

# What's new at Musalaha?



1. We would like to introduce to you our newest staff member, Nanor. She is an Armenian-Palestinian living in the Old City of Jerusalem. She recently graduated from Bethlehem University with a BA in Psychology and Sociology. Nanor also recently participated in the Bridge Builders trip in Norway. Read what she has to say on the front page.

2. Want to see more smiling Musalaha faces? You can find pictures and videos from the events you read about in this issue on Musalaha's facebook page. Just search for Musalaha Org - we promise to be your friend!

3. On International Day of Peace, September 21, 20 women will gather on the shores of Caesarea to discuss art, its influence, and how to make an impact through our talents. This is a team building exercise for a group of veterans and new-comers that we pray will be vital and move our ladies' groups towards better understanding and practical outreach.

4. Besides our ongoing activities with women, and youth we are spending November with a Danish organization coming to strategically revamp our infrastructure. Please pray that their experienced assistance will help us serve the community more effectively.



## "This is Why We are Here" (cont.)

After a long conversation, I told him that we are all children of God and it is a commandment to love everyone, even those we don't like. It is not a choice we have to make. It is a lifestyle we have to live. Then he confided in me that the real reason he did not want to be in the cabin was due to the fact that he did not know anyone in the room. Surprisingly, it was the same case with the girl as well.

It got me thinking, if we are forced to share a room with someone we don't know, is it a good enough excuse to say that we don't like them or even hate them? Does this exempt us from learning to share a room for five days?

I was amazed at how much children pick up from their surroundings. The coping mechanisms children choose are learned from adults. After a ten minute conversation with them, the boy and the girl changed their minds and spent the whole five days in their designated rooms. That was the end of that incident.

The rest of our camp went smoothly. Children formed relationships and played together. During the Bible study times we had a prayer box where children could write their requests, and then everyone could pray for them at the end of the session. Each day, we would get several notes that were very

touching. This is what I remember from this camp more than anything. A child wrote: "Pray for that what I have seen here doesn't end here."

The boy and girl we spoke to at the beginning of camp are snapshots of parts of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. We live in a world that sends out messages of hate and separation to children, and we at Musalaha try to send messages of love and inclusion. Participating in camps where children are moved and take the message of reconciliation to heart makes all of the challenges of our work worth it.

-Shadia, Youth Project Coordinator

## THE SUMMER THAT WAS

The Summer of 2012 was a logistical stretching even for me the Queen of organization. This is how it went....

At the end of July, Kay, John and Sam flew to UK. A few days later, Salim and Daniel joined. Within a week, Jack joined us in Bolton, UK, and the whole family was together.

The family flew to Germany for the Musalaha family conference. Salim worked as a conference leader non-stop. Kay was ill. The boys were seen in passing.

In mid-August, Salim and Daniel flew to USA for orientation week at the American University in Washington, D.C. Around the same time Kay, Jack, John and Sam flew back to the UK [and nearly missed their plane]. This is where four healthy young and strong boys come in handy that can run and carry suitcases at the same time.

Salim flew from Washington DC to Arizona, Iowa, and Chicago for speaking engagements.

# Munayer family update

At the end of August, Jack and Sam flew to Israel for the start of the new school year for Sam [Jack was asked to do this as he can drive/shop/sort of cook and knows the whole routine.] A few days later, John joined them.

Early in September, Salim returned to Jerusalem from Chicago, just a couple of days before Kay...the final leg or frontier or whatever you want to call it.

Believe it or not we pulled it off. One suitcase went adrift but turned up the next day which was actually a mercy as it was one less bag to haul on the train.

Daniel is settled in university in Washington, D.C. and apart from sighing at the amount of homework he has seems to be enjoying himself on his Global Scholars program with all sorts of people from all over the world.

Jack returns to York University in the UK late Septemeber on some sort of student train deal through Europe.[Not asking it's better I don't know...I think.] Around the same time, John will leave to start a YWAM (Youth With a Mission) program in Cape Town.

Sam is back to swimming/school and deciding which bedroom he wants when his brothers leave. We are not used to having just one child in the house.

Kay and Salim are still recovering from although a highly successful Summer as far as things that got done was highly stressful to match.

Susu has a leg sore he/she keeps pecking at which was either due to a fall or a 'lonely sore' whilst we were away.

That's it for now. Please pray for our boys that are away. Phew and more phews!

-Kay Munayer for all the Munayers

In addition, Salim will be teaching and intensive course titled "A Christian Response to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict" at Fuller Theological Seminary's School of Intercultural Studies in Pasadena, California. The course will be held from October 22 to November 2, 2012. For more information, contact Fuller at [www.fuller.edu](http://www.fuller.edu).



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AUTUMN 2012

## THE BRIDGE BUILDERS EFFECT

*This summer has been incredibly busy and exciting! From three summer camps in Israel/Palestine, a youth trip in Holland, a young adult trip in Norway, a family leaders conference in Germany, and Salim speaking in the States, this has been a productive past several months. This newsletter will focus on our young adult trip in Norway and our three summer camps. We look forward to telling you more about the other activities in our winter newsletter.*

Someone once said, "Things go wrong because people build walls instead of bridges." Conflict can develop when two sides do not see eye to eye. Through the years negative feelings accumulate, growing into walls.

I am a Palestinian of Armenian descent, raised in Ramallah, now living in Jerusalem. I grew up under the occupation, passing through checkpoints daily. The looks I received in West Jerusalem when I spoke any language other than Hebrew made me want to keep my contact with the "other side" limited, but I was always curious. I actually wanted to meet "them" – the Israelis.

When I first heard about Bridge Builders, I thought it was the perfect opportunity for me to have a better understanding about the other side. Yakov was one of the Israeli participants I met on the encounter, and the first person I had a conversation with about the conflict. This talk made me take a step back and wonder whether or not it was a good decision to come in the first place! At the airport I met the other Israelis with a friendly hello, and waiting through the two-hour check-in gave us the chance to talk. I let

my guard down a little, but as I walked past security, a nervous feeling came over me. I had no idea what to expect from this ten day trip, so I let God lead the way.

When we arrived in Norway we were met by a group of ten Norwegians who rounded out the group of Israelis and Palestinians. Our first few days were spent camping in the mountains, hiking in the rain, and experiencing the extraordinary beauty of Forenset. We took our first group picture after hiking up to Polikesin and shared the breathtaking views, united by our humanity and smallness as we reveled in the vastness of nature. We sang worship and folk songs in our different languages with Alex playing the durbake, Kevork the oud, and Rami the guitar. Through music and worship we connected, forgetting the barriers that came between us back home.

We took advantage of free time and had many conversations. I already miss these moments, sitting together drinking coffee and cakes made by the kind Vaulali staff. Unlike the general teachings, our private talks directly related to the conflict and our experiences, including settlements, checkpoints, Palestine and Israel. It was not just "Happy, clappy, yofi tofi!" ("it's all good") as Yakov constantly said. The talks were challenging, unsettling, and sometimes frustrating. Norwegians sat among us, wanting to know more, calmly listening and discussing with us. We as Israelis and Palestinians considered them the glue between us, and I am sure that because of them we learned to listen more closely.

My favorite part of the trip was a series of evenings where we learned more about each ethnic group through food, drama and dancing. We let the emotional wall between us crumble, hoping that one day the Separation Wall will come down as well. Planning for these evenings and sharing this part of ourselves with our new friends brought us closer together. Together we stepped into a fairytale of God's creation and we took a piece of it back with us to reality.

I cherish the memories of my new friends. Each and every individual on this trip, Palestinian, Israeli and Norwegian, touched my heart in a unique way, and I look forward to part two of the program in Jordan next spring. This was truly an amazing experience filled with moments of beauty, unity and challenge – a foundation of a bridge built.

-Nanor (Palestinian participant)

\* Names have been changed

in this issue...

THIS IS WHY WE ARE HERE

DOES IT HAVE TO END?

EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS



מסאלחה מלאה

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# EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

As the time of my flight to Stavanger, Norway approached, I found myself having low expectations for the Bridge Builders program. I was interested in reconciliation with Palestinian believers, but I figured one of two things would happen on the trip: either that it would be boring, filled with lectures and meetings around the clock resulting in semi-conclusive decisions on land, politics and theology; or that the Israelis and Palestinians would get along and have fun, but it would only be on a surface level. As soon as everyone arrived, I realized exactly what I was in for...

Fun! The next morning we were off to camp for three days. The time was filled with group activities, competitions, games, music, swimming in the ice-cold lake, picking (and of course eating) loads of wild blueberries, campfire talks, reconciliation discussions, worship, teachings, hikes, amazing views, and home-cooked meals. The rest of the program followed suit: playing games late at night, sharing meals together, plenty of free time (which was a major component in being able to connect with everyone), hot chocolate, the amazing cultural nights, outdoor activities, host families, and hanging out in the city. To sum up, this trip was one of the most fun and enjoyable experiences I've ever had!

Despite the fact that the program was loads of fun, it was definitely not only surface-deep. On the second evening, a leader led us in a short activity that, to summarize, anonymously got everything out on the table, right away: the good, the bad, and the ugly. That evening was not an easy one. I could feel a certain quiet tenseness in the air, feelings were hurt, and nerves were on high. Afterwards, the leaders led us through worship, returning everyone to an upright heart. The perspective was Godly, not self-focused. Now was time for God, knowing there would be plenty of time to talk later. Getting everything that was on our mind out in the open in the beginning was one of the main reasons why the group connected so well and bonded so fast throughout the trip. Nothing was hidden, which allowed people to be themselves. Real friendships are built on truthfulness, not by holding things within.

Sharing a relationship with these people, knowing that we all shared a relationship with Yeshua made talking about the various issues much easier, and sometimes, even enjoyable. There wasn't that feeling of trying to prove oneself right or another wrong. We learned to listen, especially thanks to a teaching from Tor about truly listening. I appreciated that discussions

about the issues were not a blatant part of the big meetings and teachings. People were able to talk about it on their own time, within their own comfort, with whom they would like, and on the subjects they chose. There was no pressure. They weren't debates either; they were heart-to-hearts. People were humble, wanting to hear, not just talk. The best part of it all was participating in, as well as listening to discussions. There was not always an agreed conclusion about the subject, but the talks ended in hugs, smiles, and the sharing of Yeshua's love.

As the program came to an end, I did not want to leave. The time spent together was so sweet; I like to think that it was incense to God. I left Norway with no hard feelings. In fact, I left with completely the opposite. I left with many new friendships, Palestinian, Norwegian, and Israeli, rooted in a deep love. I left with amazing memories and lifetime experiences. I left with a respect and love for the Palestinian people. I left with life lessons learned. I left with a more whole understanding of Yeshua and His love that surpasses all things! Bridge Builders was an experience I cherish, and I hope many others will be able to participate in such a life-changing, special experience too!

*-Adina (Israeli participant)*



## This is Why We are Here

Our annual Israeli-Palestinian children's summer camp took place at the Baptist Village from the 23-27th of July with 76 children - Israeli and Palestinian kids as well as some Eritrean and Sudanese refugee children. Fifty youth and young adults from the Holy Land and abroad served as staff and helpers.

We have been blessed with several projects for the youth department this summer, but at the same time we have struggled with recruitment this year more so than previous years. The Palestinian registration had been filled as early as May whereas the Israeli registration was on a standstill at six participants. To have a camp with a majority of one side does not reflect what we stand for. The hardest part of a project in Musalaha is to get people to commit to an event. To us, this is when reconciliation begins. It is not when people meet for the first time, but it is when they commit to attend such encounters. So, there I was, weeks before camp, putting my time and energy into informing people about our camp. Yet, disappointingly, there was still no change. Every morning, this would be a subject of prayer during our staff meetings. It was almost a challenge of faith as well. I was somewhat relaxed about it because I knew that we had done everything we could, and the rest was up to God. As July began, the days just flew by. We had two other camps to conduct before this one, and there was no time for anxiety. And then it began, two weeks before camp, the Israeli registration picked up and eventually filled out to balance with the Palestinian list.

It was time for our Baptist Village camp. As campers began to arrive at the camp, the counselors' team welcomed each one into their cabin where they placed their luggage, and met their fellow roommates.

Some of the children came from the North, from Central Israel and others from Jerusalem and the Bethlehem area. Halfway through registration, I had two cases, one from a boys' cabin and the other from a girls' cabin, where kids did not want to be in their designated rooms. "Why?" I asked. "She doesn't want to be in a room with Arabs," one of the counselors replied. "He doesn't want to be in a room with Jews," said the other.

As prepared as one can be for these situations, it is still shocking to face such a reality. It hurts to know that nine-year-old children already know who the enemy is, and what their stance is towards them. Quickly I answered each of the counselors, "This is why we are here. Go back and talk with them about it."

I was asked to help in one of the situations. The boy was not willing to go inside the room, and he was sitting with his luggage, a frown on his face. I sat next to him and he immediately started crying. "I haven't said anything," I said to him. "What seems to be the problem?," I asked. "I don't want to be in this room," he replied. "Why so?" "I don't want to be with Jews," he retorted. "Why?" I asked. "I don't like them," he insisted. "Why?" I asked again. "I don't know, I just know I don't!"

*(continued on back)*

## hebron

On July 7th our group of counselors turned up to the local Evangelical School in Hebron at around 8:00 am. It was a half an hour before the kids' summer camp started, and already the grounds were swarming with kids. I instantly saw that these children were cheeky and lively. If you were to come to Hebron with no idea of the difficulties facing the community, you would learn nothing through the attitude of the children, which was only full of joy. This community outreach camp was extraordinary in the fact that these were all Muslim kids with all Christian counselors - Palestinian, British, and a few odd ones like me. We introduced Biblically-based ideas of reconciliation in a general way: through stories, crafts and games. For instance, we sang the song "Allah Khale Kul Ishee," a song sung by both Muslim and Christian children. Allah simply means "The God" in Arabic and is used by both Christians and Muslims across the Middle East.

## taybeh

After three days break from the Hebron camp, I found myself in Taybeh at my second camp. While the Hebron camp was meant for community outreach and for showing God's love to the Muslim population, the Taybeh camp was community outreach meant to encourage relationship building between the communities of different sects of Palestinian Christians. It was so nice to be able to talk and sing openly about Jesus in this camp. In Taybeh, we could be very open as we were in a Christian village, and everything was about Jesus: the theme, the songs and the lessons. We sang "If You Love Jesus



# does it have to End?

*Kiwi counselor Jemmina gives us a glimpse into her experiences as a counselor at Musalaha's three children's camps this summer*

And You Know It," talked about Jesus' parables and prayed, all in Arabic. Because I had more freedom at this camp I was able to hang out and play with the kids more, and was blown away by their positive outlook and how much they laughed.

## baptist village

On July 23rd, after lugging my things onto the Baptist Village campgrounds near Petah Tikva, Israel, I settled into my cabin ready for the first day of Musalaha's Israeli-Palestinian (plus Eritrean and Sudanese refugee) summer camp for believing children. I had a room of amazing girls, both campers and counselors. Within ten minutes of getting to our room, one of the Jewish girls told one of the Palestinian girls (through a counselor) that she wanted to be friends but could not speak Arabic or much English. The Palestinian girl said that she wanted to be friends also but could not speak Hebrew and little English. They started talking, through one of the girls here who is tri-lingual (I am so jealous!), but as kids do, she soon got bored, and they were left alone. From the time they arrived until bedtime the two were inseparable. By the end of camp they were showing off that they could count in each other's languages. It was amazing to witness how their relationship blossomed. It was not forced by a program, not even suggested from a counselor; it was simply two girls wanting to be friends with each other. It was truly Musalaha in action.

This month has been amazing. I have laughed, I have cried, I have met so many people, I have been stretched and I have learned so much. July 2012 is a month that has changed my life. I have constantly thought, "Does it have to end?"