

CHALLENGES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

While TEE programmes are serving the Church in a variety of difficult situations around the world, the Middle East is perhaps one of the most challenging regions. Radical groups like ISIS, civil war and volatile political situations have led to millions of displaced people. It is in this context that the Programme for Theological Education by Extension (PTEE) provides evangelical theological education in Arabic.

The PTEE Executive Director, Jiries Habash, said, “So far we have been able to work in up to eight countries in the Arab world. We also work with the diaspora in the USA, Canada, Sweden and Australia.”

PTEE has two main programmes. One utilises SEAN courses for adults who did not complete their high school education. The other leads to a Bachelor of Theology degree, and includes some courses especially developed to meet the needs of students in the Middle East. Two ‘home-grown’ courses are worth special mention:

“Christian Peacemaking addresses the issues in the Middle East and the mentality of the people in general. When we say ‘peacemaking’ people may just think ‘Palestine and Israel’ or ‘Arab and Jew’ but it is more than that; all people need to have the spirit of reconciliation. The Social Ethics course is also especially relevant

because it helps students develop a methodology for thinking through the issues they are facing in their own contexts.”

Over the last five years, across the whole region, there has been an average annual enrolment of over 120 students in the Bachelor’s programme, with around fifty classes each year.

While the PTEE Ministry Centre, which provides overall coordination, is in Jordan, the programme is administered locally in each country by an Area Coordinator. Each group studying PTEE courses meets regularly for 12 weeks for group discussion led by a trained tutor.

In each of the countries where PTEE groups meet, the situation is slightly different. The Christian populations in Syria and Iraq are decreasing, due to emigration and ISIS activity. In Jordan and Egypt, the PTEE situation is stable, and while there have been no classes in Lebanon for the last few years, there are a few in Palestine.

Despite the challenges of working in this region, there are many positive stories of how PTEE courses have impacted people.

A local believer asked one of the PTEE tutors for help, because her fiancé was not serious



about Christ. The tutor encouraged them to join a group studying the Abundant Life course. Both of them completed it, and were so encouraged by what they had learned that they began studying the next course, Abundant Light.

It is stories like this that keep PTEE focused on the benefits their work brings, despite the need to constantly rise to overcome new challenges. For more information on PTEE please see www.ptee.org 🐾

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