

James and Stephanie Van Straten

Serving in Menouf, Egypt

December 2010

Camel



Outside of Menouf



Children of Menouf



We live on the edge of the town of Menouf, which means we are a five minute walk from the farmer's fields. In town, we are continually dealing with cars, people, and animals. Living in a densely populated area means that it is inevitable that there are people everywhere. It's amazing the peace and stillness that comes from just getting outside of the outskirts. Last winter we made an effort to walk at least once a week in the fields, and now that the cooler weather has arrived, we are starting to do this again. Walking in the green delta gives us a much needed respite from the hustle and bustle of town, its dusty roads and brick buildings.

The green we get to enjoy is directly a result of the Nile River. The Nile is truly a gift of God to the Egyptians. A land that would otherwise be completely barren is now green and productive. Using a system that is thousands of years old, the fields are irrigated through an elaborate system of trenches and canals that take the precious Nile River and waters the crops. As a result, the land abounds in food, and throughout history, it was Egypt that fed empires. Walking through the fields, we can almost forget that the mighty Sahara desert exists not a 30 minute drive to our west. Instead we can rejoice at the blessings of provision that God has given to the Egyptians.

We feel blessed that we have this opportunity to escape and feel rejuvenated by the bright green of the Egyptian Delta and amazed how God has provided this gift to the Egyptians, providing life to 80 million people.

You can read more about our adventures on our blog:

www.jsvanstraten.blogspot.com

username: vanstratenblog@hotmail.com

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In November we participated in the MCC Egypt's team retreat at Anafora, which is a retreat center of the Coptic Orthodox Church built in the desert as a safe and quiet place for Christians to relax and pray. The name comes from part of the Coptic mass where they lift up their prayers to God. Again, what was much appreciated for both of us was the sense of quiet and peace as we took a break from our work in Menouf and enjoyed time with the MCC team, reflecting on how God has worked in our lives this year and lifting up our own prayers.

During advent, we look with longing towards the birth of Christ. Living in the Middle East, I find the story has taken on a new meaning. Visiting sites where the Holy Family stayed during their 2.5 years in Egypt has made the story that much more real. The Christians here take pride that in Matt. 2:5 where it states: "Out of Egypt I have called my Son."

As we look towards the second half of our term, we are eager to continue our work, but also are so appreciative of your prayers as we seek to discern God's will and guidance as to the direction our work will take.

Some areas of prayer:

- That our Arabic can continue to improve
- That James can continue to find meaningful work in the hospital
- That the new hospital in Sadat City runs smoothly and that they can find the staff that they still need
- That we can continue to grow and develop our relationships with the people of Menouf
- Thankfulness for all the blessings that God continues to give us each day
- That the center can continue to attract more students and that it can provide more opportunities to truly be a *community service center*

We wish you all a Blessed Christmas and Happy 2011!
Peace,

James and Stephanie
كل سنة و انتو تعيبين
جمس و ستيفنى

We always love to hear from you. Please write us at: tepvd@hotmail.com or
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The Three Wisemen at the Anafora Retreat Centre



Sunset at Anafora



Stained Glass in the town of Beni Suef/
Wiseman at the Cave Church in the Moqattem