



Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية



For years, many of our residential students were Sudanese. They yielded to the refining strokes of the Lord's chisel as they were turned into jars of clay fitting for the treasure. Even today in the hybrid learning era, Sudanese followers of Christ continue to enroll in our programs even if at lower numbers. Because they are passionate about theological education, and because we are committed to the ministry in Sudan, a team from ABTS—namely ABTS President Elie Haddad, Academic Dean Walid Zailaa, and Director of Peacemaking and Non-formal Training Bassem Melki—headed to Sudan this January, and for three days, they met with students and alumni, conducted training workshops, visited church leaders, and explored how we can best support seminaries in Sudan.

Reunions and first encounters

The team's visit had several goals. The first was to visit our Sudanese students and alumni in their ministry contexts. "On the first day of our arrival, we met our students and graduates in the evening," shared Walid. "We updated them about our programs and the opportunities for continuing their theological education, through our new Master of Theology program, and soon, the PhD program. In turn, they updated us about their lives and ministries." The team met graduates from different cohorts, and they prayed together. They also met Certificate in Ministry students they hadn't been able to meet before.



Discussions with Sudanese theologians

The team visited three seminaries in Sudan: Nile Theological Seminary, Faith Institute, and Greif West Bible School. The seminaries expressed the need for technological upgrades as well as the pressing need for more theology professors and library resources. We pray that the Lord aids us in supporting seminaries in Sudan so they can be better equipped to train more leaders for the growth of the Kingdom in Sudan. We are currently in discussions with partners for that purpose.



A training and a confessional group prayer

A major part of the trip was the non-formal training workshops we held for Sudanese churches. We invited more than 60 church leaders with their spouses to a three-day training event in coordination with some of

our students and graduates. On the first day, Elie spoke on the missional church, and on the second day, Walid offered an Old Testament survey focusing on difficult themes such as war. On the third day, Bassem spoke about soul care and peacemaking among churches, resolving tribal conflict within Sudanese churches and tackling cultural sins and hinderances to reconciliation.

Bassem shared:

The contributions and discussions of the pastors were eye opening, and we resolved to hold more trainings in Sudan. At the end of the training, we held hands and prayed a confessional prayer—that we needed to change so that we witness the power of the Holy Spirit. There was a spirit of conviction, and it was beautiful. We would like to stand by the Church in Sudan, and we continue to find out what that will look like and how we can build a groundwork for what is to come. We will continue to hold non-formal training events and train more trainers to go to the difficult areas in Sudan and train more people in the ways of peacemaking.



A living Church in Sudan

Walid shared:

The Church in Sudan is facing challenges in its community, and yet the Lord is working through people who are holding onto their faith. A local pastor was helping us commute; he shared how he would not leave Sudan although all his family has already left the country. Key Church leaders are resolved to stay in Sudan despite the political and economic turmoil. A remnant is continuing the ministry in a country where they don't always have access to basic human rights. They have decided to follow God's calling with no turning back, despite the ongoing persecution. Hope in the future seems scarce in Sudan, but the Church is alive there, and it is serving its community.

Our graduates Yousif and Sousanna built a church and are pastoring it. It is very hot there, and yet they meet in the extreme weather. Many spend their Sundays going from one church to another preaching God's word. Another graduate, Fouad went off to serve at other places right after the Sunday service. It is quite touching to see their zeal and tirelessness.

A testimony of a graduate and a pastor

I studied at ABTS in Lebanon from 1995 to 1998. Those three years were transformative, and the Lord used them to prepare me for ministry in Sudan. The seminary didn't only impart me with biblical knowledge; the people there genuinely cared about my personal growth. They became family and partners in prayer, and even today, we are bound in prayer amid the turbulent times Sudan is witnessing.

So many of the Sudanese ABTS graduates are key church leaders here. They are active in key strategic places, serving through outreach and planting and pastoring churches, and many of them are working together. I am impressed by their remarkable characters and social influence. I thank the Lord for using ABTS to serve the Sudanese Church.

These were the words of our graduate Hafez Fessaha. Today, he is the pastor of the Evangelical Church of Khartoum Bahri. He is also the head of the national committee of Christian Education in Sudan, and he teaches theology at Faith Institute.

It is an honor to be walking alongside our Sudanese brothers and sisters and partnering with them in God's Kingdom work in Sudan. We hope to grow together and learn from one another. We hope to be a source of encouragement to them as they have been to us over the years. We have often been inspired by their genuine faith and humility. They have their difficulties, but God's Spirit is working through them in the country. Every time we hear what God is doing there, we are encouraged. Their passion for God's work is evident, and they are not concerned about their comfort as long as there is ministry. Please pray with us that God continues to use them in Sudan. No doubt they are making a difference there.

Vision for a Regional Center for Research at ABTS

In [December's Newsletter](#), Elie Haddad shared about how we were able to identify God's work in the past year, and how He is providing for the sustainability and growth of our programs. This includes the ongoing renovation of our **dormitory** and the building of a new **library and research center**.

The dream to build a multipurposed building started many years ago. The initial plan was to have one structure that would be suitable for an adequate living space for students and a functional library and study space. The plan was subsequently modified to build a separate library and research center while restoring and renovating the old dormitory.

Work on both buildings started in 2021. The construction of the new library and research center was completed last month and is now being furnished. The move to the new library and research center has started. It should be fully functional by the summer. The dormitory is expected to be ready by the summer as well.



Library and Research Center



Dormitory

But why invest in a renovated dormitory when we do not currently have a residential program, and why a new physical library when our students are distant and we are already investing in a state-of-the-art Arabic digital library?

God is giving us an expanded vision for training leaders for the Church in the Arab world at an intellectual and a scholarly level. With the recent launching of our [MTh program](#), and our developing plans for a regional and collaborative [PhD program](#), serious research is becoming a priority at ABTS. Our vision is to have the new library and research center accessible to all church leaders and serious students of the Bible in Lebanon. Additionally, we want these facilities to be accessible to all serious researchers from around the Arab world and beyond. The dormitory will also serve this same purpose. It will be used to house students, visiting professors, resident scholars, and anyone pursuing any research interest in service to the Church. Our vision is to see ABTS become a hub of research for the Church in the Arab world.

As God is growing His church in our region and is increasing its impact, the need for solid scholarship is urgent so that new generations of church leaders are formed, equipped, and trained with crucial skills that can help them engage our region with the message of God's love and hope.

We are grateful to God for this major milestone, and we are grateful to those whom God has used to make this vision come to life.

Check out our latest blog posts:



[Let Us Continue the Conversation: The Bustani-Van Dyck Arabic Bible and the Discussion Around Inerrancy](#)



[A House Divided Against Itself Will Fall](#)

- Pray with Us - Some of Our Sudanese Students

Ibrahim | Bachelor of Theology

I ask you to pray for me. The larger part of my family remains far from Christ, and they often criticize and pressure me. Pray for my ministry, that the Lord uses me according to His will, not mine. Finally, pray for the region, as so many Arab countries are experiencing crises and difficulty.

Haroun | Bachelor of Theology

Pray for me that the Lord grants me grace, wisdom, power, and energy so I may move forward in ministry according to the Lord's calling for me.

Balgis | Bachelor of Theology

The situation in Sudan is taking a turn for the worse with each day, and people feel unsafe. We now fear for our children due to the systematic targeting of Christians. Please pray for the security situation in Sudan.

Yousif | Bachelor of Theology

Please pray for my wife and son and for our life as a family. My wife and I strive to serve the Church and our community in Sudan. Pray that we are given a spirit of wisdom in our leadership of the Faith Baptist Church in Soba. I also ask you to pray that God blesses the ministry of our church in this new year and uses all its programs and activities for His glory. We recently baptized 22 new members, so we ask you to pray for them.

Gozoli | Bachelor of Theology

The Wad Madani archdiocese of the Episcopal church in Sudan held a conference on mission and evangelism in Al Jazeera State in February, and then we held a strategic planning conference in Khartoum. Please pray that these conferences bear fruit and result in lasting outcomes.

Khamis | Certificate in Ministry

I knew my calling was to teach God's word, but after beginning to study theology, my knowledge of His word increased, and I was able to realize my calling more. Today, I have a counselling ministry at church as well as a one-on-one discipleship ministry. I also take part in a prison ministry. Please pray for my ministry in Sudan and for the Church there.