

Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

www.abtslebanon.org

June 2022



Last May, we held a workshop for the Karantina Alliance Church that was titled “Clash of the Worlds.” The training focused on creating space for conversation and providing tools for parents and children to communicate with each other effectively. This event is part of the work we see God prompting us to lead through our Peacemaking and Church Relations department. Since 2019, the department has been working with a collaborative team of Lebanese pastors and church leaders from nine different denominations to identify key areas of need in their churches – including theological, ministerial, and relational needs – and mobilize the expertise at ABTS to help fill the need where possible. The different denominations that make up the Lebanese Church have historically been at tension with each other; through God’s wisdom, this first-of-its-kind endeavor is bringing us together in service of His Kingdom.



In recent interviews, Peacemaking Team Lead and Dean of Faculty Bassem Melki, and Church Relations Coordinator Kamil Aquila Malak, shared with us about the growth we are experiencing in Non-formal Theological Training.

What does non-formal theological training look like at ABTS?

Bassem - Our non-formal theological training workshops focus on a theological and practical approach to ministry that is adapted and tailored for Arab church contexts and that emphasizes collaboration between different members of the Body, including churches and seminaries. They are the organic growth of the peacemaking and reconciliation action-based research project we conducted with a collaborative team of twelve local Lebanese pastors from nine different denominations a couple of years ago.

Kamil - The conversations we are having are allowing both ABTS and the churches to grow so that we can come alongside each other more effectively. Part of that is reflected in the impact of the peacemaking workshops. Our peacemaking workshops began back in March 2021 with a series for the Beirut Nazarene Church. Talking about the workshops, pastor Andrew Salameh shared:

Our ministry teams grew a lot as we responded to the needs emerging in the community in the aftermath of the crises Lebanon faced over the past years, and with that came the inevitable tension that happens among team members. Peacemaking was a Biblical solution to a church issue. After going through the trainings, there was a noticeable improvement in interpersonal relationships among church members.

How has non-formal theological training developed into what it is today?

Bassem - We first started out with six topics that focused on peacemaking. As the discussions progressed, the pastors began highlighting new areas of need that they are noticing in the local church community. With our faculty's theological expertise in topics like Kingdom Ethics, the Missional Church, Church History, and the Old and New Testaments, and their experience in ministry, we are able to provide a church-friendly contextual repackaging of the courses that we teach our theology students.

“She had never imagined studying history could be so engaging!”



Kamil - We held a workshop on Church History last March for the Beirut Church of Christ. Talking about why he felt the training was needed, pastor Moufid shared:

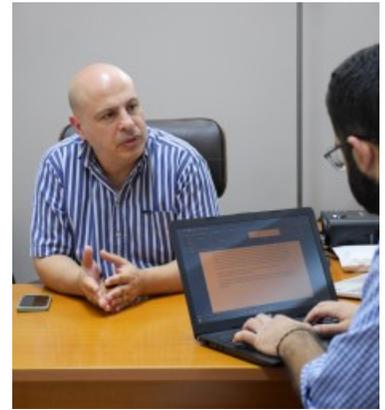
The non-formal training, I think, is very helpful for the new generation of believers who are excited for ministry and are handling multiple commitments. It equips them with knowledge that helps them become effective disciple makers without them needing to commit themselves to long-term study.

We coordinated with our faculty, and Assistant Professor Abed El Kareem Zien El Dien led the workshop. We got a lot of positive feedback afterwards! One person said that she had never imagined studying history could be so engaging!

How have the conversations with the collaborative team grown?

Bassem - At first, we noticed some justifiable hesitance with some of the pastors. Still, they were all excited to come

together and discuss issues that they felt were relevant for the Lebanese Church. We did our best to create a safe space where they could share their experiences openly, and they quickly began to talk about issues in the community and how the Church could work together to deal with them. Even during the lockdown when we had to transition to Zoom meetings, they were still all excited. We recently held a meeting for the pastors and their spouses talking about 'soul care'. Several shared that the trainings and discussions were sorely needed in the Lebanese Church and in their families.



Kamil - A lot of the pastors gave us feedback on the conversations we are having. Talking about why he felt the conversations were important, pastor Moufid shared:

For many years, we've lived in isolation from each other, which has led to empty churches and debilitating issues both inside and outside the church. Christ is very clear in Matthew 18 when He calls for confrontation and confession that lead to reconciliation and salvation. What's happening now is that we are learning from each other humbly and are helping each other to solve essential issues, which is reviving our churches very strongly.

We thank the Lord for His work in creating collaboration between the churches.

What are the hopes and next steps for the non-formal trainings?

Bassem - The hope is that by collaborating together as churches, ministries, NGOs, and seminaries, we realize that we

can learn from and benefit each other, which helps us arrive at knowledge humbly and in an interactive manner. This creates collaborative growth, and here is where we learn to allow the Holy Spirit to freely shape us.

Currently, we are connecting with more local entities that are interested in receiving non-formal training. We are also beginning to participate in more discussion platforms, both locally and abroad. Furthermore, we want to be training young church ministers and leaders so that they can take on more effective roles in their churches.

“... Here is where we learn to allow the Holy Spirit to freely shape us.”



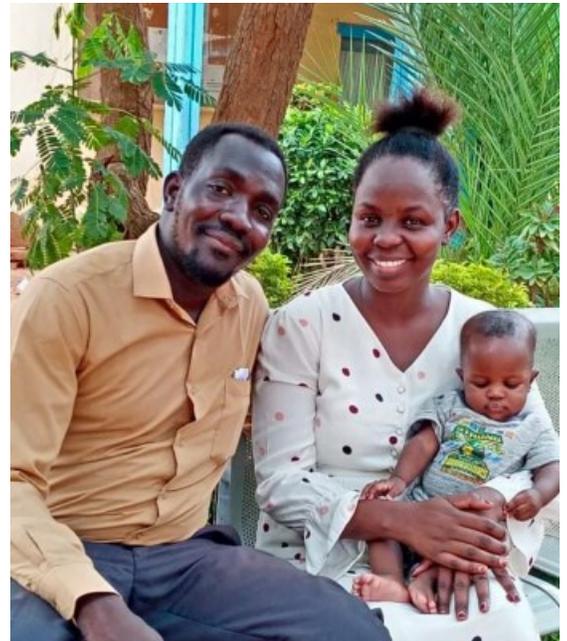
This is all a very humbling and challenging journey. We are excited to be engaged in what the Lord is doing in our region, and in how He is using the gifts and experiences available both at ABTS and among the Arab Church community for His glory and for the growth of the Kingdom.



Yousif and Sousanna Ministry Update

Yousif and Sousanna both had wonderful experiences with God before coming to seminary. Yousif had been part of his church’s youth and college student ministry, and Sousanna was diligently looking for ways to know God more. In 2018, they both felt the need to grow in their knowledge and understanding of their faith. Feeling God’s urging and wanting to respond to His work in their lives, they both began their journey of theological education in 2018. At the beginning of the 2020 pandemic, when we transitioned from a residential to a hybrid delivery method, Yousif and Sousanna moved back to their home in Khartoum. There, they committed themselves to serving the Kingdom through their local Baptist church while continuing their theological education and growing their family...

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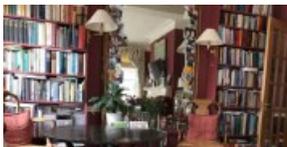


Energy bills are rising globally, however things are even more acute in Lebanon due to the deteriorating economic situation and decreasing availability of publicly generated electricity.

To be better stewards of our resources we are in the process of installing a PV system. Help us invest in green, renewable energy. [Contact our Director of Partnerships here.](#)

A new Blog Post goes out every Thursday!

Check out the latest posts below:



[Trapped in the Academic-Spirituality Divide?](#)



[The Lebanese Parliamentary Elections are Over. Now What?](#)



[Abu Akleh and the Religious Other](#)



[Yearning for Mercy: A Christian Reaction to the Death of Non-Believers](#)

Pray with Us!

Prayer Requests from Students in the Integrated Theology Program

Raymond from Lebanon

Please pray that God is glorified through the ministry that I am part of as it sends missionaries across the 10/40 window. Pray that more local churches in Lebanon adopt this ministry and that a missional mindset spreads across the Lebanese Church. I am experiencing a beautiful season in my life as I wait for our new baby, so I ask you to pray for my pregnant wife who will give birth soon.

Nadalla from Syria

I ask you to pray for me as I get ready to travel to the Gulf countries in September to baptize 19 people who came to faith through the online radio ministry with which the Lord has entrusted me. Pray for me also as I continue to battle with ongoing persecution problems that date back to when I first accepted Christ.

Yaacoub from Morocco

Pray for me that I bear spiritual fruit and obtain practical skills for carrying out the Great Commission as I study at seminary. In addition, I am applying for a job position, so I ask you to pray that I pass the recruitment process successfully. This way, I can provide for myself and support my local church.

Santo from Sudan

Please pray that God grants peace to all those who serve Him in Sudan while having to face economic challenges daily.

Lydia from Egypt

Please pray that God continues to use me with the group of young women that I serve, and that He guides me as I hope to open a shelter for refugees and young women who were battered and abandoned. Please pray for God's healing hand in my life because I suffer from several health issues that have recently worsened. Please also pray for my husband and me to have children; we have been married for nine years. I am holding on to Him and placing all my fears and pain at His feet.

Rony from Lebanon

I ask you to pray for me as I strive to obey God's call in my life. I had moved away from my career to serve the Lord full time in the fields of outreach, discipleship and follow up while getting equipped at seminary.

Some of the student names in the newsletter are pseudonyms for security reasons