



ARAB BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

ABTS Newsletter

March 2016

Women at ABTS and their Ministries

Just like Lydia, Mary, and Deborah before them, women equipped for ministry are essential for the spread of the Gospel and the development of strong church bodies in the Middle East and North Africa. Despite the conservative cultures Arab women serve in, they are effectively sharing the Gospel through their ministries. At ABTS, 40% of residential students and 60% of staff are female. We currently have one core female faculty member. Women at ABTS serve the Church with the same passion and commitment as their male counterparts, and this month we lift up and share the ministry testimonies of a few of the female staff, faculty, and alumni from our community.



Smyrna Khalaf, member of the Board of Trustees and lecturer, is active in family and marriage counseling ministry. She is a PhD candidate at Regent University (Virginia Beach, VA). Smyrna teaches a variety of counseling courses at ABTS with a contextual emphasis, including a popular course about the Middle Eastern family. She is also a professional counselor. She contributes to the ministry of ABTS by caring for and counseling our student families who leave their homes and extended families to study in Lebanon. Smyrna is helping develop a counseling center at her home church, Resurrection Church Beirut, to serve the local community. On the value of counseling in the Arab world, she shared: "There is so much need in our community. There is no education on what marriage is, or how to parent kids in this changing society. There is abuse and trauma, but no education on how to address it. In the Middle East, counseling is something new.

We have issues with pride and we don't like to be vulnerable or share our private issues and this inhibits people from asking for help. But we are raising awareness about counseling and more and more people are hearing about counseling and benefiting from it."

Karen Shaw is Assistant Professor of Cross-Cultural Ministry. She is also part of our Student Affairs Team, and is active in the leadership at International Community Church in downtown Beirut. Karen views the study of cross-cultural ministry as essential for the Church in our global world. "I help students think about ministry to those from different backgrounds," Karen shared. "I also teach classes about women in the Bible and in ministry. The next class I'm teaching, *Empowering Women for Ministry*, is about how men and women can best enable women in the Church to use their gifts for the Kingdom of God. Last year I taught a course on women in the Old Testament. It is always exciting for me to see both male and female students discover diversity in the fascinating personalities of the women God used throughout the Bible."



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Alexandra Abou Rjeily is our Administrative and HR Manager, and a member of the ABTS leadership team. One of Alexandra's key strengths is seeing the potential in others. She encourages our staff to keep learning, to grow and invest their full potential at ABTS. Alexandra is responsible for the Sunday School ministry at her church, Faith Baptist Church in Mansourieh, and has been discipling a small group of Syrian women. She took over the Sunday School ministry after the church's pastor passed away two years ago. "We didn't have a proper Sunday School at the time, so we put a team and a program together," Alexandra shared. "We are following a curriculum on the characters of the Bible and how God performed miracles through them. We specifically chose the theme of miracles for the many Syrian children who attend our Sunday School classes. My favorite thing about this ministry is seeing the kids praying and loving God more and more. You see the lives of the children changed through Sunday School, you get to watch them discover God's love. We have started seeing the parents of the Syrian children who attended Sunday School join the congregation during the main sermon as well."



Read about the ministry of another woman in our leadership team, **Registrar Rana Wazir**, in our September 2015 newsletter, downloadable at this link: <http://bit.ly/1iON5ie> (PDF; 333 KB)



Samar Khoury, 2012 MDiv graduate, is involved in ministry both through her church and at a local Christian K-12 school where she is the school counselor and a Bible teacher. She prepares the curriculum for her 8 weekly Bible classes from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. "As a school counselor I spend a lot of time one-on-one with the students – which is great! I love my job! I am also part of a big team of people from my church Resurrection Church Beirut involved in ministry among Syrian refugees. I witness to, disciple, and train Syrian women, with a special focus on training 7 women who are each leading a life group for other Syrian women. One of these groups has 25 female members! We used to lead the life groups ourselves but with the growth in our church, mostly consequent to the Syrian and Iraqi refugees influx, now we train the leaders. This brings more fruit and we are entrusting them to serve just like we were encouraged by our leaders to do so. And they are being led by the same Holy Spirit and so they are growing and discovering. They are able to grow and discover what God put in them. Everything that ABTS embedded in me I put into the women that I disciple. ABTS's philosophy that practical ministry and theology go hand in hand is the same philosophy I am teaching these women. I love teaching. My heart bubbles with joy when I am teaching and engaging with people about faith. Seeing people transformed and healed when they receive the Gospel, it's something else. It's beautiful."

Rola Salloum, Librarian, helps our students to find the resources they're looking for, and identify the references and books related to the topic of their research papers during the academic year. Rola is also involved in worship ministry with the Lebanese non-denominational worship band *Stronghold's*. As a pianist, Rola participates in the concerts, track recordings, and weekly practices. "We try to reach out to young people who are not active in churches or are not believers with our contemporary music through concerts, CDs, music videos, and a weekly TV show on a Christian satellite channel. People bring their friends, who are not believers, to our events. We have heard over and over again how God used our music to touch people's hearts. I love this ministry from the bottom of my heart and hearing stories of how our music brings people closer to God is what makes all of us in Stronghold's committed and happy."



ABTS Mission: To serve the Church in our region as it realizes its Biblical mission of having Christ acknowledged as Lord by offering specialized learning resources and equipping faithful men and women for effective service.



Christina Khamis, Events & Marketing Coordinator, assists in managing our conference center and guesthouse. She has been involved in ministry with vulnerable kids through ABTS's sister ministry, [Baptist Children and Youth Ministry \(BCYM\)](#), since 2013. She volunteers in the summer camps and the year-round weekend camps BCYM hosts for vulnerable children – Iraqi and Syrian refugees and disadvantaged Lebanese. Serving

these children can be difficult. "Vulnerable kids aren't always easy to handle and you always have to be energetic and creative even on very little sleep. But these children appreciate these programs so much and are so grateful for us. I'm able to do something for these Syrian refugees since I can't help them in other ways. We bring a source of fun and love and the message of the Gospel into these communities who have been forced to leave their homes. For kids who have lost their parents we highlight that we are all children of God and He is our Father. We create a sense of community and family for these kids who have lost both."



Christina in action!

Join Us In Prayer

Please pray for all Church servants in our region—both men and women. This is a difficult time for the Arab world and there seems to be no end in sight to the conflict and economic paralysis. Praise God for the way He is redeeming the hurt, pain, and conflict. He is turning these bad circumstances into opportunities for people to hear the Gospel for the first time in their lives, and to draw them to Him.

Our Sudanese students have asked for prayers for pastors detained in Sudan for many months, and other pastors just recently detained, including some of our graduates. Some information is [available at this link](#). Pray for the safety of ministry leaders in Sudan as they seek to serve His Church in a hostile contexts.

Pray for the spread of the Gospel which we firmly believe offers the hope, the truth, and the way to peace in this turbulent region. Pray that God sends volunteers and servants, equipped for ministry, to fulfill His Great Commission.

Keep praying for peace to return to Syria, for the bloodshed to stop, for the Church to become an agent of reconciliation, healing, and hope in Syria and among the Syrian refugees all over the world. Please pray for our upcoming [Middle East Consultation \(20-24 June 2016\)](#) where we will explore Christ-centered responses to the growing refugee crisis in the Middle East, Europe, and beyond.

Please pray for our graduating students to know the will of God for their lives after graduation in June 2016. This period is difficult for most of them as they seek to discern where God is leading them next.

We thank God for the amazing women in this newsletter who are serving Him faithfully and modeling His deep love for neglected and disadvantaged communities.

The Middle East Bible Outreach (MEBO) is a 501(c)(3) corporation based in Atlanta, GA, that coordinates efforts among our US friends and partners to generate awareness and much needed financial gifts and prayers to support the work of ABTS. To learn more, visit: www.mebo.org.

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