

you are welcome

YAGM newsletter one



“You are welcome.” That is how I have been greeted by nearly every person I have met here. That, often followed by invitations for dinners, coffee and helpful advice; and here everyone genuinely means it. I’ve already learned so much from my communities about hospitality, openness and vulnerability. My journey here is one about accompaniment. This idea that was reiterated over and over throughout our large group training in Chicago last month. Accompaniment is walking alongside people with a hope for mutuality and understanding. It is meeting people where they are with an open mind and open heart. This is something I am still figuring out how to do and I’m so lucky to have the patience of you all and my community here as I learn. Along with living along side my community and host family, my specific call in this context is to assist in English classes in schools two days a week and work at the environmental education center the other two days. I just finished my first “real” week and still have a lot to figure out about my place in these contexts, but I am so excited for what is to come.

[\(link: about service\)](#)



PEOPLE

These goons are the other YAGM serving in Jerusalem/West Bank. The 7 of us, along with our amazing country coordinators, Colin and Jeni, spent our first two weeks in-country learning about the people, places and food here. Orientation was a lot of long days, history lessons and processing the complicated realities of this land. We were all smushed in a van for the two weeks of orientation and I still love all these humans to death. This whole team is so brilliant, kind and talented. I feel quite lucky to serve and learn along side them.



PLACES

First I was in Kansas, then I took a plane to Chicago. We had a little over a week of training with the entire YAGM group. I am so in awe of this whole community. The way they learn, care for and support each other is incredible. It was a intense 9 days and I am so excited to hear about all the joys, challenges and lessons they each take from their country placements. From Chicago I got on another plane to New York. Then we took a really long plane ride to Tel Aviv. We were greeted at the airport by our amazing country coordinators, Colin and Jeni and their two precious kids Josie and Amos (you may have seen these two featured on my snapchat, being adorable). And then we were off. Over the course of two weeks we traveled all around the Jerusalem area to learn, to ask questions and to be challenged by our new context. And now we’re here. One week ago I moved into my host home for the year. I have a large and beautiful house next door to my host family. Living alone has been an adventure and moving was a whirlwind, but I am ready to get started.



THINGS

One of the ways my community has welcomed me is through food and oh boy is it a gift. Everywhere I go I am offered sweet treats, rich Arabic coffee and warm food. Everything is fresh, and you better believe I am over the moon with how much produce is served to me. Every meal begins with a bountiful display of salads, hummus and pita. After stuffing myself full of that, the actual meal arrives. I’ve indulged in many delicious rice and veggie dishes and I’ll usually be on my fourth serving before I can convince the host that I really am full and physically cannot take another bite. I wish I could describe the sound that good falafel being broken makes or bottle the smell of fresh pita. I’ve also learned that mint lemonade is one of my favorite flavors in the whole world.

HEY USA

We had the opportunity to visit Augusta Victoria Hospital as part of our orientation and learn about the special care it provides to patients who can’t get it anywhere else. The US promised \$25 million in funding to East Jerusalem Hospitals as part of a 2017 budget. How this funding is being redirected now is a mystery to me and a tragedy for the people receiving or waiting to receive life-saving treatments in these hospitals.

[Learn more](#)



MEET THE SQUAD:

Eli likes to share fruit. He’s easy to talk to and smiles all the time. He is always a joy to be around and makes me laugh at the most unexpected times.

Oh **Katie**. She’s the sweetest and coolest person I have ever met. Being in her presence always makes me calm. She also has the best playlists.

Calla has a laugh that is contagious and she tells the best stories. She’s an expressive talker and I’m pretty sure she can make friends with anyone. Also, she geeks out with me about plants so that’s dope.

Hannah speaks Arabic well and so patiently teaches me the same words 20 times in a row. She never fails to make me laugh, is a great musician and pretty much great at everything else too.

Way back in April, **Phifer** was the first person I told that I felt like JWB was the right program for me. He has so much passion for this place and could probably make conversation with anyone on the planet.

Courtney was my roommate at orientation in Chicago and is my go-to human. She is really brave about trying vegetables and her high school graduating class had 19 people. She’s the best pal and always so fun to be around.

WHAT THE HECK IS A YAGM?

YAGM stands for Young Adults in Global Mission. It is a program through the ELCA that sends young adults (age 21-29) to 11 countries all over the world to serve in the spirit of accompaniment, walking alongside global companions in a manner that practices mutuality, interdependence and solidarity. I am serving with the **Jerusalem/West Bank** program.



I got to release a bird during our tour of the Environmental Education Center (one of my work locations). One of their site programs is tagging and tracking birds all around the West Bank. The action brought me so much joy, but as with much of life here it makes me consider freedom. I have only begun to scratch the surface of learning about the realities Palestinian people face everyday. I am still working to sort out the complicated paths of history and visual realities I witnessed during orientation. Hopefully I will be able to better share these feelings in future newsletters, but I feel that right now it is my time to just listen and learn. If you would like to join me in learning about the complexities that exist Israel/Palestine, please let me know. I would love to chat, forward resources or just process this crazy world together.

If there are specific topics you would like me to share about in these newsletter please let me know! I am so excited to share my journey and your interest means the world. Thanks for reading.

all my love,

Genna

more genna things:



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