

Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

www.abtslebanon.org

September 2020

What a privilege it is to share with you new stories from ABTS. This month, we invite you to join us as we unfold a new dimension from our journey in the new strategic direction where Martin Accad shares about [The Central Role of Faculty in ABTS' Emerging Hybrid Program](#) on our website.

We also ask you to keep us in your prayers as you read about activities that were beyond our scope, yet impossible to ignore.

Let us allow the Spirit of God to guide us in all that we do!

Loulwa El Maalouf, Development and Partner Relations Manager

Little Sprouts of Life Stir the Rubble

Looking After Families on Our Campus

"We spend a lot of time in discernment as we steer the ministry where we believe God wants to take it. But not in response to the explosion," Elie Haddad said in [our previous newsletter](#), "We didn't need to stop and ask God what to do. We immediately knew what He wanted. Opening up our facilities to house newly homeless people was the most natural thing to do. This is a testimony of God's work in our hearts for years and years."

This month, we interviewed our Registrar Rana Wazir, who has been managing the vetting and placement of the families in their rooms, and our Facilities and IT Manager Elie Daher, who has been leading the maintenance team in equipping and maintaining the rooms. We encourage you to read their heartwarming stories about God's work on campus.

Preparations to House Families

Elie Daher: I was in my office on August 4 when I first heard the blast; it was precisely 6:08pm. As soon as I found out what it was, I hurried to check our facilities. As I locked the doors and headed home, I was thinking about repairing the damage and cleaning up the shards of broken glass. The next morning, after an



urgent leadership meeting, we were to reopen the family building instead. How could we not reopen it when many had lost their homes? And so, instead of repairs, we started the preparations immediately.

We wouldn't have been able to do it without the support of the ABTS community and other volunteers. The hard work and enthusiasm of the people was exceptional. The corner house was to be emptied, cleaned and furnished with beds. Buildings had to be deep cleaned.

The guesthouse team cleaned the rooms, toilets and passageways. They washed the laundry and the linen. They repainted the walls. The team was all over the place! We as the maintenance team made sure everything was running well. We checked the showerheads, the faucets, the air conditioners, and so on. In 48 hours, we had accomplished most of the work.

The First Family

Rana Wazir: Right after the explosion, we began to prepare our buildings to host families who were affected by the blast. Two floors of the guesthouse already housed healthcare workers who are in quarantine, so we decided to use the ground floor to host healthcare workers whose dorms were destroyed in Beirut. We also equipped two floors of the Sharouk Building, all the Family Building and both floors of the Corner House.

Three days later, we received the first family, whose members were heavily injured. Since then, we keep receiving phone calls from those who need shelter. We had a sudden surge of families after people started getting out of hospitals, and they had nowhere to go. Some were abandoned by family and friends. Some had lost their jobs after the destruction of certain areas in Beirut. Some already had no jobs. Many were injured both physically and psychologically.

An Encounter Near the Guest House

Elie Daher: The Saturday right after the explosion, I was placing New Testament Bibles on the bedside table of every room. Almost two hours after that, I was standing in front of the guesthouse when a taxi arrived with a new family. Their clothes were stained with blood and Betadine, and they carried with them nothing but their medicine in a small plastic bag. The scene brought back memories of war.

I was born at the end of 1975. My mother often told the story of how she had fled her home at the start of the Lebanese Civil War – a baby boy in her arms and a little girl tagging along. My grandfather often told the story of fleeing his home in 1983 not knowing whether he would ever return. Today, there is no war, yet we are re-experiencing the stories of the Civil War firsthand.

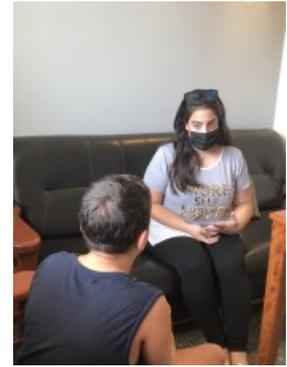
After they got out of the taxi, the woman shared her story with me as her injured hands trembled, and her eyes welled with tears. Her mother was still at the hospital, and her sister was waiting on her. I comforted her, and I assured her that we would do all that we can to help.

This incident left a deep impression on me and made me say with Solomon, “All is vanity.” It reminded me that we can lose our possessions in the blink of an eye and that we are nothing without Christ. It reminded me that we are here for a Divine cause. As long as God wants to use us, we must be ready to give our lives away.

Serving the Families

Rana Wazir: We soon saw that God wanted us to do much more than providing shelter. They had nothing; this meant we were to provide everything. Unsolicited, local ministries and partners abroad came to our aid. By God’s grace, we were able to provide them with three meals a day, hygiene kits, water, internet, cleaning and laundry services, among other things.

We had a team from ABTS caring for the families’ material and spiritual needs in collaboration with a few local churches. They provided the families with things such as clothes, toys for kids, milk and diapers for babies. We had a medical team volunteering to check up on the people’s wounds and injuries,



and a psychologist volunteering to check up on the children’s mental health.

One elderly man had diabetes, Parkinson’s disease, and many injuries. One woman had her skull fractured. Several were bedridden, and when they showed us pictures of their destroyed homes, we wondered how they came out alive. The families are coming to us with a lot of heartache, but they are finding rest here. I think the location helps – the serenity and the green spaces. They also have a safe space here to share about their troubles.



In the busyness of preparing meals and delivering them to all the rooms, someone stops us at their door, and they begin to cry as they share their story. Kids like to run around and play. I think the people feel at home now.



It’s Worth It!

Rana Wazir: Often, the team is physically drained. We are in action every day of the week from morning till late at night. Kristen [Front Desk Representative] sometimes has to stay overnight. Once, an old man arrived in critical condition in the middle of the night. We couldn’t leave his side.

Meeting the tragedy of people face to face isn’t easy. I cried many nights at their suffering, but every time, my husband Walid reminded me that, at least, I could do something about it. It really helps to know that one can contribute to bettering people’s situation. I stand amazed at God’s work. In the end, this is not my work. This is



not ABTS's work. God is using us to accomplish His work.

A Concluding Prayer

Elie Daher: Today, the Church in Lebanon is getting involved in God's work more than ever. People in Lebanon are tired of empty words and corrupt leaders. Let's show the people actions

instead. Let's model a new way of doing things.

I pray that the families experience the love of Christ here, whether it's through a meal we prepare or a faucet we fix. May Christ's love be manifest, and may they receive the inner healing that we cannot offer, but only He can.

A Gesture of Love: An Interfaith Peacebuilding Project

It is no secret to anyone that Lebanon has been going through unprecedented difficulties as of late. The economic crisis followed by the pandemic have both knocked the wind out of our country's sails. The people are lost and confused, and their livelihoods are threatened. The members of the steering team of our Friendship Network of Church and Mosque Goers peacebuilding initiative saw that it was necessary to stand together now regardless of religious belonging for the common good. The religious leaders came together in conversation during one of the Network's meetings and set up a relief project from their own resources to help benefit the most vulnerable. Our partners abroad also pitched in so that the initiative could reach as many people as possible.

In July and then in August, a Christian and a Muslim faith actor who are part of the Friendship Network, accompanied by facilitators from our Institute of Middle East Studies (IMES), jointly distributed relief packages and vouchers to the less advantaged people residing in Tripoli. Even before the pandemic and economic crisis, Tripoli was one of the poorer cities in Lebanon and the past year has hit it hard. The members of the Friendship Network were able to help around 200 families through their efforts. By putting others first, the faith actors worked together for the greater good and solidified relationships between the two sides of a divided society.

"In times of crisis, closely-knit communities tend to huddle together and look after the needs among their own," shared Martin Accad, Director of IMES. "It is a tremendous testimony when people of faith are able to stand back from this natural instinct and then take action together in a way that reflects care for each other's interests and needs. It shows strength of character and deep faith."

Our Friendship Network of Church and Mosque Goers is an interfaith peacebuilding initiative that is carried out by our IMES team. The initiative brings local Christian and Muslim leaders and their congregations together in conversation over religious and cultural issues. The Network aims to create a nucleus of good-willed people within churches and mosques in areas where communities are diverse and religiously segregated. From this, we derive joint action by Christians and Muslims within the community for the common good. The initiative comes out of Christ's calling for us to be peacemakers; "Blessed are the peacemakers because they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9 NIV).

We are encouraged by the selflessness displayed by the religious leaders. Their actions go to show that, by living sacrificially through the grace of God, people of different belongings are able to come together for the benefit of the broader community.



Pray with Us: Prayer Requests from Residential Program Graduates

Pray with us for Sudan as it battles with the economic crisis, the pandemic and the recent floods that left no way of escape from the deplorable situation. In these tragic circumstances, a glimmer of hope shines elsewhere in Sudan as the civilian-led government and rebel groups move towards a long-awaited peace agreement and a change of the country's constitution, which ensures human rights including freedom of religion. Pray with us that the efforts for peace, freedom and justice in the country prove to be serious and long lasting. Pray also that the Church in Sudan continues to be a voice to the voiceless in all circumstances.

Talal | 2019 Master of Divinity Graduate from Sudan

Pray for the discipleship ministry at my local church in Khartoum because it is essential for encouraging evangelistic work and other ministries. Pray for the ministry's impact outside of Khartoum as well, because we want believers in other areas to grow in faith and biblical knowledge.

Habil | 2019 Bachelor of Theology Graduate from Sudan

Pray for Sudan because the economy is still unsteady. Pray for South Kordofan and its people as tribal strife and bloodshed continue. Pray for my home group ministry there and pray for my family in the Nuba Mountains. My mother has had acute pain in her spinal cord for more than four months.

2016 Master of Divinity Graduate and ABTS Online Tutor from Egypt

Recently, as I tutored the *Holy Spirit* course, I saw that many Arab students suffered because of the economic situation and

COVID-19. I ask you to pray for them. Pray also that the Holy Spirit transforms their lives using us and the course content so that they bring about change in their communities.

I also ask you to pray for my country of residence Brazil where the virus is spreading alarmingly. Many are dying, and many are losing their jobs because of the lockdown's effect on the economy.

Magi | 2016 Master of Divinity Graduate and ABTS Online Tutor from Egypt

A while ago, my brother had a terrifying car crash and lost his daughter. His wife also needs a microsurgery as her hand's nerves were damaged. Three weeks after that incident, Mom went to be with the Lord. I need much prayer.

Elia | 2015 Master of Divinity Graduate and ABTS Online Tutor from Egypt

Pray that a vaccine for COVID-19 is found soon. People are in pain over losing loved ones. May the Church be aware of this point in history, and may God give ministry workers wisdom to stand beside those who are suffering.

2014 Bachelor of Theology Graduate and ABTS Online Tutor from Morocco

My prayer goes out to the online learning team as they maneuver through the current challenges. I pray that God continues to call passionate Arab believers to study theology and serve Him as they stand out as lights in this broken world.

مبادرات الشرق الأوسط • MIDDLE EAST CONVERSATIONS

Rethinking Missions During Pandemic: Considerations from the Middle East

Contributors include:

Keynote Presentation: **Wes Watkins**, *Arab Baptist Theological Seminary*

Regional Respondent: **Kamel Shalhoub**, *The Navigators*

Global Respondent: **Pam Arlund**, *All Nations International*

September 17, 4:00-5:30 pm Beirut Time (GMT+3)

[Register Now!](#)



ABTS and ANBC

*The Arab Baptist
Theological Seminary
and the Arabic
Nazarene Bible College*
signed an agreement to
collaborate on various
academic programs.

[Read more here.](#)