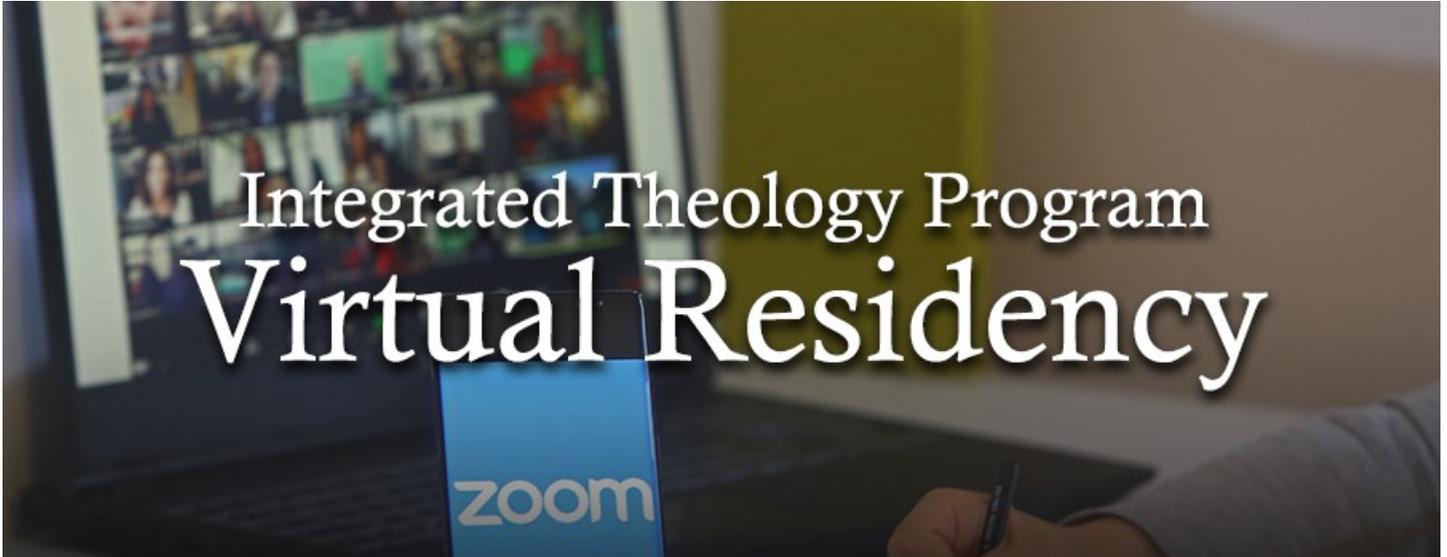


Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

www.abtslebanon.org

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The Church needs to be actively present in our region today. It needs Arab thinkers who can read the signs of the times and watch out for what God is doing. It needs those who can use their time wisely and invest it in the service of our Sovereign Lord, because there is no greater calling than that to which He has called His Church, and no greater plan than His plan of redemption. At ABTS, we are privileged to be training and equipping some of those whom God has called to serve His Church in our region.

We are thankful for the new Integrated Theology Program students who enrolled in November starting with their Arabic studies. We had been eagerly waiting for them to join us in Lebanon for their first two-week residency, but with the spike in covid-19 cases, that was not possible. So, from January 24 to February 15, our new students joined us virtually instead. We were thrilled to meet them and listen to their incredible stories



of God's work in places like Lebanon, Morocco, Egypt, Sudan, and South Sudan. The students, in turn, expressed how meeting the ABTS community made them feel even more excited about theological training and reminded them of the commitment that accompanies it.

The residency spanned a period of three weeks and was hosted by Academic Dean Walid Zailaa. He shared, "Despite all the changes we have experienced in the last two years, moving from a full-time residential program to a more hybrid format, we believe a two-week residency at the beginning of the academic year is key and has a powerful impact on the students' formation as they embark on a unique theological journey at ABTS."



During the first week, the students were introduced to the vision, mission, and values of the seminary as well as the curriculum and academic policies, and the work of our Development and Partner Relations team. ABTS President Elie Haddad answered the students' questions and shared helpful insights for their academic journey. He shared about the need for humility when studying theology because the more we study about God, the more we realize

that there is so much more that we don't know. "Our God is infinite," said Elie. "It would take us an eternity to fully comprehend Him." He also shared about the need for critical thinking. "We do not offer packaged answers," he said. "That would be indoctrination and not education."

Abednego, our new student from Sudan, serves children in the Nuba Mountains. He shared: "The residency was delightful and well structured. One of the most important things I learned from it is that studying theology is not about having a good grasp of biblical stories and truths just so I can retell them to others. It is about the embodiment of God's word in my life first and then in the lives of others. I hope that, through studying theology, I would love the Lord more deeply and serve others better as a result of God's work in my life."



Abednego during children ministry

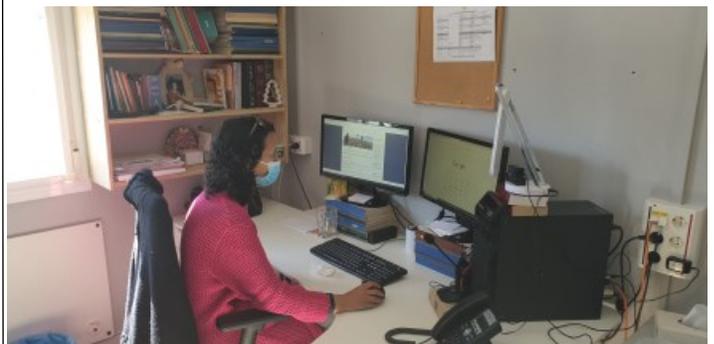
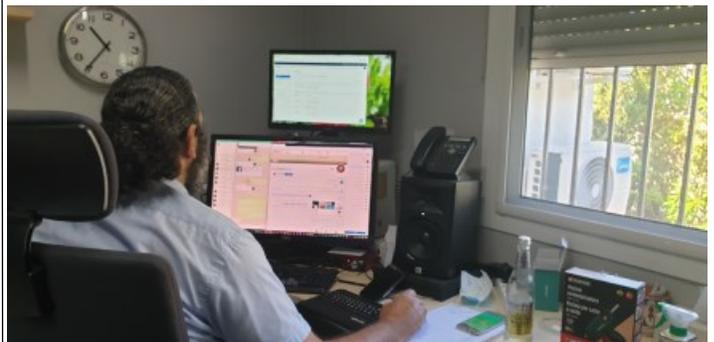
During the second week, students were introduced to the Life and Ministry module led by Bassem Melki, our Dean of Faculty. Bassem shared how excited he was to meet the students, and how he was looking forward to walking the journey with them, watching how God will develop them into better servant-leaders of Christ. Bassem guided the students as they talked about each of their unique personalities. Through learning more about their personality types, they are able to assess more accurately how God is shaping their characters and which ministries best suit their unique gifts.



Bassem also introduced them to the mentoring they will receive throughout their academic journey. Our faculty members will provide monthly group mentoring sessions. It is a valuable tool for them to learn and grow together, to confide in and pray for one another. Our faculty do not only offer monthly mentoring sessions but are available online and offline to help students individually whenever they need it.

Yaacoub, our new student from Morocco, serves the Lord at his local home church. He shared, "Although I am still a new student at ABTS, I can already tell that studying alongside brothers and sisters from different Arab countries will be an enriching experience. I am thankful for the leadership of the academic team. I have experienced their thoughtfulness, care, and love, especially during the residency. The team has truly made me more excited about studying theology. I am very happy, and I pray that studying at ABTS would make a visible change in me so that I faithfully serve the Lord."

During their third and final week, Emad Botros, Assistant Professor of Old Testament, introduced the students to research methodology. Emad shared that, as we teach the Research Methodology course, our focus is not only on the conceptual and practical research skills, but also, on the qualities of humility, honesty, and developing greater passion for studying and growth. In this sense, learning becomes a lifestyle as they lead and serve the Church in the MENA Region.



“Our region needs intellectual and humble learners and thinkers. May the Holy Spirit ignite the desire for learning and studying in the hearts and minds of our students,” Emad shared.

Lydia from Egypt serves and follows up with a group of young women. She shared, “Before the residency, I was anxious about the seminary’s academic requirements because it is all new to me, but when faculty and staff explained things, it made such a difference. I was able to get an overview of what to expect while at the seminary. I was also able to express myself and ask questions. I was very happy to meet other students.”

The road of theological education for these new students is only in its beginning. They have many challenges that they need to overcome as they seek to be better equipped for ministry. Balancing between work, study, and ministry is an obvious one. But our prayer is that, through all the challenges, they allow

God’s hands to mold them according to His good will. Join us in this journey, and keep our faculty and students in your prayers. May the Lord strengthen them and guide them. May they always trust in Him with all their hearts, and may they not lean on their own understanding.



MENA Christianity Module Residency

From January 10 to 24, MRel students attended the two-week virtual residency for the *MENA Christianity* module. The residency provided an opportunity for faculty and students to carry out an extensive exploration of the heritage, beliefs, witness, and challenges, seen in numerous Eastern Church traditions. During the residency, students deepened their insights by attending lectures and presentations, reflecting together in discussions, and preparing for their module research projects.

Due to the ongoing pandemic restrictions, students could not be with us on campus. While we are used to having most of the MRel residencies doing field trips around Lebanon, the virtual residency was all “in class”. So, instead of studying the *iconostasis* (wall of icons used to separate the *nave*, where most of the worshippers stand, from the *sanctuary* or the area around the altar) at the Saint Paul Greek Catholic Basilica in Harissa or Our Lady of Balamand Patriarchal Monastery, for instance, MRel students studied the icons virtually over Zoom. “They were very happy, and the feedback was very positive,” Martin Accad, Faculty Lead of the MENA Eastern Christianity module of our [Master of Religion in Middle Eastern and North African Studies](#) (MRel) program, shared, “We promised that when residencies are no longer virtual, they could join us in Lebanon for the field visits.”

Students expressed their gratitude for the extraordinary opportunity to deepen and enrich their understanding of Christian heritage in the MENA region. They were offered fresh perspectives on the various confessions of Eastern Christianity, and this caused them to examine and reconsider their preconceptions.



MRel student Sara from the US shared:

“A worn spiral notebook accompanied my every reading assignment, full of scribbled notes, questions and exclamations—my immediate reactions laid bare to be embarrassed about later as further study gave clarity to my narrow view. Aside from overturning my predispositions about iconography, I have also gained a much broader and healthier understanding of the historical—and living—Church through study of the Eastern traditions.”



MRel student Miles from the UK also shared:

“As someone who engages in the region on matters of religion and politics, the module has given me a stronger basis for building good relationships with bishops and archbishops, amongst others, from various MENA countries and Christian confessions, on foundations of respect and brotherly love. There have been points at which the religious, cultural and historical factors we're studying, relating to schisms, doctrinal appreciation, linguistic misunderstandings, relevant historic figures, and experience of persecution have stepped off the page and into conversations.”

Join us in prayer for our MRel students as they grow in their knowledge of Eastern Christian traditions and develop a better understanding of fellow Christians as they seek to faithfully serve God across contexts.

A new Blog Post every Thursday! Latest from our ABTS Blog



[Re-examining Mission](#)



[Was Our Ministry Successful
Last Year?](#)



[Why is the Church Silent About the
Gift of Singlehood?](#)

Pray with Us: Prayer Requests from New Integrated Theology Program Students

Lydia | Egypt

I have been married for eight years and four months, and my husband and I still do not have children. We are praying for a child, so pray with us that our family grows.

Yaacoub | Morocco

Please pray for me as I start my journey of studying theology. Please pray that I may be able to balance ministry and seminary, for it can sometimes be challenging. I am also applying to several jobs, so pray that the Lord leads me to the right place.

Charbel | Lebanon

My prayer is that God helps me in my ministry of offering medical help to people with special needs in Syria. Please pray that things go smoothly as we get the official paperwork ready to start a similar ministry in Lebanon. Pray also for my family's health.

Mal Joseph | South Sudan

Please pray that the Lord send me work. I am trying to find a new job so I can provide for myself because I recently lost my job. Pray that I give theological education my all as I work and serve at the same time.

Madalla | Syria

I ask you to pray for my health because, later this February, I have an appointment with a surgeon. I need to do two surgeries, one in my foot and another in my stomach. Pray also for my ministry among Arabs in Canada and through an online Christian radio called Voice of Faith.

Samer | Iraq

Please pray that the crises in Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, and Syria come to an end. The people living in these countries are experiencing destruction, terrorism, and death, so please lift them up in prayer.