



**EMBRACE**  
the Middle East

THE CHRISTIAN DEVELOPMENT CHARITY TACKLING POVERTY AND INJUSTICE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

# EMBRACE

SPRING 2024

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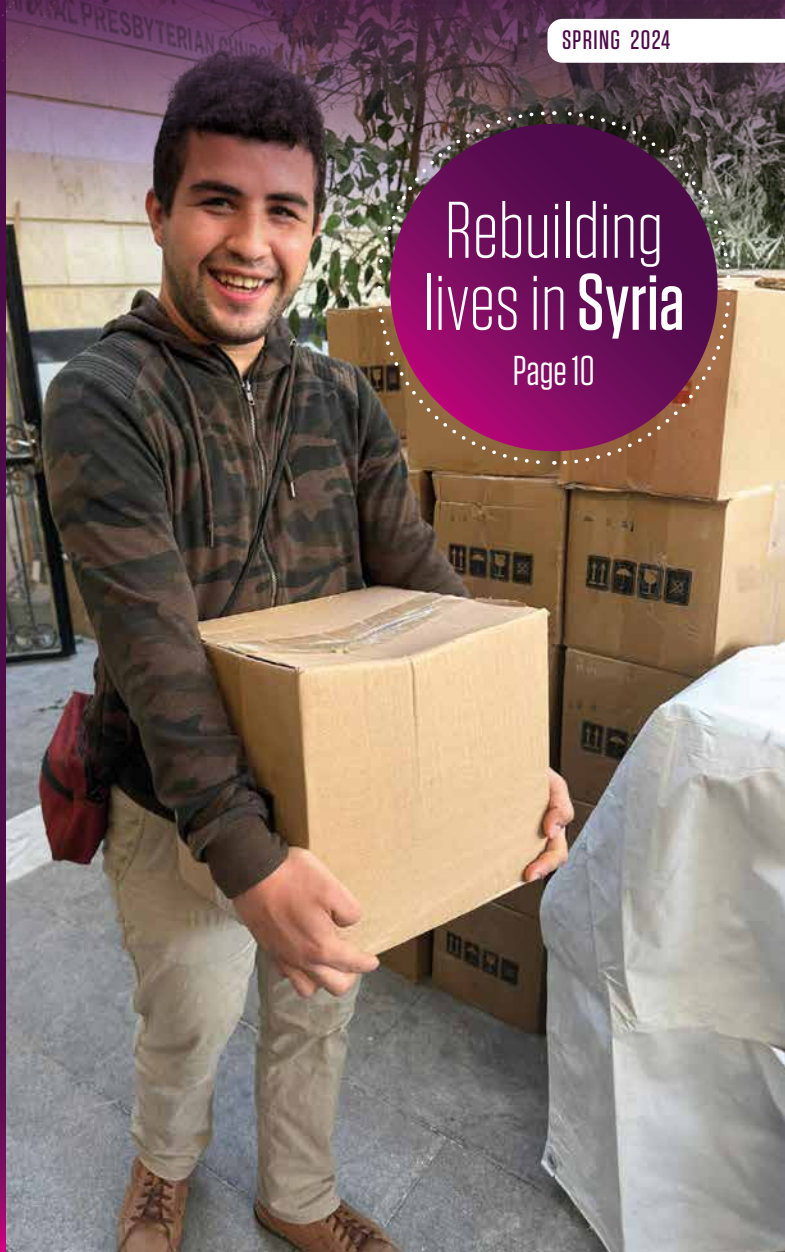
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# WELCOME



**As you know this is a big year for Embrace. We celebrate our 170th anniversary. And when I say 'we', I do mean all of the Embrace family – starting with you, our amazing supporters, without whom nothing is possible. Thank you for your support, generosity and faithfulness.**

As ever, we bring you news in this issue of some of the amazing things being achieved by our partners. Unsurprisingly our lead article is about the Al Ahli Hospital and its mission in war torn Gaza. Read about the trained volunteers – community mobilisers – who worked in a little-known enclave called Al Mawasi, now a much better-known place of refuge for hundreds of thousands of displaced Gaza residents.

Thanks to your incredible generosity, Embrace's partners will be contributing substantially to the rebuilding of Gaza's social and economic infrastructure, and especially its health care provision, long into the future. We hope also to support efforts to rebuild trust between two very divided communities including in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Israel - the only sound basis for the serious peace building that we all pray is waiting around the corner. You can read about the wonderful work of BASR in Bethlehem, and the YMCA in Jenin – both beacons of hope and light in dark times.

Away from the sufferings of Gaza and the West Bank, you can read about the new paediatric department at the Harpur Memorial

**Editor:** Beth Amphlett | **Editorial:** Matt Adcock | **Design & Production:** fisherdesign.co.uk

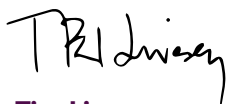
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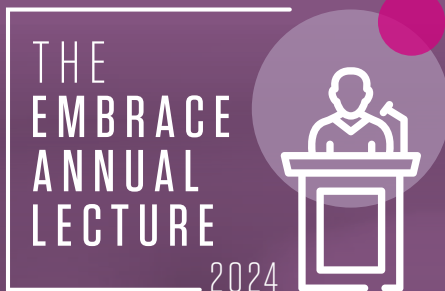
“ Thanks to your incredible generosity, Embrace’s partners will be contributing substantially to the rebuilding of Gaza’s social and economic infrastructure.

Hospital in Menouf, Egypt which Embrace has supported for decades. The new department was built and equipped in part with a very significant donation from one of Embrace’s long-standing donors. The impact of that donation on the lives of children across a vast region will be felt long into the future.

A sincere thank you to everyone who has contributed to Embrace’s mission to help sustain and support Christian social witness in the Middle East since 1854!



**Tim Livesey,**  
Chief Executive



## Save the date!

Our Annual Lecture will be held on **Thursday 17th October** at the Church of St Margaret, Westminster Abbey. We hope you can join us! You’ll be able to attend in person or online.

**Further details will be published in our Summer magazine and on our website at [embraceme.org/events](https://embraceme.org/events)**

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# HELPING HANDS

## AL AHLI HOSPITAL'S COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE PROGRAMME

By Rhiannon de Laune, Embrace Programmes and Partnerships Manager



In July 2023, I visited an area of Gaza called Al Mawasi. I had not heard of this area before, but now the whole world knows the name. It became the designated 'safe zone' in Gaza, 3.3 sq. miles of largely agricultural and sandy land that runs along the Mediterranean Sea.

There, I met a group of female 'Community Mobilisers' - volunteers trained by Al Ahli Hospital to go into homes and talk with mothers, about hygiene, nutrition and their rights, and help identify families where further intervention may be necessary, for example via Al Ahli's 'Community Healthcare Programme', which Embrace has been supporting since 2014.

This programme works with local community centres, helping those in more isolated areas get access to hospital care by transporting them to hospital for a day. There they can get the consultations, health awareness sessions and diagnostic tests they need - such as for cancer and also osteopenia, which is common amongst women in Gaza due to inadequate levels of vitamin D. Left untreated, it often develops into osteoporosis.

The ripple effect in families and communities of this kind of preventative intervention is huge, both socially and economically. Without this opportunity, many would not have sought out medical attention until their condition had deteriorated to a point where the prognosis is poorer, and treatment harder and more expensive.

Building capacity within the community is also an integral part of the mission. The need in Gaza is astronomical (even before the latest round of conflict), and so each year Al Ahli's programme moves on to serve different communities. This is less than ideal – it could be years before the programme returns – but there is always something left



**Above:** The 'Community Mobilisers' of Al Mawasi

behind. As Suhaila Tarazi, director of Al Ahli, put it: 'We leave a *fingerprint*' – such as Al Mawasi's Community Mobilisers.

I remember these women as vibrant and passionate about improving the situation for their community. Now they are often in my thoughts. I hope they are safe and that their knowledge means that they have been able to help some of the thousands of displaced people who have descended on that little sandy strip.

As medical teams across Gaza continue to work against the odds to treat the sick and injured, I'm sure that Al Ahli hospital's '*fingerprints*' from the last 10 years of community outreach and development can be seen clearly.

Find all the latest updates of how the war in Gaza is affecting our partners, along with prayers and resources, at [embraceme.org/israel-palestine-news](https://embraceme.org/israel-palestine-news)



# 170 YEARS OF GIVING



As we commemorate our 170th anniversary and reflect on the journey of our mission to support Christians in the Middle East, we are privileged to benefit from the long-term commitment and generosity of our dedicated supporters throughout the years.

**Whilst the landscape has shifted over the decades, our mission remains the same – empowering Christian communities in the Middle East to serve those around them. And YOU make this possible.**

We want to say a huge thank you to all our supporting churches and individual donors, whose dedication continues to play a pivotal role in sustaining the vital work of our sisters and brothers in the Middle East. We express our sincerest gratitude and want to acknowledge those who have stood with us for decades.

Your commitment enables us to continue to support our partners as they work for meaningful change in lives across the region.

Since the pandemic, we have seen a shift in how our supporters choose to donate to Embrace. We will continue to accept cheques through the post, but an increasing number of supporters are choosing

to give online and have embraced the efficiency of Direct Debit or regular donations via credit or debit card. Not only does this make giving to Embrace even easier for you, it also streamlines our processes, ensuring your gift reaches the region even faster.



If you don't already give to Embrace on a regular basis,

please consider doing so. Setting up a regular gift has never been easier and will enable us to plan long-term projects throughout Israel, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq. Whether opting for a Direct Debit or a regular card donation, you have the flexibility to choose how to reflect your solidarity with Christians in the Middle East with a monthly gift.

**Visit [embraceme.org/regular-giving](https://embraceme.org/regular-giving) to start your ongoing support**

If you would like to chat through other ways to give to Embrace or would like more information, our friendly Supporter Experience Team can be contacted on **01494 897950** or via email at **info@embraceme.org**.

Once again, a very special thank you to all of our dedicated supporters, particularly those who are already our regular givers. Your solidarity with Christians in the Middle East is not just a charitable contribution; it has a lasting impact that helps shape a brighter future for the region. **Thank you so much.**



# NEW PAEDIATRIC DEPARTMENT OPENS AT HARPUR HOSPITAL



Embrace has been partnering with the Christian-run Harpur Memorial Hospital in Menouf, Egypt for over 40 years. So, when they told us they needed a new purpose-built unit for their Paediatric Department, we worked with them to get the funds needed for their project.

**01:** The shell of the building was already constructed but funds were needed for the internal building works, furnishings and equipment.

**02:** The new department includes four paediatric clinic rooms, a doctor/on-call room, a nursing station, and a large outpatient room where patients can be treated and monitored.

**03 & 04:** Embrace funding also paid for medical equipment, including four hospital beds and monitoring apparatus for the outpatient room, as well as the office furniture and IT equipment for staff.

**05:** The new building not only significantly increases the number of patients that can be seen, but it also means they can get all their treatment in the same place with better coordination of care.

**06:** The new paediatric department was opened last autumn, helping the hospital continue its mission of "Providing excellent medical care to all for the glory of God". Promoting medical best practice and a holistic approach to treatment is key to the hospital's ethos and the centralised department can now also serve as a teaching facility, helping to train up the next generation of paediatricians for many years to come.



**You can support Harpur Hospital and other vital medical projects in the Middle East by buying our Training for a Nurse alternative gift. Visit [shop.embraceme.org/collections/alternative-gifts](https://shop.embraceme.org/collections/alternative-gifts) to find out more.**



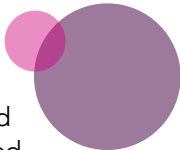


# SYRIA EARTHQUAKE: ONE YEAR ON



It has been over year since the earthquake of 6 February 2023 struck Turkey and Syria. Through our partner MERATH, we continue to work with churches in Northern Syria as they provide vital support to families still struggling to rebuild their lives after the devastation and amid an unrelenting economic crisis.

One of the churches sent us this update:



Syria already was, and is still, suffering from economic crises and deteriorating living conditions. When the earthquake happened, the feeling of fear, confusion, and insecurity was overwhelming. But quickly, the sense of responsibility took over, as we started to respond to the material and psychological consequences of this tragedy.



### PROVIDING SHELTER, FOOD AND MEDICINE

Right from the start, the church opened its doors to the affected and displaced. For one month, the people who had taken refuge in the church were provided with food, water, heating, blankets, supplies for infants, medicine, and psychological support, especially for children and youth.

### REPAIRING HOMES

Later, the committee took recovery steps through assistance to restore homes of affected people, and distribute financial grants and monthly vouchers to ease the burden.

“ We believe the role and responsibility of the church is to follow in Jesus’ footsteps. ”

**Main Picture:** The streets of Aleppo, Syria (Credit: Ahmad Sofi, Unsplash)

**Above left:** Distributing food parcels at the church | **Above right:** Many families are still struggling to afford the basics and are reliant on food parcels (Credit for both: MERATH)

**PERSEVERING IN THE FACE OF UNRELENTING DIFFICULTIES**

But the circumstances in Syria have kept deteriorating. Unemployment remains very high and the country is experiencing surreal inflation. Most of the vital goods – such as food and medicine – have become completely unaffordable to most people. We continue to distribute food, milk, diapers and hygiene supplies; and help with health services and winter items.

Our church works very hard to meet the needs of families during these exceptionally hard times. Our spiritual and humanitarian message calls us to persevere and overcome difficulties with God’s grace and the help of partners like you.

We believe the role and responsibility of the church is to follow in Jesus’ footsteps. Jesus met both the spiritual and the physical needs of the people, and so we are to do the same.



You can find more stories from the earthquake on our website at [embraceme.org/stories](https://embraceme.org/stories)

170TH ANNIVERSARY: EMBRACE MEMORIES

# Graham's Story



Graham Hobbs was just three years old when he first came across Embrace. Now he's helping us to mark our 170th anniversary by sharing his story:



**Above:** Graham and his daughter Jen

**My memories of Embrace begin in the 1950s. From the age of three I had to endure - and not disturb - some tedious church services. I didn't know what I was looking at, but part of my survival technique was to look at the pictures on the Bethlehem Carol Sheet (right).**

Roll forward to 1967. My parents returned from a trip to Israel and Jordan, leaving just days before the 6 Day War began. They were impressed by the achievements that Israel had made in its 20-year life, but they also felt for the Palestinian refugees they had met in the West Bank. I began to take a mild interest.

In 2005 my daughter Jen began working for Embrace (then BibleLands). Naturally, I knew much more about the organisation than I had 50 years earlier, but I was about to learn a deep lesson. Our Jen took a party of young volunteers to work in an orphanage in Bethlehem. They'd hardly arrived when Hezbollah started firing rockets and Israel retaliated. Till then these things would have just been news. This time, my own daughter was in

the area. I realised that wars were about real people.

The group decided to stay put and get on with the job.\*

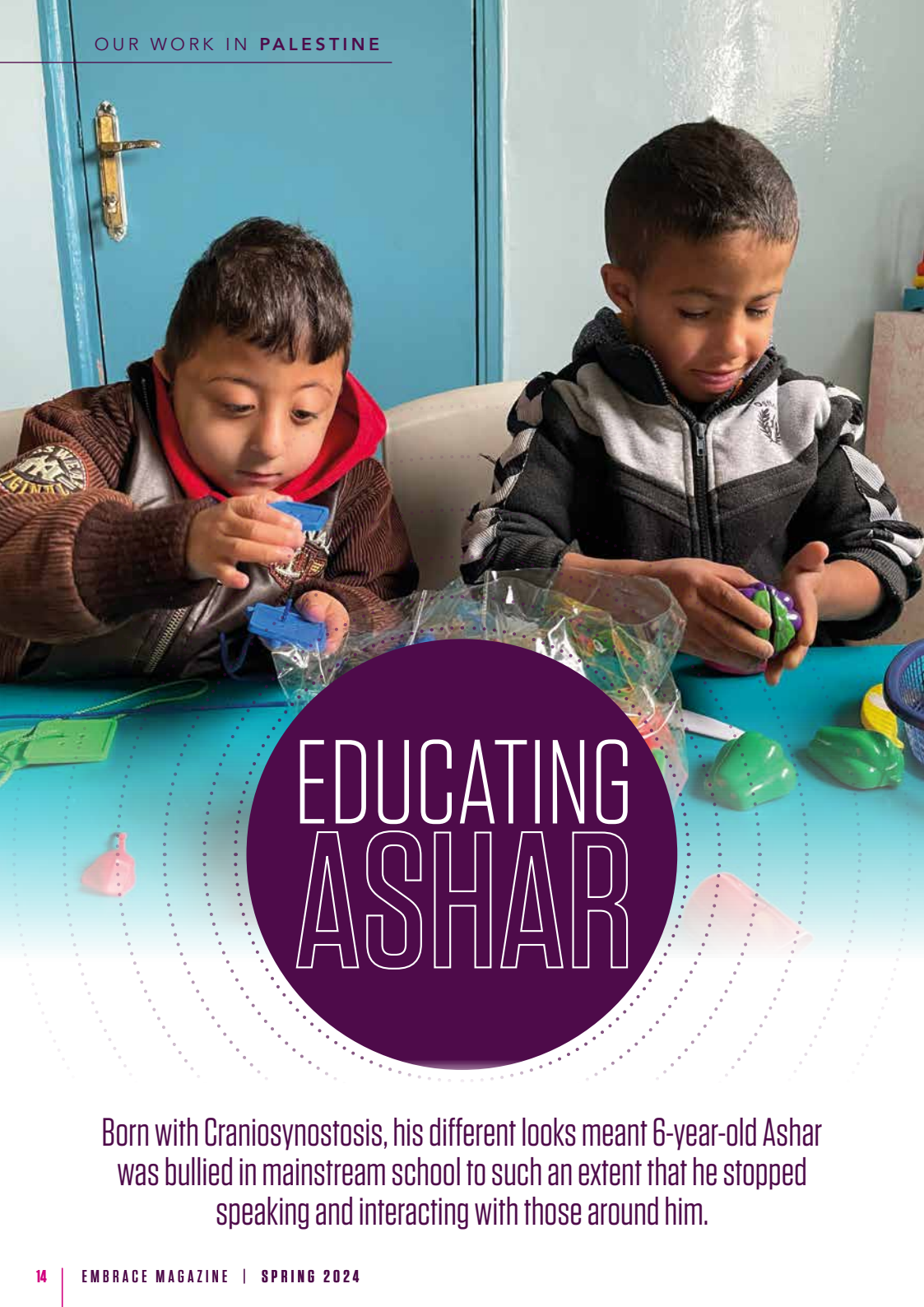
People seeking refuge from the fighting slept on the floor with them, they were Palestinian Christians and citizens of Israel. I realised what a difficult situation they could find themselves in. Being Palestinian, Christian and Israeli in a land where identity has so much meaning is not simple. I can't imagine what some of these people are going through now, at a time when differences are magnified.

My daughter left Embrace to have daughters of her own, but I still have mementoes that she brought back from the Holy Land. A final legacy is the difference that engaging with BibleLands/Embrace has made to me. The three-year-old looking at pictures in a carol sheet has grown into a 70-year-old whose involvement with Embrace has taught him to appreciate the humanity behind those pictures.



**We'd love to hear your memories of being part of the Embrace story of Christian social witness. Email [editor@embraceme.org](mailto:editor@embraceme.org) or post them to our office.**

\* All travel decisions are made in accordance with FCDO advice and conditions on the ground.



# EDUCATING ASHAR

Born with Craniosynostosis, his different looks meant 6-year-old Ashar was bullied in mainstream school to such an extent that he stopped speaking and interacting with those around him.

# A new special education centre in the West Bank

**M**ainstream schools in Palestine are open to all, but most of them are not equipped to support students with disabilities, particularly those with learning difficulties. Children like Ashar are left struggling and isolated, and often leave school with very little education.

Embrace partner BASR (The Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation) is changing this by working with the local Palestinian authorities to provide specialist education facilities, such as the centre at Tuqqu.

The Tuqqu Center for Special Education opened last year in the village of Tuqqu, near Bethlehem, and supports children with a wide range of intellectual disabilities. It is the result of close collaboration between BASR and the Tuqqu municipality, which provided a building for the centre and has taken on part of the continued running costs.

Following the 7th October attacks, the centre had to close for three months because of the movement restrictions and security situation in the West Bank. It has recently reopened, and we pray that it can



stay open so that it can continue to provide the vital specialist support needed by Ashar and his classmates.

Since moving to the centre, Ashar has received speech therapy and motor skills sessions to rebuild his confidence and communication. Now his speech is improving and he has started to play with his classmates. His progress is such that staff at the centre are hopeful that he will be able to integrate back into the local mainstream school this year. They will be working closely with the teachers of the school to ensure his transition goes smoothly and that he has the support he needs.

The vision of BASR is for an equal society but also an inclusive one where dignity and opportunity is available to all. It's a vision shared by Embrace and we are proud to walk alongside them, for all are one in Jesus Christ.

# Psychological First Aid in the West Bank

Incidents of political violence are sadly common in the West Bank and have increased significantly since 7th October. The daily reality of such violence has a particularly negative effect on the psychological wellbeing of young people.



**Above:** Children in the village of Urif in Nablus participating in an East Jerusalem YMCA recreational activity.



Psychological  
First Aid  
for more than  
**2,000**  
people in 2023

**Since 2022**, Embrace has been supporting our partner, East Jerusalem YMCA, as they provide psychological first aid, group counselling and recreational activities for young people, children and their carers in Salfit and South Nablus who have been affected by violence.

These interventions help improve wellbeing and resilience, even in the face of ongoing insecurity. In 2023, the project responded to 317

incidents of political violence and provided Psychological First Aid to more than 2,000 individuals.

This year, the YMCA has expanded their programme to Jenin, which has recently been experiencing violence and unrest on a daily basis. We pray the violence will end, but until it does, creating safe spaces for children and young people to process their traumatic experiences and heal, helps create hope for a better future.





## A MESSAGE FROM OUR **CHURCH ENGAGEMENT MANAGER**

We would like to say a **HUGE** thank you to churches across the UK for your generosity over the past few months!

As we enter another very difficult year, it is an enormous encouragement to us and our partners to see churches and groups here stretch out arms of love and compassion to our brothers and sisters in the Middle East.

### **Volunteering opportunities**

**Are you part of a church and passionate about the work of Embrace?** We would love you to consider joining Embrace as a volunteer Church Ambassador, equipping your church with the latest news and prayer requests from our partners, and helping to amplify their voices to their Christian sisters and brothers here in the UK.

Best wishes,

*Rowena*



**Get involved: Drop us an email  
at [engagement@embraceme.org](mailto:engagement@embraceme.org)**



# YOU'VE HEARD OF SHOP IN A BOX, NOW GET READY FOR SHOP IN A SHED!

Tucked away in Hertfordshire's countryside is a colourful bazaar of Middle Eastern merchandise. Margaret and Alan Gilliam have been volunteering for Embrace since participating in the October 2016 Olive Harvest Trip.



**T**hey love to raise awareness in their local area of Embrace's work and the reality of life in the Middle East. The highlight of each year is the transformation of their garden shed into a Middle Eastern shopping experience.

Shop in a Shed began during lockdown in December 2020, when Margaret and Alan realised the festive season would lack the usual church events



**Above:** Alan and Margaret (centre) and the Shop in a Shed which continues to increase in popularity

and craft fairs. Since outdoor socialising in private gardens was permitted, Shop in a Shed was born. Inspired by their passion for the Middle East, and hoping to raise profits in support of Embrace's healthcare, education and community development projects, Margaret and Alan began stocking authentic Middle East gifts and cards, including fairly-traded Palestinian products from Zaytoun and Bethlehem Baubles, both of whom also supply our Embrace shop.

With the launch of our Embrace Shop in a Box scheme in 2021, Margaret and Alan added Embrace-branded items to their stock, and Shop in a Shed has increased in popularity yearly, with many regular customers and a bespoke logo.

In the Christmas 2023 season they welcomed over 100 customers, sold out of Shop in a Box products, and raised over £1,000 for Embrace. With Gaza in many hearts and minds this year, Palestinian products were particularly popular – in total, Shop in a Shed customers purchased 15 litres of olive oil and 6 kilos of dates! The shop allows Margaret and Alan to share their passion with their community and has led to various spin-off events: a soup lunch, church Christmas Fair stall and Middle Eastern Cookery classes.

Margaret and Alan's story is just one example of many creative ways that you, our valued supporters, embrace opportunities to engage your communities in supporting Embrace's mission. In 2023, we distributed 30 Shop in a Box kits to hosts across the country, raising an incredible £10,000.



## COULD YOU HOST A SHOP IN A BOX?

Visit [shop.embraceme.org/pages/shop-in-a-box](https://shop.embraceme.org/pages/shop-in-a-box) to apply. Interested in becoming an Embrace volunteer? Contact [engagement@embraceme.org](mailto:engagement@embraceme.org) for more information.

Book  
your place  
now!

# OLIVE HARVEST TRIP

18 - 29th October 2024 | £1,840 per person (single supplement applies)

It is more important than ever that we stand in solidarity with our Palestinian brothers and sisters.



**Travel with us to the Holy Land in October to help with the olive harvest.**

You'll meet, eat with, and hear stories from Palestinians, as you visit places off the tourist trail and learn more about the situation in Palestine.

Email [visit@embraceme.org](mailto:visit@embraceme.org) for more details and to secure your place.

**Travel with peace of mind:**

A message of assurance from our travel agent:

*"Be assured that should it be unsafe to travel, in accordance with the Foreign Office Advice for your departure date, we will not send your group and will offer transference of your booking to new dates or a full refund of monies paid."*