Arab Baptist Theological Seminary
كليّة اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

June 2016

Community Updates: Accreditation, Children's Library, Refugee Ministry and More

In May 2016, the Middle East Association for Theological Education MEATE accredited all our programs. This was the outcome of the MEATE accreditation visit to ABTS in October 2015. Except for our new ABTS Online degree, all our programs are now accredited by both the European Evangelical Accrediting Association and MEATE. This is yet another milestone for ABTS. We will apply for the accreditation of our online degree once we have graduates from this new program.

This year, the Saturday children's library was a new addition to our campus activities. Staff, students and volunteers read stories in English to the children of students, faculty and staff, simultaneously translated to Arabic. On Saturday, June 4, we concluded this academic year's children's library at ABTS, and the children returned the books that they had borrowed. The children's library will re-start again in October 2016.

Multiple voices from ABTS were featured in the second issue of the InSights Journal for Global Theological Education. Master of Religion faculty Rupen Das wrote on the "Relevance and Faithfulness: Challenges in Contextualizing Theological Education." Caleb Hutcherson wrote "Toward Theological Integration Using Action Research: Reflections from an Arab Context." And Elie Haddad wrote a review of the book, "Serving Communities: Governance and the Potential of Theological Schools." The complete issue can be downloaded at this link (PDF, 1.26 MB).

Members of our community - students, staff and faculty - spent half a day on Friday June 10 packaging food portions that we will be distributing on June 18 to over one hundred Syrian refugee families living in tents in Eastern Lebanon. We are grateful for the opportunity that God gave us to serve the refugees in Lebanon during the month of Ramadan. This distribution is part of the student-led compassionate care ministry for refugee families and children, in partnership with Heart for Lebanon and the relief arm of the Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development. Please pray that the refugees see God's love through our actions.

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Graduating Students: Journey at ABTS and Vision for Ministry

This is the last month of the 2015-2016 academic year at ABTS. More than twenty students will finish this phase of their race and are ready to be launched as equipped servants for God's glory. They include our very first group of graduates of the Master of Religion in Middle Eastern and North African studies. As the long awaited graduation approaches, which will take place on the 26th of June, graduating students share with us what they've acquired, the obstacles that they have overcome, their vision for the future, and their prayer requests.

Elias, Lebanese, Bachelor of Theology | "In the past, I just wanted to be involved in church planting and that's it. My vision was broad and unspecific. The more I got involved in the ministry and the more I studied at ABTS, I understood my calling deeply as my gifts unfolded little by little. As for now, I feel that my calling is to see churches emerge in the Lebanese community, especially in areas where there aren't many. In the *Empowering Servant Leaders* module, my last module at ABTS, a key principle in leadership is empowerment. I began giving authority, delegating, to other people to minister in the home group we are leading, thus delegating them to grow in their leadership and skills." Elias is currently serving at *Jesus the Prince of Peace Church* in Sabtieh, Beirut, is a member of the worship team and of church planting team.

"After I graduate this month, I will be in full-time ministry. Pray that the Lord will guide me so I may be a good influence to others in my ministry in Lebanon."

Student from an African country, Bachelor of Theology | "During my stay in Lebanon, I was a worship leader at the Resurrection Church (photo below). I also led discipleship classes with a home group through this church and another home group in Eastern Lebanon. I have also been serving at our expat community church through leading the worship and through preaching. Upon graduation and return to my country, my vision is to lead a home-groups ministry and plant churches through my Presbyterian church. When I first came to ABTS, I used to see myself as a worship leader only. I led the worship time and added a few brief messages between songs. Now, I see God calling me to play a larger role – whether it is in preaching, in exhortation or with the young adults. I realized that I want to be part of the church's plan in becoming missional, that I want to be a living example of what I preach."

"Pray that God's will be done in my life, and to be able to use what I learned in the face of the challenges that will be awaiting me in my country."

Patricia, Lebanese, Post-Graduate Certificate in Theology | "I work in Lebanon with an organization that supports church planting in the Middle East, North Africa and Asia. In the past, my husband and I helped a local Lebanese church to start a Bible school, and a Sri Lankan church through preaching and teaching. Today, we are pastoring two Filipino churches in Lebanon - the Living Word Church in Beirut and the King of Kings Church in Mount Lebanon. We are training elders from these two churches with the hope to see these two churches running on their own in a few years. The one-year program at ABTS was the best training I have ever undergone in my life. It has helped me in my practical life, and I can study and communicate the Bible better to others. I would like to pursue my theological education further in the future. I have used the things I learned in the Hermeneutics course to write a course in order to train the Filipino church elders to preach exegetically."

"Pray for my upcoming trip to America, now that I'll be travelling with my baby girl. Also, pray for guidance in the ministry, for God to open my eyes so I may deal wisely with the people."

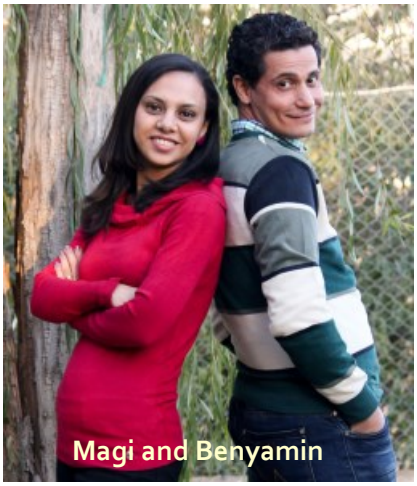
Student, Egyptian, Bachelor of Theology | "When I first came to the Lord, I used to be very confrontational with those who belong to unreached people groups, always trying to prove them wrong. I also had trouble communicating with the churches around me, and because I was generally dissatisfied with society, I thought I should verbally attack them. After I came to ABTS, however, I learned how to effectively communicate with those around me, especially with the unreached. Another thing that changed for me when I came here is my concept of leadership. Because I was an authority figure, I used to think that leadership is merely a form of

Would you consider supporting the equipping of future leaders for the Arab Church? We invite you to partner with us in fulfilling our mission of serving the Church in the Arab world, by providing scholarship support to one of our students. Contact Partnerships Manager Wissam al-Saliby today to know how you can contribute.

authority. Now I know that a leader walks among the people; he is someone who inspires those around him. Upon return to Cairo, I will start a home group ministry, building on home groups that I've already established."

"I need prayers for my ministry in Egypt as there are difficulties awaiting me. There is a need for more servants at my church and more financial aid. Also, pray that the Lord will continue the work He has begun. I hope I'll be in communication with the ABTS staff and faculty members even after I leave."

Benyamin, Egyptian, Bachelor of Theology | Benyamin, who is married to fellow student Magi, shares with us some things about his final year here. "I've learned more about practical leadership, handing over ministries, encouraging others and being like Jesus in my dealing with them. I've also enjoyed studying about biblical models of leaders, their weak and strong points. I now also have a vision of what kind of leader I'll be after I graduate. I pray I'll be influential in any place God chooses to place me. I hope to broaden my horizons by reaching out for the larger society through my local church, The Revival of Holiness Church in Sohag, which lies on the west bank of the Nile. My passion is to minister to young adults, and to contribute to forming a generation of Jesus followers. As for my ministry in Eastern Lebanon, I will be handing it over to the group that will come after."

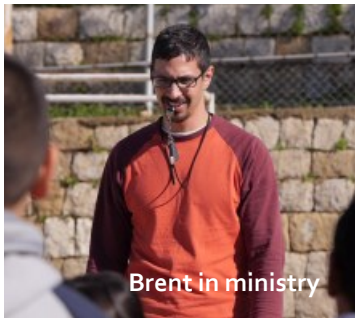

Magi and Benyamin

"I need your prayers that I may be in God's will, that God will open doors for ministry so I may be a blessing to others whether it be young adults or any other group I might serve. I also need prayers for the challenges my family and I may face, for my wife's ministry and for our kids."

Magi, Egyptian, Master of Divinity | Magi will be the student speaker for the School of Theology at the graduation ceremony. She thinks it's really good that the last module she took in April and May was on leadership, for it really helped in equipping her for the ministry that is to come after graduation. Magi has a passion for counseling. She hopes that she can minister to others through counseling in the future if she gets the chance to major in this field. "I've been raised in a society that teaches us to see things from only one angle. At ABTS, I met people coming from different churches and social backgrounds, and I realized that there is more than one way for looking at things. That taught me to be open to others' opinions, and I am so thankful for that. I have also learned that ministry is not only a concept you hear about in sermons but is rather a way of living in everything I do, wherever I am."

"Please pray for me and my two boys because everything will be new to us once we go to Cairo. Pray that all we have learned here will be invested in our country."

Brent, Arab-American, Master of Religion (MRel) in Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) studies | Brent Hamoud is an American of Arab descent who has been here in Lebanon for nine years. He is now working with Dar Al Awlad (Kids Alive Lebanon) serving at-risk children through residential, educational and care center programs. Now that he has completed the MRel degree program, Brent says, "The MRel deepened the understanding of my ministry context by examining the complexities of the MENA region within the dimensions of God's kingdom. The most surprising module for me was Cultures of the MENA region because of its emphasis on social science field research. The course provided opportunities to engage people in new ways, and it contributed to further discovery and awareness of my own personal vision. My vision is to model the gospel by serving a place that nurtures the marginalized, forges relationships across social and cultural lines, delivers practical services, shares the hope of Christ's love and provides onlookers with a glimpse of God's kingdom."


Brent in ministry

"Please pray that my graduate studies will help me take advantage of opportunities to build up the Church as it provides witness of Christ."

Chris, American, MRel in MENA studies | Chris is living with his wife in Tyre, Lebanon, where they work as church planters. Chris believes that "completing the MRel program is very satisfying because it has been a challenge to pursue my education while continuing to work in a growing ministry. The MRel program has helped me to be much more effective as a minister and church planter. The Islam module was an excellent opportunity to critically examine Islam in a setting where people genuinely love Muslims. I was surprised at how much I enjoyed the MENA Christianity module! It was a brilliant idea to have it taught by a group that included an Orthodox Priest. The module that impacted my ministry the most was the economics and politics module. The material that Rupen Das taught about project management and proposal development is without doubt the single most useful set of lessons I have ever taken."

"Please pray for us going forward as we look to our ministry future. Many of the things I learned in the MRel program are helping me to see more clearly God's purpose in our ministry here in the Middle East."