



# meco|international

MAGAZINE

ISSUE 1, 2011

## Using our gifts for His kingdom

**Also includes:** A show of hands ■ Honouring God through sport

# MECO Magazine

Keeping you up-to-date and affirming the importance of your role in the ministry of MECO.



- 04 A show of hands**  
An interview demonstrating how puppets are keeping teenagers engaged in church life
- 06 Paints, easels and friendships**  
Art enables meaningful conversation and opportunities for sharing the gospel
- 08 Honouring God through sport**  
How can sport be used to share what it means to live for Jesus
- 10 Serving anywhere, anytime**  
An inspiring story of a couple willing to serve the Lord later in life
- 11 MECO opportunities**  
Could God use your unique gifts and experience to serve Him in the Middle East

*Comments or questions?*  
Email [info@aboutmeco.org](mailto:info@aboutmeco.org)

MECO International is an interdenominational fellowship of evangelical Christians from many countries with shared goals for the Middle East. During 150 years of service in the region, MECO has played an important part in the growth of the church, and now serves in many Middle Eastern countries.

#### MECO International Magazine

**Publisher** Rob Cullen (Publicity Manager), PO Box 40662, Larnaka 6306, Cyprus

**Printers** Masterprint, Alsoupoleos 1A, Larnaka 6052, Cyprus

**Press and Information Office (PIO) Cyprus Registered:** Ref. No. N.3530

**Writer** Jon Matthias **Editor** Ruth Cullen **Design** Rob Cullen

**Photography** Some photography supplied by istockphoto.com and may feature models

## Get in touch!

### australia

**A** PO Box 136, Kerrimuir, Victoria 3129  
**T** (03) 9898 0077  
**E** [australia@aboutmeco.org](mailto:australia@aboutmeco.org)

### canada

**A** PO Box 610, Burlington, Ontario L7R 3Y5  
**T** (905) 335 7329  
**E** [canada@aboutmeco.org](mailto:canada@aboutmeco.org)

### newzealand

**A** PO Box 76656, Manukau, Auckland 2241  
**T** (09) 263 6819  
**E** [info@meco.org.nz](mailto:info@meco.org.nz)

### southafrica

**A** PostNet Suite 414, Private Bag X37, Lynnwood Ridge 0040  
**T** (084) 623 5962  
**E** [sa@aboutmeco.org](mailto:sa@aboutmeco.org)

### uk and ireland

**A** 22 Culverden Park Road  
Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 9RA  
**T** (01892) 521541  
**E** [uk@aboutmeco.org](mailto:uk@aboutmeco.org)  
Registered Charity 272327

**A** Unit 1, Ravenhill Business Park  
Ravenhill Road, Belfast BT6 8AW  
**T** (028) 90 460780  
**E** [donhowe@aboutmeco.org](mailto:donhowe@aboutmeco.org)

### usa

**A** PO Box 14896, Bradenton  
FL 34280-4896  
**T** (800) 747 MECO  
**E** [usa@aboutmeco.org](mailto:usa@aboutmeco.org)

# Editorial

“Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the Potter; we are all the work of your hand.” Isaiah 64:8

Have you ever wondered why you were interested in art, or sport, or why you have a specific gift? Every relationship and experience we have can be used by the Lord, if we are willing to be molded by the Potter.

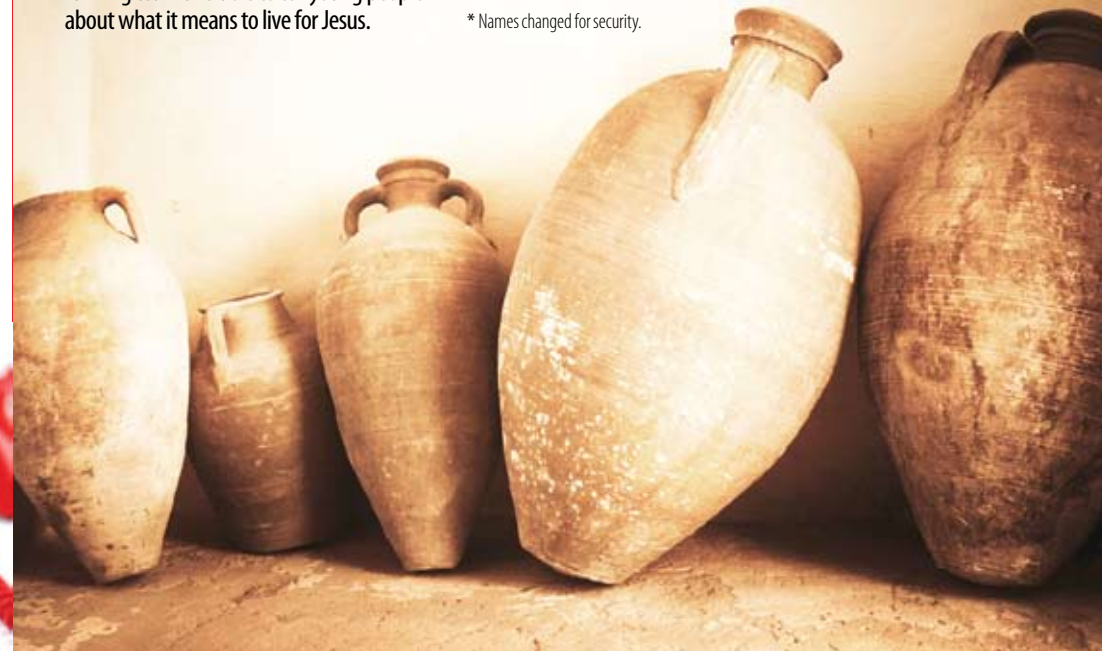
In this edition of the magazine, you'll read about people with unique gifts serving the Lord in the Middle East in exciting, innovative ways! Take Rachel\* on page 4 for example. She used puppets during university and later saw how these could be used to reach out to teenagers in her local Middle Eastern church. Matt\*, on page 8, loved to run back home, but never thought he would be able to do so in the Middle East. Now he is coaching a running team and able to tell young people about what it means to live for Jesus.

Tina\*, on page 6, loves art and linked in with the art community when she moved to the Middle East; she was amazed by the depth of meaningful conversations about faith that this brought!

And, Stanley and Wendy, on page 10, were willing to go and serve the Lord when they should have been enjoying retirement. But the Lord had other plans and used their special gifts with blind people and past experiences to minister tremendously in Northern Iraq.

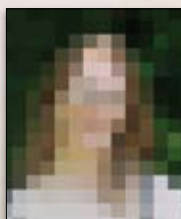
Please pray with us that many more people with unique gifts, molded and prepared by the Potter, would be willing to come and serve Him in the Middle East.

\* Names changed for security.



# A show of hands

Throughout the centuries Christians have communicated through paintings, plays, music and songs. And there are really no limits to imaginatively engaging with people and helping them learn and discover. Rachel\* has found a unique way of capturing the attention of people - using puppets to help build up young people in the local church!



An interview with, Rachel\*, a MECO worker in the Middle East who is using her unique gifts and experience with puppets to reach out to teenagers.

## How did you start working in the Middle East?

When I was a young girl, God put the people of the Middle East on my heart. After graduating from college, God opened the door for me to go - it was the beginning of a very exciting adventure in a very special part of God's world.

## What prompted you to start using puppets in this way?

About two years ago I noticed that the young teens were drifting away from my church here. This is a crucial age in any culture, but particularly in the Middle East, where even children of Christian families have little opportunity to hear about Christ.

I had been part of a team who communicated using puppets during my university years and thought "What about starting a puppet team for the teenagers here?" It gives us an opportunity to teach through the puppets, and the team members will be part of a fun, exciting project, that will give them identity, purpose and space to develop their own faith.

## What do you do with the puppets?

We prepare a prerecorded programme of skits and songs on a specific Bible story or theme (in Arabic). Our shows usually last for 10-20 minutes, which is often followed up with questions to the audience. We've performed in our own church and others, as well as an old people's home, a Christian children's home, and a local Christian school.

## What reactions do you usually get?

When I first demonstrated the puppet ministry in my own church, our pastor was



Children hear Bible stories for the first time because of puppets

as excited as the children! The church is very supportive, and helped with buying the materials and building the stage. The teenagers really enjoy recording the scripts with their own voices. I now have young people queuing up to join the team!


The headmistress at a Christian school, was delighted with our performance, and said we could come back anytime. As we were packing up after a show, one of the school children came up and excitedly shared with my Arab helper that it was the first time she had heard this message.

We also have a weekly devotion and prayer time which is very important to me. To begin with, the teenagers were reluctant to share anything or pray out loud, but over time they have gained more confidence.

## What would you say to someone considering working in the Middle East?

I really believe that if you are willing to come, God will use whatever gifts He has equipped you with. If you can do it at home, quite often you can do it here. It may be more challenging, but equally more fulfilling.

## What can people particularly pray about for you?

Please pray for my young team that as they grow in experience and skill in puppetry, they will equally grow in love and commitment to our Saviour. 

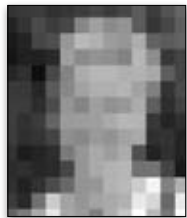
## Action!

Could God use your unique gifts and abilities? See page 11 for just a few opportunities available, contact a MECO office near you or visit [www.aboutmeco.org/opportunities](http://www.aboutmeco.org/opportunities)

\* Picture disguised and name changed for security.



# Paints, easels and friendships



**Tina\***, an artist from South Africa, shares how God used her artistic gifts to reach out to local people and make meaningful friendships.

**Learning to use art as a bridge to be able to share my faith has been an exciting, and sometimes long, journey!**

God laid Egypt on my heart while at Bible college. From the time of my call to actually going took seven years. It was during this time of 'waiting' that the Lord was equipping me. On my conversion - I went from blasphemer to evangelist/art director to gospel! My training ground was at the local university in my city; I started working with the art students. It was here that the Lord taught me how to use art as a bridge. The post modern students wouldn't talk to me about Christianity, but when I read their art, I saw their hearts and this allowed me to build relationships.

Eventually I had an opportunity to go to the Middle East for six months to have a serious 'look and see' and explore how the Lord could use me there. I knew I had to just

be me and use all that the Lord had been teaching me over the years.

**Discovering special friends**

I chose to live in an area where there were a lot of art galleries. After language studies I would walk through my neighbourhood and look into every gallery along the way.

*... when I read their art I saw their hearts.*

I noticed a little gallery that was almost hidden and it was here that I met a young Egyptian woman. We chatted easily, I practised my two words I knew and she kept encouraging me with some new words. The gallery was having an exhibition opening that night and she invited me to come so that I could meet her husband. I did not know at that time what a special friend she would become.

I also volunteered on Saturdays to work with a group of artists that get together to teach, love, encourage and share their lives with the street children from the Giza pyramid area. This was very challenging, but I had excellent teachers - the children themselves! There were translators that worked with us, but the more Arabic I learnt the closer I felt to the children.

**Art enables deeper communication**

I made many friends in the art circle and had incredible conversations with Christians and Muslims. Art is a powerful platform to work from as most artists are lateral thinkers and seem to bare themselves personally quicker than others.


But my most precious times were with my friend from the little gallery. She would even come and visit me at my

*... she would weep when I prayed for her.*

apartment. She had so many questions about love, marriage, life and God!

She allowed me to share my personal story of conversion, she would weep when I prayed for her and she would often refer to me as her "angel". Whenever I answered her questions, I would tell her it was from the Bible.

Our last night together was spent eating delicious food, watching the sun set over Cairo and just loving each other's company - she looked at me with tears in her eyes and said, "Please come back, keep learning my language; I have so many more questions to ask."

I trust the Lord to put me where He needs me and use the gifts He has given me. 



Meaningful conversations enabled by a shared understanding of art

**Action!**

Are you an artist, or interested in art? Do you feel God calling you to work in the Middle East? Contact your local office to explore options for serving in this part of the world, or visit [www.aboutmeco.org/opportunities](http://www.aboutmeco.org/opportunities) for other exciting opportunities!

# Honouring God through sport

“God made me fast. And when I run I feel His pleasure.” This is a quote attributed to Eric Liddle, the Scottish athlete celebrated in the film *Chariots of Fire*. God did not make me fast, nor most of the runners I coach, but I still believe that God is honoured and finds pleasure when His people use their gifts well.

**Matt\***, a MECO teacher in a Christian school in the Middle East describes how sport creates bridges for sharing the gospel message.

Sport was a large part of my working and social life whilst living in the UK, but when we prepared to leave and serve in the Middle East, I considered it something I would be giving up. It was, for the first 3 years, but then the opportunity arose for me not only to enjoy doing sport but for it to be an integral part of our gospel work here.

In the country where we serve, there is no inhibition when it comes to talking about religion and it would be hard to find a politician who ‘doesn’t do God’.

Sadly though, this has served only to make people more sceptical. There is often a gulf between words and reality. For this reason, whilst we are glad of the daily and weekly opportunities we get to teach the gospel the school was founded on, we know we are watched carefully to see how we live it.

*We are watched carefully to see how we live the gospel.*

## Living out our faith through sport

We seek to do that in the classroom, in the playground, on trips, visiting families and of course through sport. I was asked to take over coaching the running team a couple of years ago and it suited me well: I love running and two of my sons are in the team with a third ‘chomping at the bit’ to be allowed to join when he is old enough!

The use of running metaphors in the Bible show what a great sport it is to teach character and illustrate what it is to follow Jesus faithfully and wholeheartedly. I hope that in the time I spend training the students and going with them to races they see me

*God is honoured and finds pleasure when His people use their gifts well.*

model the gospel I preach. I hope also that it is clear to them in my life that I am working for a prize that will never perish.

Please pray for me and others like me to make the most of the opportunities we get. Sport enables us to encourage those students who don’t find it easy to succeed academically. It has given me the opportunity to encourage believers and new believers who run in the team; sometimes through just a conversation in the bus as I drive them home after training. Please pray that some who run with me will choose to run the race and will persevere to the end. **m**

## Action!

Do you enjoy sport? Would you be able to coach or teach a sport in the Middle East? Contact a MECO office near you to find out more or visit [www.aboutmeco.org/opportunities](http://www.aboutmeco.org/opportunities) for other exciting opportunities!



“Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus.” Hebrews 12:1-2

# Serving anywhere, anytime

Stanley and Wendy Choi are proof that God can use late bloomers.



**Linda Haist**, MECO's Canadian Director, illustrates how God can use people to serve Him at any stage of life.

In May of 2007, when they should have been enjoying retirement, the Chois went to Northern Iraq. Within a month Stanley, who was 67, had been placed as an instructor at a blind school and with the Blind Union. Wendy, who was 62, was serving as a sewing instructor at a community centre and in a jail for women.

### How it all began

This Korean-Canadian couple's journey to Northern Iraq really began in 1996 when they left Toronto and their two children, who had just entered university, and went to Vancouver to care for Korean MKs (missionary kids). It was nonstop work that lasted seven years and was the training ground they needed for their next placement, this time in Jos, Nigeria. There Stanley taught in a school for children of Korean missionaries and Wendy established a sewing school for widows who needed to support their families.

Three years later, while on furlough in Toronto, God gave Stanley a desire to work in Northern Iraq among the blind. As Stanley

and Wendy prayed, and Stanley fasted, they were led to MECO. Three months later the Chois were in Northern Iraq.


Not that their placement was easy. People had reservations: "Would they be able to adapt to the culture?" "Is there work for them to do among the blind?" "What about learning the Kurdish language?" However, God paved the way and three years later everyone can look back and see all that He accomplished through them.

### Working on a Braille Kurdish New Testament

One of the finest accomplishments involved printing into Braille the Kurdish translation of the New Testament (NT). It took Stanley more than a year to input the NT using a Braille computer and printer purchased with funds from supporters in Canada, Korea and the US. The task was carried out after school hours and fraught with problems. At one point, Wendy says she asked Stanley to give up the project. "But he scolded me and said he had a concrete vision for this worked. Soon I realized this must be God's work and the enemy is trying to stop us."

It is the Chois' hope that as the blind read the NT "the truth will touch their souls".

In June of last year, Stanley and Wendy reluctantly retired from the

field. They say the fruit of their three years in Northern Iraq belongs to the Lord. They also say that all of the difficulties and challenges they faced were the back drop for God's grace to be worked out in their lives; for His love to be reflected through them unconditionally until they stand before Christ. 

**Could God use you to change lives in the Middle East?**  
MECO is looking for people to serve in the Middle East.

### Teacher - Iraqi Kurdistan

**Description:** Working with ex-pat kids in a home school situation. Developing adult education, especially literacy projects. **Length:** 1 month - 2+ years  
**Language:** English. **Qualifications:** Hold appropriate qualifications.

### Optician - Arabian Peninsula

**Description:** Work in a clinic attached to a local church.  
**Length:** 1+ month. **Language:** Arabic an advantage but not essential.  
**Qualifications:** Medical qualification with 2+ experience.

### Refugee Worker - Cairo, Egypt

**Description:** Serving Sudanese refugees in a local church.  
**Length:** 1+ years. **Language:** English, Arabic is desirable.

For more exciting opportunities and information, visit [www.aboutmeco.org/opportunities](http://www.aboutmeco.org/opportunities)



Stanley and Wendy were willing to let God use their unique skills and gifts

