

Dear friends,

2008 has been an interesting year in Lebanon and at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary (ABTS) in particular. The political situation in Lebanon has gone back and forth between hostilities and cautious stability, while at ABTS the ministry keeps growing. God seems to be preparing us for a wider impact for the Kingdom.

Some of our donors question why they should partner with a ministry that operates in such an unstable environment. No one knows if and when things might go wrong. Our response is simple: if we, as a Middle East Church, are engaged in spiritual warfare, wars are fought on the frontlines, not where it's safe and stable. Yes, of course ministry here is risky, but we don't consider this a threat. Rather, we consider it an opportunity to join God as He extends His Kingdom in this highly volatile region.

Graduation

In June 22, 2008, we graduated 13 students who went back to serve God in the communities that sent them. These students came from Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and Iraq.



ABTS Graduates and Faculty

Riad Kassis, the regional director for Overseas Council International gave the commencement address. He spoke of the many challenges that

face the Church in the Middle East today and gave valuable advice to the graduating men and women on how to face these challenges. Riad is exceptionally equipped to handle such a delicate topic being a teacher, scholar, pastor and an experienced administrator.

Faculty Retreat

Earlier this year, and in order to move forward with our curriculum revision, we had a retreat for our faculty to have a dedicated time to work on it. Our special guest consultant for this retreat was Donald Goertz from Tyndale Seminary in Toronto. Tyndale has been at the cutting edge of developing missional theological programs, and Donald has been one of the leaders in these initiatives. Thanks to Tyndale Seminary and to CBM for sponsoring this retreat, we are making major progress in developing a new missional curriculum that will revolutionize the ministry of our graduates. We expect that the new curriculum will be in effect in the academic year 2009-2010.



Donald Goertz

Leadership Retreat

During the summer we had another retreat, this time for the leadership of ABTS. As God is growing the ministry, we felt that we needed to take our time to refocus on what God wants us to do next. The challenges and the needs of the ministry are huge, but our resources are limited. So, we felt the need to examine what we're doing. The ministries of ABTS are growing way beyond what a traditional seminary does, especially one as small as ours. The size of our faculty and staff, as well as our budget, far exceeds what's needed to teach less than 50 residential students. But God is stretching our ministry in different directions. The reach of our Institute of Middle East Studies is way beyond our residential students. So is the reach of our Educational Ministries Resource Centre and our publishing initiatives.

After reflecting on what God is doing in our midst and what we believe He's calling us to do (and to be) we are finding ourselves needing to redefine who we are and who our "clients" are. We are no longer just a seminary. The best way we are able to describe who we've become is a *missional educational movement*. We are in the process of writing a strategic plan to help us understand better what this will mean to us in the near future. Needless to say, these are very exciting times at ABTS – it's always exciting when God is doing something that none of us can do.

CBM in Lebanon

A group of CBM leaders, with several leaders from the Canadian Baptist churches east and west, visited us in Lebanon. The primary reason for this visit was to sign a partnership agreement with the Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development, the legal owner of ABTS. This is a partnership that sets the ground for

future areas of collaboration that may cover a wide range of ministries.

A New Dimension to Mireille's Ministry

Mireille has been involved in the work of ABTS in many capacities. Her latest role is as a research assistant for the Educational Ministries Resource Centre (EMRC). This centre was founded last year. Its mission is to provide resources and training to empower the Church in the Arab world and beyond for holistic educational ministry as it realizes its Biblical mission of having Christ acknowledged as Lord.



Mireille on the EMRC Team

Dear friends, Mireille and I want to thank you for your continued support of our ministry. We cannot continue to do what we're doing without partners like you.

If you are interested in becoming our Partner in Mission, please contact Eileen at eileenm@cbmin.org, or go to www.cbmin.org.

***“O Lord, you are my God;
I will exalt you and praise your name,
for in perfect faithfulness
you have done marvellous things,
things planned long ago.”***

We would love to hear from you. You can contact us at:

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