

TRANSFORMING LIVES WITH UNSTOPPABLE HOPE

MEMO

50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION



mem.org

50 & Beyond

 Middle East
MEDIA
EST. 1975



FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Friends,

Thank you for celebrating our 50th year with us! Whether you joined us at the London celebration, the US event or another gathering - we're grateful for you in this milestone season.

This edition of MEMO is a special one. It's both a moment of gratitude and a glimpse forward. We thank God for His incredible faithfulness over the last five decades, and we're excited about the future.

I recently had the chance to sit down with our International Director, Wayne Larson, for a conversation about what lies ahead. He shared one truth that stuck with me when talking about the rapid changes in media:

"Technology may have changed, but telling a story hasn't... it still all comes down to the message of Christ in it."

That truth has anchored us from the very beginning. No matter the medium, our mission remains unchanged: to create content that points people in the Middle East to the hope in Christ.

And of course, none of this would have been possible without you. Whether you've been praying for us, giving faithfully for decades, or have just recently come alongside—thank you. Your partnership continues to fuel this work.

Enjoy this special edition!

James Ballock

Senior Communications Manager

hello@mem.org



mittleeastmedia

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WHERE IT ALL BEGAN...

PRINT MEDIA | 1975-1984



1976

Creating and distributing a magazine across the Middle East becomes MEM's main focus.

1976 is a year of much researching by the team – of existing magazines, misconceptions about Christianity, potential target audience and finding writers and artists.

1975

Middle East Media, having started as part of Operation Mobilisation, becomes an independent publication and distribution ministry in September 1975.

Based in Lebanon at the time, the vision is to use secular channels to reach the masses in the Middle East with the Christian message.

MEM is publishing books, but our street-level research reveals that magazines are more popular than books due to literacy levels and reading habits. To reach more young people, we decide to launch a newsstand magazine.

MEM's launch coincides with the start of the Lebanese civil war and, by Christmas, the team decides to evacuate to North Africa. They plan to spend three months there. But the war continues for another 15 years and the team stays in North Africa.



The team evacuates with a 9-month-old and a 1-week-old newborn. Stopping in Jordan on the way to North Africa, some of the team spend Christmas sleeping in a van.



1977

The team believes that our media has to be written by Middle Easterners for Middle Easterners. Praying for this to become reality, they miraculously find a group of local believers who share the vision to start a magazine.

The first edition of the magazine Magalla* is published in October. Initially available on newsstands in 7 countries, it includes Christian content appropriate for the masses.



1981

We publish 75,000 comic-strip Bible story books, which were originally serialised in Magalla magazine.

1982-1983

The sale of video-tape machines is taking off in the Middle East. MEM sees the strategic value of investing in video ministry, even though other ministries disagree and think it's too early.

During planning and research, we decide that, though we can dub western media, our priority is to produce culturally relevant, local-language TV and video programmes.

*Magalla simply means magazine in Arabic.



NADER, A FOUNDING EDITOR OF MEM'S MAGAZINE, MAGALLA, WRITES OF HIS EXPERIENCE

I remember when a total stranger first visited me at work. He came and spoke about a project of making sixteen pages for children that had a Christian message. We studied the matter together and I said, 'Very hard to start a magazine for kids. We are not equipped enough. We cannot do this. If you think of a magazine for young people, it would be easier'.

It took twelve more months before MEM's magazine got off the ground, and eventually I asked my wife to resign from her job as a television journalist. Her colleagues were really astonished at her decision. Even our Prime Minister at that time said to her, 'How can you leave this position and work for an unknown magazine?' But the Lord gave her a heart of love for it. Nobody had any experience doing a project like this.

If you were to start a magazine like any other Christian magazine in the Middle East, no non-Christian would buy it and you would not find a commercial distributor. We had to think outside the box, to dig channels and find our way sensitively into people's hearts. This needed a lot of wisdom and lots of prayer.

Our local churches in the Middle East hadn't worked out ways to bridge the cultural differences between ourselves and non-Christians. This was what we were trying to do and I believe we succeeded - creating a different Christian vocabulary, a different style and a different strategy which can reach people. Now, using media has even come into the church and we've been instrumental in showing the way.



The pen-pals programme encouraged believers in the West to allow their names and addresses to be printed in MEM's magazine. This programme continued for several years, during which time many thousands of Arabs wrote to a Western pen-pal and friendships were formed. Some private visits were even arranged.

John, a pen-pal from North America, initiated correspondence with Ibrahim, an Arab student. The correspondence went on for more than a year and then John spent six weeks in Ibrahim's village. Ibrahim was quite poor and arranged for his pen-pal to stay at the house of a friend. This friend became a Christian as a consequence of John's life and witness. Several others in the village, including the police chief, also became Christians. Ibrahim himself was converted and baptised. He was then disciplined by a Christian ministry in a nearby city."

Ibrahim's conversion is an example which illustrates the way God uses His people in the Middle East. The efforts of many Christians, ministries and international partnerships all played an important part in bringing Ibrahim to Christ through the Holy Spirit. In this case, the magazine and the pen-pals programme were important first steps. The visit of John added to this. The radio programmes to which Ibrahim used to listen also played a role. The discipleship Ibrahim received from the man in the city helped continue the transformation in his life.

The primary purpose of the magazine, like all of MEM's projects, is to encourage a heart that seeks God. Some projects may lead to a moment of transformation, others simply bring a person nearer to the point of change.

MEM'S FIRST SECRETARY OF THE UK BOARD, EDNA W. DOBLE, DESCRIBES THE IMPACT OF THE MAGAZINE'S PEN-PALS PROGRAMME

VIDEO, TV & TRAINING OTHERS

1985-1994

1986

MEM expands its printed literature programme and opens a distribution centre in Istanbul, serving 24 cities. In 2006, this becomes an independent video ministry, called SAT-7 TÜRK.



1988

MEM's research reveals a huge lack of TV shows in the Middle East for children. We respond by producing four children's shows and testing them in eight countries.

MEM is now the largest distributor of Christian books in the Middle East.



1989

Magalla magazine is receiving 40,000 letters each year from readers. Christian radio station, FEBA, is using Magalla's content in their programming.

“Magalla is like a gold necklace adorning our Arabic media. Here the reader can find all he needs about culture, science and complete satisfaction for his spiritual hunger.”

KAMAL, FROM SUDAN



1994

MEM has 110 staff worldwide, 85% of whom are from the Middle East. The expat staff come from 8 seconding agencies.

1993

This year sees a dramatic growth in satellite TV, with more channels becoming available, including dozens of channels in Arabic.

After extensive research, MEM develops plans for a satellite TV channel. The proposal is met with enthusiasm and scepticism, with some church leaders wondering if it would be allowed in the region, or how it would be funded.

MEM delivers its first media training, covering creative writing, camera work, editing and more. By 2024 more than 12,000 people will have been trained by MEM.

We gain more experience in 3D animation and co-produce VeggieTales for children.

MEM helps establish Middle East Concern, an organisation defending the religious freedom of Christians.



MEM'S UNIQUE MISSION CONTINUES AS TECHNOLOGY EVOLVES

1995-2004

1995

An MEM dilemma... the SAT-7 TV channel is becoming a high profile, overtly Christian project that would compromise MEM's main strategy of media distribution through secular channels.

The Board decides to release SAT-7 to wider ownership and it becomes a new separate legal entity.

MEM adopts the vision statement:
By the year 2020, MEM will be making the Gospel accessible to all the families of the Middle East.

2000

Our first fully 3D animated series airs on national TV and soon wins a national award. In 2004, a major Arab airline buys the series for their in-flight entertainment.

MEM celebrates 25 years.

2001

Our first series for women airs on TV.

The events of 9/11 make for a somber and financially challenging end of year.

2003-2004

We hold media training events in Algeria, Malta, Egypt, the UK, Spain and Tunisia.

A senior Qatari government official once told me he'd been watching cartoons on the Disney Middle East channel with his children. *"These episodes are different,"* he said. *"They've made me think."* He began listing ways the messages challenged what he'd always believed - about forgiveness, truth and hope.

I realised he was talking about MEM's cartoons - produced by a member of my own family. But he didn't know that.

This moment reminded me how powerful media can be. Quietly, it enters homes and hearts, opening doors we never could on our own.

Before we parted, he asked me something I never expected: "Can I have a Bible?"

I gave him mine.

This is why we do what we do. MEM is planting truth where it's never been heard before.

HABIB, THE HUSBAND OF A MEM STAFF MEMBER



1996

It is estimated that our TV shows are now seen by an average of 17 million viewers, 90% of whom are non-Christians.



SHIFTING MEDIA TRENDS, SUPPORTING WOMEN AND PERSECUTED BELIEVERS

2005-2014

2005

MEM starts using media for in-person ministry, serving disadvantaged groups like women, survivors of trafficking and refugees.

2007

MEM continues to train hundreds of Christian leaders and young people in media ministry each year — including new believers who came to faith through media.

To my beloved brothers and sisters,

Thank you so much for all your support when I was studying with you, learning how to develop my writing skills. You invested greatly in me as you mentored me in Christianity as well in writing and supported me financially. I am very grateful. I have been working in the industry since I returned home and many of my scripts have been produced and aired on satellite TV. I have also won awards for my writing skills, thanks be to our gracious God! Thank you for showing me how to carefully entwine Biblical concepts and truths subtly through my scripts so that seeds of life can be sown in the hearts of viewers. Our God is beautiful and attracts producers to my work.

Thank you for believing in me and teaching me The Way.

Many blessings, Sammie

2008

MEM's Gulf office opens with a focus on teens. It soon expands to equipping persecuted new believers to share the Gospel through media.

MEM launches its first multi-media project using print, website, radio, TV and in-person ministry. This project affirms the value of women.

“MEM's support has been a major shift that has changed the course of my life, especially the lectures on spirituality and shame.”

HODA

2011

2011 is heavily shaped by the Arab uprisings across the region. They show that one of people's few sources of uncensored information is found through social media, raising its strategic importance for sharing the Gospel.

2013

We support new believers from the Gulf to create dramatic testimony videos. In 2016, they have 15 million online views.



THE FULL CYCLE OF MEDIA MINISTRY

Naomi, from Palestine, grew up in Jordan with her father and stepmother. When she was 12, her birth mother died from cancer, but she was not allowed to see her.

When Naomi married, she worked 16 hours a day, despite having four children. At home, her husband became abusive. One day, after suffering a stroke, she was temporarily paralysed on one side of her body and had to give up work.

Having witnessed so much suffering, Naomi's eldest son soon began to reject the mainstream religion in their country. Trying to help him, Naomi too found herself questioning her religion. She felt helpless and alone, and was desperate to escape her misery. One day, Naomi started watching videos created by two new Christian believers who were from her own cultural background.

Naomi had never fully understood Christianity. Yet, for the first time, these videos answered questions about God she had long wrestled with. She connected with these believers' experiences. They used language that she understood and spoke about Jesus in a way that made sense. Naomi longed to know more and decided to dig further into Christianity. There were still major doubts in her mind, but, out of desperation, she prayed to the God of the Bible. As she did, she began to feel God's love for her in a way that she had never known before. Naomi couldn't explain it, but she knew that it was real. She secretly began to explore the Bible's teachings and became convinced that it was all true.

One day, after Naomi's husband caught her reading the Bible, she had to flee home. She then spent two years on the run doing some horrific jobs just to get by. She was tricked into returning home by one of her children. Once home, her husband beat her severely and trapped her inside. The family brought various people to reason with her, even trying to pray away the 'demon' inside her that had supposedly caused her to become a Christian.

Yet, Naomi persevered in her new faith. Grasping at an opportunity to run away again, she used the little money she had to come to the Gulf. This is where she encountered our team, who specialise in supporting women persecuted for their new faith. Our Gulf team walked alongside Naomi for several years. They nurtured her practically, mentally and spiritually.

Thanks to a local Orthodox church and a supporter in the West, Naomi joined our Gulf office as a paid media intern for 18 months. The team trained Naomi in media skills and online outreach, helping her to find financial stability.

As part of her internship, Naomi produced her story for our video testimony series, raising awareness among churches and missionaries about the challenges faced by new believers. She then helped launch Desert Roses, a social media outreach project aimed at connecting with women in the Gulf - many of whom are difficult to reach in person.

Naomi and the Desert Roses team understand the nuances of their culture and former religion, making them uniquely equipped to share the Gospel in a respectful and sensitive way. This is part of our mission: to nurture and equip new believers to reach their own communities.



DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY IS GROWING...

2015-2025

2015

We launch a new initiative to empower female refugees.

Another project is combatting human trafficking and early marriage.



2016

We begin production on our 3D animation project that supports children affected by trauma. By 2022 it will have supported over 7,000 children in person.

2018

Our animated apologetics videos are distributed on 3,000 USB drives at the World Cup in Russia.

We also develop the first-ever Arabic-speaking Christian digital social media influencer.

2020

MEM's new strategy focuses on building media teams across the Middle East, social media and reaching the younger generations.

2022

Research this year shows that the Middle East is a global leader in social media uptake. The top 5 countries in the world for reach on YouTube and TikTok are all in the Middle East. On Facebook, Libya has the largest reach globally.

Our new online platform for children begins, reaching millions of families through YouTube, Facebook and in-person events.

2024

We begin production on a new online apologetics series for young adults.

By the end of the year, we complete research for another social media project - focused on using influencers to reach young teenage girls online.

2025

The Libyan team that we nurtured launches an audio Bible app. It features the first-ever Bible translation in Western Libyan Arabic.

MEM also turns 50!

“Your cartoon song made me remember the hurtful words I often hear at home. But then through the song I realised that God sees me as precious, no matter who I am or my circumstances. I began crying as I realised how valued I am.”

SADIYA, AGE TEN, EVENT ATTENDEE

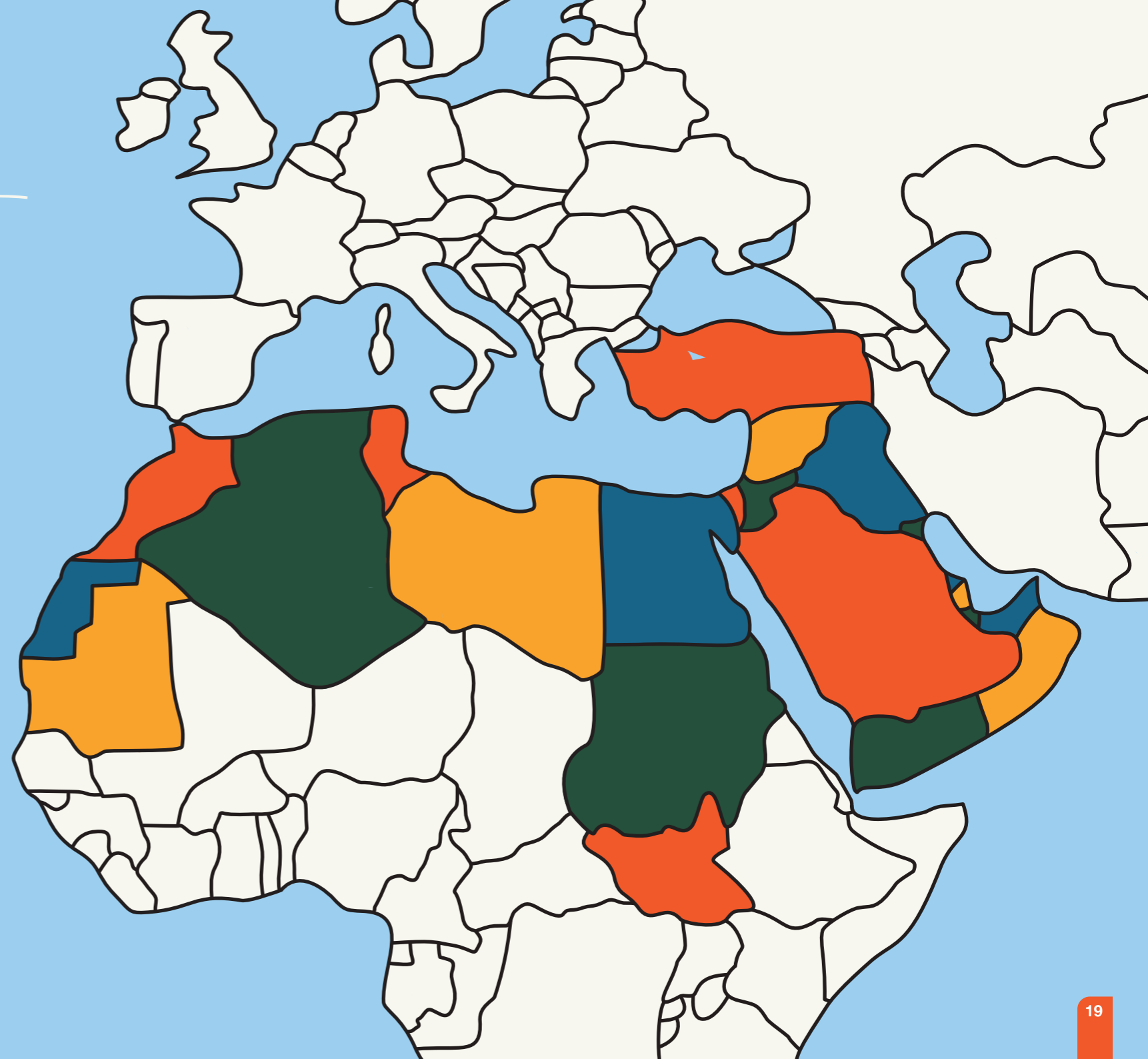
Impact Numbers in 2024

- 19.8 million reach through our social media in the Middle East.
- 20,800 digital Bibles and Christian resources shared via direct message on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.
- 6,600 people supported at in-person events, mostly children from poor communities.
- 42 people trained in media, online gospel sharing and discipleship.
- 6 new media teams supported from 5 countries, including Sudan, Turkey and the Gulf.
- 13 organisations used our film on early marriage and trafficking to spark community transformation.
- 47 people openly reported coming to faith through our media— though many more likely did so quietly.

JOIN US IN PRAYING FOR THE MIDDLE EAST AND MEM

Prayer Points

- Pray for open hearts across the nations we reach, asking the Lord to draw people to encounter the message of hope through our television broadcasts and online media.
- Lift up the expansion into new communities and regions, praying for God-given opportunities to equip and walk alongside local media teams. Ask that believers in these areas would be empowered to create powerful, Christ-centred content that reflects God's love to their own people.
- Ask God to move mightily through our social media outreach, that every like, share and comment would be more than engagement—it would be an encounter with the transforming power of Jesus Christ.
- Pray for the children who attend our events, that their young hearts would be touched by the presence of God, and that they would come to personally know the truth of who Jesus is and the depth of His love for them.
- Pray for continued vision and divine guidance for our teams as we look ahead to the next 50 years of MEM's ministry. Ask that we would be equipped with the wisdom and the right tools to effectively reach hearts across the region with the message of Christ.



STRONGER TOGETHER: 50 YEARS OF COLLABORATION

In the last 50 years, we have partnered with many individuals and organisations to share the love of God with the people of the Middle East.

We are thankful for 250+ organisational partnerships that have enabled our ministry to be known and our materials to be distributed on various platforms, from radio to TV, mobile phones, internet, social media and also in-person in the Middle East.

And this would have not been possible without financial partnerships. Many individuals in the West have generously invested in MEM's ministry, including through trusts and foundations, mission organisations and churches.

We cannot name all of our partners here, but some of them agreed to share their thoughts about partnering with MEM for this special edition of MEMO.



Many of our early staff in the Middle East were expat missionaries who came through Interserve – from Holland, Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand. We are very thankful to this wonderful organisation for providing incredible support with MEM's staffing.

"If MEM didn't exist, it would need inventing."

Steve Bell
Former UK Director of Interserve

We extend our heartfelt congratulations on your upcoming celebration. We are immensely proud to have supported your inspiring dedication and work over the years in hard-to-reach areas and people groups, and we celebrate this significant milestone with you. With Psalm 118:23 we say: 'The LORD has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes.'

May He continue to bless the work that Middle East Media is doing so that His Kingdom continues to expand, and the name of Jesus Christ will be glorified. May this special occasion mark the beginning of new achievements and enduring partnerships.

Warmest regards,
The Board of Urco Foundation,
Netherlands

It's unbelievable to see how God has blessed Middle East Media with so many fruitful years and productions. And all in a region that is at the centre of His heart and the attention of the world!

Throughout the years it has been a blessing to work together and pray together with this region on our hearts. The word of Hope in your invitation to celebrate 50 years reminds me of a Bible verse dear to my heart as well: 'But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.' (1 Peter 3:15).

In a way, this is everything of MEM in a nutshell. Christ as Lord. Always prepared. Give reason for the hope you have. With gentleness and respect. A ministry from the heart!

Unfortunately, we are not able to join the celebration in June. Nevertheless, we will celebrate with you by thanking our God and father for the faithfulness shown to your ministry over the years and we will pray for a next phase with even more blessings!

André
Care4You, Netherlands

MEM has always been looking for new ways to share gospel truths to a wide audience in the Arabic speaking world. Inspired by Jesus' way of using parables, MEM's creative writers have been tools for the Holy Spirit to reach the hearts of its audience. The organisation has also been an inspiration and launching pad for new ministries.

Geir
Norwegian Mission Society

I want to thank and applaud MEM, because they have been a Middle East organisation that has been a model with women in leadership, for many years, and very early.

Kay
Serving in Turkey with Strategic Resource Group, USA

As an organisation, MEM has been very good to work with - and a wonderful partner. The professional dubbing of the amazing animated Bible, Superbook, has allowed there to be amazing impact in the region.

Elias
Middle East Regional Director,
CBN

One of the projects Arab World Media partnered with Middle East Media on is called 'Arabian Dawn'. The project provided followers of Jesus from some of the most closed countries on the planet in the Arabian Peninsula with the opportunity to share their story of coming to faith in Jesus Christ. These powerful testimonies produced years ago continue to bear amazing fruit today. It is still used and distributed online. It was a privilege to partner on the Arabian Dawn project to bring hidden testimonies of Gulf Arabs coming to Christ to light.

We wish MEM every blessing as they celebrate their 50th year and pray that God continues to use them in the effective medium of visual story telling for His glory.

Hugo Wolmarans
Regional Leader, Pioneers Middle East





We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Middle East Media on reaching this remarkable milestone—50 years of unwavering dedication to spreading hope, faith, and love across the Middle East.

From your humble beginnings in Lebanon in 1975, MEM has evolved into a beacon of light, leveraging innovative media to touch lives and transform communities. Your commitment to producing culturally relevant content, empowering local believers, and training future leaders has left an indelible impact on countless individuals.

As you celebrate this golden anniversary, we celebrate with you the lives touched, the hearts changed, and the communities uplifted through your ministry. May the next 50 years be filled with continued growth, innovation, and the enduring presence of God's love.

With deepest appreciation and prayers for your continued success.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg, Germany

MEM is an organisation not afraid of change, always looking for new opportunities.

Helen R
Regional Director MENA, Interact, Sweden

It was such a privilege to share a partnership journey with MEM. We have the highest respect for MEM's investment in the development of their people and culture and we value the fact that prayer is at the centre of all that they are doing. All of this culminates in an organisation that transforms lives through their innovative and Spirit-led tools, connecting with their target audience in contextually relevant ways and serving as a conduit of the Good News to those who are desperately seeking it.

MEM is both a blessing and inspiration! We celebrate your leadership in the media space and your Christ-like heart for those whom you serve. It has been a huge blessing to partner for a season and we pray that the impact will continue in the years to come.

Etienne Piek
Regional Manager MENA, Mergon, South Africa

We are deeply grateful for the relationship we've built and the impact we've made together. In the past 6 years, we've localised nearly 400 videos across five languages and dialects together. This work simply wouldn't have been possible without MEM's creativity, collaboration, professionalism and dedication. From navigating regional dialect choices to coordinating across multinational teams, MEM has been an invaluable collaborator. The heart and passion each team member brings to their work is inspiring and energising.

BibleProject, Global Team

MEM encouraged many Christian leaders to have a new foundation, a new way to do ministry. It helped Arab Christian leaders to catch the vision to do ministry, and now there are over 115 independent evangelical ministries – this was not normal before.

T.G
Former Business Manager for over 20 years with MEM in North Africa.
He moved on from MEM to start a ministry, which now has over 600 staff and 600 volunteers.

THE ROLE THAT WESTERN CHURCHES PLAY IN MISSION TO THE MIDDLE EAST

MEM first responded to the Great Commission (Matthew 28) by not only 'sending' and 'making disciples', but by using the growing influence of media. And this was inspired by a meeting in a local church.

It all started with George Verwer's ambitious vision in the 60's to mobilise the Western church for the task of world evangelisation. George went on to set up Operation Mobilisation (OM), today an international mission agency sharing the Gospel worldwide. At a similar time, a young Christian, called Terence Ascott, was introduced to OM through his local church in the UK. With George's encouragement, Terry saw potential in the written word and subsequently, established the Christian Literature Agency in 1967, using his home church as the base for this. Over the following couple of years, he went on to publish over 2 million tracts for use on university and college campuses across the UK.

Terence and Jacqueline married in 1972 and soon joined OM for a year, but eventually stayed in missions for much longer. During their time of service in Austria, they heard about the overwhelming needs in the Middle East. Only 0.01% of all missionary work was focused there.

"Dear Magalla, you are like pure water to a thirsty spirit,"
- writes an 18-year-old Muslim to MEM's youth magazine. Another reader thanks the magazine for 'helping us understand the faith'.

In 1973, they moved to work with OM's Arab World Team, based in Lebanon. In 1974, a small part of the team, including Terence and Jacqueline and led by John E. Ferwerda from the USA, formed a separate department to produce Christian literature for distribution through secular channels in the Middle East. In 1975, this became a separate legal entity, called MEM.

Writing and creating visuals for this new team, inspired by God, became their way of helping fulfil the Great Commission in the Middle East.

MEM's own literature in Arabic, as well as that translated from other languages, was widely distributed in the Arab world – through book fairs, universities, supermarkets, hospitals, health clinics and even hairdressing salons. In fact, it quickly became one of the largest distribution programmes for Christian literature in the region.

The content of everything that Middle East Media produced, whether literature or, later, through videos, always sought to break down commonly held myths and misconceptions about the Christian faith in the Middle East. These barriers of darkness keep Middle Easterners from being able to receive the Gospel. But once they are removed, people are more likely to accept Christ.



MIDDLE EASTERN CHURCH AND THEIR MISSION TO THEIR OWN PEOPLE

Most churches in the Middle East are not allowed to be overtly evangelistic; in some countries they are only permitted to exist to support Christians, coming from a Christian background. They cannot be seen to be evangelising or supporting new believers from a different religious background. This is a massive tension that our brothers and sisters live with in this region. Acting directly on the command of Jesus in the Great Commission would most likely result in severe persecution, imprisonment or even death in some countries.

However, some churches in the region have shown great courage in welcoming new believers. But sadly, it is not uncommon for Christians, born into Christian families, to be suspicious of new believers from a different background. In the past, some have recanted and gone back to Islam, even publicly accusing the church of having encouraged them to convert to Christianity. Some have been exposed as working for the authorities, in the hope of accusing the pastor of seeking to convert non-Christians. Others have converted to get help in emigrating, or other support. Therefore, many new believers are not easily accepted into existing churches.

Parts of the Church in the Middle East continue to need some help from the Western church in discipling the exciting increase in the number of new believers, but let's look at how 'the help' has now changed.





“BROKERS OF OPPORTUNITIES”

Our friend, Reverend Canon Richard Bromley, the Mission Director at Intercontinental Church Society reflects on the change:

The role of Western churches in mission in the Middle East has a long history—both good and bad. Today, the people we serve and the world they live in are dynamic, developed, creative, aspirational, and modern. Our role is different; we still have one, but it is clearly not more of the same. The ability to adapt has been a defining trait of the Christian church through the centuries. At our best, the role Western mission plays now is transformed from what it was.

I believe the biggest change is in our posture—how we engage with the people and communities of the Middle East. We move:

- *From sender and receiver to partners.*
- *From giving and receiving to creating together.*
- *From providing the experts to discovering the wealth of skill, energy, and creativity already present.*
- *From assuming we know what should be done to learning together.*

The phrase that runs through my mind as I reflect on our role is that of being brokers of opportunities—ultimately, creating opportunities together for people to encounter the life-changing love of God in Christ.

THE ROLE OF THE GLOBAL CHURCH

Over the decades, we have included and consulted with global church leaders on every important decision we made at Middle East Media. However, not everyone in the church thought progressively and did not always quickly embrace the bold visions that MEM leadership had. As this was clearly shared in MEM's 1984 Annual Report:

"With global broadcasting technology changing rapidly, we have to look to the nearer-than-we-think future, when it will be as easy to send Christian TV into the Middle East as it currently is to penetrate the area with Christian Radio! When this day comes, what will we have to broadcast? More subtitled American films? Or something written by Arab Christians to speak meaningfully to the interests and spiritual needs of other Arabs, heart to heart? Our goal is to begin soon and, with God's help, to be ready for unprecedented opportunities to share the Good News in a region so long insulated from global missionary endeavours."

MEM saw that satellite TV broadcasts in the future would bypass government censorship, allowing direct access to millions of non-Christian viewers, and that TV and video would fast become the two most influential sources of information and entertainment. However, many Christian and church leaders could not see this, as TV was seen as too secular and entertainment based.

But the Western Church was great at sending and supporting missionaries abroad. And these expat missionaries made up most of MEM's staff in the early days. Gradually, MEM hired more local Christians to further develop the ministry. Today we have only one American missionary in the Middle East, who happens to be our International Director, Wayne Larson.

THE ROLE OF CHURCHES IN THE LIFE OF MIDDLE EAST MEDIA

MEM UK was founded in 1975, and the support base was founded on prayer. Rev John C. Doble as the first Chair with his wife, Edna W. Doble, as the first Secretary, were running MEM's UK operations from their vicarage home in Hove, England.

By 1980, twenty-five churches in the UK had linked up with MEM, many of whom gave generously. Since then, dozens of UK churches have supported our work for various lengths of time. Today, in 2025, we want to acknowledge and thank seven UK churches in particular who have been providing robust support – not only financially, but also through prayer, encouragement and their friendship.

1. Trinity Church, Buxton
2. St Paul's Church, Kingston
3. St Mark's Church, Battersea Rise
4. St George's Church, Stamford
5. The Church of the Good Shepherd, Romford
6. SDR Churches, Stanton-by-Dale
7. Holland Road Baptist Church, Hove

Churches in Sweden (through their mission agency, Interact), Germany (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg) and Norway (through the Norwegian Mission Society) have provided incredibly generous support – financial and governance - in the development of Middle East Media, and continue in their support today.

In the USA, there are over 100 churches who have supported MEM's mission over the last 20 years. We won't be able to name them all, but we want to thank Chapelstreet Church, Illinois, for their longest partnership, one that continues until today. There are some church communities which started their support some 30-40 years ago, for very specific staff needs, and still continue their support today. Some of these include First Evangelical Free Church in Wichita and Garden Valley Church, both in Kansas, US. We want to thank them all for their commitment and faithful, generous support.

THE EXPERIENCE OF A CHURCH PARTNER

Trinity Church Buxton is one of our longest-serving church partners in the UK. The Frohwein family with three young children from this congregation felt called to mission and served with our team in North Africa from January 2002 until July 2005. The church fully supported them during their overseas service and after they came back and continued working for MEM. The partnership between MEM and Trinity Church has continued even after the family is no longer part of the church.

“Our relationship with Middle East Media has opened our eyes to many needs and we have sought to take a prayerful interest in some of them. Most notable would be the resources produced to help traumatised children, the work to tackle the horrors of women who are sold into marriage without their consent and MEM's ongoing work of training emerging media teams in a number of countries,” shared David Barnsley, Acting Senior Minister.

“It's been a particular joy over the last few years to get to know some of the staff on MEM's UK team. We have enjoyed their contributions on zoom at a number of our prayer meetings and several visits to see us in person and share fellowship over food,” reflected John Tromans, missions coordinator. *“We have in our church family a gentleman whose father was an Iraqi and lived in Iraq until he was 8 years old. He and his wife are looking forward to visiting this year, to see first-hand some of the work in which MEM are engaged.”*

BECOMING MEM'S PARTNER

The support and engagement of churches is vital to MEM's existence.

There are about 38,500 churches in the UK, and 380,000 churches in the US. We would love to see more churches engaged in our mission to the Middle East. It is not only the finances that are needed, but the prayer and encouragement, and people willing to serve. When things get tough – we need the Body of Christ to stand with us. And only with the support of His people, we can know His will and be effective in our ministry.

We, in the West, also need our brothers and sisters from other parts of the world to help reignite our faith. This is how we grow together as the Body of Christ. And this is what the partnership with MEM and your Church could achieve – growing together to become more like Him.

Will you and your church community join us?

TRANSFORMING LIVES WITH UNSTOPPABLE HOPE



AN INTERVIEW WITH LOUKIA

MEM'S 3D ANIMATOR FROM NORTH AFRICA

Tell us when and why you joined the organisation?

I graduated from Graphic Design in August 1998 and joined MEM in February 1999. In between, I worked in the private sector for two months and felt very used. We weren't allowed many breaks and worked very long hours. I was the third person to join the animation team at MEM despite the fact that I knew nothing about animation.

So how did you move from graphic design to animation?

The national director at the time (who is now our International Director, Wayne Larson) told me that MEM really cared about its staff and that they wanted to develop them. I felt like the whole atmosphere, including the physical space which was just very beautiful, was very different to other workplaces. I immediately felt I wanted to work here. I was taught everything about the 3D animation world and I have really enjoyed creating simple but funny characters.

Have you ever met anyone who has seen your animation?

Yes! Many people. I've had the privilege of going to Lebanon, Iraq and Syria to help and train many people in how to use our Life in the Desert animations with traumatised children. I also had a profound experience attending Kingdom Platform events. I heard first hand from some of the children after they had watched these animations. They connected deeply with the truth that they are created in God's image. Many children, and even adults, have now watched it and begun their healing journey.



Tell us about your family.

I met my husband at work. I joined the MEM team in February and the office celebrated Valentine's Day. We gathered together and had to say encouraging words to the person we drew out of a hat. I happened to get my future husband's name, but I felt shy. I threw the piece of paper away and he never got any nice words from me that day. We got engaged in August 2000 and married in November 2001. We have two sons and they are now studying abroad.

If you had the choice, would you live somewhere else in the world?

No! Family relationships are still so important here, in North Africa, and I love the family culture.

What do you think MEM has contributed to the region in the last 50 years?

I heard somewhere that if you can change someone's imagination you can change their life. I am very proud of what we have done here. As an animator, you can change children's imagination and outlook on life, by creating cartoons. My friends feel safe to allow children to watch our cartoons. Another friend from a different religious background told me that she really loves our animations as they present ethical, clean and good principles.

How do you see the organisation in the next 50 years?

I see it continuing to evolve with technology to be even more effective in the region. My prayer is that nothing will stop us if God is calling us to do it. There will be challenges because the enemy is working too. But we need to have courage and continue using media to meet people's spiritual needs.



50 YEARS AND BEYOND: UNSTOPPABLE HOPE

AN INTERVIEW WITH WAYNE LARSON, MEM'S INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR



As we look back on the past 50 years, we're reminded of God's constant provision and faithfulness. But what lies ahead? Our International Director, Wayne, explores with us what it means to carry unstoppable hope into the next 50 years.

How long have you been with the organisation and what's one of your earliest memories?

It's been almost 40 years since my wife Jeannie and I joined. When we travelled over to North Africa from the US, it was our first time travelling outside of the country. We arrived at the airport and found a taxi. But, at that time, people didn't use maps, so I ended up having to count the roads to find Terry Ascott's house. When we finally arrived at our destination, Jackie Ascott asked us who we were and why we were there. We found out that the letter we'd sent, to tell them we were coming, hadn't arrived. The letter eventually turned up 10 days after we got there!



What's your biggest highlight from your last 40 years?

I don't think I have just one highlight, so I'll cheat and tell you my top 3 (not in order).

1. Handing over the video ministry to an Arab colleague in 2005 is definitely a highlight. The transition went amazingly well and the team flourished. They went on to accomplish so many things that wouldn't have been possible if I was still in charge.
2. When I look around today and see people working in and leading media ministries who we trained 35-37 years ago, it's very encouraging.
3. Training and equipping people who are from a non-Christian background in media, who are now working in Christian ministry just continues to show me God's faithfulness.

What's the biggest change in media ministry in the Middle East?

There have been two main changes since I started. Firstly, with the internet and social media we have so many options to broadcast our content, but not only that, we can also connect with people online and securely help to disciple them. Secondly, the cost of equipment and ease of production has changed significantly – in 1986 it cost us \$125,000 to get the equipment we needed to produce video content and today I can produce the same or better quality on my phone.

The big thing that hasn't changed is how important it is to tell a story and how creative that story needs to be. It still comes down to the message and bringing Christ into it.

What is the biggest opportunity for our ministry in the next 50 years?

I think it's building up and equipping believers in the region, people from different backgrounds, and helping them to creatively reach their own people groups. If we can continue to do this well, we'll see expansion and multiplication of the impact we can have. We also need to look at our own team and intentionally bring in people from all the different Middle Eastern countries and believers from all faith backgrounds, so that we can be effective across the entire region.

Everyone has an important part to play. We are all a part of one Church using our gifts to accomplish the mission.

You have been a strong advocate of the term 'unstoppable hope'. What do you mean by it and what does it mean to you personally?

In reality, it means that, as we walk the path, we have unstoppable hope that God will enable us to do the work. He will fulfil what He wants to happen - He will bring real change in this part of the world. It's not just about helping 9 or 10 people to come to faith, it's also equipping and walking alongside whole communities of new believers, helping them to use media to bring God's love to people.

What does it mean to bring Unstoppable Hope into MEM's future?

For us it means proclaiming His Kingdom as we step into the future. I was reading a book at the weekend and saw a quote that read "hope is the raw material from which faith builds the house." From a spiritual perspective, we want to keep building the house – and the unstoppable hope found in Jesus is vital in doing that.

We are building more media teams across the region so that we can be more effective in bringing unstoppable hope into people's lives. Over the last 2 years we've walked alongside 5 unique media teams from several countries and we've doubled our capacity as an organisation. These new teams know their unique dialects and local cultures best, so will be more effective at reaching their people than a single team from one North African country.





What are some of the biggest challenges in front of us?

One of the biggest challenges when creating a team made of people from different Middle Eastern backgrounds is division around cultural differences. There is distrust of people from different backgrounds in the Middle East, meaning that Middle Easterners from a Christian background struggle to trust new believers and vice versa. There is a long history of persecution happening and different groups rejecting each other and isolating themselves from each other.

This issue of division is very much found inside of churches. And we have to ask ourselves; do we treat each other as Christ would? At MEM, we want to have inclusion of Middle Eastern Christians, no matter their religious background as part of our organisational identity. We are working on overcoming division and seeing the positives in being a multi-national and a multi-faith background community of Christian media professionals.

What are the technological opportunities for the next 50 years?

Typically, the Middle East takes advantage of new developments in technology faster than the West. We're always looking at which technologies are the best to take advantage of, and we're keeping our eyes open to make sure we don't miss any opportunity.

We're figuring out how best to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) in our work and it's a real challenge. Our Head of Video Production is giving out monthly challenges to his team to create AI generated movies based on a script he writes. The visuals, music and voices are all created by AI. It's a fun competition to work out how to use AI in a creative and effective way.

Why should Christians in the West care about the Middle East?

Because God does. God loves the people of the Middle East. The Christian church started here and the people of this region need the opportunity to get back to their roots. Mark the Gospel writer was from Libya, but now there are only 150-200 indigenous Libyans that follow Jesus in their country. This is just one example of how the region needs the love and support of the global Church.

How can supporters of MEM help to achieve this vision?

I pray that our supporters catch the vision with us, encourage us and support us when it's not easy. When it's tough and things aren't working the way we'd like, we rely on the prayers of our supporters and we believe that prayer changes lives. I would also encourage people to come and visit us, see our media being created and sit in a room with our team, encourage them and show them that there's a whole community of people behind them cheering them on.

TRANSFORMING
LIVES WITH
UNSTOPPABLE
HOPE

WHY I'VE GIVEN TO MEM FOR 30 YEARS

(AND WHY YOU'LL WANT TO!) BY ANTHEA ALLEN

I've been a MEM supporter since I was a student 30 years ago. I don't know about you, but I am amazing at good intentions. But, actually getting around to doing them... less so. From picking my way through half-finished projects in the garage to emptying the washing machine, it's a challenge. But what has this got to do with being a MEM supporter? Simple: a regular giving commitment!

Uncertainty is an unavoidable aspect of life in the Middle East. In a small way, I can help reduce the stress of that by making my donations regular. I review the amount if my circumstances change, but it means that supporting MEM is never found lurking half way down my black hole of a to-do list. And, because I've planned my giving, MEM can plan further ahead, because they have a steady income.

In a small way, I can help reduce the stress of that by making my donations regular

Why have I supported MEM for more than half my life?

I became a Christian at University. Being young, free and single, what better could I do than become a missionary? And who are the people least likely to come across the gospel? Middle Eastern women, I thought! Fortunately, an older, wiser Christian raised a brow and asked whether I was doing it for their sake or for mine. My influence as a young, Western woman with a year of Arabic evening classes would be tiny. Then, I came across MEM at a conference.

It is far better for me to work in the UK and regularly support MEM with cash and prayer. That way, people who speak the language fluently and understand the culture can provide a Christian influence directly into the homes and hands of people who are unlikely to encounter Jesus in any other way. My dream of changing lives in hard-to-reach places could come about!

MEM has an incredible vision. They want to increase their reach and impact by millions each year, to reach the younger generations and create a network of media-creating teams across the Middle East. I don't know about you, but isn't this exciting?

Whether you can support MEM with £1 a month or £100, I urge you to set up a Standing Order. Make that good intention a reality. I have no regrets about supporting MEM regularly for 30 years and, God willing, I shall continue to do so for another 50!



HERE IS WHAT YOUR MONTHLY GIVING COULD DO:

£25 Could pay for 5 Middle Easterners to attend MEM's event.

£50 Could pay for 20,000 views of MEM's content on YouTube.

£100 Could pay for 160 event booklets full of biblical content.

Could you join the MEM regular giving community today?



Go to mem.org/give to set up a regular donation or scan the QR code.



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mem.org | hello@mem.org | (+44) 01223 901137

Middle East Media UK & Europe

Unit 142, 23 King St, Cambridge CB1 1AH, UK.
Registered UK Charity No. 271373.

Middle East Media USA

PO Box 4949, Wheaton IL, 60189
director.usa@mem.org