

HOLLY IN THE HOLY LAND

March Newsletter

*My YAGM year in Jerusalem
and the West Bank*

Header photo: the Siq, the natural split rock that was used by the Nabataeans as the road leading to the ancient city of Petra



JORDAN RETREAT

Reflecting and Resting in the Desert

In February, our cohort traveled to Jordan for a Mid-Year Retreat. We left on February 15th, my 23rd birthday! While a full day of travel that included a border crossing was not the most restful way to spend a birthday, arriving in Wadi Musa/Petra and seeing the beautiful mountains was such a special way to celebrate my birthday! Our week in Jordan was filled with moments of exploration, rest, and reflection. We focused on the theme of "Identity" as we journeyed around Jordan, looking at both our identities and those of the people of Jordan, especially the large refugee population. We had the opportunity to visit the Za'atari refugee camp that hosts around 80,000 people, the majority being refugees from Syria. Overall, it was a memorable trip!

Photo: the view of the Petra valley



BEAUTY IN JORDAN

PETRA

The ancient city of Petra is one of the Seven Wonders of the World! Visiting Petra has been at the very top of my bucket list for as long as I can remember, so it was very exciting to explore this beautiful place!

Photo: our cohort at the iconic Treasury

WADI RUM

We also enjoyed a few days in the Wadi Rum desert, where we stayed at a Bedouin camp, stargazed at night, climbed mountains and sand dunes, and rode on jeeps through the picturesque landscape.

Photo: sunrise camel ride in Wadi Rum

AMMAN

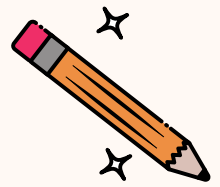
While in Amman, the capital of Jordan, we visited the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, an ELCJHL congregation, and explored the ruins of the Amman Citadel.

Photo: the Roman Temple of Hercules at the Amman Citadel



Photo: me and Britta cheering before running the 10k at the Palestine Marathon in Bethlehem

SCHOOL OF HOPE UPDATES



The Evangelical Lutheran School of Hope in Ramallah

Life at the School of Hope continues to be exciting and full of everyday surprises! A recent activity at the school that I have been loving is English Club! Britta and I have been working with students in 7th-10th grade to prepare a skit for the graduation ceremony in May. I always love integrating theatre into my involvement at the school, so this has been a great way to do that! Additionally, I continue to find joy in helping out at the school in unexpected ways. For example, I got to teach a geography lesson to the 7th grade class! This was such a fun day, as I have always loved geography, and it is a class period that I will never forget for all the silly moments of learning and fun!



Photo: the administration at the school surprised me with a birthday cake (it was delicious!)

MOMENTS



A Look at February and March Through Moments of Joy

For this newsletter, I'd like to share some tidbits of my day-to-day life in the West Bank through the small moments in February and March that I will cherish for years to come:

- Traveling to Jericho with the Church of Hope congregation for a memorable day of barbecue and games on one of the first hot days after a chilly winter
- Riding camels in Wadi Rum to watch the sunrise over the desert
- Photographing English Day at the School of Hope - 1st grade students gave presentations on their future careers, 2nd grade students competed in a Spelling Bee, and 3rd grade students presented a "Lutheran's Got Talent" show
- Tutoring the two sons of Miss Mays, the school's deputy principal, in English language and getting to spend time laughing and playing with the kids
- Running (um...walking) the 10k in the Palestine Marathon in Bethlehem
- Celebrating Ash Wednesday at the Church of Hope - Ash Wednesday is a holy day that I grew to love while a student at St. Olaf; it was meaningful to continue participating in this day of remembrance and repentance with the ELCJHL
- Joining the women of the congregations of the ELCJHL for an International Women's Month event with bingo, food, and fellowship
- Making qatayef, a popular (and yummy!) Ramadan dessert, with my host family



Photo: 1st grade students on English Day at the School of Hope; the 1st graders gave presentations on their future jobs and some chose to dress up

I want to express my immense gratitude for my partners near and far for supporting me! Thank you to the ELCA, the ELCJHL, my sending community, and the congregations at St. James Lutheran Church in Johnston, IA and Bethany Lutheran Church in Rice Lake, WI for your blessings and prayers!

My next newsletter will be sent out at the end of May. If you would like to contact me in the meantime, feel free to email me at hollyannebeck15@gmail.com. Friend me on Facebook for more updates!

