



# Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

## كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

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### Faculty Doctoral Students Pursue Context Driven Research

*Over the last decade, ABTS has steadfastly pursued faculty development. The sustainability and growth of ABTS is dependent on developing local, Arab (and Arabic-speaking) theologians and educators to equip leaders for the Church in the Arab world. Eight faculty members are currently pursuing doctoral degrees. They all lecture in Arabic – including non-Arab faculty. Our faculty maintain and grow the curriculum, and adapt it to the evolving needs of the Church in the Arab world. Each of our eight faculty members pursuing doctoral degrees have chosen subjects and thesis topics relevant to our region and context to better serve the Church in our region. Read on to learn more about our faculty doctoral students and their vision for their degrees.*

**Elie Haddad**, ABTS President, is pursuing his PhD at the International Baptist Theological Study Centre at the Free University in Amsterdam. His topic is Missional Ecclesiology, looking at how the local churches in Lebanon can become missional sent-out communities that take the Gospel outside the four walls of the church into the surrounding communities. This is a very relevant topic, not just for Lebanon, but for the entire Arab world as the Church seeks to rediscover its Kingdom role in the region. The topic of the Missional Church has become a key module in our curriculum.



**Smyrna Khalaf**, Member of the ABTS Board of Trustees and adjunct faculty member, is currently working on her PhD in “Counselor Education and Supervision” at Regent University in the United States. She completed her main courses this summer during a residency in Virginia as well as preparations for her dissertation. In addition to teaching courses on counselling with a focus on the Arab family structure and context, Smyrna is a marital counselor and has been working to set up marriage counseling at her home church, Resurrection Church, for her fellow Lebanese as well as Syrian refugees. She is pursuing a PhD to better prepare her to serve Lebanon and the region by teaching and training counselors who can impact many lives during these critical times.

**Walid Zailaa**, Lecturer in Old Testament and Head Librarian, is roughly halfway done with his Doctor of Ministry (DMin) degree through Acadia Divinity College in Canada. His thesis, “Beyond Literacy in Theological Education: The Story of the Old Testament in Oral Contexts”, is extremely relevant in training literate theological students and leaders to narrate the story of the Old Testament in oral societies in the Middle East and North Africa. Additionally, his research topic is relevant to the current refugee crisis, helping the Church in Lebanon better serve the spiritual needs of the refugees – many of whom come from traditional oral backgrounds – as well as their children whose unfortunate lack of education is creating a new generation of an oral society.



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**Would you consider supporting our new Arabic online degree program?** We already have more than 40 students in the program. The numbers are increasing very rapidly because of the vast need for equipping for ministry. Our students come from Mauritania all the way to the Arabian Peninsula. \$360 would cover the cost of one course per student. Contact Partnerships Manager [Wissam al-Saliby](#) today to know how you can contribute.



**Emad Botros**, Lecturer in Old Testament, is an ABTS alumnus (2003) of Egyptian origin. He is pursuing a PhD at McMaster Divinity College in Canada, with a focus on the Old Testament and Biblical Theology. His goal in this degree is to develop a Biblical theology of the Old Testament, focusing on the Book of Jonah, in the context of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Emad hopes to equip and empower students with sufficient tools to develop their own understanding of the Old Testament and to learn how to apply it in their MENA ministry contexts. On a personal level, he hopes this degree will allow him to sharpen his research skills, improve his ability to interpret the Bible, and deepen his knowledge of the message of the Old Testament. “My dream is to revive the message of the Old Testament in the life of the ABTS students, as well as in the church, and to help Christians as they make the message of the Old Testament relevant to our Middle Eastern context today,” Emad shared. “This dream will be accomplished through equipping and training future leaders from the Arab World to teach and preach the Word of God from the Old Testament, and through writing commentaries on the Old Testament specifically for our Middle Eastern/Islamic context.”



**Bassem Melki**, Dean of Students and Lecturer in Music and Worship, is currently working on his PhD through the International Graduate School of Leadership in the Philippines, in partnership with Peacemaking Ministries. Through this PhD he seeks to grow in his understanding of Arab culture and contextual biblical peacemaking in the hopes of influencing the Church in the Arab world and bringing effective change and healing. His aspiration is for the theory in this dissertation to be the new basic grounds for developing better conflict resolution skills, based on biblical principles, to bring transformation on the path of *shalom*: restoring joy, peace, and abundant life to a war-torn, sin-torn culture.

**Caleb Hutcherson**, Lecturer in Historical Theology, is currently in the entry stage of a PhD in Theology through the International Baptist Theological Study Centre at the Free University in Amsterdam. “Currently, my working title is ‘Contextual Methodology in Theological Education: A Comparative and Critical Analysis of Reflective Practice in Faith Leader Training between Protestant Christians and Sunni Muslims in Lebanon,’” shares Caleb. Through his planned dissertation topic, he hopes to help ABTS benefit from a deeper understanding of contextualized methodology for theological education that draws on the wider Arab cultural contexts. He hopes that his project will facilitate further inter-religious dialogue between programs of faith leader training in Lebanon. “My aim is to explore patterns of theological reflection in Islamic clerical training, which I think may have particular significance for how we go about training emerging Arab church leaders to teach and do theology for their peers,” says Caleb.



**Abed Zein El Dien**, is ABTS Online Coordinator and Lecturer in Communication Studies. He teaches courses both online and residually. Abed is working on his DMin at the Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri. His research topic is about telling the story of Christ in a non-Christian, Middle Eastern and North African context. This topic is essential for those seeking to witness and disciple believers in our region from non-Christian backgrounds.

**Mike Kuhn** teaches in our School of Theology as well as in our Master of Religion in Middle Eastern and North African studies program. Mike is also an ordained Teaching Elder of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in the US, and has authored a book titled “Fresh Vision for the Muslim World” (Intervarsity Press, 2009). He is working on his Doctorate of Philosophy (D.Phil) through the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, validated by the University of Middlesex. His research topic focuses on two ancient Christian theologians, Iliyya of Nisibis (modern-day Mardin Province, Turkey) and Ibn al-Tayyib of Baghdad, who served as role-models as faithful shepherds and intellectuals while the Church was struggling under harsh ostracism and occasional persecution from the growing influence of Islam in the region. ABTS is preparing similar servant-leaders for the Church in the Arab world, and it is his hope and prayer that our graduates will be able to defend the Christian faith with the same contextual awareness.



Finally, we want to say congratulations to two of our faculty members who recently completed their doctoral studies, Arthur Brown of the UK and Wes Watkins of the US. We are grateful for the hard work of all of our faculty members and the diverse theological knowledge with which they bless our seminary.

## In The Context of a War that Has Changed Everything, A Couple's Heart for Ministry to Children is Unwavering

For Fouad and Hiba, like countless other Syrians today, it could easily seem that everything in their lives has changed since the war began in March, 2011. The conflict has torn apart normalcy and peace for families from every demographic of Syrian society. And in many ways life could seem unrecognizable now, if Fouad and Hiba were to pause and remember their lives in Homs before the war. And yet, for this couple currently enrolled in the Certificate of Theology program at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, some very significant things have not changed.

[Continue reading this article on the website of our US affiliate, the Middle East Bible Outreach, MEBO.](#) 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](http://www.mebo.org).



### Community Prayers Request

**Milad, second-year Egyptian student:** "I would love prayers for the academic challenges I am currently going through, as well as for me and my wife to balance better our studies and family life. Also please pray for us as we seek to deal with children in our ministry in wise and creative ways, to bring out the best in them. We are praying to enhance our talents and gifts here at ABTS so that we may be a blessing to all the children in the Arab world."

**Alexandra Abou Rjeily, HR Manager:** "Please pray that we recruit the right people sent by God to be part of our ABTS family, and to pray for greater financial sustainability as we seek to serve His Church in our region."

**Rabih Hasbani, Translation Coordinator:** "Please pray with us for the new [ALPS branch](#) in Mansourieh, may God lead the work and people in charge for smooth development and rapid progress."

**Dr. Perry Shaw, Acting Academic Dean:** "One of the greatest challenges our students have is to find balance in life – between academics, family life, personal relationship with God, and physical exercise. Pray that students might know God's grace and strength in finding this balance."

**Fouad, third-year Sudanese Student:** "We need to join hands in prayer for the Church in Sudan and to pray for the protection and wisdom of the leaders so they are able to bring again the Church in Sudan together under one vision and one mission."

**Elie Haddad, ABTS President:** "Please pray for the ongoing assessment project being done by our Academic Team. They have traveled recently to Tunisia and Jordan to assess the impact of our seminary on the Arab world and help us at ABTS become more effective."

**Maya, first-year Syrian student:** "Please pray for the situation in Syria, we declare peace upon this land in Jesus' name. On a personal level, please pray for my relative Hanadi who got into a car accident and is now in a coma."

**Abram, third-year Sudanese student:** "Please pray for the Compassionate Care Ministry which serves Syrian refugee children in East Lebanon. In our upcoming visit, we will be distributing Easter gifts to the refugees and we ask for the Lord's protection and guidance, more volunteers for this ministry, and that the people we are meeting open their hearts to the Lord."