



ARAB BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

ABTS Newsletter

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MENA Islam Explores New Paradigms for Ministry in the Middle East

Early in 2015, ABTS welcomed students from its Master of Religion in Middle Eastern and North African Studies program (MRel) as they arrived for the residential portion of the module on Islam. The majority of the MRel in MENA Studies program is administered online, ideal for students serving full-time in and beyond the Middle East. However, for two weeks during each module, students gather in Lebanon for specialized lectures, discussions, and field visits.

This past January, following a period of daily Bible study and discussion, students participated in sessions exploring different models of Muslim-Christian engagement, Qur'anic studies, Islamic law and theology, and the diversity of Islamic practice, led by scholars of Islam Colin Chapman, Martin Accad, and Fouad Masri. Special sessions taught by both faculty and guest lecturers examined topics exploring women in Islam, jihad, peacebuilding strategies, and Christ-centered witness, among others. In the afternoons, students experienced Lebanese hospitality as they visited sites throughout the country, including an orphanage run by a Shi'ite Muslim foundation, a Sunni mosque in the southern city of Sidon for Friday prayers, organizations devoted to interfaith coexistence and cooperation, and a

variety of local NGOs and Christian ministries.

Fouad Masri, Holistic Formation Faculty for MENA Islam and founder/director of the Crescent Project, shared with us about his teaching experience: "I am teaching Islam as a religion and as a way to understand Muslims, showing students effective ways to communicate the Gospel. Most of our students are from different church groups that are ministering in Muslim communities – some in Europe, some in America, some in the Middle East. This study will help them be more effective in building bridges with Muslims and reflecting the teachings of Christ in word and deed."

"We have had great interaction within the classroom and wonderful communication with Muslim and Christian leaders who are involved in dialogue and witness as we visited their locations. We have gone to different places in Beirut, Sidon, and tried to go to Zahle but the roads were blocked after a recent snowfall. During our trip to Sidon, we visited with a local Imam. We tried to pay attention to the spiritual needs, and were impressed by the Imam's openness to building bridges between Christians and Muslims. This challenged and convicted us to continue building bridges of love."
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Martin Accad teaching an MRel module



Sheikh Muhammad Abu Zayd



Fouad Masri

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Martin Accad, IMES Director and Support Faculty for MENA Islam, added: "This year's residency for the MENA Islam module was an excellent experience for all involved. As a result of interesting guest speakers, faculty lectures, site visits, and in-depth conversation, students were able to explore different sides to a religion whose influence permeates the societies with which they are seeking to engage in their ministry. For example, we brought a local Sunni sheikh and a female Muslim scholar to give their perspectives on key aspects of their religion, and to give our students an opportunity to speak openly with them, asking

questions for the sake of furthering understanding and interfaith communication. God was at work through this residency program. Our students learnt about Islam and about how Christians can interact with Muslims or those from other religions. Our students are taking the skills and knowledge they gain through this program and serving as effective agents of transformation in and beyond this region. I ask that you pray that the program accomplishes what it intends to do in the lives of our students, that they would be transformed to become more effective witnesses of God's Kingdom." ♦

Q&A with MRel Student Marcos Amado, Brazil

What is your ministry? I was a missionary outside of Brazil for 23 years in North Africa, Southern Spain and the UK. Today I teach missions at a theological seminary in San Paolo, Brazil, and I am the director for the Latin America Lausanne Movement. Additionally I recently started a missiological center in association with Servants of Christ, a seminary in Brazil.

How do you relate to ABTS's mission to serve the Church in this region? Some of the Brazilians that we are training will end up in this part of the world. We can help them to have a more realistic understanding of the Church, Islam, and the Middle East. Many people from Latin America leave for ministry without preparation. They don't understand the culture, the people, the economy, or the history. By helping people to be more prepared, we are helping the Church in this part of the world.

How has your experience been at the MRel residency so far? This is my second module. We



spend 10 weeks before each module residency reading more than 1000 pages about the topic we are studying. Therefore, we come to the residency with a lot of information already in our minds. During the residency we can learn more and get answers to the

questions we have. It's not only theoretical. We went to a mosque, to a Shi'ite Muslim neighborhood, and to an orphanage led by Muslims. This contact with the reality on the ground is helpful for us to understand better the complexities of this part of the world. During my first module, MENA Christianity, we visited several different areas of Lebanon; we traveled South and North. Just seeing the variety of Christians in Lebanon is surprising and helps us understand the country. These site visits highlight the fact that we learn a lot of theory as students, but at the same time there is a practical aspect. I use all the knowledge I learn through the MRel program in the courses I give back home at the theological seminary where I teach and in churches and missions training centers throughout Brazil. ♦

The MRel in MENA Studies program focuses on providing a strong theoretical understanding of the region and the issues that it faces, combined with an emphasis on developing applied skills needed to work in the region and among MENA communities worldwide. It is based upon a strong theological and Biblical framework in that each module weaves scripture and theology into its theory and practice and intentionally incorporates spiritual formation among students.

If you are interested in learning more about the MRel in MENA Studies program, you can visit our website at www.abtslebanon.org/mrel or email us at MRel@abtslebanon.org.

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.*

Introducing our Newest Faculty Member, Emad Botros

ABTS is pleased to announce that our Board of Trustees has just appointed Emad Botros as faculty in the Theology Department of ABTS. In parallel, our valued partner [Canadian Baptist Ministries \(CBM\)](#) has [appointed](#) Emad to be seconded to ABTS for his role as faculty. Emad and his family are currently living in Ontario, Canada, and are hoping to join us this summer if they are able to raise the necessary support.

Born and raised in Egypt, Emad came to Lebanon to study at ABTS. Almess, who was later to become Emad's wife, came from Iraq to study at ABTS. They both graduated in 2003 with Bachelors of Theology. Pursuing his calling in theological education, Emad began studying at McMaster Divinity College in Ontario, Canada. He completed his Master's degree in Christian Studies in May 2013. Emad recently taught several courses at ABTS as [visiting faculty](#). *"Lebanon, and particularly ABTS, has a special place in our hearts,"* Emad says. *"ABTS is the place where Almess and I first met, and where our love story began. ABTS was also a place where God transformed our lives, shaped our vision, and developed our skills. We know that it is time to go back and make a difference in the lives of students, mentoring them in ministry and leadership skills."*

At ABTS, Emad and his wife will mentor students in ministry and leadership skills. Almess also plans to explore ministry opportunities with Iraqi and Syrian refugees.

With regard to his academic interests, Emad explains: *"My major interest has been in the Old Testament, Biblical Theology, and Islam. My goal is to develop a biblical theology of the Old Testament in the context of the Middle East and North Africa. My research has focused above all on the intersection of the Biblical texts and the Qur'an. At McMaster Divinity College, my research focused on the intersection of the Book of Exodus and the Qur'an, with a particular interest in the Golden Calf narrative in the Book of Exodus and the Qur'an. I am currently in my second year of doctoral studies at McMaster where my current research focuses on the intersection of the Minor Prophets Corpus and the Qur'an, particularly reading the Book of Jonah in the MENA context."*

As for his academic role at ABTS, Emad told us he is excited to be *"lecturing in the areas of Old Testament and Islamic studies, an area I first fell in love with at ABTS. I will also be involved in developing resources and models for ministry in the MENA context. My dream is to revive the message of the Old Testament in the life of the ABTS students and the church, and to help Christians as they make the message of the Old Testament relevant to our Middle Eastern context today."* ♦

