

Angels on a Mission

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This summer Meredith students have a variety of plans. Internships and summer jobs abound. But instead of working in an office some students have different plans. They will be travelling abroad participating in summer mission trips.

One such student is Melissa Lincoln, Meredith c/o 2017, lifeguard, Environmental Sustainability major, friend to all, and missionary. Lincoln will be traveling to North Africa for two months this summer, with an organization called Pioneers Mission Organization. Her exact destination is undisclosed because of safety reasons, but it is in North Africa where they primarily speak Arabic, along the Mediterranean. She and three other women will be 'short term missionaries' teaching English in high schools and middle schools, and learning Arabic while they're at it. Pioneers also has long term missionaries who have lived there for 8 years and with whom they'll stay.

"We'll be building relationships with the families and learning their culture, really embracing that. We'll do some prayer walks and evangelizing." Upon arrival, Lincoln and her teammates are going to take a camel trek through the Sahara and visit a bunch of the towns. They'll spend the first few days getting a feel for the culture and customs. Then their goal is open ended. They are going to

meet whatever needs are there.

Lincoln explained, "Every missions team is different depending on what the need in an area is." There might be need for medical missions, or maybe they need help building a church. But she continued "regardless of what the mission is the teams all have the same heart. You go not with the intention to change the world, but just with a heart of humility and a heart of service." She said "that's the coolest part-your mission is more love than anything else and it falls into place naturally."

This is Lincoln's third time out of the country and her third mission trip abroad. In 2013 and 2014 she travelled with a missions team to Jamaica.

"I know that at some point missions will be a long term thing for me. I can see myself in a lot of different countries doing a lot of different things. I'm like a rolling stone, I have to keep moving wherever God leaves me," Lincoln said.

On a warm Sunday, sitting near the strawberry patch Lincoln said, "When I was 16 years old, I went to a super cool conference in the mountains and at that point I thought I wanted to be a veterinarian, and I think it was that trip that I really developed a heart for missions and a heart for God and from that point on I knew at some point in my life I was going to be

doing missions abroad for the rest of my life."

Lincoln's passion for God is amplified by her passion for organic gardening. When asked about how she could use her major to do God's work Lincoln said, "Environmental sustainability covers a lot of things, but what gets my heart going is sustainable agriculture and organic farming, being safe with the land and treating it with respect, treating the animals with respect, too. I'm a vegetarian so if I had animals they'd be companion animals and pets and maybe chickens for eggs. Using that and learning to share with people and build relationships because farming is a heart language to them, farming and learning together."

Initially, Lincoln was headed towards Fiji, but "[her] heart wasn't in Fiji, but in the middle Eastern, Northern African regions." However, she choose Fiji because her "parents were fearful of [her] going anywhere there was a lot of political discord." But that did not sit right with her. Soon God pushed her towards her current destination, North Africa, and she is at peace with that.

Now that she is headed to North Africa, Lincoln has a lot culture and adventure on the way. She is most looking forward to "being immersed in other cultures and learning their values."

"Being able to go to North Africa I'll be able to get a feel of what living I their shoes is like and be able to taste a whole other side of the world that I've never even thought of living in," Lincoln said. She is also thrilled to learn Arabic and teach English. But with any venture there are some worries. "I'm concerned that I won't come back because I'll fall in love with it so much, and end up staying," she said excitedly.

"I'm not concerned by the safety," she said "That doesn't bother me at all, but I guess I'm concerned about how adequate of a teacher I'll be and how adequate of a learner I'll be."

With any all-encompassing project such as this there is the question of 'what I do versus who I am. Lincoln says that she does consider herself a missionary.

She said smiling, "It's not just missions abroad that we often think about being a missionary in context. Being on a college campus is like being a missionary. Sharing love with people who may be feeling hopeless during exam week or dealing with stuff at home. You could be a missionary if you're a teacher, a student, in the United States or across the seas. I consider myself to be a missionary in training."