Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

كليّة اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

April 2018

Moved with Compassion: Serving Among Syrian Refugee Children

"Sometimes I ponder upon the dehumanizing living conditions of the camp. I see their so-called houses – the worn wooden doors they glued back into shape and the tattered billboard posters that they use as shelter. The fumes of cinders sometimes irritate our lungs, as many of these single-room 'homes' have no decent heating. To top it off, the area is getting more crowded with more tents being set up. Through it all, I am comforted to see the glimmer of hope and joy in the kids' eyes as they approach us with their shabby clothes and dust-filled rubber slippers. I am pleased to be part of God's work in this place."

These are the words of our third-year Egyptian student, Eman, who is part of the Compassionate Care Ministry team (in partnership with MERATH, a relief and development sister ministry, and Heart for Lebanon). Through this ministry, God is using our students to shine His light and to be actively present among the poor and the marginalized in society.

Despite the delay caused by the stormy weather and the Saturday morning courses, the team, made up of nine ABTS students, made a visit to the Zahle camps on February 24, 2018. They were so excited to set the children's program in motion once more. The families living in the camp also lent a helping hand. After the songs and the games, the lesson focused on how we can be strong in the Lord, and the story was that of Gideon. After that, they distributed meals to all 300 kids. In all, the team members noted that the kids' behavior is improving with each visit. Eman comments,

> "The rough kids are now better behaved. They used to hit each other and curse loudly. Now, they speak moderately and respectfully to one another. Some of them even help us set up the place. They cooperate with us and sing to the Lord at the top of their lungs."

The Compassionate Care Ministry team made another trip on March 25, 2018. Because the team was made up of twenty students then, they were able to divide the kids into six groups. These groups rotated around six game stations right after the songs. After the games, they shared an allegory pertaining to the story of redemption. At the end of the program, the team distributed gifts to all the kids present.

According to team leader Sabet, who is a second-year student from Sudan, the team members were very enthusiastic to spread God's love. Our second-year student from Mauritania, for instance, successfully engaged with a group of 15-to-16-year olds in eager conversations. Moreover, second-year student Habil from Sudan led the discussion in the group of 8-to-10-year olds, and all of them were participating. It was clear that they understood the story very well.

The Compassionate Care Ministry is also helping kids on an individual level. For instance, Sabet shared the story of "Kamal":

> "The first year we visited this camp, Kamal was a very shy nine-year-old boy, who would briskly say hi and then retreat under a pine tree. He wouldn't participate in any of the activities we put up. Whenever the meal time came, he would take his portion and leave. With time, he began to leave his spot under the pine tree

and play with the other kids. He was participating throughout the entire program last time we visited."

Moreover, Eman shared the story of "Zahraa". She says,

> "Last year, Zahraa started coming to the program. She seemed to be a target for ridicule and scorn by the rest of the girls. She was also strikingly reclusive. She had a glass eye. However, Wahiba [ABTS 2017 graduate and former ministry team leader] and I did not leave her. We urged her to participate. We gave her value and confronted the girls who shunned her. She used to come to us with her hair covering half her face. Now, she has the confidence to show her entire face and to speak up."

We ask you to lift the children up in prayer, that they would carry with them the fragrance of this ministry, as they grow older. Pray that it would spark in them a desire to help others and to make a change in society.

Two more months until MEC 2018!

Would you consider supporting a local or regional leader from the Middle East to participate in our 2018 Middle East Consultation?

We are aiming to support 10 key leaders to join us in June 2018, people who would otherwise not be able to be with us. If you would like to help please contact us at information@ABTSLebanon.org.

To learn more about MEC 2018 ***Jesus Christ and the Religious Other: Toward a Biblical Understanding of Islam***, visit www.abtslebanon.org/MEC2018.

Forum for Current Affairs

"This is what the Lord says: 'Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed.'" (NIV) Isaiah 56:1

Martin Accad

The Institute of Middle East Studies (IMES) is a research and resource institute of the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary. This year, the IMES team is working on three peacebuilding initiatives. Each of these initiatives reaches a specific segment of society, highlighting ails such as sectarianism, prejudice, conflict and violence, and historical inter-communal hurt on a national scale.

One of these initiatives is the *Forum for Current Affairs.* Launched in 2017, this initiative brings together key church and ministry leaders for strategic conversations on the prophetic role of the Church in response to surrounding political, economic, and social realities.

Under this banner, on March 15 of this year, the IMES team organized a gathering entitled "The Convergence of the Church and Politics". This is a very timely event leading to the Lebanese Parliamentary elections on May 6. Its purpose was to explore how responsible Christian's can engage in politics and the democratic process. A select group of Christian leaders were invited along with representatives of four prominent Lebanese political parties.

In a country where votes are cast based on individual loyalties, and religious and political affiliations that are passed on from generation to generation, the representatives were asked to present their parties' respective values and principles. Martin Accad, IMES Director, moderated the meeting. He raised topics related to chronic problems, such as shortage of electricity, the garbage crisis, political sectarianism, and corruption. Then, the current Member of Parliament representing the Evangelical community, Bassem El Chab, shared about his experience in the Lebanese parliament. Finally, the gathering was concluded by two theological commentaries. The first was by Nabil Maamarbashi who spoke about the historical background of political participation in Evangelical thought. The second was by Hikmat Kashouh, Research Professor at ABTS, who shared a theological reflection entitled "Which Member of Parliament Should I Vote For: Biblical Principles on Choosing Wisely". His message included seven main points that we must seek in a candidate. According to Kashouh, these principles are: dedication and service, love for one's country and people, wisdom and competence, genuineness and authenticity, accepting the counsel of others, not a lover of money, and a visionary.

Please, pray for our upcoming elections. Pray for the Lord to grant wisdom and guidance for the voters and the candidates. Pray, also, for IMES as we aim to encourage our churches to rise to current challenges and increase the Body of Christ's impact in society.

MP Bassem El Chab

Hikmat Kashouh

Pray With Us: Residential Students' Prayer Requests

Second-year Bachelor of Theology male student from Mauritania

My family members in Mauritania have cut ties with me ever since I came to Christ. My eldest sister is the only one who sporadically contacts me without the knowledge of my family. She often tries to bring me back because she deeply wishes to see the family unified again. Please pray for her that she may also come to Christ.

Fahmi, second-year Bachelor of Theology male student from Sudan

I ask you to pray for my ministry in Lebanon and in Sudan. In Lebanon, I serve with Syrian refugee children in the Zahle camps (as part of the Compassionate Care Ministry team). In Sudan, the current situation is unstable. Please pray that God will grant me the wisdom to counsel and disciple Sudanese believers when I visit during summer.

George, second-year Bachelor of Theology male student from Lebanon

Please continue to pray that God would give me strength, rootedness and protection. Pray that my academic performance would be up to par and that the Lord would show me more options for ministry.

Habil, second-year Bachelor of Theology male student from Sudan

Please pray for me because I would like to see my family again this summer; I haven't been able to see them for the past seven years. They are stuck in an area far from Khartoum (Nuba Mountains) where rebels have taken over. Please pray for the Lord to strengthen me constantly and to reveal to me His calling.

Makki & Nason, second-year Bachelor of Theology couple from Sudan

Please pray for our family during our stay here in Lebanon. Please pray for our son Nelson. Also, pray for harmony among Sudanese of different religions. Moreover, prices have suddenly gone up in Sudan, so living conditions are not exactly easy there.

Rami & Rasha, second-year Bachelor of Theology couple from Syria

Please pray for our family's visit to Syria this summer. Pray for whatever may be awaiting us. We accept whatever comes from the Lord, but pray that we might be able to serve there. We want to serve among people who are like us – people who come from non-Christian backgrounds.

Sam, second-year Bachelor of Theology male student from Sudan

Time is passing quickly. I will be graduating next year and then return to Sudan. I ask you to pray for my country. There is political unrest and the economic situation is bad.

Second-year Master of Divinity male student from Sudan

In the midst of hunger and poverty in Sudan, are people ready to listen to the Good News? I pray that God would give me sufficient wisdom to spread His word.

Second-year Bachelor of Theology female student from Jordan

I ask you to pray for me as a single mother of two teenagers to balance between raising my children and studying.

Sabet, third-year Bachelor of Theology male student from Sudan

Please pray for Sudan and for my area specifically, the Nile River State. I will graduate this summer, so it won't be long before I start my ministry. When I go back, I will be training Christian education teachers. I will also be teaching at a school. Pray for my ministry in the midst of the political instability.

Third-year Bachelor of Theology male student from Sudan

Please pray for my country Sudan, as the situation is currently unstable, and for me, as I will soon be graduating and returning there. In order to support my ministry in Sudan, I will be working as a schoolteacher. I desire to further my theological education in a year or two, if the Lord allows.

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

Please pray that God would give me the wisdom to apply what I learned here in my circle of ministry in Egypt and to teach it to the youth I serve. Pray that I would be a living example of the things that I teach despite how the majority are behaving.

Third-year Master of Divinity couple from Sudan

Lift our family and our ministry up in prayer. This June, we graduate and return home. Our kids will find it hard to adapt to their new surroundings. Also, pray for us to find a good job to support ourselves as we serve. Lastly, pray for the ministry in Sudan as Christians have limited freedom to practice or share their faith. Many ministry workers have fled from the country because of persecution and economic trials.