Arab Baptist Theological Seminary
كليّة اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

December 2016

Middle East Consultation 2017
The Church in Disorienting Times: Leading Prophetically through Adversity

We live in disorienting times. This is a reality for the Church in many parts of the world today, not the least of which is the Middle East. Many factors, both historical and social, have reduced the church to the status of a minority, in which persecution and hopelessness have become a reality for many. How then must our theology inform our response?

June 19 to 23, ABTS' Institute of Middle East Studies will organize the 14th annual Middle East Consultation on **The Church in Disorienting Times: Leading Prophetically through Adversity**. MEC 2017 participants will seek to discern a biblical framework that avoids both self-victimization and triumphalism and encourages the church to prophetically embrace adversity in a way that activates growth and development rather than discouragement and stagnation.

"We have decided to adopt for MEC 2017 the concept of 'disorienting times' as a descriptor for the age in which we now live, and the challenges thereof, which the Church globally has to reckon with," shares Chief Academic Office Martin Accad. He adds, "In the four key areas of these challenges, we will be seeking to construct a prophetic voice, accompanied by appropriate local responses, in the face of these global realities. As the world grows increasingly interconnected, the challenges that the Church has been facing have become increasingly familiar to the global body of Christ. Putting our minds and hearts together this coming June as we reflect on appropriate responses to these global challenges promises to be a fascinating journey."

MEC 2017 will provide a unique platform for the MENA and global church to address the following critical issues.

Suffering and Persecution: To what extent is it helpful to distinguish between religious persecution and other forms of socio-cultural factors? To what extent is 'persecution and suffering' something that we are all 'called to'? What does it mean to be faithful to the Gospel in the face of suffering and persecution? How can the Church respond to such challenges in a biblical framework and to be united in comforting and supporting our brothers and sisters around the world?

Emigration: What can we learn from the Biblical narrative about how God would lead the Christ-following community in terms of developing a Biblical approach to emigration?

Hopelessness and Despair: How can we, as individuals and communities, move away from despondency towards vibrant and prophetic witness? And how might we bring others with us on this journey of redemption?

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MEC 2016

ABTS wishes our friends and partners a Merry Christmas and a blessed celebration of the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ!

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The Process of Minoritization: How should the Church take a long-term and multi-faith approach that recognizes that those who love God and neighbor represent the majority who can transform the mainstream narrative?

Participants and contributors will come from across the region and the world, providing a unique opportunity to reflect on the critical challenges facing the Church today. MEC 2017 will feature high-quality presentations, first-hand testimonies, pastoral responses, practical workshops, interfaith forums and opportunities for all participants to engage in robust discussion. In addition, the consultation will include time for prayer, worship and biblical reflection.

MEC 2016 in numbers

Over 200 participants

50% from the Arab world and 50% from outside of the Arab world

Over 15 nationalities present

Over 20 sponsored participants from the Arab world

Over 25 speakers and contributors

Arthur Brown, Associate Director of IMES, shared with us, "I am really excited about the upcoming Middle East Consultation. It is perhaps more apparent than ever that the Church in the Middle East is facing huge and complex challenges. Persecution, emigration, war, minoritization, hopelessness and despair are all everyday realities. And yet God has not and will not forsake His Church. How will the church lead prophetically within the context of its own pain and suffering? What role will it have in the rebuilding of the region from where our faith has its origins? And what will be the nature of the relationship between the MENA Church and the global Body of Christ? I am excited because I think MEC 2017 will provide a unique context to explore some of these big questions with local, regional and global voices, within a prayerful and hopeful environment."

Held the third week of June each year at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, the purpose of IMES' Middle East Consultation is to equip participants to respond in prophetic and Christ-like ways to the many challenges facing Christians and Muslims in and beyond the Middle East. Mark your calendars.

Registration information will be made available soon on our website www.abtslebanon.org.

Would you consider supporting a local or regional leader from the Middle East to participate in MEC 2017? MEC is a significant and transformative event for those who participate in it. We are aiming to support 20 key leaders to attend MEC 2017, people who would otherwise not be able to be with us. If you would like to sponsor MEC 2017 participants, please contact us at MEC@ABTSLebanon.org.

Prayer Requests for the Coming Year

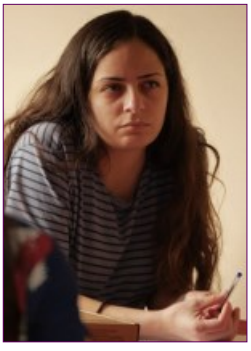
As this year reaches its end, and December paves the way for another, students, staff members and faculty share with us their prayers, aspirations and the coming challenges that might come up in 2017. Let us lift them up together in prayer, and let us pray for ABTS's ministry in 2017.

Moussa, Syrian male Online student living in Syria: Please pray for the displaced in our country. Our church, the Evangelical Baptist Church in Damascus, is ministering spiritually, emotionally and financially to nearly 700 families. Also, pray for my home visits ministry through which we visit the underprivileged, those who have lost loved ones or have lost contact with a family member because of war. May the Lord grant us the grace to be a cause of comfort and salvation in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Samia from Egypt, Diploma in Theology: Please pray for the Arab world in 2017, that wars would cease so that children may know peace. Also pray for us who are called by His name, that we may live out what we preach.

Eman from Egypt, Bachelor of Theology: May the Lord intervene further in our lives and give us ears to listen. Pray also for my ministry so I may know how to better deal with the underprivileged youth of Egypt and other difficult societal groups.

Male student from Sudan, Bachelor of Theology: Pray that Sudan would be open to ministry and we would have opportunities to start new ministries. I also pray that the persecution in Sudan would grow less in the coming year.



Farah from Lebanon, Bachelor of Theology: May the Lord use my life experiences for good, so that all I went through – the lessons learned from my past broken relationships – will not go in vain. Pray also that, during the coming year, the Lord would help me in my studies. Sometimes the academic requirements can be a cause of stress, but with His help, I will be able to attain my theological education successfully.

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Sylva, Syrian Kurdish Online Student living in the Middle East: We are doing a ministry in a non-believing area, and the Lord grants us the needed heavenly wisdom to deal with various situations. Our center was closed for a period of three months, but the Lord has brought forth our justice like the noonday sun. Please pray that the Lord would protect us. Now that our team has become larger, pray with us for the needed wisdom to lead it. Also, pray for my engagement. Thank you, and may the Lord bless you.

George, Syrian Online student living in Syria: We are now in the process of moving from Abu Dhabi back to Syria. Please pray for us as a family to see God's will clearly.

Furat, Iraqi female Online student living in Iraq: Please pray for my ministry in Iraq and the challenges I face as a servant of the gospel. Pray that my life may be consecrated for Christ, to be used by Him more and that He may give me a spirit of wisdom and revelation to know Him deeper on a daily basis and to change into His likeness. Also, pray that I will continue studying all the courses till the very end so I may benefit from them.

Youssef, Syrian male Online student living in Canada: Pray that peace would spread all over Syria, so we may return to our country and spread the light of Christ, reconciling the people and rebuilding what Satan had destroyed. Pray also for those who are persecuted for Christ's sake in my country and around the world. And please pray for all my family members and especially my son, Alexander, who will be born into this world with a heart defect. He will have to undergo a delicate surgery after five days of His birth, but I have faith that the Lord will heal my son and use him for His glory.

Roula Al Azzi, Executive Assistant: For the coming year, I pray the Lord would allow ABTS ministry to further prosper and to witness the hand of God as it accomplishes and executes all its goals. Pray that God's will would be fulfilled through ABTS and that he would help it to overcome all the challenges that may arise as it performs its ministry. Also, pray with me that I might have more time to study without interruptions or diversions.

Marcelle Saad, Students Affairs Assistant: Pray for our Student Affairs team be able to provide our first-year students with a family atmosphere as they face the challenge of leaving their homeland and loved ones and coming to a place with so many different cultures. Also, pray for God to provide to some of our students who are going through financial difficulties.

Alexandra Abou Rjeily, Human Resources Manager: Pray that God will provide for ABTS as we seek to explore how we can sustain our ministry. Also pray with us for finding the right people to recruit and to join our family. We are currently looking for someone to fill the job position of an accountant; kindly pray for us that the Lord will send the right person.

Mike Kuhn, Faculty: We will start the Discipleship module in March. Pray for this module so that it may benefit the students and influence them positively.

Emad Botros, Faculty: Praise the Lord for being able to grant visas for the families. They are all here now. Pray for the first-year students that they will have a smooth transition and that they can adapt easily to the culture at ABTS. Our students come from different backgrounds. As they get to know each other and learn about other cultures, please pray for unity, a spirit of acceptance and peace in relationship among our students.

Arthur Brown, Assistant Director of IMES: We pray that our 2017 Middle East Consultation will provide a safe place for the regional and global church to seek God's heart for His church in the Middle East, and that participants will feel called and inspired to live out their prophetic calling as a result. Please pray for our growing Peacebuilding Initiative team, for wisdom and discernment, as we seek to expand our work and our team in this program.

Fadi Salamoun, Facilities Manager: The pressure of work and ministry is increasing to an unprecedented degree. We are currently furnishing new classrooms after months of work, and plan to move classes to a new location in January 2017. Please pray that the Lord would give me wisdom and strength to lead our facilities team and to stay on top of our work.