

PRAYER & PRAISE

Quarterly news from Middle East Media

ISSUE 95 JANUARY 2017

**INSIDE: YOUR FREE
PRAYER POSTER**

*Remember to pray for
the Gulf every day!*

**HIGHLIGHTS OF 2016
& PROJECT LIST 2017**

...and more!

middle east
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Dear friends,

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” – Matthew 25:40

As I look back on Middle East Media’s work in the past year, these powerful words of Jesus come to mind. Almost everything we do is for those who are considered least by society – the oppressed, voiceless, persecuted and disenfranchised – women, children, persecuted Christians, the young and jobless.

In places where women are often legally worth half of a man, where girls are trafficked and then rejected by their families, where Christians often have to live out their faith in secret for fear of persecution, and where unemployment is greatest among young people, we seek to be the hands and feet of Jesus, serving the ‘least of these’ and meeting their needs.

From the rest of this passage in Matthew 25, we see that Jesus isn’t only concerned with people’s spiritual needs – he also wants us to care for people on a practical level. Of course, one of our goals at MEM is to teach people about Jesus and ultimately we want them to find a relationship with him! But in following the example of Jesus, we also seek to meet people where they are. For example, how can we best serve women in North Africa, many of whom are oppressed, overstretched and feeling worthless?

We can teach them about their value, give them practical guidance on day to day issues like parenting and marriage, and give them a safe space to talk freely about what matters to them.

And how can we best serve believers from a Muslim background, who are often rejected by their families and have nowhere to turn? Of course, one of our priorities is to give them vital spiritual guidance and discipleship, especially since they can’t meet freely with other Christians. But more often than not their needs are practical too - how can they find a job now their family will no longer support them financially? How can they find a spouse who is a fellow believer? If we want new believers to truly flourish, we have to care for them in a holistic way.

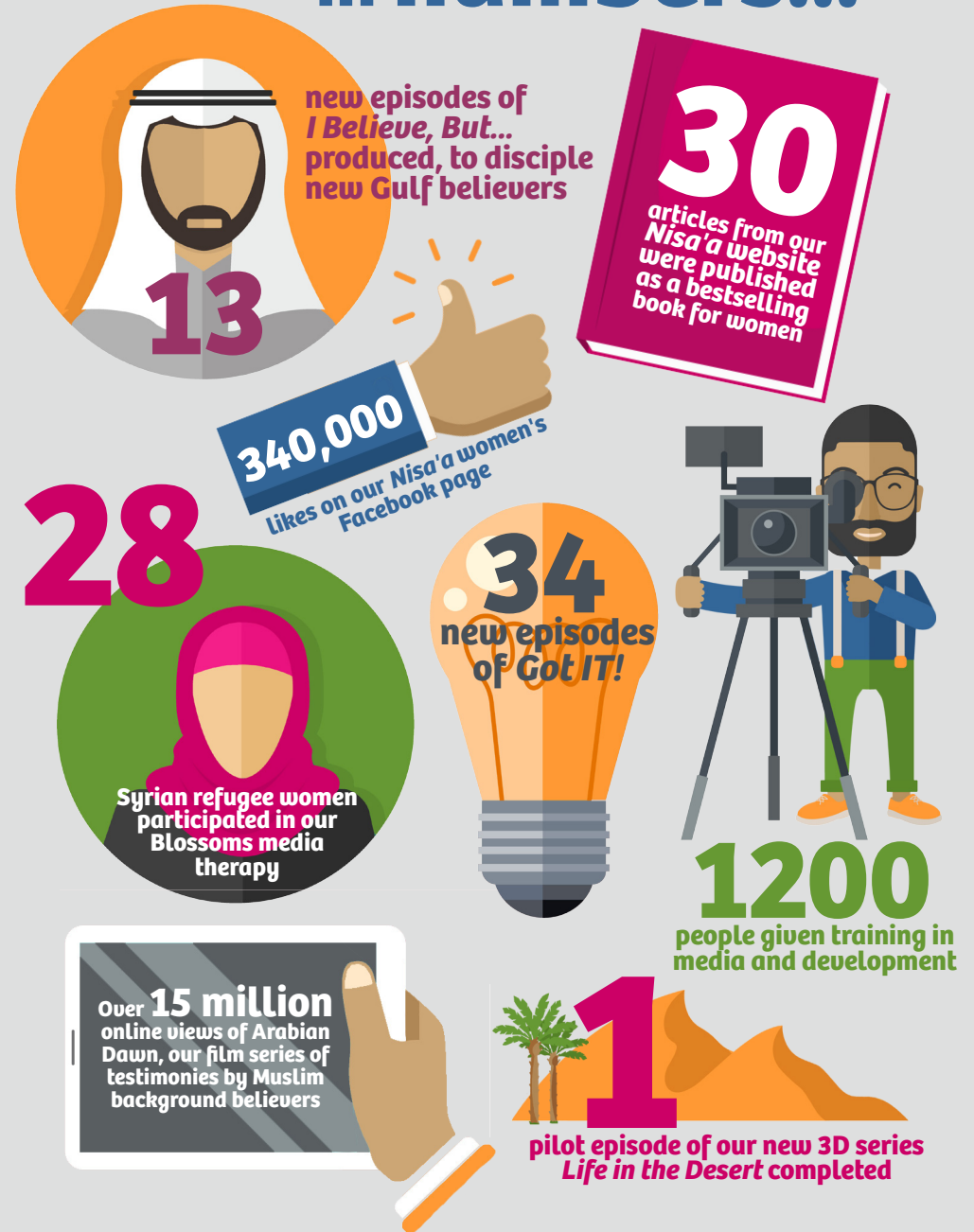
By addressing people’s practical, emotional and physical concerns as well as the spiritual, we want to demonstrate that God cares about every area of each person’s life - from the greatest, down to the very least.

In this issue, we take a look back at some of our highlights of 2016, and how you can pray for our work in the coming year. We hope you find it inspiring, and as always, thank you so much for your vital support!



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the year 2016 in numbers...





Rivers in the desert: EMPOWERING NEW BELIEVERS IN THE GULF

“Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder things of the past. Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert... to give drink to my chosen people. The people whom I formed for myself will declare my praise.” (Isaiah 43:18-21)

These words from Isaiah have a powerful meaning for our ministry in the Gulf. Over the past year, the Gulf team has felt that God has given them a clear purpose – to enable Gulf Arab believers to spiritually and creatively impact their own communities. We believe these Gulf believers are the “rivers in the desert” Isaiah was speaking of! God is raising up these new believers to form mighty rivers, bringing God’s living water to their thirsty lands.

Geographically, the Arabian Peninsula is predominantly covered by desert and has very few lakes or rivers. But it’s a spiritual desert too.

Across the region, Christians face intense persecution, particularly those who have converted from a Muslim background. Whether it’s risk of the death penalty, honour killings or rejection by their families, most Christians have to keep their faith a secret and are unable to meet regularly with other believers.

Though the penalty of becoming a follower of Jesus is high, the number of Christians in the Gulf is growing – partly due to Christian TV programmes and web series like ours, as well as through dreams and visions of Jesus. These believers call themselves the “New Church”, and these are the people we want to empower to reach their own people through media.

When we talk about 'the Gulf', which countries do we mean?

Our work in the Gulf mainly focuses on these countries and our productions are filmed in the individual Gulf Arabic dialects - though of course, since our programmes are available on the internet, they can be viewed anywhere!



Though small in number now, these New Church believers have the potential to reach millions – all they need is a way to reach people! That’s where we come in – we want to train these believers in filmmaking and provide discipleship to strengthen them in their faith and enable them to reach out to others.

Our work for 2017 will focus on empowering the New Church in the Gulf. We hope to train key believers in media, film the testimonies of believers from a Muslim background, continue to produce our *I Believe, But...* online discipleship series, and so much more.


God is doing something new in the Gulf. These new believers are springing forth, ready to take the Gospel to their own people. They are the rivers in the desert, reaching their parched lands with the living water of Jesus, so that all the people of the Gulf will declare his praise.

Pullout prayer poster: Remember to pray for the Gulf every day!

We’ve included a pull-out poster overleaf as a prayer reminder - display it by your desk, on your church noticeboard, or keep it in your Bible! The photo is of the beautiful Wadi Shad in Oman, a valley of clear waters in a rocky landscape.

We hope every time you see it and read the words of Isaiah you’ll be reminded to pray for the Christians of the Gulf, that they will be rivers of God’s blessing to their nations.

We’ve also created free desktop wallpapers to remind you to pray every time you open your computer! Visit our website at www.mem.org/riversinthedesert to download your choice of 3 designs.



“Do not call to mind
the former things,
or ponder things of the past.
Behold, **I will do something new**,
now it will spring forth;
will you not be aware of it?
I will even make a roadway
in the wilderness,
rivers in the desert...
to give drink to my chosen people.
The people whom
I formed for myself
will declare my praise.
(Isaiah 43:18-21)

God is doing **something new** in the Middle East!
Pray for believers in the Gulf, that they would be
the **rivers in the desert** bringing God's life and hope
to their thirsty lands.

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The pools of Wadi Shab, Oman. Photo by Trifoglio



IMAGE CREDIT: RUSSEL WATKINS/DFID

Emotional healing

BLOSSOMS WORKSHOPS FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES

Over 4.8 million refugees have now fled Syria to neighbouring countries, and around 120,000 of those have made their way to the North African country in which we work. We want to support these individuals in any way we can. This summer, we ran our Blossoms workshop specifically for Syrian women, to give them the tools to express their feelings, fears and thoughts in a safe environment.

Having lost their homeland, homes and even their families, many refugees have severe psychological trauma which is largely going untreated. We welcomed 28 Syrian women to participate in an emotional intelligence workshop - part of our Blossoms project to provide psychological training, art and media therapy to women to bring about emotional healing in a healthy and constructive way.

The first day of the workshop involved a talk on emotional intelligence, covering topics such as parenting and marriage styles, how to channel fear and anger in healthy ways, and how to challenge negative thought patterns. On the second day, the women participated in art and drama therapy, giving a safe environment for women to explore, address and deal with personal and societal difficulties like grief and anxiety. This included drama games, role-playing, and using art to express feelings.

Many of the women had been through extremely traumatic experiences and carried a great sense of loss, yet our trainers found that the women felt great comfort and relief in drawing and acting out their feelings. **Most of their drawings depicted a beautiful new Syria, where they could return to their homes and families once again.**

"I can understand myself now."

"The thing I liked most was the drawing and the acting, as I could express my feelings easily."

"I felt comfortable to talk and express all my feelings as there wasn't judgement."

"Now I have self-confidence."

"I learned to respect others, and not to judge people."

- Feedback from participants

Some of the women had their children with them as they had nowhere to leave them for the day. The children that came along were able to participate in the art therapy too - they were so excited to hold colouring pencils as they hadn't seen them for such a long time! The women recommended that in the future we also run these workshops for children, as they had appreciated the chance to express themselves and their experiences.

Please pray:

- For the women and children who attended this course, that God would continue to bring healing in their lives.
- That we would be able to run more courses like this, as there is clearly a huge need for this kind of training.

A woman paints her home at one of our Blossoms workshops, May 2016



An update on Serving Refugees

Thank you so much for your generous donations and prayers for the Serving Refugees project, which is now in its starting phase. The specialised Blossoms course is just one of the resources we want to use to help refugees in the coming year.

Our team is currently developing a curriculum specifically for refugee children based on our 3D animated TV series, *Dreammaker*, to cover themes such as self worth, fear and self image. We hope to finalize this curriculum in early 2017, and test it with a focus group of 20 teenage girls in March.

We're also continuing to develop our *Life in the Desert* series, and have tested the pilot episode with focus groups of children in Lebanon.

Please pray for the North Africa team as they seek opportunities for working in partnership with other organisations, and as they create these exciting new resources.

Full Project List 2017



Here is a full list of all our projects for 2017 with a short summary of each. We hope it will help you pray for our work! If you'd like to know more about any of the projects listed, please do get in touch.

NORTH AFRICA

Animating the Action Bible: The Action Bible is a comic-book style Bible, telling God's story through beautiful, hand-drawn illustrations by Marvel and DC Comics artist Sergio Cariello. We will produce 66 Bible stories as 2-minute motion-graphic style animations, with an Arabic voiceover.

Blossoms: Blossoms provides spiritual and emotional healing to women in North Africa. We provide psychological training and simple filmmaking workshops, to enable them to capture their heartfelt needs on audio-visual messages.

Future Leaders: We give media and leadership training to young leaders from the persecuted church in North Africa, to enable them to impart transformational messages of hope, love and reconciliation to their peers in the conflicted communities around them, and to meet virtually when they are forced underground.

Got IT! Through dynamic, 1-2 minute animations, Got IT takes common misconceptions that many Muslims have about Christians and Christian theology, and explains simply and clearly what Christians actually believe. We hope to produce and broadcast at least 10 more episodes in 2017.

Leaders at the Well: We hope to train a group of young people in scriptwriting so they can write a short film retelling the biblical story of the Woman at the Well in contemporary setting. The aim is to draw out themes of good leadership that arise from the way Jesus interacts with the woman in the story, and to build an educational curriculum around the final film to teach leadership skills in the community.

Life in the Desert: This is a 26-part animated series for Middle Eastern children aged 5-9, many of whom are dealing with trauma, fear, loss and grief. It tells the story of a young girl, Farah, who is going through a difficult time and finds comfort and inspiration from the heroes of the Bible. We hope to produce at least 7 more episodes in 2017.

Nisa'a Women's Project: Through our women's website we seek to challenge women's core beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of themselves and others. We encourage women of all faiths and backgrounds to question inherited cultural patterns, empower them to undertake new endeavours, and inform them about gender equality, citizenship and human rights.

Seeds: Seeds is an already-developed 51-unit curriculum for pre-school children. Each unit presents a biblical story around which the lesson is built. Our goal is to produce a short animation for each unit, to illustrate the topic in a visually engaging way.

Serving Refugees: We want to use our impressive range of existing creative media resources where the need is greatest - among Middle Eastern refugees. Some of the resources we want to adapt include children's animated TV programmes, gender-based violence curriculum, women's media therapy and filmmaking camps for young people.

Tamer's Questions: Children of the Middle East are often discouraged from questioning and are taught to accept and obey the teaching that is passed down to them. This series will encourage children to ask their questions about God and find out answers for themselves.

Youth Media Club: We train children and young people (age 7-17) in all areas of filmmaking. Our training equips young people to communicate their thoughts, beliefs and ideas in a constructive and creative way, and gives young people the practical skills to find employment.

THE GULF

Arabian Dawn: This is a series of testimonies of new Gulf believers from a Muslim background, who describe how they became followers of Jesus. The testimonies are broadcast across the Arabian Peninsula to reassure those questioning Islam, and to encourage isolated new believers. We want to produce 2 more episodes in 2017.

Film Fest Blitz: The Gulf team will mentor young adults, creating 4-7 short films with powerful messages about social and cultural issues. The team will help the students get their productions seen via film festivals and the Internet. The project will help Gulf young people develop their talents to communicate truths their society needs to hear, giving them a voice and a purpose.

Gulf to Gulf: We want to add at least 3 local Gulf believers to our team. This region has a real need for Christian media in the Gulf dialect, and to make the work sustainable it is vital to train up local people in filmmaking and business skills so they can produce this content themselves.

I Believe, But...: This online video series is designed to answer difficult questions that Muslim-background believers in the Gulf face on a daily basis. It gives otherwise-unreachable new Christians answers to their questions and tools to help grow them into a deeper relationship with God.

Location, Location, Location: Our Gulf team requires a permanent and secure location in order to continue filming our provocative and transformational films and testimonies. We need a studio training space large enough to host equipment, backdrops and filming crew.

MC Connect: We offer Gulf children the chance to learn filmmaking skills, work as a team and develop social skills in after-school clubs. The goal of this is to create on-going connections, mentorships and relationships with young people in local schools.

Media Connect Events: In 2017, the Gulf team will organize 5-6 community events for past and present MC Connect participants. These events will bring together our Gulf staff with participants and their families, many of whom will have never met a Christian before.

On Bended Knee: We want to produce 365 short film clips of poetry, prose, scripture and prayers, showing Gulf believers praying for their own nations. These clips will give new believers a safe way to communicate about their faith, and will be a powerful witness to Gulf Muslims.

People of the Land: We want to empower new believers in the Gulf to reach their own people through media. We will train Gulf believers in filmmaking and provide them with holistic discipleship training, so they can make their own films in their own language.

Project Breakthrough: This is a biannual event, in which Muslims and Christians meet together to discuss differences in their respective faiths. Our Gulf team films the dialogue and streams it live on the Internet, as well as creating YouTube and DVD versions.

The Refuge: We desire to provide a place of refuge for believers from a Muslim background. Many have been rejected by their families and don't know where to turn, so we want to give them a safe space where they can find spiritual and emotional healing and guidance.

WebTV Gulf: We hope to produce a mini-series of short, 3-5 minute episodes, ideal for mobile devices and the web. Each episode will provide a parable-like insight into God's character, and will be filmed by local Gulf believers in a culturally relevant way.

You can find more detail about all of these projects on our website - visit www.mem.org/projects to read more.

www.mem.org

TAKE A TOUR OF OUR NEW WEBSITE

1. About Learn how MEM got started, what we do, where we work, what we believe, and find out more about our staff teams.

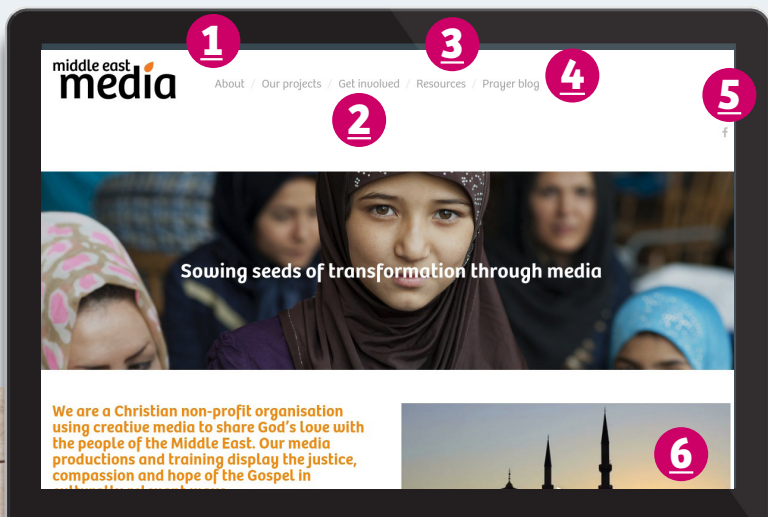
2. Get Involved Use the website to invite a speaker to your church or small group, give online in the UK & USA, set up Easy Fundraising & more.

3. Resources You can now watch some of our real videos, like *I Believe, But...* and *Got IT*, and download previous editions of *Prayer & Praise*.

4. Prayer Blog Join us in praying regularly for the people and places of the Middle East.

5. Facebook Like us on our brand new Facebook page (www.facebook.com/middleeastmedia) to stay updated on all our latest news and prayer requests!

6. Watch the MEM video Take a look at our new promo video, which gives a quick overview of what we do.



Sowing seeds of transformation

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