

# THIMAR

LSESD MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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# LET US REFLECT THE HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION

BY NABIL COSTA

The news these days seems like a doom report. At times I feel so overwhelmed by the weight of the devastation and grief that many must be experiencing around the world. According to the WHO, at the time of this writing, over 1.6M people have been infected with the virus and more than 96,000 have succumbed to it.

In Lebanon, we were already experiencing a crisis before the coronavirus outbreak. On March 9th, the Lebanese Government defaulted on its external debt and the nationwide lockdown that started on March 14th has further accelerated the downward spiral of an already ailing economy. While developed and healthier economies around the world are now prepping stimulus packages to shore up their economies and support their citizens during this time, our government has been struggling to pay the wages of the staff at the Beirut General Hospital which is on the frontlines of the coronavirus fight.

I am usually optimistic by nature, but this time it seems that the fallout of this pandemic on many countries will be dire. As Christians, we are learning what it really means to put our hope in the Lord, and this does not mean that things will be easy or comfortable as we are starting to face a severe social crisis.

This crisis has reminded me of many things:

First, that we are not in control even though our civilization has, for a long period of time, given us the illusion of control.

Second, that we are in this together. The virus does not differentiate between countries and ethnic groups. This is why we need to be united in our response now more than ever.

Third, the crisis has made us more empathetic. For example, one of our core values as a ministry is educational inclusion for children and young adults. Being secluded has now given us a different taste of the difficulties and challenges of individuals who lack community and strengthened our compassion and commitment towards them.

Finally, looking back at the history of the Church, I was reminded that it is in such a time as this that the Church needs to be present and visible. Many churches have moved their services on-line when they are able to do so, while others have suspended them, but this does not mean that our faith should be distant or suspended. This is a great challenge to our faith. Will we rise to the occasion knowing the risks and the cost? Will we be faithful when no one is watching?

As we get ready to celebrate Easter, we remember that we have a hope to share with our broken world. Jesus Christ came to give us life through Him in a world that is infected with a deadly virus that spares no one. He is the vaccine, the antidote we need.

No matter how distressed we may be, we can look at the empty tomb and remember the words Jesus told Martha when her brother Lazarus died, saying "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11). Do we believe this? Can this truth free us from the fear that is crippling us?

How can we leverage technology and different resources to reach out to our fellow neighbor?

I am humbled and grateful to see how each one of our ministries is adapting and thinking outside the box to continue empowering the church and serving the community while abiding by safety regulations.

Stay safe and may the Peace of Christ go with you wherever He sends you!



## LOVE IN THE TIME OF CORONA

BY SOPHIE NASRALLAH

### YOUR HELP CAN SAVE LIVES

The coronavirus is now officially spreading through Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria, as well as in other countries in the Middle East. This follows a harsh winter and unprecedented economic and financial crises that have already severely impacted the most vulnerable. As a result, many families, as well as our local partners who are serving in their midst, are at a higher risk of contracting the coronavirus and developing complications.

To help protect our local partners as they continue to serve the poor and vulnerable around them, we are providing guidance on how to safely distribute food assistance in the coming weeks, as well as basic personal protective equipment, including masks, bleach and pump sprays, alcohol, gloves, and hand sanitizer.

In turn, we are attempting to provide as many essential hygiene kits as possible to vulnerable families in order to meet their immediate sanitary needs. Each kit contains 12 bars of soap, two bottles of hand sanitizer, and two packages of paper towels. Hygiene kits not only help prevent the spread of the coronavirus within densely populated refugee and vulnerable Lebanese settlements, they also provide much-needed relief to vulnerable households amidst Lebanon's ongoing economic crisis.

Wherever you are, you can contribute to save lives here. With \$50, you can help us cover the cost of three hygiene kits and protect three families from the virus and its consequences. In turn, you help protect all other families that they would have potentially contaminated. Please consider making this small investment, as it would have an exponential positive impact on the most vulnerable.



[Read Full Article](#)

Go to:  
<https://merathlebanon.org/2020/03/24/love-in-the-time-of-corona/>

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# SCHOOL BEYOND WALLS

BY MAY-LEE MELKI

## AN UPDATE ON THE BEIRUT BAPTIST SCHOOL

Not always do we get to tangibly experience the impact of the investments made in a program so quickly. Adopting a wide and robust digital infrastructure through Microsoft classrooms was the best thing that the Beirut Baptist School (BBS) did over the last 3 years. Not knowing what lay ahead, BBS invested heavily and became one of the pioneer schools in distance learning in Lebanon. We are reaping the benefits of that investment today after the first full month of complete lockdown by government orders. The right team of trained educators at BBS has been able to train their peers to lead digital interactive classrooms and successfully move all teachings online.

Teachers are being met with surprisingly high levels of interaction among students and in some cases are even receiving feedback on and recommendations of digital games and online learning methods from the students themselves, showing that they feel included in the learning process. As first responders, doctors, nurses, and law enforcement officers carry out life-saving efforts, educators in Lebanon and all around the world are fighting for the continued advancement and growth of their students. Prior to the pandemic, BBS classrooms were already conducting video chats with classrooms in Canada and India to instill a sense of global citizenship and widen their world views.

As an inclusive educational school, the BBS special education program known as “SMART” has also been able to cope with these exceptional circumstances very well! Online therapy sessions, parental coaching, recorded projects/lessons, and homework assistance have found their rhythm in the life of BBS families. Educators and therapists are pursuing a variety of methods to increase students’ involvement, engagement, and progress. And on April 2nd the school lit up blue in solidarity with the global autism family on World Autism Awareness Day. That day was an important reminder that even in the toughest of times we can take action to encourage, support and raise awareness of the uniqueness that everyone with autism adds to the beauty of our community.

Recognizing that the life cycle of the school is now experiencing deep financial strains due to the complete economic paralysis and deteriorating financial security of parents, the school is prioritizing tuition scholarship support to maintain the students it serves. We pray that the Coronavirus will end soon, and that our world will no longer be secluded! In the meantime, BBS is committed to leveraging the resources that it has been blessed with for such a time as this!

# A reflection from the Chaplain of the Beirut Baptist School Mr. Toni El Haddad

In aviation, when a pilot becomes disoriented and loses spatial awareness, he can panic and make decisions that send the aircraft into an out-of-control free fall, a fatal moment called the graveyard spiral. Has the panic over the Coronavirus plunged you into a graveyard spiral?

It really depends on how you look at it. Is it serious? Yes. Is it dangerous? Yes. Is it a calling to be alert and pay attention? Yes. But we need to remember that while pain is inevitable, misery is a choice. In times of atrocity, our only hope is to cling to the Lord, who guides us through these difficult times and gives us wisdom on how we should behave in order to stay safe and protect those around us. Otherwise, misery is waiting at the door.

Do not be discouraged. Trust the Lord whom you heard about over the years. Trust him and remember that He is a Loving and Compassionate Lord. Victory was His portion and it is unto your account. Just stretch out your hand in faith and grasp it. What does not break you will make you stronger!

*“Because he loves me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.”*  
(from Psalm 91)





# LEARNING FROM A DISTANCE

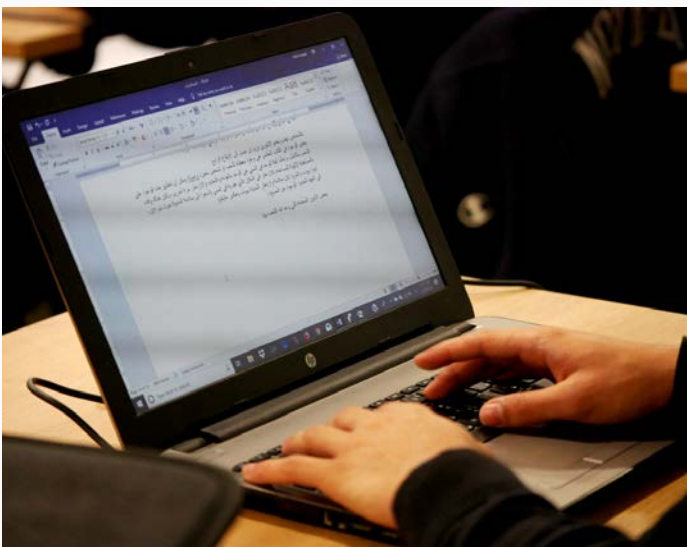
BY JAD TABET

## THE ABTS ONLINE PROGRAM

In the current world of social distancing, we are more than ever called to be the salt and light to others around us. Starting April 8th, we at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary (ABTS) will begin to provide online classes for our current residential students so they can complete their training from the safety of their homes. The Lord has given us, through what we have learned so far from our experience with the Online Certificate program, the opportunity to continue serving the Arab Church while preserving the health of our faculty, staff, students, and communities.

In 2015, we launched our Online Certificate in Ministry with 13 students, and the first cohort of graduates was made up of 8 servants. Today, this accredited online program has grown to provide online theological education and spiritual formation to for over 100 servants active in ministry all over the Arab world. The program allows us to further come alongside the Arab Church as it realizes its Biblical mission of having Christ acknowledged as Lord all over the Middle East and North Africa.

One of our students, Zeina, who serves in Syria with at-risk children and teens, shares her experience with us. She says, “The courses I have completed so far have taught me how to share my beliefs with others without being polemic. We are meant to be the salt of the world and so should not cause the people around us more suffering. Rather, we should reach out with love to those around us and lead by example. The courses have helped me, both on the personal and the ministerial levels. I have learned to understand where other people are coming from and how I can prevent conflict. It specifically helped my ministry with teenagers as I learned how to have effective discussions with them and how to use their questions to lead them to the Lord. The online program has been a great blessing to my ministry and my life.”



*“You are the light of the world.  
A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.”*  
Matthew 5:14

We thank the Lord for giving us the opportunity to continue serving His Kingdom during these difficult times. And we pray that people around the world will seek His Kingdom first during this pandemic.



# LIFE ON LOCKDOWN

BY DANIELLA DAOU

## SPECIAL NEEDS FAMILIES IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Household dynamics shifted as we entered new times where social distancing, online learning, and working remotely became the norm. With the new living conditions and constant negative news, anxiety and stress are bound to knock at our doors. Among the many challenges we are facing, the main psycho-emotional one is finding creative ways to cope with our stress. But what about children and individuals whose psychological and cognitive differences prevent them from properly processing their feelings?

Amal, a nurse and mother of two children with learning differences, continues to be positive despite the challenges because she is finally spending more time with her kids. Remaining optimistic, Amal keeps her young kids busy with learning the alphabet and playing with them. She struggles with her daughter's frustration at staying inside the house; however, this has also brought the family together in an effort to find ways to relieve the little girl. What's making Amal anxious, though, is her fear of transmitting diseases to her family after her shift ends.

Salma, mother to a boy with special needs, shared with us her strategy of coping with the sudden changes. "To maintain sanity", as she describes it, Salma resorted to creating routines and staying organized. "Every day, we wake up in the morning, get dressed, meet in the kitchen to have breakfast, start with the homeschooling until noon, then dedicate time for activities in the afternoon."

Salma agrees with Amal that frustration and anger have increased during quarantine, but they are both accepting this reality. To destress, Salma and her son have a daily pre-bed dance party!

"There is added pressure for me to not only be his educator at home but also his therapist, which I am not seeing as realistic with my job." This challenge that Salma shared is the case of many parents who are struggling to find the time for their children's home schooling, therapy, and activities, and their own working hours.

The SKILD team is working closely with parents and children to support them through weekly worksheets and schedules, online sessions, and pre-recorded videos. This is also followed by a social media campaign giving tips regarding children, teenagers, and parents to equip the special needs community to better respond to the needs of the children. Parents are also currently being encouraged to get their free copy of SKILD's *Wise Parenting* pocketbook which has more than 60 tips on daily struggles parents face with their children.

For more information on the *Wise Parenting* book, go to:  
<https://skild-edu.org/wise-parenting/>





# LEADING BY EXAMPLE

BY DANA HAIDAMOUS

We are taught from a young age not to be anxious about anything but to pray and thank God for everything we need. And we, in turn, instill this hope along with God's promises in our children and youth so that they may live life with Christ.

But when the world shuts down and everything around us is characterized by collapse, negativity and darkness; how do we answer our children's questions about God and their fears that even we have? How do we teach them to see God's love and goodness despite what the world says? After much prayer, the BCYM team's best answer to this question is to Lead by Example.

*“Command and teach these things. Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.”* - 1 Timothy 4:11-13

BCYM has come up with two immediate programs to lead by example by asking friends and partners who are significant in the lives of youth and parents with children to join with us in preparing encouraging video messages to share experiences, answer questions and provide tools to deal with and make the most of this time of isolation.

The first program is a Weekly Youth WhatsApp Broadcast that will feature 2- to 3-minute videos of popular or influential individuals in Lebanon and across the world who youth in Lebanon look up to in order to share the Word of God with them and encourage them to work on their walk with God and help their friends to do the same. We pray that the broadcast will eventually evolve into a forum where youth can share their ideas, prayer requests and testimonies.

The second program is a YouTube Channel and WhatsApp broadcast for Parents with Children, which will feature counselors, teachers, doctors, special needs teachers and other professionals sharing tips and advice with parents on how to encourage their children during this time, whether it be through activities, bible study, crafts or teachings.

We hope that both channels will grow by word of mouth to bless children and youth across Lebanon and outside of Lebanon.

Check out some of our broadcasted videos on our YouTube Channel: <https://bit.ly/BCYMYoutube>

## How Can You Help?

The BCYM Team are thankful for friends and partners ready to contribute to these projects by:

- Praying for the projects so that they reach children and youth and touch as many lives as possible
- Sharing these projects with someone who might fit the profiles we are looking for (in Lebanon or internationally) and make simple 2 to 3 minute short videos as specified above.

The most important goal of the video would be to link your thought or advice to the Word of God and also to suggest a call to action during the week.

- Support us so that we can carry on with these projects.
- Forward our broadcast to someone who might benefit (whether youth or family) once the projects begin.

For further information or if you would like to contribute, please email [dhaidamous@lsesd.org](mailto:dhaidamous@lsesd.org) 





## Blessed Are Those Who Mourn, for They Shall Be Comforted

BY WISSAM NASRALLAH

In a time when the corona virus is wreaking havoc on our healthcare and economic systems, we all need to hear good news, to be comforted and reassured. On the surface, this beatitude fits the job description of a blanket blessing. However, when we look a bit closer, Jesus is literally saying, “Happy are those who are sad”. What does He mean? What kind of sorrow is He talking about?

This should naturally lead us to mourn and weep over the evil in our lives with contrition and penitence. This is what repentance is all about. The apostle Paul calls it a “godly grief [that] produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret” (2 Cor 7:10).

In our last newsletter, we shared about how entering the Kingdom of Heaven requires a realization of our spiritual poverty and a subsequent crying out to the Lord for mercy by emptying ourselves of our pride and self-sufficiency.

As citizens of the Kingdom, we also mourn for the evil and suffering in the world as God’s servants did in the Bible. This includes grieving over the terrible consequences of the Coronavirus.

The good news is that those who mourn in repentance will be comforted for “blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity” (Ps 32:1) and there is “now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). As for those of us mourning as a result of the pain caused by the fallenness of our world, let us remember that “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Rev 21: 4).

“*For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.*”

*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

*-Matthew 5:4*

# PRAYER REQUESTS

## ABTS

Join us in prayer for strength and wisdom for ABTS leaders. May we be aligned with what God is doing in the region, and may we be sensitive to His voice and Spirit through this crisis.

## BBS

Please pray for our teachers who are conducting online classes under challenging circumstances, and learning everyday as they go. Please continue to pray for perseverance, health and creativity as they nurture their students daily. Pray for students to settle in to a new routine of learning from home and managing their anxieties of the unknown. Pray for parents who are undergoing severe financial struggles. Finally, pray for the administration of the school as they lead in times of economic and health crises.

## BCYM

Pray for our current outreach projects so that they reach children and youth and touch as many lives as possible.

## DMAH

We pray for wisdom and insight so we take the right decisions in the Covid-19 time, and that God will use every book we have published to encourage and strengthen everyone in these difficult times and that people will come to know Him, value their spiritual life and grow in Him.

## MERATH

Please keep us, our local partners, and the families they serve, in your prayers. Like Talia, one of our inspiring partners, we believe that “the Lord is teaching us a new way to serve. A way that breaks routine. This is a time we need to all be lifting our eyes upon the Lord and seeking His face. Prayer is what can change everything to turn out for the better.”

## SKILD

On the 8th National Day for Students with Learning Differences on April 22nd, SKILD in collaboration with the British Council, and under the patronage of the Minister of Education and Higher Education, will hold the first virtual conference on Inclusion in the Time of Distancing with 22 speakers sharing their experiences on distance learning for children and youth with special educational needs. Special educators and therapists continue to support children we serve at the center and schools through online worksheets, schedules, and videos. Please pray for renewed strength, wisdom, and creativity for the team as we find new ways to support children at home and raise awareness to the Lebanese and regional community.



*None of this would be possible if it weren't for you our faithful partners, friends and loyal supporters. ❤️*

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