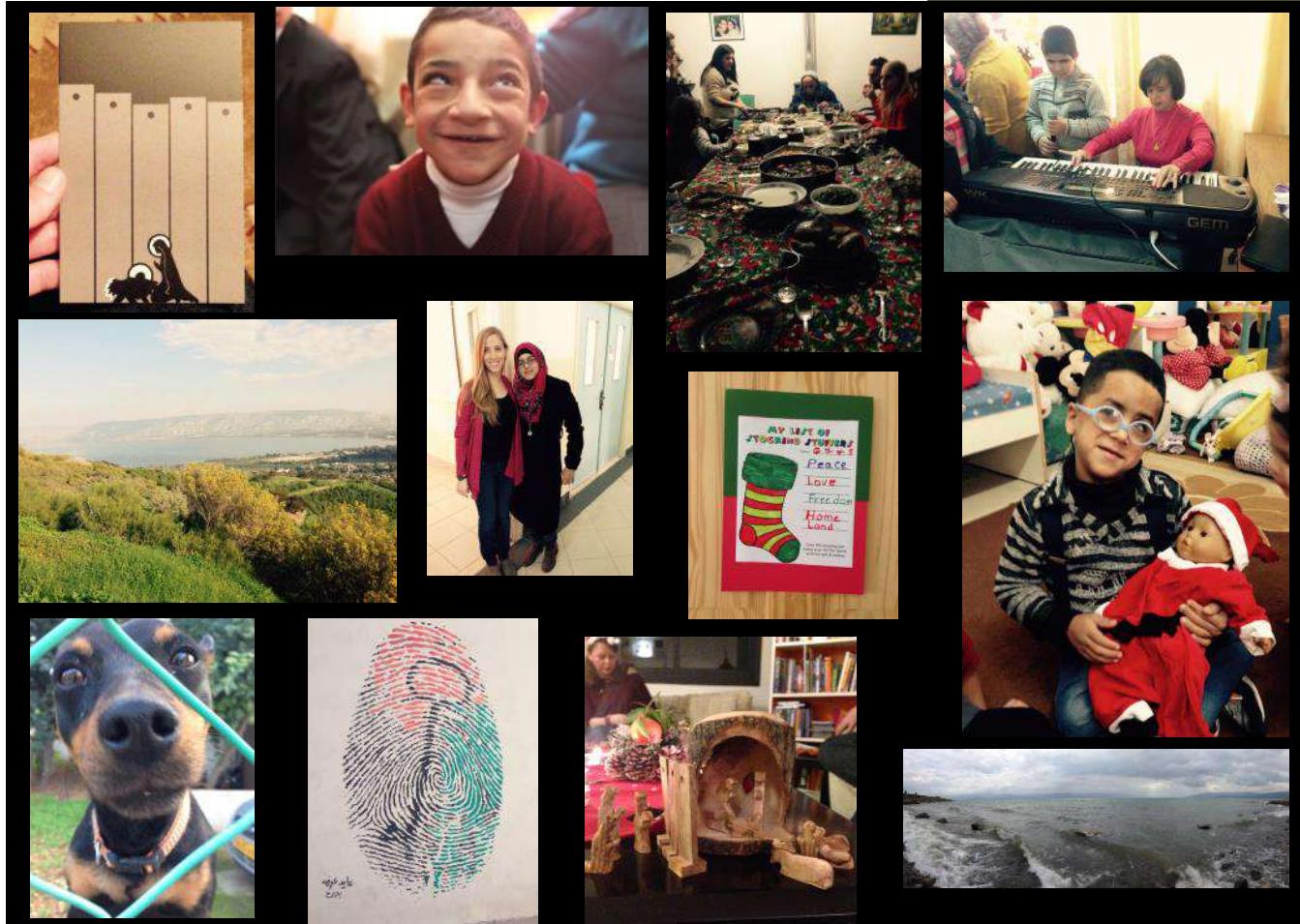


The finished product!

Picture Stories

From upper left to right:

- Postcard of the manger scene, with a stark reminder of the current state of Bethlehem
- First grader, Kareem, preparing for the Christmas program
- My host family's Christmas Dinner (with sheep stomach!)
- Music teacher, Iman, and fifth grader, Muhammad warm up their voices as they prepare to sing 'Leila Talminat'
- The view approaching the Sea of Galilee
- 8th grader, Bayan, and I at the Christmas program
- A Palestinian Christmas list
- Kindergartener, Abdullah, holding baby Baba Noel
- The neighbor-pup, Oreo
- A symbol for the right to return at Dehaisha Refugee Camp
- Nativity scene made of olive wood, gifted to me by my country coordinators. The wise men cannot enter due to the separation wall.
- The beautiful Sea of Galilee on the shores of Capernaum



Say Hello!

The fastest way to contact me is through Facebook message. Otherwise email works too!

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Be sure to follow my blog:
OnThisJourneyCalledLife.com

Of course, I love receiving
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