

“Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me.”

JOHN 14:1

Living and Learning in a Troubled World



ALISON
STENDAHL

Uskudar American Academy in Uskudar, Turkey is an historic mission school founded by missionaries in 1873 during the Ottoman Empire. Today it is a secular private school that strives to prepare students for a rapidly changing multicultural, multilingual, and religiously diverse world. Missionary Alison Stendahl has been working with the school for a number of years. She reflects: any school is a subset of its surrounding world, where its diverse community members learn to understand one another even in the face of conflict and disagreement. When a community truly and sincerely cares for its members, it can be a nurturing place where one should feel safe. Turkey borders a region caught up in strong social and political forces. The more the region destabilizes, the greater the effects on Turkey as it braces itself for an influx of refugees. We are particularly aware of how immense social pressure can eventually focus people on their differences rather than their commonalities. We focus on those who strive to build bridges of understanding rather than to construct walls of fear.

Uskudar American Academy has one of the most respected Model United Nations conferences where 500 high school students from various countries come together in a forum to seriously examine the major issues facing this geographic region. Dedicated to preparing students for an increasingly intertwined and complex world, Uskudar American has a strong vision for the future and is also a supportive and caring community. Though the vast number of teachers and students are Muslim, several are also from Christian and Jewish backgrounds. Together this diverse community models how a common vision can give its members energy to strive for a better and more positive future.

We pray for students, who through social service projects, do what they can to help those who have needs beyond their imagining. We pray for teachers who work with the youth, as they explore what it truly means to be a global citizen in today's world.

Alison Stendahl serves the Near East Mission in Istanbul. She works as academic dean and math teacher at Uskudar American Academy.

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