



ARAB BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

ABTS Newsletter

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Growing in God, Preparing for Growth

By Wissam al-Saliby, ABTS Partnerships Manager

More than two thousand years ago, the Son of God incarnated as part of God's plan for us to regain fellowship with Him. Today, we, His Church, are the extended incarnation of His love and hope for men and women.

This year, an unprecedented number of people will be celebrating Christmas in the Arab world. More and more men and women across the Arab world are recognizing His kingship over their lives. Earthly kings rise and fall, but His Kingdom remains through the work of the Holy Spirit and through the message of love that we live and relay.

God's servants are increasing. As churches in the Arab world grow, God is calling men and women to ministry. As servant-leaders recognize the need for theological training, they seek to be better equipped for the challenges arising – be it communication, theology, apologetics, society and culture. Many turn to ABTS whose mission is to serve the Church in our region by equipping faithful men and women for effective service.

ABTS is growing, as are our needs. In the admission process, we never reject an eligible applicant for lack of funding nor for limitations of infrastructure. We choose to take risks because we believe that we are at the service of God and part of His plan for the Arab world. We trust that He will provide for His ministries. God sent us 18 new leaders this year, bringing us to a total of 44 full-time students, 20 part-time students and 12 MRel students – a 15% increase compared to the previous academic year. This figure is likely to grow over the coming years. The need for housing, food and other services has increased. We are currently renovating and equipping our old faculty building and converting it to housing for student. In parallel, we are actively seeking to recruit and invest in mostly young Arab faculty to strengthen our academic programs and sustain them – a resource consuming endeavor.

Partnerships need to grow. In Paul's words, *"but as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose."* (1 Cor. 12) We are grateful to God for sustaining ABTS to date through committed partners, churches and believers. God uses members in the Body of Christ to strengthen other members.

Today, ABTS is growing as a member of this Body. We invite you to partner with us to serve the Church in the Arab world as it incarnates the birth, death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior. We invite you to invest in equipping servant-leaders so that they pursue the work God entrusted them with.

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Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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Iraqi Pastor Ara Badalian Teaches New Testament Survey Course

While teaching the New Testament Survey course for first year students, Ara Badalian shared with us about his ministry as the pastor of the National Baptist Church in Iraq. Ara graduated from ABTS in 2012 with a Master in Divinity and is now completing his PhD in Contextual Theology at the Asian Pacific Theological Seminary in Malaysia. Ara has already taught the “New Testament Survey” course in November, and will be back in February to teach the “New Testament Background” course.



Ara Badalian, Graduation 2012

What does ABTS mean to you? Did you plan to come back and teach at the seminary?

Studying at ABTS played an essential role in shifting my way of thinking and dealing with life and church

matters. I had no idea that God was going to use me to teach in the same seminary I graduated from, but God’s grace is at work. The professors at ABTS encouraged me throughout learning and teaching. Serving at ABTS enriches my ministry back in Iraq, since my theological knowledge improves my teaching skills. On the other hand I am able to contribute to the curriculum from my practical experience; I am able to adapt the course with the context in which the students will have their ministries, since I pastor a church in a community very similar to their own. I am really happy to come back and teach in the same place from which I graduated.

What were the challenges you faced as an Iraqi theology student who is about to graduate?

In 2012, I was assigned to be the pastor of the Baptist National Church in Baghdad, a week after I graduated from ABTS. My vision was very clear from the start. It was not easy for me to return, but I decided I will not run away from such a responsibility since it was a call-

ing from God to serve the church in my country. In spite of the challenges the church in Iraq is facing, it is a privilege for me to sustain a church that started ten years ago in 2003, and I was encouraged by the church members who expressed their desire for me to be there pastor. My church played a vital role in bringing many to Christ, and it is our responsibility to keep this message alive.

What are the dreams and challenges of the church in Iraq?

The ministry in Iraq is struggling. Church members are increasingly immigrating because of the insecurity, violence and persecution to which the church is exposed. However, nothing is stopping our church from growing and dreaming. In the past year, the church was able to shift its effort towards missions and going outside the walls of the church. After becoming the church pastor, my priority was to emphasize the church’s role in reaching out to the community. I encouraged church members for outreach through



Ara leading a prayer meeting at the National Baptist Church in Baghdad

***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.*

changing the leadership style to which they were used. We started 3 home groups doing regular Bible studies, for families that cannot come to church for reasons related to their background and to insecurity. We dream of a church that plays a vital role in the Kingdom of God, therefore it should play an effective role within its context. Part of our plan is to start a Kids Nursery project that serves the church’s vision which is “glorifying God in our ministry and our Iraq” and mission which is “Witnessing for Christ and His work in words and in actions”. But the challenge remains, and the need for servants increases as the number of people immigrating every month increases.

How does studying theology empower ministry in the Arab World?

I believe that equipping leaders through theology education ensures the sustainability of the church and its ministries. It should be a pre-requisite for any servant who wants to lead an effective ministry. Our church in the Arab world suffers from the lack of proper theological education, although we have so many servants. Those servants lead so many ministries, without having sound biblical foundations.



New Testament Survey Course at ABTS, November 2013

*C***hristmas Season Prayer Requests**

This year, and like every year, our students will not be able to go home for Christmas. They will be celebrating Christmas together on campus along with staff, faculty and friends. Please keep our students in prayer. Most of them feel homesick during the holidays, especially the newcomers. This season becomes emotionally and financially overwhelming, away from their families back home. In addition, they have to adapt to the cold weather in Lebanon to which many are not accustomed.

Also, pray for students who will be launching the compassionate care ministry in January 2014, after a successful ministry in 2013. Many Syrian refugee children are without schooling and live in precarious housing without the opportunity for fun or for playing. In 2014, ABTS students plan to visit monthly two or more camps in the Bekaa. They will carry out recreational and educational activities

for the children, to bring laughter to their hearts - even if it is just for half a day every two or three weeks. Through hymns and games, the students carry the message of God’s love and salvation.

*Read on our Website an article about:
“Transforming Your Church” Course by Rev.*

Dr. Paul Beasley-Murray

www.abtslebanon.org

