

My Dear Sweet Ladies,

It is good to be past the holiday season and looking toward spring with a renewed sense of emotional (hence physical) energy. It helped so much to have Robyn and Greg come for a visit. What she does everywhere else, she does here with us, so our spirits are refreshed. There are only 5 of the children here right now, as Jon and Kim are at Maranatha Bible School for a few terms. But we very much look forward to their return. Kim will be back mid February along with a few extremely welcome visitors. Jon will return here mid April to help facilitate our exit. These two are considering their next language should be Spanish. As The Lord wills.

We also had the pleasure again this year of hosting my cousin and a crew from the Christian college he is a dean of, in Michigan. The students from America meet with and talk with the students here at the men's and women's colleges in sort of an east meets west venture. Two of the Michigan students will be staying here in different places in the country to work jobs and be available for ministry opportunities. Cousin Gerald is the son of my Aunt and Uncle who lived here from the early 1960's until the early 90's. Mark took the men of his group to a wedding (the groom's part), while I took the ladies to the "Tourist Souk" and the local real souk (souk is a market or shopping area usually with booths in a row). Pretty fun and always nice to see Cousin Gerald.

For those of you getting along in the minus 20° or worse temperatures like good Norwegians, we haven't forgotten you. It always helped me to remember that all weather, not unlike stratospheric anomalies, are cyclical. So things may not be quite so bitter next winter, and if you can just get through this winter, spring will slip in and reawaken all senses as flowers bud through leftover snow and milder air currents move in to comfort all living things. (this she says from perfect 75° and pleasantly sunny skies, with floral scents wafting in the windows and mina birds talking to me from the trees ;-)

Food report:

Every now and then the ice cream man (who comes almost every school day afternoon in good weather) gets a hold of some peanuts somewhere, and they are the best roasted peanuts we've ever had. They come rolled up in used Arabic school worksheets, so I realize we're taking our chances here but they're worth it 😊 .

I derive an odd sort of comfort in having just a regular McDonald's hamburger when I am able to acquire one. The trip to Abu Dhabi a couple of days ago was my chance. But this time I had the nagging sense that I should order a [McArabia](#) just to have tried one while I was here (since I rather doubt it will ever be a big seller in MN). It wasn't bad and I didn't get sick. And that's how we gauge food here.

I'm saving the entomology report for when I'm for sure past getting any more visitors 😊

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Logic Free Zone report:

-it rained since the last letter. A lot. But all in about 3 days. It's infrequent so it makes some sense they don't have a real efficient way of dealing with it all. But one might think when dealing with this high

voltage that they would have a better system for keeping it safe from water. When it rains – the water gets into the circuits and trips the breakers, meaning no water (through the actual faucets I mean), no lights, etc.. the only benefit is I don't burn my toast on those days.

-our general mission in life is not necessarily an ecological one, but I found myself asking a girl why so many people here throw trash out windows or leave it on the ground. The answer: "to give 'the workers' something to do. They need work". Apparently this falls under "humanitarian reasons" (Kermit the frog was right. "It's not easy being green")

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I mentioned rain. It really was a deluge and caused a big logistical problem for the girl students. They are under the supervision of the college during school hours and while to and from school on the buses. All other times, girls must be chaperoned by a male member of their family. Normally the busses bring the girls to their homes. But when the buses were not able to get through some of the mountain passes due to rain washing through the wadi (usually dry stream beds that can quickly and dangerously fill with water during rain) and overflowing to the roads, all the families had to be contacted to come pick up their girls at designated places in the road before the place of the wash out. It all worked out and school was cancelled for the next day, giving time for water to recede.

Robyn and I attended a wedding of a friend of hers and Kim's (Kim was already in MN by then). Now I must admit to avoiding the weddings *here* when I can. Allow me to explain. They begin at the beginning of the wedding week by decorating the bride's (and the groom's if he is from here) family house all over in lights. There are multiple festivities, but the main ones are the "henna party" on Wednesday night, the grooms wedding on Thursday night, and the bride's wedding on Friday night. The "henna party", in times past was when they all got something called "Henna". This is a sort of temporary painting on their arms and lower legs made from henna (a plant substance colored reddish brown) – a very traditional middle eastern thing. Nowadays, the girls all get their henna done at a Henna Salon, and the "Henna party" is merely a lot of women sitting around listening to very loud Arabian music and eating food, and passing around the obligatory perfume and incense until quite late. It's hard to describe. The Groom's wedding on Thursday night, is a lot of traditional Arabian dancing (just men) with their traditional canes and/or guns, singing, and eating. The Bride's wedding on Friday night is only for the women and girls. The bride isn't there at first, but there is very loud music, lots of food, qahwa and shai (arab coffee and arab tea). Also there is a lot of Arabian dancing by the bride and groom's female family members and friends. I hesitate to describe the dancing but let's just say the object generally is to get the jewels to jingle. Lots of perfume brought around and incense. The bride shows up anywhere from 10:30pm to midnight. After many photos, she sits on a couch up front where you can go say congratulations to her. She sits there while more food, etc... is passed around and the Groom comes finally (when the groom shows up there is much scurrying for everyone to get their Abayas and Shayalas back on over their dresses), anywhere from 12:30pm to sometimes 2:30am (I've wondered if it depends upon whether they really wanted to get married or not since it's been arranged). This was one of the easiest weddings I've been to here. We got there at 9:30pm, the bride came at 10:30pm, and the groom got there at 12:30am. But then they really wanted to marry each other, and she had been sick all week previous, so we thought he was being kind by not making her wait till all hours. The perfume, incense, and food was

all optional this time so it wasn't too unpleasant. But they are people, in many ways just like us and it means a lot to them for you to attend their wedding festivities. And I hope you got through that difficult last paragraph.

There are so many things I'd love to just tell you about that I don't always do in this letter mainly because it goes out to our website. But we have been encouraged by opportunities we've had and relationship God has helped us to maintain. I also hesitate to mention the politically charged and financially motivated (yet rather amusing) re-naming of the tallest building in the world. I like the old name and will probably stick with it.

I'm trying to collect myself now and get back to a few of my hobbies that I usually love, but that lagged behind me for a few months due to a general disinterest (on my part). So things are looking up ☺ .

Thank you for so many emails and letters around the holidays. They are such a welcome occasion. All photos go on the bulletin board to encourage us and to intrigue the neighbors. Please forgive how behind I am on personal correspondence.

That's the news from this end of the earth.

Much Love and Fond Affection,

~Pam.

"From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I." (Psa 61:2)



Whirling Dervish Dance (National Day celebrations). A practice from the Sufi muslims (a mystical form is islam). This fellow is for hire and is a performer.



Little Ali. A sweet neighbor.





The College Chicken coop. Now this is the life. ☺



Another housepet



Herb and lettuce kitchen garden outside a restaurant. Very impressive.



A common offroad route



A somewhat disturbing sign for an Indian fast food restaurant. Cooked in Hg?



Our 4 lovely daughters





Another odd sign. I have no idea what it means



Behind every cloud there is a silver lining. Wait for it.

