Have you ever wondered whether your prayers really make a difference? News of conflict and suffering in the Middle East makes it easy to feel helpless and too far away to help. But that’s not the case! The messages we receive from our Christian partners in Israel and Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq and Syria show just how much your prayers strengthen them every day.

Though they face huge challenges and a daunting mission to tackle poverty and injustice, our partners want to know that people across the world are upholding them before God. Thank you so much for supporting them in this way.

As we pray through Lent and Easter and as spring moves into summer here in the UK, we don’t know how the situation will change in the Middle East. What we can be sure of, however, is that Embrace’s partners will continue to put their faith into action to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable members of their communities.

In the following pages you’ll find a prayer prompt for each week from February to July 2020. We have a prayer team at our headquarters who follow this diary too, so we’ll all be focusing on the same partners at the same time – that’s prayer power!

Please share this prayer diary with your friends and church family. If you would like extra copies, call us on 01494 897950 or email info@embraceme.org. You are also welcome to photocopy the booklet or reproduce the text in your church newsletter.

The Embrace Prayer Team
The little things

The scale of the challenges in the Middle East can feel overwhelming. Conflict, poverty, injustice – they are too much for any one person to overcome. But when we pray we are never alone. We are part of a much larger family of prayer.

Put a bowl on the table and surround it with small pebbles. Invite everyone in your family, congregation or group to take a pebble and focus on what it looks and feels like – or you could do this on your own, taking one pebble each day. Is it smooth? Are there cracks? What makes it unique?

While contemplating their pebble, each person could pray silently for one small event or action to happen – or not happen – today in the Middle East. When they have done so, they can place their pebble into the bowl. One pebble alone might seem insignificant – but look how quickly they add up.

You could pray:

- That a hungry person gets a hot meal today
- That someone who is ill gets to see a doctor
- That a person with disabilities doesn’t encounter discrimination
- That a child has a chance to play
- That a bullet misses its human target

Your prayers count. They don’t have to be about everybody and they don’t have to solve everything, but a small prayer might just make a huge difference.
2 February
Tackling stigma to save lives

Please pray for breast cancer awareness in Egyptian society

The early detection of breast cancer increases the chances of a positive outcome, but social stigma leads to misconceptions about the disease. Our partners at CEOSS educate women and girls about self-examination and how to get screening. CEOSS has provided hundreds of clinic appointments and mammograms for women who would otherwise not receive these services.

9 February
Starting again

Please pray for Iraqis determined to rebuild their lives

Although the Iraqi Civil War formally ended in 2017 and some internally displaced people have returned home, the threat of ISIS remains in the background and many Iraqis do not feel safe to go back. Our partners at CAPNI are helping people to establish livelihoods and provide for their families by starting small businesses in their current location.

16 February
A house of positivity

Please pray for children learning about honesty, forgiveness and love

The Palestinian Bible Society runs a community centre called Zacchaeus House in Jericho. The centre gives children a place to share their thoughts and experiences through play, sports, art, drama and excursions. For many, it provides relief from difficult family backgrounds and helps them learn about positive values such as respect for others.

23 February
The battle against addiction

Please pray for people affected by addiction in one of Egypt’s poorest communities

The Salaam Centre works with the garbage-collecting community in the Cairo suburb of Ezbet el Nakhl. Substance abuse is one of many problems in the area and the centre runs support groups for addicts and their families. It can be difficult to persuade people to engage with further treatment, so the centre would appreciate your prayers to tackle this issue.
We’re always busy finding even more ways to support the life-changing work our partners carry out, which is why we’ve recently launched our Hive of Inspiration Alternative Gift. This gift will help Iraqi refugees returning home start up small businesses, like setting up beehives and selling delicious honey. Order yours at shop.embraceme.org.

‘Too many people think that prayer is what we try when we can’t think of something useful to do; we disagree. Prayer is the start of everything we do and we’re grateful to all of you for joining us.’

NIGEL VARNDELL, DIRECTOR OF FUNDRAISING AND MARKETING
1 March
Filling the healthcare gaps

Please pray for medical staff reaching out to vulnerable communities in Gaza

Healthcare in the Gaza Strip is a key humanitarian concern. Services are under-resourced and inaccessible for those living in isolated areas. Our partners at Caritas Jerusalem provide mobile clinics to ten locations along the Israeli border. When they lost funding from USAID (the US government’s international development organisation), Embrace, along with other Christian organisations, stepped in to enable these missions to continue.

8 March
We mean business

Please pray for Egyptian women working to improve their lives

Think and Do helps poor Egyptian communities become more self-sufficient through a variety of healthcare, education and vocational training projects. Women’s empowerment is a major part of their work; they help women set up or expand their businesses to earn a living, and offer courses in marketable skills.

15 March
Rights and decisions

Please pray for the wider recognition of people with learning disabilities in Lebanese society

The Zvartnotz Centre in Beirut, Lebanon supports children and adults with learning disabilities to develop their social and job skills. The staff listen carefully to the participants’ ideas because it is important that they are involved in decision-making. As well as providing education, training and supported employment, Zvartnotz also campaigns on a wider scale for disability rights and inclusion.

22 March
Sharing in safety

Please pray for children facing psychological trauma in West Bank

Palestinian children are at daily risk of witnessing traumatic situations such as the arrest of a family member or Israeli military incursions into schools. This has a profound effect on their mental health. East Jerusalem YMCA offers group counselling that enables children to share their experiences and release stress through structured activities in a safe environment.
29 March

Partnership in action

Please pray for the work of LSESD with vulnerable people across Lebanon and Syria

The Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development (LSESD) equips the local church to help vulnerable people of all faiths. Their projects include humanitarian relief for Lebanese and Syrian refugees, vocational skills training for women, education for children with additional needs, and much more.

Our spring catalogue is just one of the ways your shopping supports the life-changing projects our Christian partners run. As we near Easter, our Trading Team will be hard at work making sure your gifts and Easter eggs arrive in time! Please pray for them as they contribute to our mission in this busy season.

‘Without your support, many would be deprived of access to proper health care. Thank you for keeping the light of hope in the lives and hearts of people in Gaza.’

A PARTNER HELPING VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN GAZA ACCESS VITAL MEDICAL SUPPORT
Heavenly father, you made a sacrifice above all others, sending your only Son to carry a cross that weighed as heavy as the burden of our sins. Just as despair struck his friends on that bleak Friday, we too are apt to lose hope. On the desert roads and olive groves, Jesus’ footsteps remain. But sometimes we are too distracted by fear and conflict to see them. Lord God, there are those in the Middle East today who know where those footsteps are. They follow them, working for the justice and equality that Jesus taught. They provide food where there is hunger; they take medicine to those who are sick; they uphold human rights and they protect the vulnerable. They are the Christians of the Middle East. Lord, strengthen and encourage them even when hope seems small. This Easter Sunday, as we rejoice in the astonishing power of Jesus’ resurrection, let us remember those who live today in the places where he changed the world, and teach us to follow his example; to speak out against injustice and to embrace the humanity of all who need our help. For he is risen indeed. Halleluia!
On Palm Sunday, Palestinian Christians and thousands of pilgrims from all over the world gather at the Church of Bethphage for a procession over the Mount of Olives. They wave palm fronds and sing as they follow the route Jesus took when he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. The procession ends at the Church of St Anne in the Old City, where local scout bands play music for the crowds.
5 April

Nursing success

Please pray for Harpur Memorial Hospital’s nursing graduates as they embark on their careers

You helped Harpur Memorial Hospital in Egypt to set up their own nursing school, addressing a shortage of professionally trained nurses in the Egyptian hospital system. In 2019, the first group of 10 students graduated and are all now employed full time at Harpur. We pray for them to have long and fulfilling careers caring for their patients.

12 April

Hope for little heroes

Please pray for Syrian children to find a sense of hope in a confusing world

Millions of children and their families remain displaced within Syria, facing uncertainty and fear. Embrace partner, the Awareness Foundation, helps give them some of their lost childhood back. The Foundation’s ‘Little Heroes’ programme organises summer holiday camps helping children to discover their talents and rebuild their hope for the future.

19 April

Life lessons

Please pray for children finding a love of learning in a difficult situation

Life in Beirut’s Sabra/Shatila refugee camp in Lebanon is hard, and there are no guarantees that children will be able to go to school. Our partners at the Joint Christian Committee (JCC) run an informal education project to motivate young people and give them a good grounding in Arabic, English, maths and science. Using fun activities and trips, the scheme shows teenagers and young adults that education can open doors for a brighter future.

26 April

Sharing knowledge

Please pray for a wider knowledge of special educational needs in Palestinian schools

Embrace partner, the Swedish International Relief Association (SIRA), runs schools in Bethlehem and Jericho for students with learning difficulties. SIRA is in the process of establishing a Centre for Excellence to train teachers and social workers from across the West Bank in up-to-date methods for supporting children with additional needs.
Our Programmes and Partnerships Team travel to the region throughout the year, visiting our partners and the people they serve. Please pray for safe journeys and fruitful conversations, as they work to support our shared mission with our partners.

‘Since the sessions, I’ve become more social with my friends. I can control my reactions better and not feel such rage and hopelessness.’
A young person supported by a partner protecting children’s mental health.
May 2020

3 May
Friendship and capability

Please pray for a new sense of independence for visually impaired women in Egypt

Visually impaired women can find themselves isolated and reliant on their families because they are not thought capable of living an independent life. The Coptic Orthodox Church, BLESS, aims to change this by providing a mentorship programme, involving sighted friends who help the women develop their daily living skills and play a more active role in society.

10 May
Growing and thriving

Please pray for the health and happiness of Gaza’s babies and toddlers

For seven years, we have helped the Near East Council of Churches (NECC) provide Well-baby clinics in highly vulnerable communities in Gaza. The clinics monitor growth, screen for developmental delay and look for malnutrition and anaemia – vital services that are difficult to find elsewhere. Early detection of any issues gives each child the best possible chance of a healthy future.

17 May
Healthcare for everyone

Please pray for the patients and staff at the Tahaddi Health Centre

In the poor Hay el Garbeh area of Beirut in Lebanon, both Lebanese and Syrian people experience poverty and poor accommodation. It would be difficult for them to get healthcare if it weren’t for the Embrace-supported Tahaddi Health Centre, which provides more than 600 free medical consultations every month. The centre also focuses on preventive medicine and runs health awareness sessions.

24 May
Humanity at the margins

Please pray for those surviving on the fringes of society

In an area of Tel Aviv known as ‘The Last Stop’, the Aviv Ministry takes care of people with nowhere left to go. Their drop-in centre welcomes homeless people and drug addicts, including women trapped in prostitution. The centre provides food and hygiene facilities, and somewhere safe to rest. Its non-judgemental ethos makes it a lifeline for the most vulnerable members of society.
31 May
Skills for the future

Please pray for deaf children and young people as they prepare for an independent adult life

The Deaf Unit in Cairo provides education and training to 60 deaf children and young people. The students come from poor families who would not otherwise be able to afford to give them an appropriate education. Recently the students have learnt some new vocational skills including electrical work, painting, decorating and cookery.

Our Public Engagement Team travel across the country throughout the year, meeting and connecting with supporters and churches. Please pray for them as they form strong relationships and share the mission of our partners.

‘You are changing lives through your prayers! Just knowing that supporters across the country are regularly praying gives our brothers and sisters in the Middle East the encouragement they need to persevere in difficult circumstances and hope for a brighter tomorrow.’

ELLIE WARTEW, TRADING ASSISTANT
7 June

Protecting at-risk girls

Please pray for a safe and happy future for the girls who attend Beit el Nour

Beit el Nour in Beirut, Lebanon, works with Lebanese and Syrian girls at risk of exploitation and violence. As well as providing counselling, Beit el Nour runs an educational programme for those who need extra help with school, or who are not in school at all. They also raise awareness with the girls and their mothers of their rights and teach them how to recognise abuse.

14 June

Professional development

Please pray for special education teachers adding to their skills

The Fairhaven School in Alexandria educates children and young people with learning disabilities. Although the staff have years of experience, they are keen to keep up-to-date with the latest methods, so they have been undertaking additional training in communication techniques and have attended a safeguarding workshop.

21 June

Letting children be children

Please pray for Syrian children to find peace in a war-torn world

The youngest Syrians have known conflict throughout their lives. Our partners at Middle East Revive and Thrive (MERATH) have set up a child-friendly space – a safe environment where children can play and find a sense of normality in a chaotic world. The centre in Homs, Syria, helps fill gaps in their education and organises specialist therapy for those with disabilities.

28 June

First aid knowledge

Please pray for school students learning how to respond in an emergency

Young people in the West Bank have been learning something new at school – how to save lives. In order to help these essential courses to continue reaching students, our partners at St Luke’s Hospital, Nablus, are training health coordinators in each school to deliver first aid training themselves. The popular sessions teach the students how to deal with minor injuries and illness, and to respond to emergency situations confidently.
‘Before, I was aimless – I spent my days sleeping because I had nowhere to go, nothing to do, and I was lonely. Here, I learnt that each one of us is differently able. I can draw beautiful paintings and sell them to people who appreciate my work. **I can dream of a better future.**’

A BENEFICIARY SUPPORTED BY A PARTNER WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES

This month, we’re hosting our Annual Lecture in London, an evening where we delve deeper into the challenges facing Christians in the Middle East today. Please pray for **staff, volunteers and our speakers** as they work hard to make the event successful.
5 July
Leading the way to equality

Please pray for Egyptian women working towards an equal society

The tranquil Anafora retreat centre, north west of Cairo, is tackling gender inequality in Egypt by training women in leadership skills. Their residential courses cover topics such as communication, financial independence and rights awareness. Many of the women who attend have a history of abuse and trauma and the courses help them to heal and become assured of their worth.

12 July
Class of 2020

Please pray for young deaf people looking forward to their careers

The Learning Centre for the Deaf in Baabda, Lebanon, runs a high school programme for teenage deaf students. Often these young people have been underestimated in mainstream education, but at the Learning Centre they can work towards their government exams and plan ahead to university. Please pray for a bright and happy future for those graduating from the centre this month.

19 July
Community healthcare

Please pray for the improved health of all those travelling to Al Ahli Hospital for medical care

Chronic illness is a significant problem in Gaza, but poverty and the constant threat of violence make it difficult for patients to travel in search of help. Coordinating with community-based organisations around the Gaza Strip, Al Ahli Hospital run medical days giving patients free transport to the hospital so they receive the care they need.

26 July
Building bridges

Please pray for understanding and tolerance between communities in Alexandria

As a way of promoting religious tolerance and preventing extremism, our partners at EpiscoCare have established the Arkan Centre in Alexandria, which brings together Christians and Muslims through cultural events such as art exhibitions and family fun days. The centre is particularly aimed at young people and also offers training in career-related skills.
As we head into the summer months of the year, our team of volunteers will be gearing up for New Wine festival. Please pray for our volunteers, who are generously offering their time and skills to continue spreading the message of our mission.

‘It is always rewarding to remove barriers preventing communities coming closer in shared activities. We always need to build bridges to reach others for a better future for all.’

A PARTNER WORKING BRINGING CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM YOUNG PEOPLE TOGETHER THROUGH CULTURAL EVENTS
We all feel a sense of connection with places. Sometimes we can visit somewhere for the first time and feel instantly at home, or perhaps we have a favourite landscape that we return to again and again. The draw of places is so strong that we can use it to find a sense of connection with the people who live there.

Find a map of the Middle East region – or just one of the Embrace-supported countries if you prefer. The kind of map is up to you – you could zoom in to online satellite images or use a printed atlas, but the more detail the better.

Look at the Gaza Strip, at Cairo or Homs, at Beirut or Jericho – or any of the other locations mentioned in this prayer diary and on Embrace’s website.

As you study the map:

• Pray for everyone who lives in that area, especially those facing poverty

• Pray that the roads will be freed from travel restrictions

• Pray that the hospitals will have the resources they need

• Pray for the schools and places of worship

• Pray for those working hard to improve life for disadvantaged and vulnerable members of their community

You could leave your map in a prominent place to remind you to pray for the Middle East every day.
Thank you for praying with us, for Embrace and our partners, and their challenging but life-changing work. And most importantly, for those in the Middle East.

To keep up-to-date with the latest news, please sign-up for our regular emails at embraceme.org/keepintouch

You can also get in touch with our friendly Supporter Care team on 01494 897950 or by email info@embraceme.org to find out more about our work and how your support is transforming lives.
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Front cover photo: A cross decorated with flowers at the Anafora retreat centre in Egypt.
Back cover photo: A busy street in the Zabbaleen community in Egypt.