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NEST

NEWSLETTER

كلية اللاهوت للشرق الأدنى

ISSUED OCCASIONALLY by the NEAR EAST SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY, BEIRUT - LEBANON
FOR RELATED CHURCHES, SUPPORT AGENCIES AND A SMALL CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

نشرة موسمية
تصدر عن



December 2021

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From the President

For the second year now we are beginning the new year under the shadow of the grave crisis, the collapse that our country Lebanon is undergoing. We, like all institutions of learning, have been affected. We were expecting 5 more SiMo students; we could have had more local students, had the situation been normal; we were supposed to host more than one workshop and training session for churches and groups from outside Lebanon in the summer. But, apparently, the crisis is going to last for many years, and we have to brace ourselves for this. Every year it is a struggle for survival; actually, every day is a struggle for survival. Things are bad on all fronts: I need not recount to you the conditions under which we live, the uncertainty that surrounds us in regard to everything that we normally used to take for granted in the past, and that other people in other countries take for granted and don't bother to even think about: electricity, water, food, gasoline, medications, etc. - simply all the essential needs. All this has brought about increasing poverty, unemployment, emigration, desperation, depression, and in some cases suicide (the rate has been increasing).

In spite of all this, NEST continues to carry on its mission, as this Newsletter will tell you in words and pictures. Students from the region and from Europe and North America still come to study here; churches still ask us to hold study sessions on our premises; pastors from Europe still come to spend a three-months' study sabbatical; our Resource Center for Christian Education is still active in holding training sessions for the churches in Syria; and we still cultivate Christian-Muslim relations. In the midst of this country's severe educational crisis we have launched a new online Diploma in Theological Studies in Arabic; and in this situation of hopelessness and decay all around us, we have dedicated a new Chapel for worship, thanksgiving and praise.

Thanks be to God who accompanies, inspires and motivates us; and many thanks to our partners and friends all over the world who continue to believe in NEST's mission and extend their support.

Beginning of the School year

The academic year began on Monday September 27 with an Opening Convocation at noon. President Sabra led the service and introduced new students. This year there are students from 6 different countries – Lebanon, Syria, Armenia, Germany, Denmark, and Canada. Even in the midst of the severe crisis that Lebanon is going through, NEST remains a multicultural, multilingual community of learners, with students from a variety of Christian traditions.



The Opening Convocation Service

Welcoming Party for Students and Residents

After two years of very low occupancy in the dormitory due to COVID19 and the shift of NEST and neighboring universities to online teaching, NEST student rooms are fully occupied at the beginning of the first semester. Many students who go to other universities are residing in the building. Students and faculty organized a welcoming party for all students in the building on September 30, where food, fun and games were shared and enjoyed.



Summer Study Session

The Anglican Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf held its second Summer Study Session for lay ministers from August 22-29, 2021. Fifteen persons from the U.K., Qatar, Bahrain, Cyprus, and Kuwait took part in this program entitled “Theological Reflection”. NEST faculty members Drs. Rima Nasrallah, Peter Ford and Wilbert van Saane took part in organization and giving presentations. Despite the severe fuel shortage and the overall difficult situation in the country in late August, the program was a success by testimony of the organizers and participants.



Visit to the First Armenian Ev. Church, Beirut

NEST's Resource Center Activities in Syria

In cooperation with the Bible Society in Syria the Resource Center for Christian Education at NEST has been organizing several training sessions for different church groups. After the May 2021 session, two others were conducted in Homs (26 participants) in June and in Hamah (25 participants) in September. Part-time instructor at NEST, Preacher Hala Khoury, along with Dr. Pierre Filfil were the main speakers via zoom, but the sessions were held in person for the participants in Syria. These training sessions are ecumenical in nature; they are not just restricted to Evangelical church groups and individuals. The last session (Hamah) was actually held for Sunday School Teachers at the Syriac Church of Our Lady. These trainings are made possible through funding from NEST partner Danmission.



Participants in the Hamah Session

Online Diploma in Arabic

The Faculty has been working on launching an online Diploma in Arabic for some time now. Last month, all preparations were completed and the program was announced via e-mail and social media to the local Middle Eastern churches and individuals in the Protestant communities. The Diploma in Theological Studies is a 24-credit non-degree program designed for persons with a serious interest in theological studies but who, for reasons of employment or other time limitation, are unable to pursue a complete degree program. The Diploma has always been available at NEST, but now, and for the first time, it is available online and in the Arabic language. The program will start in February 2022.

For information and registration, check NEST website: www.theonest.edu.lb

DanMission Meeting in Beirut

Danmission, a major partner and supporter of some NEST programs and initiatives, invited NEST and other partners in Lebanon to meet the new Secretary General, Mr. Kristian Sloth Petersen, on 30 September in Beirut. Mr. Petersen introduced and discussed with the participants Danmission's new program strategy and other new plans and strategies, and expressed his desire to developing them further with the local partners. Dr. Rima Nasrallah represented NEST in the meeting.



Danmission partners in Lebanon

Pastors Sabbatical 2021

Five European pastors (4 Germans and 1 Dane) are with us in the first semester, taking part in the 3-months' Sabbatical Program for Pastors. The program had been suspended last year due to COVID19, but we were able to resume it this year, despite all the problems in the country and the difficult conditions under which NEST is operating. The pastors attend some courses, participate in the community life of the Seminary, go on field trips, and take part in discussion sessions on Christian-Muslim relations and other topics especially designed for their program.



C. Shnepel, B. Klünemann, H. Johannessen, K. Jacobi & B. Braun

Seminary Retreat

The annual retreat of the Seminary took place on the last week-end of October (29-31). The annual Retreat had been cancelled last year due to COVID19. Twenty-six students, faculty members and Sabbatical pastors attended the Retreat in the Evangelical Conference Center of Dhour Shweir around the theme "In via: Spiritual Reflections on Faith Journeys". The aim of the Retreat at the beginning of the academic year is to worship, reflect, have fellowship with each other and establish deeper personal acquaintance. It sets the tone for the whole year.



Dhour Shweir Retreaters

Dedication of the Kenneth Bailey Chapel



On November 24, the birthdate of the late Dr. Kenneth Bailey (1930-2016) NEST held a special service in which the small chapel was officially named “The Kenneth Bailey Chapel.” Dr. Bailey served as professor of New Testament at NEST from 1965-1984. He was an internationally recognized scholar of the NT and left a great impact on students and colleagues in Beirut and the Middle

East. Members of the NEST community and representatives of the four Churches that own and manage the Seminary were in attendance. President Sabra spoke a word about Dr. Bailey and his significance and his service for the Seminary. Sara Bailey Makari, his daughter, sent a word from the family.

The Service can be watched on Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sF62cBJWXvQ>



Bailey Chapel Dedication Service



Dr. Sabra speaking in front of the wooden cross made by Dr. Bailey

Friends of NEST in Germany

In view of the dire economic and financial situation in Lebanon, the Association of former German students in the Studies in the Middle East program (SiMO) took it upon itself to raise some funds for the support of NEST students for purchasing needed books. Mr. Lukas Reineck, former SiMO student and member of the Board of the “Friends of NEST in Germany,” came to Beirut on October 6, met with some of the full time students and gave each one a donation from the Association. The gesture was highly appreciated by NEST students, and thanks were expressed to all the members of the Association.



L. to R.: Armen, G. Sabra, Arkadi Mr. Reineck, Khachig and Aline

Islam Class in Sidon

Dr. Peter Ford’s “Introduction to Islam class” visited the main Saida mosque and were hosted by Shaykh Mohammed Abou Zaid. The group listened to Shaykh Abou Zaid, especially about his work as a judge in the Shari’a court, observed the Friday noon prayer, and enjoyed lunch in the downstairs hall provided by members of the mosque community.



Visitors

Outreach Foundation



Marilyn Borst surrounded by student George Shammass and Julie Burgess

A delegation of 10 persons from the Outreach Foundation (USA) led by Rev. Jack Baca, President of the Foundation, and Marilyn Borst, Associate Director of the Foundation, visited NEST in November. They met with Dr. Sabra and heard an update about the situation at NEST in the current crisis in Lebanon. Dr. Sabra thanked the Foundation for its support of the Seminary throughout the years, and especially recently for its donation towards the completion of the Bailey Chapel. The group then had lunch with students and faculty.

Visit of Hessen and Nassau Church

Rev. Detlev Knoche, Director of the Ecumenical Centre and Ecumenical Liaison Officer of the Protestant Church in Hessen-Nassau (EKHN), accompanied by Rev. Dr. Andreas Herrmann, Commissioner for Interreligious Dialogue (Islam), visited the Seminary from November 12-16. EKHN sends pastors to do a 3-months' sabbatical at NEST. The visit was for evaluation of the current program and discussion of further collaboration between NEST and EKHN.



Herrmann, Sabra, Knoche

Archbishop Naoum in Beirut

On his first visit to Lebanon after consecration as Archbishop of the Diocese of Jerusalem of the Episcopal Church, the Rt. Rev. Hosam Naoum visited NEST on December 2, 2021 along with a delegation from the Church. Archbishop Naoum met with Dr. Sabra, then with some faculty members. Discussion revolved around the present situation of NEST and the country, as well as about the possibility of sending more students from the Diocese to NEST.



,L. to R.: Archdeacon Zoorob, Rev. Dagher Dr. Sabra, Archbishop Naoum, Mrs. Naoum, and Rev. Binder

Christmas Gifts to Beirut Suburb Nursery

Through a generous gift by an anonymous donor in Germany, Dr. Rima Nasrallah and NEST students and staff were able to purchase Christmas gifts for the children of poor families in the YWCA Nursery in the southern Beirut suburb of Hadath.”



Students wrapping



Children receiving

In Memoriam



Rev. Salim Sahiouny

1931-2021

With much sadness and a sense of great loss NEST received the news of the passing away of Rev. Dr. Salim Sahiouny on 5 December, 2021. Rev. Sahiouny, a graduate of NEST (B. D '67; M. Div. '73), was a major figure in the Evangelical and ecumenical world of the Middle East for decades. Having served as pastor in Marje'youn (South Lebanon), Hamah (Syria) and Beirut, he later became the General Secretary of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, and also held the post of President of the Supreme Council of the Evangelical Community of Syria and Lebanon from 1983 until 2019.

Rev. Sahiouny also served on the Board of Managers of NEST for 47 years, and was Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Board many times.

Our heartfelt condolences go to his daughter Dr. Marlene and to his son Elias, who is the Finance Officer at NEST, as well as to all his relatives and friends.

“For to me living is Christ, and dying is gain.” (Phil. 1:21)



Thank You!

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UCC and PCUSA are now complying with US donor rights policies which do not allow them anymore to share donor information with NEST. We kindly ask all our donors through UCC and PCUSA to inform us of their donation by separate mail or copy us their mail to UCC or PCUSA, so that we can acknowledge receipt and thank them.

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Thank You!

DONORS: Dec. 1, 2020 - Dec. 15, 2021

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Merry Christmas



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