

Rosie in Cairo

July 2010

Rosie Fyfe

c/o PO Box 87, Zamalek, Cairo 11211

(Please note that you can write to me at this address, but parcels tend to get opened)

Dear friends,

Greetings from Cairo. After feeling like I've been preparing for a while now, it's great to finally be here.

First impressions

Cairo... the constant sounds of car horns which can communicate anything from "you're going too slow, speed up", "I'm behind you so stop backing now", "do you want a ride." The 5-a-day calls to prayer. People talking loudly, calling out across the street, arguing, or bargaining.

The sight of thousands of buildings with satellite dishes attached. Boats cruising along the beautiful Nile. People everywhere. Dust everywhere. Women wearing anything from a full burkha to a tourist wearing a bikini at the Pyramids.

A highlight of the past two weeks has been the warm welcome from the church. There is a great sense of community among those who work at the Cathedral. People have been so caring and welcoming of me, and forgiving of my faltering attempts at Arabic phrases.

What I've been up to

I started at language school this week. The first class was a bit overwhelming - a realisation of the amount of hard work it takes to pick up language and how many times I need to hear and say a word before it sticks in my mind. However, it's great to be learning a language in the country where it's actually spoken. I've been enjoying trying out new phrases to people I meet during the day.

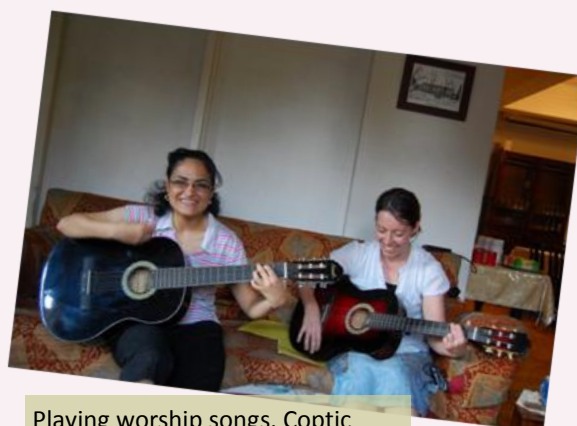
I won't be forgetting the Arabic words for 'I'm sorry' anytime soon. I learnt them on my second trip on the train. While I was waiting for the train, a lovely family started talking to me. As the train pulled up, they beckoned me on. Unfortunately, my intuition that a train door wouldn't close on you was incorrect, and I just managed to rescue my leg from the door and only my skirt got stuck. However, the grandmother was left behind, with mum and the kids on the train. I was able to lend them my mobile phone, and repeated I'm sorry many times!



High rise and Coptic Church



My workmate Sherry and I



Playing worship songs, Coptic chants and Maori waiata

I've also been spending time just talking with people who work at the Cathedral. There are a couple of shops run out of the Cathedral buildings. It's been great to just spend time getting to know the people who work there, and they've been teaching me some Arabic words. One of the women is keen to improve her English so this week we will start spending one hour together learning English, and one hour learning Arabic.

Future role

I start my official role with the Diocese in early September. I will be working with Sherry, an Egyptian woman. The church does an impressive amount of development work in Egypt: schools, community development centres, hospitals, prison ministry, refugee work, a special needs and a deaf school. The church is limited in what it can say in the public sphere, so the development work is a way to show Jesus' love practically.

These projects are funded by various embassies, companies, churches and individual donors. Part of our role is to take photos, and write stories about the work that is happening, and improve reporting of how the money is spent. We are also aiming to develop new funding sources so that the development work of the church can increase. The intention is that Sherry and I will do the role together, and then she will continue in this role after I leave. Sherry is lovely, and I think that we'll be a good team. I've particularly appreciated time we've spent praying together before we start this role.

Something I've been praying and thinking about over the past few days is how I spend my non-work time here. Cairo has a big ex-pat community and it would be possible spend my time with people from similar cultures to me. I am conscious of wanting to really engage with people from here, and especially to be intentional about getting to know women outside the church.

Blessings,
Rosie

I'm thankful for:

- The super warm welcome from the church, and people going out of their way to make me feel welcome and included.
- Opportunities to practise Arabic at the Cathedral, and having a language helper to study with.
- Beginnings of new friendships.

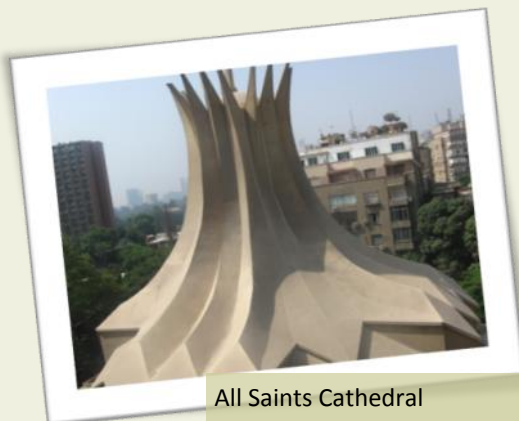
I'm praying:

- That I will be shameless at speaking Arabic with people, and that I will continue to have the motivation to work hard at language learning.
- For Sherry as she juggles her family, study, her previous role and preparing for our new role. That she can have peace, and confidence in her abilities
- For Christians here as the month of Ramadan approaches in mid-August.

Language learning tip

One of my favourite phrases at the moment is 'sabaah il-ful.' (literally good morning jasmine flower).

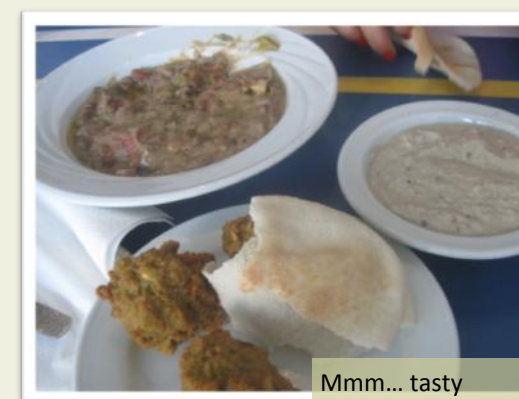
This is not to be confused with 'foul' which is a tasty national dish of fava beans, garlic, lemon juice, olive oil and parsley that you dip bread into.



All Saints Cathedral



The Egyptian museum



Mmm... tasty



Some of the staff at the Diocese