



Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

September 2017

The 2017-2018 Academic Year Has Started!

By Rana Wazir Zailaa, Registrar

The 2017-2018 academic year has just started on September 11 with second and third-year students taking elective courses. We are excited for what God has in store for us and for our students this year! Now that the admissions stage is over, we will be welcoming twenty new residential students on October 9, 2017. Two of these students are ABTS online graduates, and they will start with the second-year of the Bachelor of Theology program. Our first-year students come from countries such as Sudan, Egypt, Syria, Mauritania, Palestine, South Sudan and Algeria. We also have seven part-time students, 50 Online Certificate in Ministry students, and 22 students in the Master of Religion in Middle Eastern and North African studies program.

Throughout July, the admissions committee met weekly to study applications. This committee is made up of two representatives from the Student Affairs team, one representative from the theology department, the President, the Registrar (myself) and the Chief Academic Officer. These meetings are preceded by interviews and our reviewing of the case studies that they write. Applicants must demonstrate a calling and a vision for ministry. They should have a strong relationship with their home church. The church should not only recommend them but also send them. That is why ABTS requires that they serve at their sending churches for a minimum of two years upon graduation.

What is different about our students this year is that we have more singles than couples (14 singles and 4 married). This is also one of the few academic years where we have students of a relatively young age (19-21). We have less children this year than we usually have (7 as opposed to 12 last year), and we have a student coming from Mauritania for the first time.



Second and third year students studying the Book of Isaiah

After the applicants got an acceptance letter, our Student Affairs staff member Chaden Hani called each of our students and introduced them to student life at ABTS. This is the first year we do this.

Returning students will be taking elective courses from September 11 till October 20. These electives are: *People Helping* by Smyrna Khalaf, *The Book of Isaiah* by David Baer, *Philosophy* and *Theology* by M. M., *Greek* by Hikmat Kashouh, *Archaeology of the Bible* by Peter Mclewin, *Current Trends in Islam* by Martin Accad, *Systematic Theology* by Ghassan Khalaf and *Orality* by Mounir Malaty.

In their first week, students took the course on *The Book of Isaiah*, taught by David Baer. "The Book of Isaiah is a key text of the Church's Scripture. Isaiah is among the three most frequently quoted books of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament in the Qumran literature and the New Testament. Its formative role on the identity of these 'new covenant' communities is self-evident. In our day, the book of Isaiah continues to fuel the life and labor of those who shepherd and shape the Christian community. Its lyrical message orients and energizes the Church's servant-shaped witness

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Students during the *Philosophy and Theology* class

and its longing that the Lord's justice should be heard as good news among all the nations.” (From the course description)

The second course students took is *Philosophy and Theology*, taught by M. M. “The goal of this course is to help theology students understand the philosophical grounds behind Christian theology throughout the first five centuries AD. This theology was not apart from the influences of Greek Philosophy, especially that of Plato and the modernized Platonic philosophy. There was a reluctance at that time on whether to dispense of Platonic theories or to embrace them within a theological framework. In this course, the students will be working on finding a way of escape from such a dilemma through answering questions such as: Why is there a need to talk about a conflict between theology and philosophy? Is it possible to think theologically without the need for a philosophical framework?” (From the course description)

Following are some student impressions of the early sessions of these two courses

Eman, third-year female student (Bachelor of Theology) from Egypt

“Both *The Book of Isaiah* and *Philosophy and Theology* have been challenging, especially concerning my view of God. Yes, I was born into a Christian family, but there were some questions I wasn’t supposed to ask because they might lead me ‘astray’. It is my right to ask the tricky questions about God; these are the questions many young people ask me. Therefore, it is important to defend the faith through logic, and this is what the *Philosophy and Theology* course has taught me so far.

“As for *The Book of Isaiah*, it is exciting to study about God’s people in the days of the prophet Isaiah and to understand why he chose to execute His judgement upon His people, a judgement that was withheld as soon as the people repented. This course has also taught me to go beyond the literal interpretation of the Bible and attempt at reading between the lines.”

Samuel, second-year male student (Bachelor of Theology) from Sudan

“I expect that I will be adding up much knowledge this year. *The Book of Isaiah* is challenging as is the entire Old Testament for me. This is because it is hard to explain to

believers, so this course will benefit me greatly, and I will be able to teach it to others later on. Moreover, Isaiah is often quoted in the New Testament, and many of its prophecies have been fulfilled in the light of Christ’s first coming. This is another reason why I believe I am going to enjoy this course.

“Moreover, some of the questions that were posed during the *Philosophy and Theology* course were very challenging. Such logical questions are often asked during my youth ministry, so this course will be of great help.”

A second-year male student (Bachelor of Theology) from Sudan

“The *Philosophy and Theology* course has helped me to understand concepts such as the Trinity. The reason why it is difficult to understand the Trinity today is because Greek philosophies are often used to explain it. The course has taught me to look at difficult questions from God’s standpoint instead of trying to answer them using philosophy. When it comes to philosophy, I am learning to keep the good and dispense of the bad.

“As for *The Book of Isaiah*, I learned that in order to understand this Old Testament book, I have to divide it into sections in order to get to the main idea. I am learning a lot of new things about this book, and I am really enjoying it.”

PRAY WITH US: Prayer requests from students, faculty and staff members

Rana Wazir Zailaa, Registrar

Please pray that during our new academic year, our students may be positively influenced and transformed and our faculty may have the energy to pass on their experience and knowledge unto them. Please pray especially for our new students; everything will be new to them, and this will be challenging at first. Another challenge they will face before coming here is getting the visas to Lebanon, so pray with us that none of them none of them would be denied a visa.

Roula el Azzi, Executive Assistant

For this year, join me as I pray for harmony among students and staff. Our community is diverse, so I pray that it would be a chance to learn more about our differences and accept them.

Bill Merrifield, Leader of Innovative Learning

Pray that the Lord would grant us the wisdom to enhance our online program in a way that serves our students. One of the ways we need to enhance the program is by encouraging interaction between our students and online tutors.

Abed Zein El Dein, ABTS Online Coordinator

Please pray for the next term (Term IV, 2017) of ABTS Online which will commence on October 5. The core courses will be *Small Groups* and *Biblical Interpretation*, and the elective courses will be *Holy Spirit in the Christian Life* and *Social and Christian Ethics*. Pray for the students, the tutors (including me) and all the people who will be a part of this term.

Alexy Abu Rjeily, HR Manager

We currently have four vacant positions at ABTS, which are: Development and Partner Relations Manager, Senior Accountant, Peacebuilding Initiatives Coordinator, and Instructional Designer. Join us in prayer that God would send the right people who are called to serve Him. I also ask you to pray for wisdom and leadership for the new academic year.

Manal al Tayyar, Peacebuilding Initiatives Leader

Please pray that we find and recruit the person suitable to take over most of the Khebz w Meleh (Bread and Salt) field-related work. Khebz w Meleh is our Peacebuilding Initiative empowering teens to spearhead social change in a country rich with communities of different faiths, yet where teens often lead separate lives.

Georgette Tamer, Researcher

Pray that many souls may be won for Him throughout Lebanon, and that we would always be part of God's work throughout this country.

Fadi Salamoun, Facilities Manager

Please pray that God would strengthen every staff member working in the Facilities department of ABTS. May He also provide for all our projects such as the large conferences scheduled in the coming months. Pray that these conferences will go very well. Most importantly, please pray for God's hand to be upon us.

Chaden Hani, Student Affairs staff

Please pray that this year the Lord would use us at ABTS with individuals and with the church as a whole. May we be influential tools of change, to be

God's hands and feet that are working in the Middle East. People who feel called to serve are also coming to ABTS, and its location in Lebanon (within the Middle East) helps a lot. Please pray for protection on this place. Another point I ask you to pray about is that there would be more Arabs writing theology in Arabic. The Church needs more commentaries and Christian authors writing in Arabic, not only people leading it. I pray that the Arab Church will become self-dependent instead of waiting on sources and material from abroad.

Eman, third-year female student (Bachelor of Theology) from Egypt

Please pray that the refugee children's ministry team of ABTS would increase their activity. Pray that God will show us His will concerning children all over Lebanon, refugees and citizens alike. I hope to see the Compassionate Care Ministry's team extend beyond Zahle and to reach different areas in Lebanon. As the verse in Isaiah says, "Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes" (Isaiah 54:2).

Second-year male student (Bachelor of Theology) from Sudan

With the start of this academic year, I would like to see my priorities change. Pray for me that I learn to deny myself, to carry my cross and follow Him, prioritizing the needs of others above my own. I want to challenge myself to know the things of God more and to enhance my relationships with others, so it would be wonderful if you can pray for this too.