



# Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

## كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية



December 2022

# Filled with Wonder: ABTS in God's Plans

by ABTS President, Elie Haddad

Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? (Exodus 15:11)

As 2022 comes to an end, and as I look back at the year, one word comes to mind: wonder. It is pure wonderment that not only are we surviving the challenges and difficulties of operating in Lebanon, but we are also thriving. Nothing is logical about what we are experiencing, for the third year in a row, except for God's majestic holiness and awesome glorious deeds that He is performing in and through us.



Elie Haddad, ABTS President

Lebanon is still in turmoil, and the whole region has its challenges. Yet, God continues to draw people to Himself all over the Arab world, and in the process, He is growing and transforming His Church to become an effective and holistic agent for the Gospel. It is then no surprise that developing leaders for the Church in the

region is a matter of great importance to God. This explains why He has been strengthening our infrastructure and preparing us for even more growth in reach and in impact.

As we look back at 2022, we can identify God's work in the following programs:

- ◆ The footprint of the fully online Certificate in Ministry is steadily growing. Through this program, we are able to develop biblical knowledge and skills training to many men and women active in church ministry.
- ◆ The new hybrid integrated Bachelor of Theology is maturing and quickly becoming our program of choice to equip key leaders for the Church in the Arab world.



October Graduation



During the October Residency

- ◆ Our Master of Theology was launched, training competent theologians and thought leaders for the Church in the Arab world.



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- ◆ Our design for the collaborative regional PhD program is almost complete. It is highly likely that we will be enrolling students in fall 2023.
- ◆ One of the most exciting developments is the expansion of our church-based non-formal training in Lebanon, with plans in place to start expanding outside Lebanon soon.

To support the sustainability and growth of the programs, God has bolstered our infrastructure in many areas as well:

- ◆ Our new physical library and research center is almost complete. We have already started moving our collections to the new space.
- ◆ The renovation of our dormitories is underway. Together with the library and research center, God is preparing us to become a place that can support serious academic research for the Arab Church. Researchers will be able to



come and stay at ABTS to pursue research interests that advance the Kingdom agenda in our region.

- ◆ A new Arabic digital library was also launched this year with hundreds of resources already available through the platform. This project is being implemented in collaboration with MENATE (Middle East and North Africa Association for Theological Education) for the benefit of all MENATE-affiliated seminaries. We plan to digitize and make available hundreds of additional resources in the years to come.
- ◆ We already started to implement a solar power generation solution on our campus that will allow us to rely more on renewable energy, thus taking better care of God's creation and significantly lowering our energy bills.
- ◆ We also embarked on a new scalability project through which we are assessing all our systems and processes to make sure that our programs are scalable and can grow without significant increase in resources.

We are experiencing God's glorious deeds not only on campus. I had the privilege of traveling in 2022 to several countries where we have graduates serving. It is always encouraging, inspiring, and humbling, to see our graduates



immersed in God's work even in difficult places. We visit them to offer encouragement and support, but we end up being the ones encouraged. It is one thing to hear reports our graduates' work. It is another thing to witness it first-hand. Such visits affirm our commitment to come alongside the churches as they engage in God's mission in our region.

Based on the way God has been preparing us, 2023 promises to be another awe-inspiring year. These are the new frontiers that we believe God is laying before us:

- ◆ Our online Certificate in Ministry program will continue to grow as it meets the increasing demand for training in the region.
- ◆ Another cohort of key leaders will start with us in the hybrid integrated program.
- ◆ The Master of Theology will be in its second year with yet another cohort joining.
- ◆ The Master of Religion program will be modified based on the recommendations of the ongoing assessment project.
- ◆ We will enroll the first cohort in the collaborative PhD program.
- ◆ The non-formal theological training will be offered to many more local churches and will expand into other countries in the region.
- ◆ We will come alongside smaller seminaries in the region and pilot the establishment of regional study centers.
- ◆ Our new library and research center will be fully functional with a growing number of local leaders and regional scholars benefitting from it.
- ◆ The renovation of the dormitory building will be completed, and a program to host visiting scholars will be in place.
- ◆ The space vacated by the old library will be renovated to become the new kitchen and dining room that service the guesthouse and conference center.
- ◆ The Arabic digital library will have no less than one



thousand resources by the end of 2023.

- ◆ We will implement new systems and automation of processes in response to the scalability project findings and recommendations.
- ◆ Our faculty will be traveling regularly to countries in the region to mentor and support our students and to build stronger relationships with the local churches.

We always set plans for the year to come, and at the end of it, we look back and are filled with awe and wonder by what God has done, way beyond our limited ability to plan or even imagine. We are looking forward to being awestruck again at the end of 2023.

## Ambassadors of Peace

“Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.” This verse from Proverbs 22 is beautifully painted on one of the rectangular columns of the Manara Youth Center playground, run by Youth for Christ (YFC) Lebanon. Beneath the verse, a sunset-colored silhouette extends her hand as if bidding farewell to the birds above her. It serves as a good reminder that we should invest in young lives, early on, and instill in them the values of the kingdom of God.

Our peacemaking initiative, Khebz w Meleh, has been bringing together teenagers from different religions and ethnicities and training them to act together for the common good of their local communities for the past several years. Lately, the peacemaking team at ABTS has been meeting with a few Lebanese schools and ministries including YFC Lebanon to understand the needs of teenagers in the country. The conversations with YFC led the team to develop a new curriculum that trains teenagers to become “ambassadors of peace”, guided by the [guidelines for dialogue](#). In collaboration with YFC Lebanon, our peacemaking team piloted this curriculum through a workshop with their leaders. Starting November, the leaders began to meet every Tuesday with the teenagers of Manara Youth Center to implement the curriculum. All throughout, the games and discussions were dynamic; the teenagers were laughing and enjoying their time, yet at the same time, they were focused, engaged, and learning. During one of the sessions, the teenagers were asked how they felt about the discussions. Jamil said, “I am able to express my thoughts freely here, and I feel heard.” Fatima shared, “I am allowed to be honest and to speak my mind.” Kamal said, “We are not afraid to express ourselves because we respect one another.” The sessions created space for the teenagers that aimed to plant in them principles for healthy dialogue that help them become agents of peace in their communities.

This past year, we have seen the Lord transform Khebz w Meleh to develop contextual curricula and train leaders in organizations who can train and empower young peacemaking ambassadors in their communities. We ask you to pray with us for the work of Khebz w Meleh in the coming year.



Reem El Khoury, Peacemaking Field Coordinator



KwM Program at YFC

Check out our latest blog posts:



[New Testament Letters as a Testimony about Distance Education](#)



[Let's Talk \(Dis\)ability](#)



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## - Pray with Us - Prayer Requests from Some of Our Staff and Faculty

### **Vanessa Tawk | HR Coordinator**

Please pray that my parents come to know the Lord Jesus as a personal Savior and experience the spiritual riches and joy of living in His presence.

### **Reem El Khoury | Peacemaking Field Coordinator**

Please pray for God's blessings on our peacemaking programs. We pray that He would use us to make an impact in the lives of youths and train them to be peacemakers within their communities and surroundings. I ask you to pray that I keep my eyes fixed on Jesus as I live this life with Him.

### **George Chamoun | Accountant**

Please pray for my upcoming marriage. Pray for me and my fiancée as we prepare to spend our lives together. We pray that every step we take is in God's will, and that we are spent in His service.

### **Carol Cheaib | Media and Public Relations Officer**

Pray for me that with each day I grow in God's knowledge and experience His presence. Please pray that I grow as a minister of His Kingdom as I serve and live for Him. I also ask you to pray for my loved ones who have not yet come to know Christ.

### **Bassem Melki | Peacemaking and Non-Formal Training Director**

Pray with us that God uses every opportunity He's given us to hold peacemaking and non-formal training to transform the lives of individuals, churches, and communities.

### **Abed El Kareem Zien El Dien | Assistant Professor of Pastoral Ministry**

Please lift our first-year students in prayer so that they are able to persevere as they balance various responsibilities including ministry and theological training.

### **Kees van der Knijff | Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology**

Please pray for our new Master of Theology students. All of them have a busy life alongside their studies, but they are devoted to giving their studies the time and energy that they need.

### **Grace Al-Zoughbi Arteen | Lecturer in Theological Education**

Please pray that the students continue to grow in their faith despite the daily challenges they encounter, and please pray that they have more opportunities to share the love of Jesus with others, especially now with Christmas approaching.