



ARAB BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

www.abtslebanon.org

Newsletter - July 2014

ABTS 2014 Graduation Ceremony

On Sunday, June 22nd, we celebrated the graduation of seventeen of our students from Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan and Syria. The graduating students had elected Adel Labib, who graduated with a Master of Divinity degree, to be their representative speaker at the ceremony. The ceremony was attended by local church members, students' families, and ABTS partners and friends. We had the honor of having Dr. Sameh Maurice, the pastor of Kasr El Dobra Evangelical Church in Cairo, hand out the certificates and speak at the graduation. His graduation speech incited the audience and the graduates to be a disciple/student, a servant, a child of God and a priest – throughout our lives. Keep our graduates in your prayers as they go back to serve the church in their respective countries.



Faculty and students praying before the graduation ceremony

MRel Students Study Middle Eastern Christianity

The Master of Religion in Middle Eastern and North African studies program (MRel in MENA Studies) welcomed 13 Students to ABTS for the residency portion of the MENA Christianity module. The MENA Christianity module seeks to develop within students a deep appreciation for and command of the thinking and practice of the Christian East, its traditions, history, and creeds, (*cont'd pages 2 & 3*)

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as well as its unity and divisions.

Immediately after attending the Middle East Consultations, the students began two very full weeks under the supervision of Martin Accad, Director of the Institute of Middle East Studies. As lead faculty for the MENA Christianity module, Dr. Accad was assisted by support faculty Mike Kuhn, who has over two decades of experience in working with Christians and Muslims in the MENA region, and Eastern Orthodox monk Fr. Elia Khalifeh, guest faculty for holistic formation.

We asked Fr. Khalifeh, who heads the Antioch

exchanges.” Module faculty Mike Kuhn said about his experience in the course: *“Having Father Elia-- a Rum Orthodox monk--has given depth and authenticity to the course. Not only did we learn facts and meet personalities of the Eastern Church, we also felt the deep theological and historical roots of the Eastern churches. We found ourselves stretched to embrace the differences of our Orthodox and Catholic brothers and sisters. Icons, saints and relics took on a new meaning for us. We clearly saw the work of Christ through the Antiochian tradition of the early church.”*



Fr. Elia Khalife teaching MRel students

Centre, about what proved to be most interesting for the MRel students in the course. He answered: *“Patristics – the study of the Early Christian writers who are designated Church Fathers – is very important. I would give the example of Ephrem the Syrian, an authoritative Syriac-language hymnographer and theologian of the 4th century from the region of Syria. MRel students had never encountered this tradition. Eastern Christianity is rich with Parathosis, the living tradition. And this is a field that MRel students began discovering during the Pre-Residency online portion of module through reading assignments and online*

This module exposed students to a unique and intensive learning experience, all the while being introduced to the rich historical, cultural, and religious heritage of the Middle East. Alongside their classes, students visited various churches and educational institutes and met with leaders from different denominations such as Rum (Greek) Orthodox, Maronite, Melkite, Anglican, Evangelical (Baptist, Pentecostal), Syriac, Armenian, Coptic and many others. They have also enjoyed an overnight stay at a monastery in the Qadisha Valley.

Students came from as far away as Brazil, Cyprus, the U.K., Korea, the U.S., Egypt, the Netherlands, and Lebanon. They serve in locations throughout the Middle East and the wider world.

Marcos Amado, an MRel student who manages a missiological training center in Brazil preparing missionaries to be sent to the MENA region, said: "Learning about the development and history of

the Eastern Church was tremendously helpful for my understanding of the ways God works throughout history. The main highlight was to realize how much



we ignore the history, traditions and theology of this part of the world, which is very rich, and how much we can learn from it. I will be using what I learned here in the classes I give about the expansion of Christianity."

Chris Todd, an MRel student from the U.S. who works in Lebanon says: "The modules have really helped me improve the way I do ministry in every way. In the MENA History, Politics, and Economics module (Fall 2012), Rupen Das taught us project management, project proposal writing, and fundraising. This has taken our ministry in Lebanon to a whole new level. My vision of my role in ministry has altered and the program helped me become more professional in the way I

assist people. The latest module, MENA Christianity, has also changed my perspective on the Eastern Church and Eastern Christianity, as we rarely think of knowing more about Christians while working in the region. This

has encouraged me to network in my ministry with the existing churches."

For more information about the MRel or to apply, go to: www.abtslebanon.org/mrel or imeslebanon.wordpress.com/mrel/

Stories of Discipleship in the Middle East and North Africa

The Middle East Consultation 2014 – Discipleship Today: Following Jesus in the Middle East and North Africa, which was organized by ABTS's Institute of Middle East Studies, took place between 16 and 20 June. We were pleased to have an unprecedented number of participants - 170 people total. During this exciting week, we listened to stories about discipleship in the context of our region. Global consultants helped us ground these stories in biblical and theological foundations. And all participants took part in daily table-group discussions, making it a working consultation instead.

Read more about MEC 2014 and participants' feedback on wp.me/p2y7pM-Cj.