



# ARAB BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

## كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

ABTS Newsletter

July 2015

## Congratulations, ABTS Class of 2015!

On June 21<sup>st</sup>, ABTS celebrated the graduation of 19 students. Speakers including Pastor Ghassan Khalaf, Pastor Charles Costa, Rev. Dr. Salim Sahiouny, Pastor Samer Batarsah, and ABTS President Elie Haddad spoke to the gathered students and community members, emphasizing the importance of educated leaders and encouraging them to educate their congregations in turn to serve effectively the Church in this region. Elia Ishak, an Egyptian student graduating with an MDiv, was selected to give a speech in which he encouraged graduating students to be permanent students of Jesus. The hall came alive as students led our guests from all over the region in a time of praise and worship. Of the 19 degrees awarded, 5 were Diploma in Theology, 2 were Certificate in Theology, 8 were Bachelor of Theology, and 4 were Master of Divinity. [Continue reading this article on our website www.abtslebanon.org](#).



To learn more about the class of 2015, their ministry visions, and their time at ABTS, read our [June newsletter](#). Check out the graduation album [on Facebook](#). For Arabic speakers, Pastor Ghassan's graduation speech is available on [YouTube](#).

## MEC 2015: Identity and Belonging in the Middle East and North Africa

We praise God for a blessed and fruitful Middle East Consultation, thanks to the hard work and unified spirit of everyone at ABTS. Our Institute of Middle East Studies and our Facilities Department in particular have our praise and appreciation for the many hours they put in to making this event a success. This year's consultation, *Discipleship Today: Identity and Belonging in the Middle East and North Africa*, attracted representatives from 28 countries, including: Algeria, Tanzania, Iraq, Bangladesh, Singapore, the Netherlands, Syria, the U.S., Romania, Lebanon, Columbia, the U.K., the Philippines, Egypt and many more.

Both keynote and regional speakers offered new insights and perspectives to this very important topic. Each day began with a daily devotion by Lebanese pastor and ABTS professor Hikmat Kashouh, whose powerful lectures on identity in a region where many Christ-followers do not come from Christian backgrounds widened the understanding of the Body of Christ for those in attendance. The MEC format emphasized sustainability and

In this Issue | Congratulations, ABTS Class of 2015! P1 | MEC 2015: Identity and Belonging in the Middle East and North Africa, P1 | In Memory of Julia Graham, P3 | Support our Mission, P3 | Prayer Requests, P3

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regional impact through twice daily round table discussions. After each workshop, participants were asked, "What struck you, what was significant for you?" and "How will you implement what you learned in your context?" This encouraged participants to make a connection between what they were learning during the consultation and their ministries.

ABTS students were heavily involved throughout the consultation. They led round table discussions, participated in panel discussions, and helped our Facilities Department with the organization and set up of the consultation. During dinner on the final evening of the consultation, several ABTS students from different countries led MEC participants in a powerful time of worship, each sharing a song from their home countries.

IMES Director Martin Accad challenged participants to ask, "How can one preserve his or her witness as salt and light in the midst of his or her non-believing family and community?" A Sudanese church leader shared with us "We have been talking about when holding on

to your identity is sinful and not sinful. In our church in Sudan we have 45 members that include Nubians, Sudanese of Egyptian origin, Sudanese of Ethiopian origin, South Sudanese, and Sudanese. As a pastor of this small but diverse community, it's important to understand identity. Our prayer is that the church accepts and embraces all Sudanese ethnicities."

"MEC continues to grow, not just in the number of participants, but in its impact," shared Elie Haddad, ABTS President. "Every year we get to wrestle with crucial issues as we actively engage in *missio Dei* in the Arab world. This year was no different. It was a rich experience and provided many challenges that have impacted our understanding, our attitudes, and our behavior."

To learn more about the MEC 2015, check out the IMES [blog](#) and view our photo [album on Facebook](#).

Read about Sosannah's journey at ABTS on the Middle East Bible Outreach (MEBO) website. [God's Workmanship: A Seminary Journey Through the Eyes of a Child](#). Sosannah's parents just graduated and returned to their ministries in Egypt.

**MEBO** is a 501(c)(3) corporation based in Marietta, 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)



**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.

## In Memory of Julia Graham

Mrs. Julia Graham, wife of the late Finlay Graham, passed away on June 17, 2015. Together, Finlay and Julia founded ABTS in 1960. Her last visit to Lebanon was in June 2010 to celebrate ABTS's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. During the event, Lebanese MP Bassem ElChab, representing the President of the Republic of Lebanon Michel Sleiman, presented Mrs. Graham with the Presidential Shield in honor of her and Dr. Finlay's contributions to our country (photo on the right).

To learn more about the life of this courageous servant of God, visit her [memorial website](#) and read this article by [Baptist Press](#). We extend our deepest condolences to the Graham family. We thank God for their decades of love and service to the Arab Church.



## Support our Mission. Please Consider Donating.

*In addition to your regular support to ABTS, please consider giving towards one of these important and urgent projects. Any contribution will make a difference.*

- \$8,000 for waterproofing of our conference center. Project due August 2015.
- \$10,000 for 20 laptops with software for first year students, to use during their studies and in their ministries upon graduation. Project due early October 2015.
- \$10,000 for the annual maintenance of student housing. Project due mid-September 2015.

*US contributions are tax-deductible. For more information, contact Partnerships Manager Wissam al-Saliby [walsaliby@abtslebanon.org](mailto:walsaliby@abtslebanon.org).*

## Prayer Requests

- An ABTS alumni and a pastor of an Evangelical Church in Khartoum, Sudan was arrested and detained briefly this month before being released on bail. The authorities destroyed part of his church and hit the pastor, sending him to the hospital. Please be praying for this pastor and his church as they live in times of persecution.
- "Please pray for my family in Syria as the situation in our hometown continues to deteriorate. My family is in danger and trying to decide if they should stay or should flee to somewhere else." (A male Syrian student)
- "My husband and I need prayers for our ministry vision trip to Turkey in August and we are facing logistical issues. Please pray that God will provide the proper finances and place to stay so we can serve the Iraqi and Syrian refugees there. Also, I would appreciate your prayers as I visit my family in Egypt this summer; we have a very strained relationship." (A female Egyptian student)
- Praise God with us for a rich and fruitful 2014-2015 academic year, and for the spiritual and academic formation it represents to all ABTS students.

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