



# ARAB BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

## كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

ABTS Newsletter

September 2015

### A “Back to School” Interview with ABTS Registrar Rana Wazir

*As autumn approaches and the 2015-2016 academic year begins, the ABTS staff and faculty have been busily preparing for the return of our students. For this month’s “back to school” newsletter, we sat down with Registrar and Admissions Coordinator Rana Wazir Zailaa to discuss our new student body for the upcoming year as well as her role as the ABTS Registrar. Rana has been our Registrar for 4 years now, initially joining ABTS as an Academic Assistant over 8 years ago.*

*What is the role of the Registrar?*

Rana: I am responsible for making sure our Theology Department and our Institute of Middle East Studies (IMES) comply with our policies. I work with Acting Academic Dean Perry Shaw and with IMES Director Martin Accad to develop the annual course offerings, set the calendars for each academic department, set up faculty contracts, collect and enter students’ grades, register students, manage transcripts, and advise the students during registration. In addition, I serve on the Admissions Committee which is made up of representatives from each of the academic departments as well as President Elie Haddad, and I oversee the graduation ceremony at the end of the academic year.

*How was the admissions process this summer?*

It has been a busy summer for our Admissions Committee! We received many, many applications this year and ultimately accepted 18 new full-time residential students. We also re-admitted 4 students, 2 married couples, who had previously completed their first year at ABTS but had taken a break from their studies. I am so excited about this group of students – we say this every year – but it’s true! We have an unusual combination of nationalities and cultures this

year. The majority of our new students are from Sudan or Syria, many of whom are married couples with young children. We also have 17 children on campus!

For our online Certificate in Ministry program, we have just accepted 7 new students for this fall term, for a total of 21 students. Finally, we have over 25 students in IMES’s Master of Religion in MENA Studies program.



Rana meeting with a student.

*What criteria do you use while reviewing applications?*

Applicants to our theology programs must demonstrate a calling and vision for ministry. We take their connection to their home church very seriously. Their home church must send them, not just recommend them, as we are ultimately training them to return to their communities for ministry.

*How does the Office of the Registrar help ABTS fulfill our mission to serve the Arab Church?*

During the admission process, we seek to identify the students with clear visions and calling to serve the Church. And once our students arrive, the many services my office provides – registration, advising, etc. – play a major role in shaping them during their time here. They are not just students to me, they are leaders, and I treat them as such.

*What is your favorite part of your job?*

Graduation and admissions are the best part of my job. At graduation, we are able to see the results of an entire year’s work. During the admission process, it is a joy to discover our applicants’ journeys of faith and ministry. When you read the new applicants’ files and conduct interviews with their churches and references, you feel like you already know them before they’ve even arrived! When they finally do arrive, I get the blessing of building on this relationship. One couple

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from Morocco we admitted several years back had a great impact on my life. We supported each other. I even took the wife to the hospital at 5 a.m. when she was in labor with their third child! It was a highlight for me to visit them and their ministry in Morocco last year.

Also I met my husband at ABTS! He is a faculty member and the ABTS Head Librarian. We have the same vision, both of our hearts are here at ABTS for the long run. Serving God together every day is beautiful.

*Do you have prayer requests for the upcoming academic year?*

As we start the 2015-2016 academic year, I ask for prayer for our students – new and continuing. Our new students face many challenges as they leave their work and ministries and raise money for plane tickets in order to come to Lebanon and



Rana cheering for Walid during the Staff vs. Students volleyball match last year.

ABTS. I ask for prayers as we seek visas for our new international students. I also ask for prayers for our returning students and for the students who will be graduating at the end of this academic year. On a personal level, I ask for prayers that I have wisdom and patience this year and that I always deal with our students with servanthood. Additionally both my husband and I are enrolled in graduate programs. I ask for prayers that we would be able to balance work, studies, ministry, and our married life!

I am grateful to God for what I have. I am finishing my Master's degree in Education Administration and I could not imagine having done it without the support of ABTS. I'm so grateful to God, my supportive husband, and the people at ABTS for the opportunity to grow in my career field to further bless the Arab Church.

## The Master of Religion in Middle Eastern and North African Studies A Scholarly Exploration of the Middle East Through Local Lenses

*"It was through my involvement in the Master of Religion (MRel), specifically the first module that I took, MENA Politics, History and Economics, that we felt that God was leading my husband and I to get involved in relief work with Syrian refugees in our area through our local church,"* said Suzie Shenkel Lahoud (27), who is now writing the final research project for the MRel. She added, *"I didn't realize before how much in my intellectual life I would sort of check my faith at the door. But the MRel program forces you to engage these issues on a personal faith level. It is really incredible to be able to rub shoulders with professors like Rupen Das, Martin Accad, Colin Chapman, really influential scholars who are there and ready to engage with you on a personal, faith, academic, and intellectual level."*

The MRel in MENA Studies is a program of ABTS's Institute of Middle East Studies. Launched in 2012, the

MRel is a flexible distance-learning program organized into modules, rather than courses, to allow for more effective multidisciplinary inquiry and learning. Today, we have more than 25 students enrolled. Instruction and learning is achieved through a combination of distance-learning technologies, which facilitate discussion and feedback, and 2-week residencies in Lebanon for each module. Based in the region, the MRel program includes extensive visits to and with local NGOs, churches, and mosques, as well as conversations and dialogues with key MENA leaders, intellectuals, and influence brokers. The program exposes students to the rich historical, cultural, and religious heritage of the region.

The next MRel module, MENA Christianity, will begin October 12. Facilitated by IMES Director Martin Accad, MENA Christianity seeks to develop in students a deep appreciation for and understanding of the practices of

**The Middle East Bible Outreach (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). MEBO's new mailing address is: 4780 Ashford Dunwoody Road, Suite A 540 PMB 472, Atlanta, GA 30338-5504

**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.*

the Christian East, as well as a passionate desire to engage and interact positively, creatively, and in mutual trust with the Christians of the MENA region.

Martin Accad shared with us: *“We want our students to become very knowledgeable in their understanding of the Christian communities of the region – not just the Muslim communities. Given that the relationships between Protestants*

*and Eastern Christians have been tense historically, we are trying to equip new leaders who can set a new precedent and develop positive relationships with the Church of the East. Also, understanding the nature of the relationship between Eastern Christianity and Islam during the first thousand years of Islam helps us understand the background of current realities – there are lessons and models and warnings from this period that are useful to the Church today.”*

We currently have students from a diverse number of countries such as the US, the UK, the Netherlands, South Korea, Egypt, Lebanon, and Brazil. One of our Brazilian students is heavily involved in missions in the Arab world. Upon completion of the previous module, MENA Islam, he shared with us: *“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. 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.”*

This year, the European Evangelical Accrediting Association accredited the MRel degree program as an Academic Master. We are grateful for this milestone, and we pray that our educational programs continue to transform leaders called to serve God and His Church in the Arab world.

For more information about the MRel, please visit our website [www.abtslebanon.org/MRel](http://www.abtslebanon.org/MRel)

FLOW OF THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM												YEAR 1	
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	
<b>Orientation Module</b> (Expectations and Research Methods)  Short online module before a student enrolls in their first module	Oct – Dec 10 weeks Pre-Residency Online			Jan – Mar 10 weeks Post-Residency Online			April – June 10 weeks Pre-Residency Online			July – Sept 10 weeks Post-Residency Online			<b>Language &amp; electives</b>  <b>18 Credits</b>  Mutually-agreed proficiency to be acquired over the two years
	January Residency (2 weeks)						June – July Residency (2 weeks)						
	MENA Islam						MENA History, Politics and Economics						

FLOW OF THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM												YEAR 2	
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	
<b>Orientation &amp; Assigning of Mentor for Final Project</b>  Half day during the last module before the final project	Oct – Dec 10 weeks Pre-Residency Online			Jan – Mar 10 weeks Post-Residency Online			April – June 10 weeks Pre-Residency Online			July – Sept 10 weeks Post-Residency Online			<b>Final Project</b>  <b>24 Credits</b>  Within one year of completion of all four modules
	January Residency (2 weeks)						June – July Residency (2 weeks)						
	MENA Christianity						MENA Cultures						

\*No module is a prerequisite for another. You may enter the program at any time bearing in mind each module is offered every 2 years.

### Prayer Requests

- We ask for prayer that our new academic year will be fruitful and that God will use ABTS in the lives of the new students. As the new students move to ABTS from several Arab countries, they will face many challenges. They have to leave their work, their homes, their extended families, and their ministries, raise money for plane tickets, and prepare to move to a new country. For most of our new students, this will be the first time they leave their home countries. Please pray that God gives them strength and grace.
- Also, please join us in praying that God facilitates the visa and residency procedures for all our new international students and for their children.

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