

PRAYER & PRAISE

Quarterly news from Middle East Media

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A comic book-style Bible animation, a new TV series for Muslim-background believers, and more!

middle east
media

Dear friends,

It is my great privilege to open this edition and be able to express my deep gratitude for partnering with us. For those who are reading this newsletter for the first time, let me give some background about MEM.

Here in the UK and Europe, we have existed for over 40 years to raise funds for the work that takes place in the Middle East and North Africa, reaching over 20 Arabic-speaking countries. The work, using creative media, seeks to shape people's understanding of democracy and equality, the very principles Jesus radically promoted in his time. We believe our work prepares the ground for good seeds to fall and grow (Luke 8:8).

One of our newest initiatives is Serving Refugees. Whilst the refugee crisis is not the only crisis in the world that currently demands our attention, it is perhaps the most worrying one in its scale and complexity. In the last five years, about 15 conflicts have erupted in the world, resulting in 60 million people becoming refugees—a record number since the end of World War II. Sadly, half of them are children. The UN Refugee Agency reports that globally, one in every 122 humans is now either a refugee, internally displaced, or seeking asylum. These are staggering facts.

Biblical compassion has no boundaries. It cuts through our backgrounds, differences, genders and races. As an organisation, built and operating on Christian values, we want to stand alongside those who are suffering, especially women and children finding themselves trapped in foreign lands. This new project aims to adapt our existing materials such as children's animations, media therapy courses for use in refugee camps, and devising an educational curriculum to equip the trainers working in the area of human trafficking and violence against women.

For this project, we need both your prayers and financial support. I want to take this opportunity to thank our team and some friends for their involvement in the sponsored walk in August, through which we raised almost £6,000 for Serving Refugees. However, we would love to be able to send £10,000 to the field for this project. If you feel this is something you would like to contribute to, please fill in the enclosed response form, or visit www.mem.org/give.



Jolita Vadopalaitė
Chair of Trustees, MEM UK

"As one person I cannot change the world, but I can change the world of one person." - Paul Shane Spear



Thank you for sponsoring us!

We'd like to say a big thank you to all the supporters, trustees and staff who came on the walk, and thank you to all those who donated!



The sun shone, the sea was sparkling, and a great day was had by all! We started at Worth Matravers, and walked along the beautiful Dorset coastline to our destination at Knoll Beach. In total there were 14 walkers, including staff, trustees and supporters.

We are so grateful to everyone who walked, fundraised or donated to the campaign. Overall we raised almost £6,000 for our Serving Refugees project, to ensure refugees receive the holistic care they need. This money will pay for 25 facilitators to undergo training in our human trafficking curriculum, to make a real difference in refugee camps where trafficking is prevalent and education is vitally needed.

If you would still like to donate, there's still time! You can use the enclosed response form, or visit www.mem.org/give.



ANIMATING THE ACTION BIBLE

Bringing God's word to life

The Action Bible is a comic-book style Bible, telling God's story through beautiful, hand-drawn illustrations. Our animation team has now been given the rights to use the artwork from the Action Bible, to produce 66 Bible stories as short, motion-graphic style animations.

With over 1 million copies sold, the Action Bible (www.theactionbible.com) is the perfect Bible for today's visually focused culture. The stories of the Bible have been expertly illustrated by Marvel and DC Comics artist Sergio Cariello, bringing scripture to life through richly colourful, dramatic and energetic artwork.

After seeing the high standard of our work, the owners of the Action Bible have given us the rights to produce short animated stories in Arabic using their beautiful artwork.

Each episode will tell a biblical story in around two minutes, such as Adam and Eve or Jesus calming the storm.

The process of turning the comic-book art into animated film is a painstaking task and requires great skill from our animation team in North Africa. Each section of each illustration is digitally separated out and animated individually, to form moving characters, scenes and backgrounds. The result is a beautiful visual effect of illustrations in motion.

Our animation team is well known in the region for producing work of exceptional quality, and the Action Bible is no exception! Please pray for the animation team as this project gets underway, as it requires huge amounts of patience, concentration and creativity.

Pray too that once completed, this new series would be a valuable resource for Arabic ministries across the world.

A selection of the beautiful character illustrations which our team will be animating. © Action Bible



Some further prayer requests from the North Africa team:

- We are so thankful to have received funding for the first three episodes of our **Life in the Desert** animated series. This series has been specifically designed for refugee children, to help them cope with pain and loss through the example of a little girl, Farah, as she learns about the characters of the Bible. Please pray that we would secure funding for the rest of the episodes.
- We are currently struggling with a **shortage of staff** - please pray that more people would be added to our team.
- We need prayer for **protection and security** in a very unstable region.
- Please pray that we would make **the right connections** to expand our work with women, children and young people. We would love for God to widen the scope of our work amongst more groups, organisations and countries who could work with us and make use of our resources.

Thank you so much for your prayers!

News from the Gulf

FILMING THE I BELIEVE, BUT SERIES

Photo credit: Haider

Dear team,

I'm a 35-year-old man from the Gulf. I decided to follow Jesus three years ago, but of course I have to keep my faith a secret.

As you know, family is very important in our traditions. My family is trying very hard to arrange a bride for me and, to be honest, I want to get married, too. I'm running out of excuses to give to my family as to why I'm refusing all the brides they suggest.

I thought I could just choose someone and get married without telling her about my faith, but then while watching a TV programme I heard them say that a believer marrying an unbeliever is considered a sin.

My question is - why is it a sin? And how can I find a bride who believes in Jesus like me? Do you think there is anyone out there who shares my background and is keeping her new faith a secret too? I have a lot of questions with no answers.

Omar

Our *I Believe, But* project is well underway! Many Christians in the Arabian peninsula, especially those who have converted from Islam, have to keep their faith a secret. This project is designed to support those Christians who can't necessarily go to a church or find others to talk to about their faith in safety. The series answers believers' real questions and struggles, such as the real example from Omar (not his actual name) on the left.

We recently finished filming 10 episodes, and are finishing up another three. We hope that at least 250,000 people view the content over the course of a year.

Please pray for wide viewership and the resources to follow up with those who need further discipleship.



The below script gives a very shortened version of the advice given to Omar in one of the *I Believe, But* episodes. The show's usual format is that a viewer's question is read out, and then the hosts pray and respond from a biblical perspective.

I BELIEVE, BUT... SCRIPT
EPISODE 1
Facing pressure to marry

Omar's question is read out by an actor.

HOST 1: Hi Omar. Your challenge is real and you're not in this alone - there are many other young people in your situation.

Christian marriage is an eternal vow between a man and a woman before God, which turns two people into one. This doesn't simply happen because they live in the same house, but because they both have Christ in their hearts. Faith has to be the most important factor, as without it unity in marriage is not truly possible. That is why we believe that it isn't ideal to marry someone from another faith.

HOST 2: Families mean well when they pressure their children to marry, so don't blame them, but don't let this pressure get to you. Try to gently but firmly communicate to them that you refuse to get married until you find the woman that meets your standards.

HOST 1: It might be difficult to find a believing woman from our Gulf background - you will have to search hard. You may have to ask someone you trust to help you, as like you, they might not have announced their new faith publicly. I trust that God will guide you.

I encourage you to pray a lot, commit to having a biblical marriage and wait on the Lord. Trust that God's timing is perfect, and that He wants what is best for you!

We'll continue to pray for you and we hope to hear back from you. God be with you all.

END

The easiest fundraising...

Did you know that whenever you buy anything online - from your weekly shop to your annual holiday - you could be raising a free donation for Middle East Media?

Through Easy Fundraising, you could be supporting our work in the Middle East simply by shopping online as usual.

There are nearly 3,000 retailers on board who will make a donation to us whenever you shop there, including Amazon, John Lewis, Aviva, thetrainline and Sainsbury's – and it doesn't cost you a penny extra!

It's very easy to use and to sign up - all you need to do is go to www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/mem and you'll be guided through the steps you need to take.

If everyone reading this signed up, it would make a huge difference to our fundraising efforts and would make a significant impact on our work in the Middle East.



Justice, compassion & hope through media

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