

MCC SALT/YAMEN Service Opportunity

MCC is an equal opportunity employer, committed to employment equity. MCC values diversity and invites all qualified candidates to apply.

Assignment Title & Partner Organization: SALT/YAMEN: Community Assistant – Uman Help Center

Term: August 16, 2022 – July 15, 2023

Date Required: August 16, 2022

Location: Uman, Ukraine

Project Theme: OS Humanitarian Assistance Food Salt/Yamen

Job Synopsis:

The SALT/YAMENer will serve alongside the Charitable Foundation, “Uman Help Center” and the local church community. They will serve different categories of people in need including children, youth, and adults who live in Uman and actively build healthy relationships with community members involved in the activities of the partner organization and the local church.

Qualifications:

All MCC workers are expected to exhibit a commitment to a personal Christian faith and discipleship; active church membership; and nonviolent peacemaking.

An invitation to an assignment is contingent on the successful completion of a criminal background check.

- Minimum of a 3-yr post-secondary degree preferred.
- Fluent in English.
- Willingness to work hard at learning Ukrainian language.
- Love for working with children and teenagers. Experience preferred but not required.
- Demonstrated maturity.
- Excellent communication and people skills.
- Flexibility and sense of humor.
- Strong organizational skills.
- Able to take initiative, work independently, and able to see ways to help without being asked.
- Good team player, but also able to work under little supervision.
- Any number of additional skills would be helpful in terms of contributing to children’s and youth programming or to the organization as a whole. Professional experience as a teacher is not required.
- Willingness to get your hands dirty, and humility to complete even mundane tasks.

Key Responsibilities:

Uman Help Center:

- Prepare the aid for distributing to people.
- Help during aid distribution.
- Communicate with people who come to receive aid.

- Do any other needed work for Uman City Help Center.

Day Center for Children:

- Spend active time with children: play games with children.
- Help in the kitchen to prepare food to feed the children.
- Be with children (“being” present is important), modelling healthy relationships.
- On occasion, help to teach Bible lessons to the children.
- Assist children to do their school homework.
- Provide other help as needed.

Church “Resurrection of Christ”:

- Help conduct clubs for children and teenagers (play with children, communicate with children and build relationship with them, sometimes conduct biblical lessons and if SALTER/YAMENER likes and can play music instrument it can only be an asset).
- Help with the youth movement “Next”: to prepare for the youth meetings in the church, communicate with non-Christian youth and show them Christ. Being open to help in conducting prevention lectures for the youth in the local educational institutions.

Teaching English language:

- Prepare logical step-by-step program for teaching English (the partner does not have a curriculum, however MCC has resources to assist).
- Teach spoken English for several groups of children/adults who have the level of English as elementary or advanced.

As an MCC worker, the SALT/YAMENER is expected to:

- Communicate regularly with the MCC Ukraine Representative(s) and Connecting People’s Coordinator.
- Attend all regional retreats and meetings planned by MCC Ukraine Representatives.
- Link with other MCC workers in the region, using these ties to promote reconciliation and multi-ethnic cooperation as possible.
- Assist in hosting responsibilities for MCC visitors, such as staff and board members.
- Interpret the realities of the region to the broader MCC constituency through regular written reports and occasional articles for Mennonite publications.
- Develop connections with related local organizations and represent MCC through these interactions.

Assignment Narrative:

The Charitable Foundation, “Uman Help Center” is an organization that responds to the acute needs of the society. “Uman Help Center” provides spiritual, psychological and material support. Besides that, “Uman Help Center” does prevention work that is directed to prevention of crisis phenomena in families and in society in general. One of the main goals is to respond to the needs of people. The main projects that the SALTER/YAMENER will be possibly involved are:

- Uman City Aid Center: <https://www.facebook.com/help.center.uman.vh/> - a place where people in need can receive material support.
- Day Center for Children – helping children from the crisis families to get their homework done and to learn more about God.
- Church “Resurrection of Christ”: <https://www.facebook.com/vhchurch.com.ua/> - being involved in church projects of serving children and youth.

- Teaching English language: teaching a few groups of children/adults with level of English as elementary and advanced.

An approximate schedule for the SALTer/YAMENer may be:

- Monday
 - 10:00 – 11:00 Ukrainian Language Lesson
 - 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. – Day Center for Children.
- Tuesday
 - 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. serving at Uman City Aid Center
 - 6:00-8:00 p.m. – Meeting with youth.
- Wednesday
 - Day off.
- Thursday
 - 09:00 – 10:00 a.m. - Ukrainian Language Lesson
 - 11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. - Serving at Uman City Aid Center
 - 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. Participating in the youth meeting “Next”.
- Friday
 - 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Ukrainian Language Lesson
 - 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. English club (teaching English)
- Saturday
 - 12:00 – 2:30 p.m. Children’s club “Smilyk”
 - 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Helping with a teenage club “Impuls”
- Sunday
 - Day off.

The participant will be actively involved in learning Ukrainian language (approximately three times per week). Part of the day will be spent (the morning or the afternoon) learning the language. Learning Ukrainian will be important for this position, and this will require time, patience, and lots of practice in order to be able to communicate.

SALT/YAMENer will be matched with a language tutor. Although there might be other language support for the SALT/YAMENer, there are not many members of the organization who speak English, so, learning the language is important for this assignment.

It is a possibility that due to COVID-19 quarantine measures in Ukraine the SALTer/YAMENer may not always be able to carry out their duties as expected. Should quarantine measures prevent the SALTer/YAMENer from working with the “Uman Help Center”, an “adaptive” assignment may be necessary. Ukraine program encourages any participant to stay flexible during this service year.

Location Description:

The SALTer/YAMENer will live in Uman, a city of approximately 100,000 in central Ukraine where the Uman City Aid Center is located. This partnership with MCC began in 2019.

Uman is not a big city, but it has two big educational institutions, a Medical College and the Uman State Pedagogical University. It means that Uman is a student city where around 20 000 students are located. Uman is an attractive city for tourists as a big and beautiful Sofiyivsky park is located there.

Since the 1990s there has been a small, but growing, Jewish population in Uman, concentrated around Rebbe Nachman of Breslov tomb. The local Jews are mostly involved in pilgrimage of Jewish tourists that visit the town. Every [Rosh Hashana](#), there is a major [pilgrimage](#) by tens of thousands of Hasidim and others from around the world to the burial site of Rebbe [Nachman of Breslov](#), located on the former site of the Jewish cemetery in a rebuilt [synagogue](#).

There is good public transportation in Uman: “marshutkas,” or small minibuses, have routes throughout the city though in the evening there are not as many “marshrutkas” and taxi can be used as a mean of transportation. The system linking cities all throughout Ukraine is a safe, comfortable, and affordable travel option. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all passengers of public transportation are required to wear protective face coverings. Additionally, public transportation is often crowded and not all passengers follow proper health-safety guidelines. MCC in Ukraine will brainstorm alternative transportation methods with the SALTer/YAMENer – and where possible, the SALTer/YAMENer should prepare to walk to locations within a reasonable distance.

There are state clinics and hospitals, as well as several private clinics in Uman where medical support can be received. Uman is also located three hours travelling by bus to Kyiv where a big variety of quality clinics and hospitals are also located.

Ideally, the SALTer/YAMENer will be placed with a host family, who will include them in their everyday activities and fellowship. Living with a host family can be a big advantage in terms of connecting, understanding a culture better, and learning a language faster, though it does mean some loss of independence. There may be somebody who will speak some English at the “Uman Help Center”, but the host family may or may not speak English. There are some contextual realities that may make it difficult to find a host family for a SALTer/YAMENer. We make every effort to place participants with families, but if one cannot be found we will provide alternative, appropriate housing.

There are several Protestant churches, though most are conducted in Ukrainian. MCC’s partner in Uman represents local Baptist church. For women, modesty in dress while attending church is quite important, though fashion and being well put together is also valued. In many of the churches with whom MCC is connected, women might still wear skirts or dresses (and little or no jewelry) to church or church events, but it would not be considered rude for a foreign woman to wear trousers. It may make most sense for the SALTer/YAMENer to be connected with the church of the host family or with the church of the partner. While some churches have begun to meet during reduced COVID-19 quarantine measures, MCC in Ukraine does not require SALTers/YAMENers to attend a church in-person during active quarantine. The SALTer/YAMENer is encouraged to nourish their faith by attending services and connecting with other Christians virtually either here or in their home church.

Ukraine has four distinct seasons; winters can be cold (with temperatures well below 0 degrees Celsius) with snow, and summers can be hot, and humid when a storm is coming.

The post-soviet era has been difficult in Ukraine, encompassing growing issues of poverty, economic collapse, the weakening of the family structure, alcoholism, drug addiction, and homelessness. Many people have been affected by the current armed conflict in the eastern part of the country with regards economic instability, social tension, and political polarization. Those affected include Internally Displaced Persons who have moved from the conflict region to Zaporizhzhia and other cities in Ukraine, soldiers and families of soldiers, and the general public.

The MCC office is located in Zaporizhzhia in Eastern Ukraine, approximately 500km (5-6 hours by car) away from Uman. MCC's legacy, while not continuous presence, began in southern Russia (present-day Ukraine) in the 1920s with material resources being shipped to help hungry Mennonites and their neighbors. MCC supervisors and additional support systems for the SALTer/YAMENer are administered from the MCC office in Zaporizhzhia. When needed, the SALTer/YAMENer will be able to get to Zaporizhzhia by public transportation whether by train through Kiev, or by bus directly to Zaporizhzhia. The trip to Zaporizhzhia by public transportation will take 11-19 hours depending on the means of transportation used.

In addition to the Reps, there are six Ukrainian National Staff, one Service Worker and two SALT/YAMENers serving in Zaporizhzhia. At the time of writing, areas to the east of Zaporizhzhia have been undergoing continued armed conflict. Peace agreements signed in Minsk have had very limited success, but it is important to note that the front line has essentially not moved for the last three years even though ongoing violence continues there. The safety of all our MCC workers is a top priority and MCC has pro-active security and emergency plans in place. At the moment, Zaporizhzhia is quiet, and the MCC workers there feel safe. The situation, of course, will continue to be regularly monitored with regards to safety.

At time of writing, entry requirements for Ukraine dictate that you must have a document confirming receipt of one or more doses of a COVID-19 vaccine included by World Health Organization (WHO) in the list of approved for use in emergency situations or a foreign COVID certificate confirming vaccination against COVID-19 with vaccines that are included in the WHO list of vaccines approved for emergency use. Once placed, MCC will provide you with the most up-to-date process and walk with you to obtain what is needed for a visa and to travel/enter Ukraine.

Challenges:

- COVID-19 remains unpredictable both at home, and around the world. MCC strongly recommends vaccination against COVID-19. Safe and effective vaccines against COVID-19 are a vital part of prevention, by reducing individual risk of disease and risk of transmission to others. Vaccination is particularly important for those who are interacting closely with members of the community, those staying with host families, who are traveling, who live in contexts with limited healthcare resources, or who are at higher risk of serious disease. Proof of vaccination may be required in individual cases to fulfill job expectations, for example, if it is required for travel by an airline, a government requirement to enter a country, required by a local partner organization, etc. Proof of vaccination against COVID-19 is currently required by the government to enter Ukraine.
- To prioritize wellness and limit risk to our participants and the local community from COVID-19, assessments of each task will continue on a regular basis. If an assignment is found to be no longer viable, we will do our best to help you secure an alternative assignment.
- Though Ukraine has 4 distinct seasons, not all buildings have central heating; as such, in certain locations it can make sense to layer clothing well in the winter.
- There are currently 11 MCC workers in Zaporizhzhia (in addition to the Reps, there are six National Staff). While other MCCers will certainly be available for support, the reality of living in a different city from where MCC office is located and living with a host family and working in the community in a new country can feel isolating. Having a mature individual comfortable receiving less support from MCC due to a distance and being on their own will be important to thrive in this assignment.
- Significant cultural/religious differences may exist. The Christian context in Ukraine tends to be more historically traditional than many Christian communities in Canada or U.S.A.

- with exclusively male leadership. There is generally a strong emphasis on Bible teaching.
- Most services will be conducted in Ukrainian though there are people who speak just Russian, especially in Zaporizhzhia where MCC office is located.
 - In Ukraine, perceptions of LGBTQ+ individuals are generally negative, and more strongly so in Christian communities. An openly LGBTQ+ Christian would face significant challenges with acceptance in this context.
 - Managing frustration when things don't turn out as expected can be hard. While we do our best to determine and outline job responsibilities with our local partners, assignments really come alive based on the passions, skills, and giftings of an individual. Responsibilities may change or be refined over time in communication with supervisors to meet the ongoing changes and needs within a local context. As such, the greatest characteristics a participant can bring to an assignment are adaptability, flexibility, patience, a willingness to get your hands dirty, and humility to complete even mundane tasks.
 - For those who are very task oriented, it can be a challenge to recognize the importance of "being" instead of always "doing" as building healthy relationships and mutually transformative learning is an important part of the participant experience. We hope participants will come with a desire to walk alongside our local partners, rather than see the assignment solely as a way to "get things done".

Benefits:

For all SALT/YAMEN assignments, MCC provides:

- All basic needs related to assignment i.e., travel to and from assignment, food & household costs, housing, in-country transportation, etc.
- Modest monthly personal allowance
- Modest monthly worker care allowance
- Full medical coverage—no co-pay
- Educational loan reimbursement
- Vacation days
- Orientation and Re-entry Retreat costs
- MCC in-country meetings and retreat costs
- End-of-term benefits

For more information, see mcc.org/salt or mcc.org/yamen