

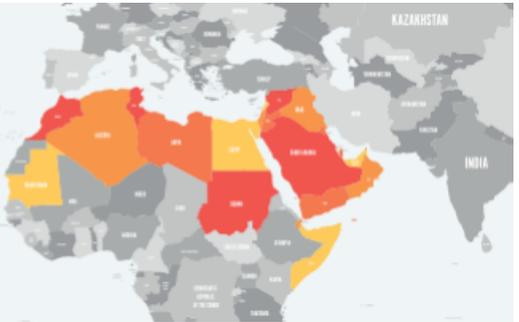
Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

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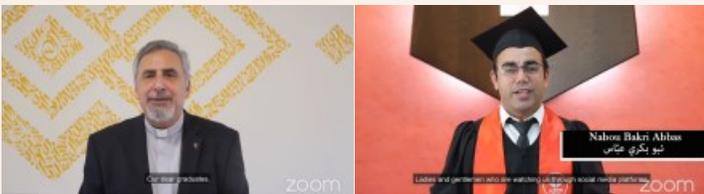
July 2021

**THIS LAND IS WORTH THE EFFORT
BECAUSE IT IS DEAR TO GOD**



Christian hope is what comes unexpectedly in unexpected places. It is beyond our imagination what the Word of God has done in the last 50 years in the world, regardless of the soil and its nature. [...] The Word is Jesus Christ—through your hands, your lips, and your lives. You are the sowers.

These were the words of the graduation speaker Pastor Joseph Kassab, President of the Supreme Council of the Evangelical Community in Syria and Lebanon, as he addressed our graduates during our June 19 [virtual graduation ceremony](#). This time, our Elias Salibi hall wasn't bustling with the ambient noise of the audience as they went in and then went out to congratulate the graduates after the ceremony. Faculty may have found it slightly strange that they were addressing a camera instead, but as ABTS President Elie Haddad pointed out, the changes that the pandemic caused became an opportunity to upgrade our programs and educational approaches to meet the emerging needs.



Together, we had the privilege of worshipping God and celebrating the harvest of our graduates. Our faculty gathered on campus, and our graduates joined them virtually from each of their respective countries, along with our friends who joined our live stream.

During the ceremony, we heard congratulatory speeches from ABTS president Elie Haddad as well as Charlie Costa, who is the Chairman of our Board of Trustees. We sang with the worship



and praise team, and we heard the testimonials of our graduates before Walid Zailaa, our Academic Dean, announced the names of the 2019-2020 and the 2020-2021 graduates.

Our 2020 Bachelor of Theology graduate, Nabou from Syria, was the student speaker for the Integrated Theology Program. Despite all the challenges he and his family faced during the Syrian war, Nabou heeded the Lord's calling for him to study theology and dedicate himself to the service of the Church. Our 2020 graduate Ashley Al-Saliby from Texas was the student speaker for the Master of Religion (MRel) program, whose vivid

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portrayal of meaningful encounters during the program’s field visits warmed our hearts. We leave you with her concluding prayer:

“Oh, that God would lead us to walk humbly with Him all our days. He is worthy. Oh, that He would enable us to walk humbly with one another. Oh, that He would help us to walk humbly through a groaning world of hurting and harassed neighbors, imitating the way Jesus laid down his rights and gave Himself up. May He be glorified in us, friends. Thank you. God bless you.”



A Peacemaking Workshop Series with a Local Church

Last February, Bassem Melki, our Dean of Faculty and peacemaking team lead, [shared](#) about our intention to work with local churches towards creating a culture of peacemaking in the hope of impacting the Arab world in the years to come. Over the past year and a half, Bassem and his team worked closely with a diverse collaborative team of 14 local evangelical pastors and church leaders to develop a theory of peacemaking and reconciliation that is contextual to the Arab world. “There are many approaches to conflict resolution out there” shared Bassem, “and though they are highly effective, they sometimes do not recognize Arab socio-cultural norms.” By developing an approach to peacemaking that faces Arab socio-cultural norms head-on, we at ABTS can help Arab church ministers and leaders be better equipped as they practice conflict resolution and reconciliation in their ministerial contexts. As we work towards our vision to see God glorified, communities restored and people reconciled through the Church in the Arab world, we know that we must first begin with ourselves as members of the Arab Church.

Following up on this impetus, the peacemaking team began holding workshops on peacemaking and conflict resolution for ministry team members from the Beirut Nazarene Church earlier this year. “The more we studied peacemaking, the more the church leaders came to see that peacemaking and conflict

resolution are an integral part of the holistic message of the gospel, so it became important to them that we continue to explore the practical and theological aspects of peacemaking together” shared Bassem. The trainings offered are dynamic and focus on the aspects of peacemaking that the ministry teams feel that they need to focus on. This way, the peacemaking team can continue to engage with the ministry teams in manners that are relevant to their ministerial contexts.

The team held three training days for 36 members of the ministry teams from the Beirut Nazarene Church. The first day of sessions, held on May 8, focused on different conflict styles and on understanding the self. People with different characters approach conflict differently, so it is important to know where one’s strengths and weaknesses lie so that we can grow together as peacemakers. Some people, for example, tend to seek compromise to resolve conflict. Some become competitive and aggressive, while others avoid conflict resolution altogether. The ministry teams went through many case studies on the day that helped them become aware of their personal attitudes and how they can grow into effective peacemakers. As the teams engaged more with the case studies, they were able to become aware of personal needs and work together so that they can continue to grow, achieve goals as a team, and work towards maintaining relationships and a sense of community.



The second training day, held on June 5, focused on developing healthier Biblical and contextual steps towards reconciliation. “In Arab culture, we tend to shy away from confrontation, and when confrontation does happen, it is often for the wrong reasons. We want to work together to build a healthy approach to confrontation. Part of this is knowing how to deal with anger”, shared Bassem. The day was centered around what the peacemaking team is calling the “three pillars of Christian life” and how these pillars inform the steps we need to take to move towards healthier confrontation, and subsequently, healthier conflict resolution. “Many Christians tend to think that Christianity is about living immaculately, while really, it is about knowing that we often make mistakes, and so the Lord gave us the three pillars of confession, forgiveness, and repentance, to know how to live together in a more harmonious way”. During one session, the peacemaking team facilitated a discussion around four steps that help us work towards peacemaking. These are:

- ◆ How can we honor God in our approach to conflict?
- ◆ How can we take the log out of our own eye first?
- ◆ How do we confront and restore?
- ◆ How do we reconcile?

Each of these four steps involve the three pillars in one way or another. Oftentimes, we resolve conflict through ending the relationship. God does not want this. “Are we the dead end of God’s love?” shared Bassem. “We are called to extend the love of God to others. Imagine if the Lord had said ‘I forgive you, but I do not want to deal with you anymore’”.

The Beirut Nazarene Church’s ministry teams had requested that they work towards developing a healthier work ethic, so the third training day, held on July 3, focused on applying Kingdom ethics within the dynamic of the team. Bassem started the session by emphasizing that the Church should be a place for growth. “The best place to make a mistake is within the Church where there is room for love, mercy, correction, and growth”. Elie Haddad, ABTS President, then facilitated a discussion on Kingdom ethics and how they inform and shape the life of the Church. “We, as followers of Christ, base our understanding of right and wrong on the character and will of God as revealed in Scripture, and our understanding of our identity as Kingdom citizens shapes our role in society,” shared Elie. “We need to remember that we are not the ones who change the world. Our role is to be salt and light and to plant mustard seeds that the Lord uses to change and transform societies”. The ministry teams worked through several case

studies using a Kingdom lens which helped them develop an understanding of how we can develop a high work ethic in the workplace as well as in church ministries. “The purpose of this learning is not to gain more knowledge to judge others. Rather, we learn how, as a church, we can become a pioneering community modeling an alternate way of life, the Kingdom way,” Elie stressed. Bassem ended the training by emphasizing the relationship between peacemaking and ethics, saying that “we cannot be Christlike in peacemaking if we are not Christlike in our ethics”.

“The sessions taught me a lot about myself” shared one of the attendees. “I learned that my weakness in conflict resolution stems from my inability to express my emotions, even in the most difficult of circumstances”. “I realized that I need to learn how to better myself and reach out to others with love,” shared another.

The peacemaking team is continuing to reach out to different local evangelical churches to see where their needs are and how the theory of peacemaking can be best applied to serve the needs present in their ministerial contexts. We thank the Lord for the work He is doing in the region through the Arab Church. We pray that our Arab churches continue to learn to be peacemakers and experience an increased Kingdom impact in the region.



MIDDLE EAST CONSULTATION 2021

MEC 2021

TOWARDS A DYNAMIC CHURCH:

Making Disciples, Developing Leaders, and Engaging Society in Lebanon and Beyond

Join us online on

Thursday September 30th, Friday October 1st & Saturday October 2nd

6pm-9pm Beirut Time

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Pray with Us: Prayer Requests from Some of our Students in the Integrated Theology Program

Ali from Algeria

Please pray for the local church that I lead in Algeria. Our hall's doors have been sealed since September 2019, and disputes have recently surfaced between believers. Please pray that the Lord gives us grace to see His purpose behind this bend in the road.

Anthony from Lebanon

Through my ministry, I disciple new believers and train them to disciple others. Please pray that God raises up a multiplying church in the North of Lebanon that is faithful to God's word. Pray that those I am discipling abide in Christ and grow in the Spirit. Pray for the leader of the ministry center in which I serve, and pray for my wife and kids.

Student from Yemen

I ask you to pray with me for Yemen, that the Lord may reign here and save the country from the violence it is currently experiencing. Pray for my family, that all of them come to Christ. Pray that the Lord heals my wife from cancer. And, finally, pray that my son, who has recently accepted the Lord as his savior, grows under the Lord's watchful eye.

Samir from Syria

I ask you to pray with me that peace reigns during these troubled times, and that we recover from the impact the pandemic has had on our countries. Pray with me, as well, that the Kingdom continues to grow, and that His word reaches all those who are in need.

Paul from South Sudan

Please pray for true peace in my country South Sudan. Many of my people are dying from hunger and lack of security. Many families cannot afford school tuition, and in all, the economic situation is very bad. Pray also that our churches would appoint leaders who offer sound teaching. Finally, I ask you to pray that I may be given wisdom to deal with my family, ministry and children.

Zineb from Morocco

Please pray that the Lord uses me more and more, and that I use my theological education for His glory. Pray that my children are rooted in Christ and that my extended family knows Him, both in Syria (my husband's family) and Morocco.

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