

HOPE IN ACTION

STRENGTHENING CHRISTIAN SERVICE
IN THE MIDDLE EAST



EMBRACE
the Middle East





INTRODUCTION

FROM THE CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

In 2024, Embrace the Middle East will celebrate 170 years working with Middle East Christians.

We approach this point in our history by sharing *Hope in Action*, our ambitious strategy for the next five years, and beginning its implementation, confident in our mission and hopeful in our vision. However, we are not complacent. We take neither our loyal supporters, nor our partners, for granted. We are conscious that they trust us to do everything possible to live up to the commitment and faithful work of our forebears.

Such trust motivates our commitment to excellence in everything we do. We are ambitious, but also realistic, in the face of sometimes daunting challenges. Amongst these is the challenge to raise sufficient funds in the next five years to match our partnership, programme and public engagement ambitions. We aim to grow our annual income to £5m and will work hard to improve year on year the efficiency and effectiveness of our, and our partners', operations to maximise the impact your support has in transforming lives.

We are inspired by our partners' courage, their integrity and their hopeful response to our shared Christian calling to serve with generosity the most marginalised and excluded. With the help of existing and new supporters, donors, volunteers and younger people prepared to engage with the lived reality of our partners in the Middle East, we want to trace the arc of Embrace's history of compassion in action - which began nearly 170 years ago in 1854 - long into the future.

Hope in Action explains how, with your help, we plan to do that, overcoming the challenging circumstances COVID-19 leaves in its wake and the complex realities of the region. Our strategy is the fruit of deep reflection and open consultation, especially with our regional partners. I hope you will feel inspired to join us in the journey of the next five years, supporting us and, through us, Christians working to transform the lives of some of the most marginalised and excluded of their co-citizens in the Middle East.

Canon Anthony Ball
Chair of Trustees

EMBRACE'S FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY

In the next five-year period, from 2021 through to the end of 2025, we will build on the achievements of our previous five-year strategy to deliver the greatest possible positive change consistent with, and inspired by, our theory of change.

This strategy, which we have called Hope in Action, tells you how we will do that. It outlines:

- our vision, mission and values (pp 6-9)
- how our history informs and inspires our work (pp 10-11)
- the theory that supports and drives the change we seek to make (pp 12-13)
- what **specific goals** we will strive to achieve in the period (pp 14-17):

...In our partnerships and programmes to:

- be an effective and innovative grant-maker
- foster a culture of learning and development
- collaborate with others to increase the pool of potential Christian leaders

...In our public engagement to:

- amplify the voices and the aspirations of our Middle East partners
- connect with a new generation of supporters, influencers and activists
- advocate on behalf of Middle East Christians and their transformative social witness in the region

We explain why these goals are crucial to furthering our mission in the coming period: securing the future of our partners, sustaining their courageous and life-changing work, and contributing to the longer-term sustainability of the Christian presence in the Middle East in the face of formidable pressures and difficulties.

And finally, the strategy (p 18) explains **why we need your support** and how we will use it to ensure that Embrace the Middle East is still supporting Christians in the Middle East long into the future, despite the challenging environment in which all charities must work.

Image p5: Bekka Valley, Lebanon





Embrace's vision is rooted in the Gospel and the twin command to love God and neighbour, especially the most vulnerable.

Every person is created in the image and likeness of God and is deserving of the dignity bestowed on them by God.

By supporting our partners to transform lives, and restore the dignity of the most excluded and marginalised, our work contributes to a culture of human flourishing in a war-torn region. We help our partners to sustain the declining presence of Christians serving the needs of the vulnerable in Middle Eastern societies, without regard to faith or background.

Ours is a vision of faith, hope and love in action: where there is a need – for refuge, a home however temporary, for health care, for education, for safeguarding, for economic empowerment, for justice and human rights – we, with and through our partners, want to respond.

'whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'
(Matthew 25:40)

Image: Beirut, Lebanon





Embrace supports the social witness of Middle East Christians transforming lives marred by marginalisation, exclusion and injustice.

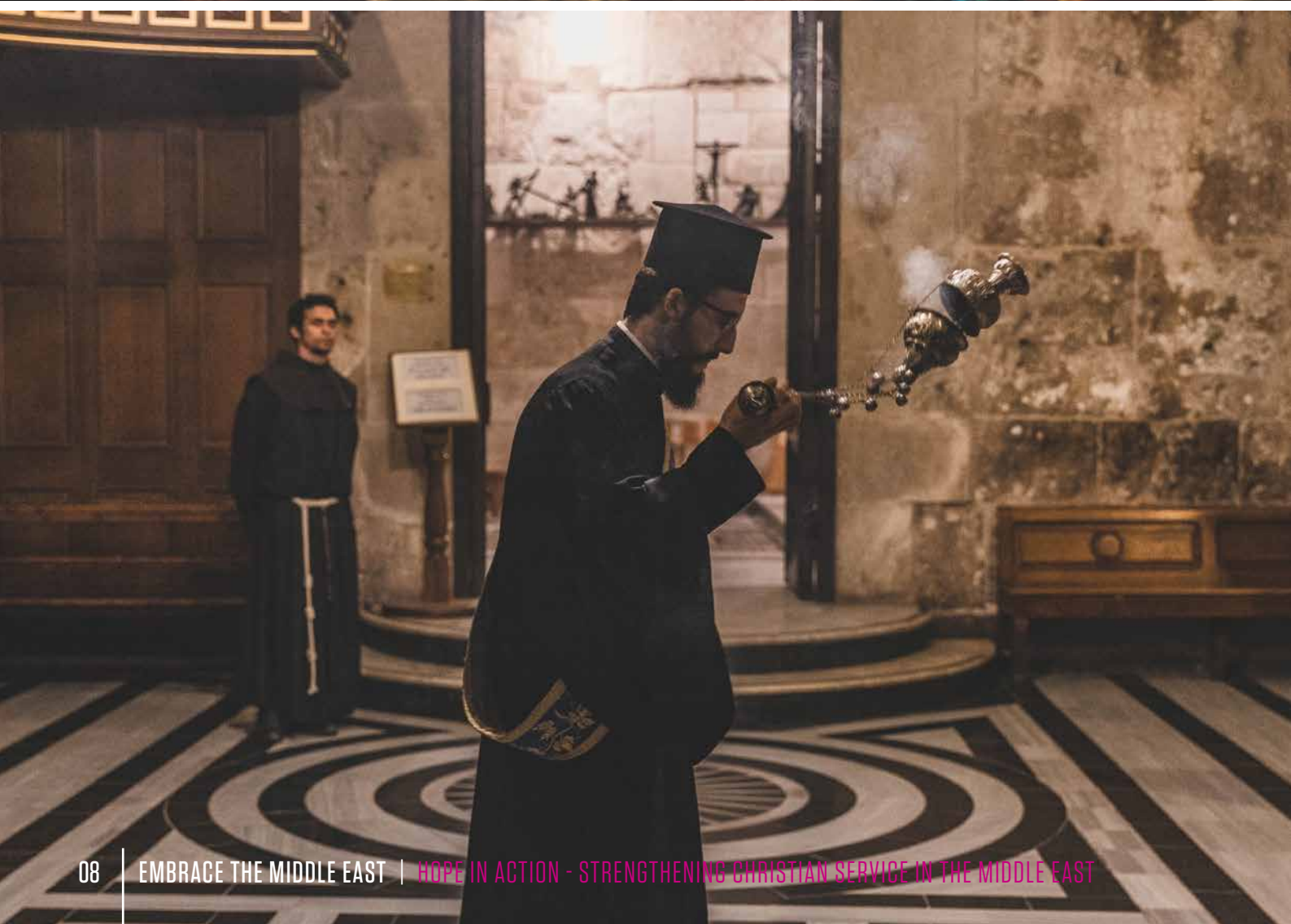
Embrace supports Middle East Christians serving those in their communities whose lives are marred by social and economic marginalisation and exclusion: families escaping violence or persecution, people living with all kinds of disability, women and children deprived of ready access to education and health services.

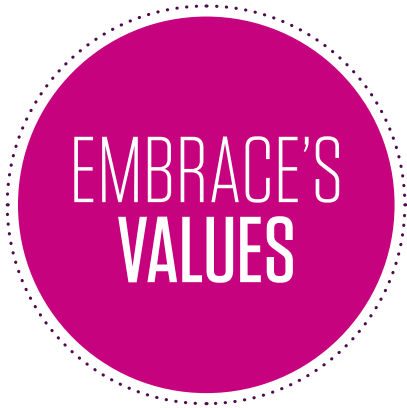
We do this by building strong and lasting partnerships, nurtured by mutual respect and a shared commitment to excellence.

Together with our partners we transform lives by empowering the disempowered, restoring dignity where it has been undermined, and witnessing fearlessly to the calling *'to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God'* (Micah 6:8).

We aim to encourage and facilitate fellow Christians, and all who have a heart for the continued presence and social witness of Christians in the Middle East, to engage with Embrace's partners, with their work, and with the challenges faced by every community and nation in the region.

Embrace the Middle East encourages all, regardless of faith, to join us in supporting and sustaining our partners, and the Middle Eastern churches, in their social witness and their particular and vital contribution to building cultures of inclusion, justice and peace in the suffering and war-torn Middle East.





Embrace the Middle East is guided by **four core values** inspired and informed by our Christian faith, as well as our commitment to meet professional and regulatory standards relevant to our work.

We hold ourselves accountable for ensuring that these values underpin our approach as we strive for excellence in everything we do.

They are hallmarks of the relationships we create with our supporters and with our partners; and how we endeavour to strengthen and sustain our partners' work to transform the lives of the marginalised and excluded in the Middle East.



Respect

We respect the human dignity and value of every person and all peoples – no matter what their beliefs or background – as made in God's own image.



Integrity

We see honesty and integrity as foundational to Embrace's way of working with partners, supporters and donors and have high expectations of all who work for, and with, the charity in any capacity.



Compassion

Our Christian faith teaches us to treat every person with compassion, especially anyone who suffers from social or economic marginalisation or from having their basic human rights withheld or compromised.



Trust

Just as we trust that God cares for us and sustains us in our work, we work with a generous and positive spirit, trusting that God desires to see all of humanity flourish.

EMBRACE'S HISTORY

Embrace the Middle East is proud of its history. In 2024 we will celebrate 170 years since our founding. We continue to draw on the inspiration, commitment to local partnership and deep desire to support the social witness of Middle East Christians that powered our early years.

IN 1854

when Britain was at war with Russia in the Crimea - the Turkish Missions Aid Society (TMAS) was founded by a young Anglican evangelical clergyman **Cuthbert Young** proposing that a mission be established to support the Armenian evangelical Christian community in Turkey. His idea received the support of a number of influential evangelicals, including Lord Shaftesbury, who became the new organisation's President. A highly unusual decision (for the time) was taken, with the advice of the then British Ambassador in Constantinople, when it was decided that the society would not fund missionaries to work in Turkey - unlike almost all other evangelical mission societies at the time. Rather, it would fund local Christians and support *their* work.

A first grant of £65 (the equivalent of about £5,000 today) was made to an Armenian seminary and its students at Bebek. Another early grant was made to a society for the Education of Women in the East, beginning a long history of support for women and girls being taught by missionaries in Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and finally Palestine.

Early in the life of what is now Embrace the Middle East another crucial decision was taken.

IN 1860

a civil war broke out in Lebanon – then still part of Syria – between Druze and Maronite Christians. Villages were destroyed and refugees fled to Beirut. Money was diverted to support a woman called **Fanny Bowen Thompson** living in Beirut. Fanny had responded to the refugee crisis by establishing first one, and then a network of craft workshops and evening schools where refugee women and children, of all faiths, and including people living with a disability or blindness, could be educated. The women were taught craft skills to help support their families.

A pattern began to develop of active support for Christians working to alleviate the suffering of the poorest, most marginalised in the Near East, or what some preferred to think of as the lands of the Bible. TMAS supported local ventures, often in response to war or famine – **Fanny Bowen Thompson's** Syrian Society in modern day Lebanon, the orphanage set up by **Gregory and Emma Baghdassarian** in Broussa, Turkey, Dr Hogg's school in Assiout, a village in the Nile delta region of Egypt, precursor to the later hospital foundation established by **Dr Frank Harpur**, and still supported by Embrace today.

IN 1893, in recognition of its expanded role, TMAS changed its name to the Biblelands Missions Aid Society (BMAS) and, led in extraordinarily challenging times by two luminaries - **Samuel Gentle-Cacket**, Secretary from 1904 – 1943 and **Bob Clothier** 1952 – 1984 - BMAS (Biblelands from 1962) continued to support emergency responses. These included the genocide of Armenians forced out of Turkey in a series of catastrophic massacres in 1909, 1915 and 1922 and more recently the refugee crises precipitated by war in Palestine following the departure of the British mandate forces in 1947/48. Partners

have responded to the ten-year civil war in Lebanon beginning in 1975, Israel's invasion the siege of Beirut in 1982, and wars in Iraq and Syria in 2003 and 2011 - the latter resulting in a huge wave of refugees moving from Syria to Lebanon. Israel's invasion of Gaza in 2014, the Covid-19 pandemic and the catastrophic explosion in Beirut in 2020 have provided further opportunities for our partners to serve others with extraordinary compassion and tenacity in the face of huge challenges and trials. Our work has encompassed support for established, and new, centres of care, compassion and love across the region, all inspired by women and men of faith.



Embrace's whole history has been built on an extraordinary legacy of partnership between women and men of compassion here in the UK who are determined to support Middle Eastern women and men of courage, conviction and compassion, fired by Christ's example of love, especially for the excluded and marginalised.

People like **Mary Lovell**, founder of the Helen Keller School for the Blind in Jerusalem, and **Nadeem Schwaryi**, founder of Al-Kafaàt in Beirut; and, more recently, **Robert Caracas**, founder of the House of Hope - Beit el Nour - in Bourj Hammoud, **Dr Morcos**, founder of the Shams el Birr home outside Cairo for children with profound disabilities, Coptic Orthodox **Sister Maria** working with the Zabaleen community of rubbish collectors in Cairo's poorest slum district, and **Dov Bikas** working with drug addicts and sex workers living on the very edge of life in the red light district of South Tel Aviv.

We currently have 50 such courageous, inspired, creative, and skilled partners in the region: all working to transform the lives of those most forgotten and on the margins; all inspired by the Gospel. We feel deeply privileged to work in partnership with them, and honoured to be able to bring their witness

closer to people in this country.

In his foreword to **Jean Hatton's** history of Embrace the Middle East, *The Light Bearers*, **Rev'd Paul Haidostian** wrote: 'every page of the history of Biblelands [Embrace] voices an advocacy for people of the Biblical lands who suffered and continue to suffer injustice, neglect, migration and demoralisation. In each instance Biblelands [Embrace] has responded by graceful and unconditional giving.'

The **Most Rev'd Dr Mouneer Anis**, Anglican Archbishop of Alexandria, former medical director of Harpur Memorial Hospital, friend and partner of Embrace for over 40 years wrote at the time the book appeared: 'We praise the Lord for these 150 years [soon to be 170!] of touching the lives of people and pray that Embrace the Middle East will continue to 'proclaim the year of the Lord''.

EMBRACE'S THEORY OF CHANGE

In the final year of our previous five-year strategy **Faith in Action** we reflected in depth on Embrace's way of working and on the change we seek to bring about. We consulted with all our partners in the region and together developed a 'theory of change'.

The Embrace theory of change is our response to a pressing challenge: how, in the face of mounting challenges, can Christian service of the marginalised and excluded across the Middle East be strengthened and sustained in the immediate and longer term?

In parts of the Middle East Christians live under immense pressure. Without continued support there is no guarantee that Embrace's partner organisations will be able to continue their life-giving work long into the future. Some may even cease to exist.

Embrace holds its partners in the highest regard. We know that if we, and others, fully understand, cherish and resource them in their work, the Christian social witness of loving and serving the needs of the most marginalised and excluded will continue.



Conscious that it is our partners whose work transforms lives, and whose efforts require our support, Embrace's answer to ensuring that this Christian witness in the Middle East continues is two-fold:

1 We seek to facilitate more people in the UK learning about the significant presence of Middle Eastern Christians in helping marginalised and excluded people across the region. If we widen the public's engagement with, and support for, their social witness we will have more influence, commitment and resources with which to support our partners.

2 This in turn will contribute to the longevity of locally-led resilient Christian initiatives that are well-resourced and managed, serving the marginalised in the Middle East and transforming lives through high quality and innovative programmes.

Together with our partners we hope and believe that Embrace is able to make a distinct and powerful contribution to human flourishing amongst some of the most marginalised in the Middle East **and** contribute to the ongoing social witness of the historic Christian communities in the region.

Image below: Beirut, Lebanon



EMBRACE'S FIVE-YEAR GOALS

PARTNERSHIP AND PROGRAMMING

We are committed to sustaining and developing local Christian social witness in the Middle East. Walking alongside our partners, we will deliver excellence, build resilience and learn together.

To achieve this ambition in the next five-years Embrace will:

- be an effective and innovative grant-maker
- foster a culture of learning and developing
- collaborate with others to increase the pool of potential Christian leaders



Embrace will be an effective and innovative grant-maker.

Embrace will invest in well-articulated, effective short and medium-term projects to support partners serving vulnerable communities and families on the margins. We will provide targeted emergency funds to assist people in urgent need or crisis. We will develop our grant-making by harnessing best practice and accessing, where possible, new funding streams to support our partners.



Embrace will foster a culture of learning and development.

We will promote new networking opportunities and peer-to-peer exchanges among partners to encourage collaboration, sharing, and dialogue.

Evidence and learning are already at the heart of the Embrace model. Working with our partners we will help them to identify and develop the impact of their work, supporting them with new resources and tools.

We will use both feedback from partners and relevant best practice to develop our approach.

By developing new strategic alliances, including with universities and other centres of excellence, we will use research and academic study to influence our own and partners' programming, policy, and advocacy.



Embrace will collaborate with others to increase the pool of potential Christian leaders.

We will work with our peers, partners, churches and Christian institutions, across the Middle East and internationally, to support the development of a new generation of Christian leaders in the Middle East.



Image: Beirut, Lebanon



St James's Church
Piccadilly

The greatest gift... is the Holy Spirit.
You can't see it on TV or in the news.
But when I talk about
Muslim youth evangelism,
I get to... I see a passion,
I see many people.

EMBRACE
EMBRACE THE MIDDLE EAST

EMBRACE'S FIVE-YEAR GOALS

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

We want to broaden and deepen Embrace's reach in the UK, and foster a new generation of supporters and influencers committed to changing lives in the Middle East for the better.

To achieve this ambition in the next five-years Embrace will:

- amplify the voices and the aspirations of our Middle East partners
- connect with a new generation of supporters, influencers and activists
- advocate on behalf of Middle East Christians and their transformative social witness in the region



Embrace will amplify the voices and aspirations of our partners in a way that builds connection with audiences in the UK and elsewhere.

We will bring together Embrace's voice and the voices of our partners so that together they resonate more powerfully in the UK and further afield.



Embrace will connect with a new generation of supporters, influencers and activists.

We want to expand our appeal to a new and younger generation of supporters who share our values, will promote our mission and are attracted to our advocacy.

We will use digital media to extend our reach and tell our own and partners' stories in new and compelling ways. We will encourage our supporters to take positive action in support of Middle East Christians serving the marginalised and excluded. We will provide them with opportunities to engage at a deeper level with Middle East Christians through visits to partners, seminars, events and fundraising initiatives.



Embrace will advocate for our partners and seek to influence decision makers in support of their work.

Embrace's advocacy and influencing initiatives will reflect our charitable mission and the priorities of our partners. Our advocacy will aim to improve the public understanding of Christians in the Middle East and our partners' work, and to influence policies and decisions taken by politicians and church leaders.

Wherever possible, we will work with other organisations to promote advocacy, and campaigns, which reflect our mission and priorities. We will seek opportunities to share unique insights which Embrace and our regional partners have to offer.



HOPE IN ACTION

Securing the future of Christian social witness in the Middle East – with your help

We are passionate about our mission to enable change in the Middle East. It is such a privilege to walk and work with extraordinary local Christians – ordinary people with exceptional compassion, dedication and courage. We believe we are all called to reflect God’s justice and infinite care for all people, in particular those who are most in need.

It is your prayers, support, volunteering and campaigning that make all of this possible. Loyal, generous and prayerful supporters like you keep us, and our partners going, providing encouragement in these tough times as well as the means to bring about real change.

As we approach our 170th anniversary the work is far from done.

In the coming five years we aspire to grow, increasing our annual income by 25% by 2025, from £4 million to £5 million. We want to increase our investment in partnerships – supporting partners with capacity building and project grants – as well as outreach, advocacy and campaigning.

Will you join us?

To realise this vision, we need your regular support. Your prayers and generous gifts are essential to maintain and grow our work in the Middle East and enable us to share the stories of Christians bringing change and blessing to their communities.

Please join us for the next phase of this journey. We’d love you to prayerfully consider how you can get more involved in giving, praying, volunteering and campaigning.

Stand with us; find out more on our website: www.embraceme.org/hope

You are the heartbeat of Embrace the Middle East:

Thank You

Images p19: L - R top row: Bethlehem, West Bank; tbc | Middle row: Beirut, Lebanon; Teluskof, Northern Iraq; Bekka Valley, Lebanon
Bottom row: Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Jerusalem; Palestinian woman picking olives





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