



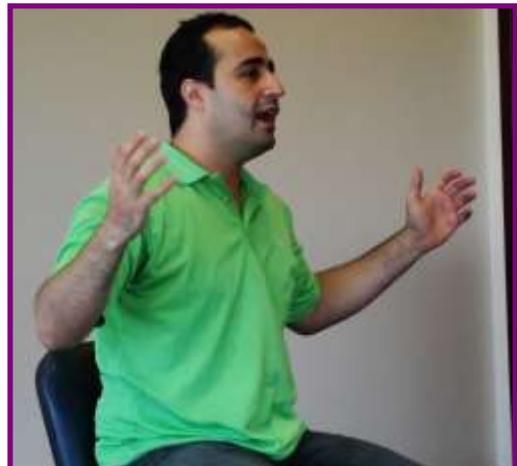
### Challenges of Theological Education in the Middle East

Three of our Lebanese faculty, Abed Zieneldine, Martin Accad and Walid Zailaa, answer our question about the challenges of theological education in the Middle East. They briefly share how ABTS's approach is playing a role in overcoming these challenges in order to equip leaders that can better serve the church in the Arab World.

**Walid Zailaa, Lecturer in the Old Testament** | For a long time in the Middle East theological education has been thought of as the "Ivory Tower", where theologians are disconnected from the daily life and concerns of people. However, this engrained allegation has been experiencing a gradual shift. This is where ABTS is playing an important role in reconciling the two poles of Theology and Church in the Middle East. Throughout the courses students discover that theological education is not merely knowledge, it is theology that can be put into practice and the training that servants need to better serve the church. Both theological education and church are like a railway with two lines going side by side to keep the society on the right track.

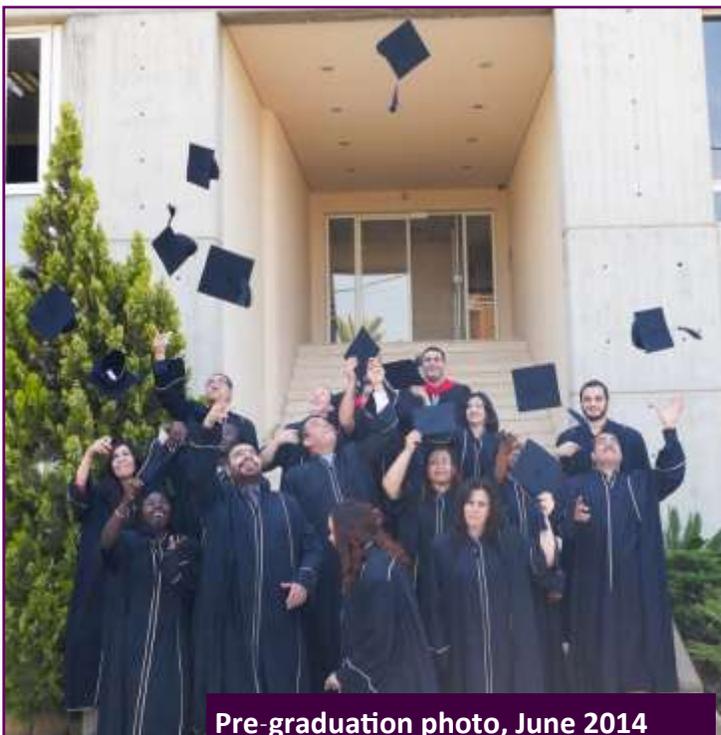


**Abed Zieneldine, teacher of Communication and Introduction to Greek language courses** | Holistic Christian education in its transformational aspect is a must in ministry. As Micheal J. Anthony puts it, "transformational Christian education is a way of educating where the scripture is dominant in such a way that changes the lives of the learners, teaching them to follow Jesus as their example." Educators, as well as ministers, ought to strive to help their learners and congregations know their Bible, *(Continue reading on page 2)*



(Continued from page 1) apply its principles in different contexts, and understand God in a personal relationship. In the Middle East, theological education should adapt to the growing number of non-Christian background believers who need theological training. I believe that the academic team at ABTS is putting significant effort to meet these challenges, and adapt the curriculum accordingly. For example, dialog with non-Christians aims first to build relations instead of *convincing and convicting*; ABTS trains on building bridges and tearing down walls in a Middle-Eastern context and culture.

**Martin Accad, Associate Professor of Islamic Studies** | Theological education in our Middle Eastern context faces many challenges, however we can benefit from these challenges to shift our approach to theological teaching. Students come with the assumption that theological formation is only for the service of the church, but we are going beyond that traditional linear approach to theological education, by helping students realize that they are being trained for leading the church in the service and transformation of society. We are also helping students move from a defensive and survivor mode, feeling like a minority in a Muslim majority, to a sense of belonging and leadership in society and the communities around them. Through theological training students are adopting a more positive attitude towards their broader communities and societies in a way that leads the Church in the MENA region to a new level of leadership.



Pre-graduation photo, June 2014

### June @ ABTS

*June is the most eventful month of the academic year at ABTS. As you are reading this newsletter, the Middle East Consultation 2014 is running with 160 participants from across the Middle East and from all over the world. On Sunday 22nd June, we will be celebrating the graduation of 17 of our students. On June 23, the Christianity Module Residency of the Master of Religion in Middle East and North African Studies begins. Read about these events and more in our July newsletter, on our website and on*

*[imeslebanon.wordpress.com](http://imeslebanon.wordpress.com)*

**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.

## Students' ministry among Syrian Refugee Children in Zahle

We praise the Lord for another blessed year for the compassionate care ministry which is run by our students among Syrian children in Zahle's informal refugee camps. Zahle is located in the Bekaa valey, East of Lebanon, and close to the Syrian border.

The ministry team was able to reach out to more than 180 children with the message of God's love. At the end of June, the team of students will return to their home countries for summer. They will be taking with them encouraging God stories and life-changing experiences from the refugee camps.

**Noha**, 2<sup>nd</sup> year student and team leader said: "We learned a lot from this ministry and from the children, above all we learned how to be thankful in all circumstances. We also learned how important it is to put the challenges of the ministry before God as one body, and ask His Spirit to walk before us. This ministry is giving us and the children hope, so we will keep going next year, even though the

challenges at the camps are growing harder with issues like aggressive behavior increasing as children spend more time in the camps."

**Sameh**, first year student said: "As soon as we came into the refugee camp area we saw many kids awaiting us. I saw thirst in their eyes to hear about God's acceptance and forgiveness. Some



Jojo the Clown played by an ABTS student

of the boys started retelling the story after me. I remember two girls asking if God is going to forgive them if they curse or hit someone. They were happy to know that He will love them and help them become better. I feel like we started building bridges with them, and planting good seeds of the love of God in those children. I definitely want to continue serving with them next year."

**Salam**, second year student: "They give us more love than we are giving them. More than anything, these kids need to be hugged without feeling abused. This year was different for me, after we received the training on how to serve among traumatized children by 'Equip'.



Sharing the Parable of the Prodigal Son

*(Continue reading on page 4)*

(Continued from page 3) The training has really helped us address the pain that the children are exposed to through our program, songs, games and communication with them.”

**The team’s prayer requests:** “Please pray that next year our compassionate care ministry team will grow into 30 or more servants. We hope that next year we can follow-up with the children and their parents more strategically with more zeal. Also pray that we will find more opportunities for training in counselling for the whole team, especially on identifying children with trauma.”

### Talk to us!

Your feedback is important. Email us your suggestions on how we can make our newsletter better. Suggest topics to write about and issues to address. Email us on:

[information@abtslebanon.org](mailto:information@abtslebanon.org)

## In ‘Transforming Theological Education’, Perry Shaw Documents the ABTS Experience

In the recently released book, *Transforming Theological Education, A Practical Handbook for Integrative Learning*, Perry Shaw documented his 15 years’ experience in the Middle East as a theological educator, drawing on lessons learned as the leader of the curriculum adaptation at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary. Since 2008, our seminary has been engaged in an ongoing experiment in the design and implementation of an integrated and contextually driven curriculum.

The book provides theoretical foundations and practical principles for purposeful curriculum design, as well as tools for integrated and contextually effective learning in the classroom. It draws on the growing awareness of the role theological schools should play in strengthening the missional vision and practice of local churches.

Continue reading about the book and ABTS’s experience on our website [www.abtslebanon.org](http://www.abtslebanon.org).

Purchase the book online on [Amazon](http://Amazon) or on [Langham Literature](http://Langham Literature).

