



Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

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June 2023

Peace I Leave with You: Peacemaking and Non-formal Training at ABTS



Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:27; NIV)

The Middle East has historically been known for its conflicts and instability. For ABTS, serving in a region where interreligious and inter-cultural conflicts are rife, Christ's call for us to be peacemakers has always been relevant to our approach to ministry. In recent years, as the Lord shaped and molded the ministry at ABTS, peacemaking has steadily moved to become at the core. Focusing first on Lebanon, the Lord has grown our peacemaking ministry to also serve the Church in the region.

Peace research began at ABTS in the early 2000s when Martin Accad founded the Institute of Middle East Studies at ABTS. Now consolidated within different departments, the Institute's programs birthed the annual Middle East Consultation and the peacebuilding initiative that helped us develop our current approach to peacemaking and non-formal training. Led by Director of Peacemaking Bassem Melki, the initiative brought local pastors together in conversation on issues that were relevant to the Lebanese Church. The pastors came from Apostolic, Armenian Evangelical, Presbyterian, Brethren, Church of God, Pentecostal, Free Evangelical, Alliance, and Baptist churches. Over time, Bassem and the collaborative team of pastors came to focus on how conflict resolution and reconciliation were carried out within the Lebanese Church. By mid-2021, the Peacemaking Department had developed a biblical and contextual approach to peacemaking that deals with the shame and honor dynamics of ministry in the region. The research also highlighted the need for ministry team members and leaders who are trained in biblical peacemaking and conflict resolution. After developing the theory, the Peacemaking Department began giving trainings to NGOs and church congregations and organizations across Lebanon.



Peacemaking Training with Local Pastors —2020

Commenting on the journey with the Lebanese Church, Bassem shared:

It has been a blessing to see so many different parts of the Lebanese Church come together in open cooperation to achieve a common goal. Lines of communication that before did not exist have opened up, and through them, we are finding ways to meet the needs arising in the Arab Church in a dynamic manner through our non-formal theological training workshops. And more and more, we are seeing a culture of reconciliation and peacemaking begin to form in the Lebanese Evangelical community. Most of all, I am proud of the pioneering work that the collaborative team of pastors took on through this project. Their initiative helped motivate others to join and be trained as peacemakers. It also helped us at ABTS as we continued to develop our approach to peacemaking so that we could share it with other churches serving in a shame and honor setting in the Arab world.



During a Peacemaking Event—2022

Speaking about the impact the workshops have had on our ministry, Assistant Professor Abed El Kareem Zien El Dien shared:

These workshops have helped us engage more directly with local and regional churches, and our relationships with these churches are growing stronger. We are coming to know their needs more directly and thus can better tailor the way in which we respond to these needs through our training workshops. We are also able to connect with the laypeople of these churches, people who might not necessarily have a need for long-term theological education, get to know them more, and help them grow in their knowledge of the content and context of the Bible.



Nabila During the Training in February

Based on the findings with the local church, the team was able to refine their theory and categorize it into three areas of peacemaking: personal, communal, and national. This approach was then presented and discussed in our 2022 Middle East Consultation. Building on the theory presented in the 2022 Consultation, this past February, we hosted 13 key Arab leaders from churches in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Sudan, and Lebanon for a four-day intensive training. During these four days, the leaders were trained and equipped to begin carrying out peacemaking workshops in their churches and ministries. The following is some feedback from these leaders.

Ashraf, our 2012 Bachelor of Theology graduate and pastor of a church in Egypt, is applying the training in his context. Talking about how the peacemaking workshops were helping him serve in his community, Ashraf shared:

After the workshop, I was able to take what I had learned back to the ministry team at my church. We held several workshops where we discussed how we could serve alongside each other more effectively while building a culture of peace. By the end of the workshops, we felt called to set Romans 14:19 as a commitment for our ministry and do our best to “do what leads to peace and to mutual edification”. This helped us grow closer, and I already see how we are better able to serve the people in our community.

What I learned also helped us improve inter-church relationships. In the area where I serve, there are several other evangelical churches, and we have a union that helps us coordinate and serve alongside each other better. As a church pastor, I serve as part of the union's executive committee. While the diversity of the members is enriching, it can also create difficulties in communication, and so we would often have discussions that lead to disagreements. After the conference in Lebanon, I was able to share the approach to peacemaking with the different pastors who are part of the union. This helped us come to a point where we could disagree with each other's opinions, stances, and ideas without becoming hostile towards the person, which has greatly improved our communication and cooperation.



Ashraf in Ministry

Ara, our 2012 Master of Divinity graduate who pastors a church in Iraq shared:

The community around my church is very diverse. This is why building bridges and creating a culture of peacemaking is important for us to reach out effectively to our community. Personal peacemaking is also important for the ministry team to be able to serve healthily and disciple others effectively. After the workshop, I was able to hold 8 sessions on peacemaking for 11 ministry team members at my church. I was blessed by how cooperative and engaged the team was. The sessions helped us open up to each other, and I was touched that the team openly shared about their past discomforts and hurts.



Ara Sharing About His Ministry

Several others are carrying out peacemaking ministries in key areas in the Arab world. Nabila, our 2018 Master of Divinity graduate from Sudan, has been displaced from her home because of the recent conflict in Khartoum. She and her family have had to seek refuge in a different area of the country, and it is difficult for her to communicate with us consistently because of the lack of access to resources. Despite this, she reached out to the team and asked for the material through WhatsApp so she could begin adapting it and applying it to the needs of her community. One of the leaders serves alongside women from different backgrounds in Lebanon. These women often come from adverse circumstances and find it difficult to integrate and communicate with each other. So, the leader chose to hold sessions for the women that focus on unity, and bit by bit, the women have been opening up to each other. Mazen, who pastors a church in Syria, went back and began carrying out peacemaking as part of his church's response in the aftermath of the earthquakes. Today, the church is preparing to launch three groups that will receive peacemaking and reconciliation training through the church. Jalil, our current Integrated Theology Program student, and Nancy, who are serving in Egypt and Yemen, have been

focusing on using the theory to prepare young adult peacemakers who can contribute to building a culture of peace in their communities, create lines of communication, and share the gospel with the people around them.

Over the next months, these leaders will continue to carry out peacemaking workshops in their home churches, test out what works, and refine the theory to their ministry contexts. In September, they will come together during our 2023 Middle East Consultation to share their experiences, take part in the discussions, and learn together as we seek to serve His Kingdom and come alongside the Arab Church as it obeys God by nurturing a culture of peacemaking.

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- Pray with Us -

Members of the Peacemaking Department and Some of the Peacemakers

Bassem | Director of Peacemaking and Church Relations and Assistant Professor of Peace Studies

Pray for the ABTS Peacemaking team as we prepare for the upcoming Consultation. Pray for wisdom and discernment as we seek God's will in these difficult times. Pray for the peacemakers, that they are able to reflect His love through their ministries.

Reem | Peacemaking Field Coordinator

Please pray for all the peacemakers who are carrying out their ministries amidst all the difficulties in the region. Pray especially for Sudan, that the Lord protects His children in the country.

Ghida | Peacemaking and Non-formal Training Coordinator

Pray with us as we ask God to walk before us and help us remain faithful while preparing for MEC 2023 and the coming pastors' gathering in September. Pray that He gives us wisdom, strength, and the ability to reflect His word and character. I would also ask that you pray for my wedding, which will take place on the 18th of June. I ask God to help me to be "A woman who fears the Lord" (Proverbs 31:30) and whose "Mouth is full of wisdom" (Proverbs 31:26).

Abed El Kareem | Assistant Professor

Pray that the Lord creates more opportunities for us to share what He has given us with the Church in the region. Pray for Sudan, that we are able to come alongside the Church there and support it amidst the difficulties that the country is experiencing.

Ashraf | ABTS Graduate and Pastor of Ezbat El Nakhel Baptist Church in Egypt

The Lord calls us to help build each other up by reflecting the love of Christ to each other. I ask you to pray that I am able to reflect His love faithfully, and that He gives me the opportunity to share this outlook with those around me.

Ara | ABTS Graduate and Pastor of the Baghdad Baptist Church in Iraq

Please pray that the Lord opens our eyes and gives us the grace to contribute positively to building a culture of peace in the Arab world. Pray also that we are able to be more engaged in conflict resolution and reconciliation efforts in our communities.

Sara | MRel Student and Women's Ministry Leader

I ask you to pray with me that God would raise the women in my ministry up to share their testimony of what the Spirit has been guiding them in. My prayer for them is humility and courage to the glory of the Father, and that the ministry bears fruit for the good of the community.

Continue Praying for Sudan!



While some of our graduates and students have found refuge in neighboring cities and countries, many remain in Khartoum, and the situation there is difficult. One of our graduates recently shared that markets are closed, and essential supplies, including food and fuel, are running low. Pray with us for our students throughout the country. Pray for protection over the innocent people who have been impacted by the conflict. And finally, pray that His peace reigns in Sudan.

MIDDLE EAST CONSULTATION 2023



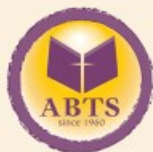
My Peace I Give You: Practicing Peacemaking in the Middle East

Join us on **September**

25, 26, & 27

Hybrid: In-Person and Online

English
translation
is provided



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