



Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

November 2020

Who is this God whom we serve? This God whose mighty hand has sustained and carried us for the past 60 years? If you missed our sixtieth anniversary celebration, visit our [YouTube channel](#) to hear our faculty answer this and other questions as they share about our curriculum.

We also invite you to read the latest chapter of our new strategic direction written by Nabil Habiby, [Distance Community Formation: Lessons from Paul](#) on our website. And as you continue to read about new developments in this newsletter, keep us in your prayers.

In all this, we give all honor and praise to our Lord and Savior!

Loulwa El Maalouf, *Director of Partnerships*

A Time of Consolidation: A New Season Unfolding

This year has brought so many changes to the ministry of ABTS. This included an emergency response during the onset of the pandemic, all the way to a strategic re-envisioning of the shape of theological education and leadership formation for the Arab world going forward. We are documenting our journey [here](#).

There is one more chapter in this unfolding story that is giving us more reason to do a thorough institutional assessment and restructure. It has become abundantly clear that God is passing ABTS through this important phase of pruning, consolidation, and solidifying the core to prepare us for another exciting season of ministry.

After 19 years at ABTS, Martin Accad will be ending his leadership role at ABTS at the end of 2020 in order to expand on a new project that he is very passionate about. Martin will continue to teach at ABTS and be an active member of our faculty. However, his main focus will be on his new project.

Martin has been providing leadership to the Theology Department and the Institute of Middle East Studies at ABTS. With Martin moving on, we will be leveraging the synergies that we have in both academic departments. Going forward, all the programs and initiatives will be given shape by our faculty under the capable leadership of Walid Zailaa as Academic Dean and Bassem Melki as Dean of Faculty.

In this article, we will be introducing you to Walid and Bassem and their vision for the programs, we will be sharing Martin's

new vision, and we will have concluding remarks by ABTS President, Elie Haddad.

Walid Zailaa

Walid's story with ABTS started in 2007 when he joined the seminary as a theology student. He graduated from ABTS in 2010 with a Master of Divinity. He then earned a Master of Theology from the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague. After attaining a Doctorate in Ministry from Acadia Divinity College in Canada, this year, Walid officially started working on a PhD at the Oxford Center for Mission Studies. The main field of his study is on "Critical Spatiality" focusing on the vision of Isaiah in chapter 2 with *The Spatial Consciousness of Isaiah 2: A Space-Driven Vision* as a working title. Walid also pastors Faith Baptist Church in Mansourieh.

Walid has been serving at ABTS for eleven years. He is an Assistant Professor of Old Testament, our Head Librarian, and has been leading our Theology Academic Programs for the



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last four years. “From where I stand today,” shares Walid, “I look back and see throughout the years the divine-human effort to equip potential leaders and faithful believers for the Church in the Arab world. Being able to comprehend this dynamic and perceive my role in this matrix as a tiny contribution in fulfilling ABTS’s vision is, indeed, a life-changing experience.”

In his new role as Academic Dean, Walid will be responsible for leading and developing our academic programs. Walid shared, “I have been involved in this line of work for the last few years. In my new capacity, the level of responsibility is different, which requires a different set of skills. This will motivate me to keep on learning and growing so that I remain faithful to the talent with which God entrusted me to serve the Church in the Arab world with my faculty colleagues.”

“My vision for the Academic programs in this new season is to receive the baton, run my race faithfully, and in due time hand it over to someone else. This is to say that, together with my faculty colleagues, we will build on the solid foundation and the legacy that has been passed on to us.”

Bassem Melki

Bassem has a Bachelor in Music Education and a Master of Religion in Religion and Music from Warner Pacific College. He is currently completing his PhD at the International Graduate School of Leadership in the Philippines researching Arab culture and contextual biblical peacemaking. In addition to pastoring the Church of God in Sioufi, Beirut, Bassem has been the Dean of Students at ABTS since 2008.

Looking back at his 12-year-long journey with ABTS, Bassem shared,

It has been a fulfilling experience knowing that God has used us for the growth of His Kingdom in the Arab world. The most exciting thing about my

role as Dean of Students was to see students leave us not the same way they came. As strange as it sounds, it was exciting when students struggled with conflict because that is where the opportunity lies for growth and transformation!

Due to moving into the integrated model, Bassem and the Leadership Team began to think how ABTS could invest in students within their own contexts, including their culture, community, and ministry. Since the frontline contact with students is faculty, Bassem will be leading them as they invest in students’ lives through mentoring and discipleship. As faculty do that, they get to better understand the contextual challenges that our students face.

“The faculty will be in contact with the students’ pastors or ministry leaders so together they can work on the students’ holistic growth. Indirectly, this will create an environment of transformation for their community,” Bassem said.

When asked about his new role, he shared, “My role involves creating the non-formal practical components of the curriculum, which come alongside the courses and provide an environment for transformation. The Holy Spirit, not us, creates that transformation.” As part of his new role, Bassem will also be leading the peacebuilding initiatives at ABTS.

Bassem’s vision for his new season at ABTS is to lead an



effective team of faculty to impact the students in the Arab world. Long term, he aims to see the churches in the Arab world mobilized into healthy peacemaking and reconciliation. He says, “We start with Lebanon, and we move forward. The Church should be doing reconciliation within itself, with other churches, and leading reconciliation in its community.”

Martin Accad

Martin joined ABTS in 2001 at the invitation of Paul Sanders (ABTS Provost at the time). In 2003, he launched the Institute of Middle East Studies at ABTS. Today, his transition out of his responsibilities as Chief Academic Officer and as Director of the Institute will close a chapter on 19 years of what he calls the most formative years of his life. He shared,



“It has been enthralling to work along so many capable people and under the inspiring and enabling leadership of Elie Haddad. I will now remain on ABTS faculty, primarily continuing in teaching capacity in the fields of Islamic Studies, interfaith relations, and discipleship and mentoring in the context of the Middle East and North Africa region.”

So, what made Martin decide to transition out of his leadership role? To that, he answers, “During the past 12 months of multiple crises in Lebanon, I could not imagine myself continuing in my current role. It always feels arrogant to claim that we are doing the work of God. But I have certainly felt, since last summer, that God is calling me to new uncharted territory on a national level.”

Martin is now in the process of establishing a new research initiative in the field of memory and narratives of conflict focusing on the concepts of truth and reconciliation. In his words:

At the end of the Lebanese civil war, our country moved too quickly to the phase of reconstruction. The past violence and hurt was buried hurriedly, and the wounds continued to fester. My new project will seek to revisit the twenty years of Lebanon’s history from 1970–1990, excavating the

multiple narratives that reflect the various sectarian views. Instead of seeking synthesis or resolution into a single narrative, the multiple narratives will be held in tension and used to foster empathy between Lebanese communities. This will become the foundation of an educational, social, and political process of national reconciliation.

“Through the new experience I gain in this new project and through my continuing role as faculty at ABTS,” he adds, “I will follow the lead of the Holy Spirit on how this vision can inspire the Church in Lebanon and the region to be more transformative and impactful, as it ministers to the communities and countries where it exists as God’s witness. We know that God’s power to transform people and communities moves way beyond the church walls. I am excited to discover how God might still use me to expand his Kingdom through his people.”

New beginnings are always preceded by necessary endings. It is sad to see Martin’s leadership role at ABTS come to an end. However, his influence and impact will not come to an end. Martin has significantly contributed to the shaping of ABTS’s DNA in many areas, especially in the area of interfaith engagement. Attitudes have been transformed because of his work. I saw that repeatedly among students and among faculty and staff. My own attitudes towards the “other” have been transformed through the influence of Martin’s work. In addition, Martin has a sharp theological mind and is a remarkable thought leader. We will lose some of that at ABTS. Nevertheless, I am delighted to see Martin follow his new calling. We need thoughtful and spiritual leaders like Martin in the public square.

I am also delighted that our faculty will have an expanded role at ABTS and that Walid and Bassem will be providing academic leadership at this important phase of the ministry of ABTS. This fits very well with our succession plan. I am grateful for the new generation leaders that God is raising among us.

I am excited about Martin’s new role. I am excited about the roles that Walid, Bassem, and the faculty will play in this next season. I am excited about how God is positioning ABTS for more effective ministry at such a turbulent time. Primarily, I am excited about all of us being part of God’s redeeming work in our region.

Elie Haddad, ABTS President

Pray with Us: Some of Our Faculty and Continuing Students

Bassem Melki

Pray that God gives me discernment and wisdom in my new role at ABTS as Dean of Faculty. Pray that, with the start of our new integrated program, God brings the right students on board so that they truly impact their surroundings.

Martin Accad

Please pray that I will continue to be sensitive to God's leading and that my eyes will be open to the opportunities that He opens before me.

Walid Zailaa

Please pray for me to find the right balance between seminary and church. In the end, any investment in the academic and theological world needs to be for the building of the Church and the advancement of the Kingdom.

Balgis | Sudan

My desire is to finish my theological training period faithfully. I ask you to pray for us Sudanese students who are continuing our education online, as conditions in Sudan are not easy. Our internet is not good and not always available. Add to that the difficult economic situation. Pray that God enables us to continue our education.

Suliman | Sudan

Now that I am back in Sudan, I will be serving at my local church through organizing outreach events, conferences, youth programs, and revival events. Please pray for this ministry.

Elissar | Lebanon

I ask you to pray that the Lord helps me fulfill His plan for my life, and His call for my ministry with young people. Pray that I may be a reflection of the Lord's light for them. Finally, pray that I have the diligence to study both theology and psychology without compromising in either.

Student from Morocco

Pray that my husband and I balance between education and other aspects of life. Pray for my ministry with the vulnerable women and children living in my area. Pray also for my husband who aims to start a media ministry in Morocco. Pray that God would send people alongside him so together they might positively impact the Church and the larger community.

Yaser | Syria

I ask you to pray with me that the situation in Syria gets better, and that Lebanon sees restoration and revival after the difficulties it has gone through.

Yousif | Sudan

As my wife Zeinab and I start a ministry, pray for ministry workers to join our team so that we serve God together. Pray for us to walk together as a family and establish ourselves in Sudan. Pray for us as we get immersed in ministry; there is much need for Kingdom work here in Sudan. Pray also that we diligently work on our theological education despite the sparse internet here.

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الإسلام، القرآن، محمد



Webinar Contributors include:
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Book Launch