



# **ARABIC LUTHERAN MINISTRIES**

**Sharing the Love of God  
with Arabs and Muslims**



**2022**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

## **The Vision and Strategy**

Developing and offering theological and pastoral formation curriculum, in Arabic, by using publishing and technological means such as social media and satellite televisions. Connecting with local communities. Recruiting and training Arabic speaking pastors and Church Planters.

### **Target Group**

Christian Arabs and Muslims (Arabs and non-Arabs)

### **The Goal**

To reach the non-believers and Disciple the believers.

Arabic Lutheran Ministries exists simply to carry Jesus' mandate and mission.



**As a 503-C Charitable Corporation and a Recognized Service Organization, (RSO) we follow and apply mission priorities adapted by the Synod's mission and ministry emphasis, *Making Disciples for Life***

**Arabic Lutheran Ministries plant, sustain, and revitalize Lutheran churches. Support and expand theological education. Perform human care in close proximity to Word and Sacrament ministries. Collaborate with the Synod's members and partners to enhance mission effectiveness. Promote and nurture the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of pastors and professional church workers.**

# Facing the Challenges

Dear Partners in Mission

Millions of people in the Middle East and Africa face problems because of regional conflicts and displacement. Many are marred by poverty, oppression, addiction and more. Since the Arab uprising in 2011 many have lost trust in all form of authority, including religious leadership. They have been disgusted with the violence conducted in the name of religion and desperate for authenticity, faith, and hope.

Although Christianity originated in the Middle East only 3.5 percent of the region remain Christian. These believers in Christ often face government restriction, discrimination, or persecution.

Media ministry remains a powerful tool to minister to closed countries such as the Middle East and north Africa. Because 1) Media and satellite ministry is the most popular way for people to get information and entertainment. 2) Almost all homes in the Middle East and North Africa today have access to the Internet and Satellite service. 3) Even the region's many non-readers can operate a satellite receiver. Satellite and internet service cannot be censored or blocked.

Media such as Internet, TV, and radio give evangelists access to millions of people they could never meet in person. Satellite TV especially has become a ragingly successful means of broadcasting the Gospel message. According to media research and statistics more than 80% of Middle Eastern region has access to Satellite television even in the refugee camp. In this end of the year report, I wrote an article about the how the media is changing the heart of millions of Muslims.

**Locally in United State.** Islam is once again on the march. A few years ago, at an Islamic mission's conference in Los Angeles, Muslims

announced a goal of winning fifty to seventy-five million Americans to Islam. Their target: “the strata of society suffering from the bankruptcy of the social order.” Further they declared that they are in North America for the long haul, indicating a willingness to invest centuries, if necessary, to achieve their objectives. As models of what may be required, they alluded to their history of gradually becoming numerically dominant in Egypt, North Africa, and Indonesia.

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**These are the many challenges that the church is facing. *Arabic Lutheran Ministries* is equipping baptized believers locally and globally to face them.**

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By His grace and through your prayers and generous support, our mission is *to deliver the unchanging word of God and an ever-changing region.*

In this report you will see handful of many opportunities where God moved mightily through the *Arabic Lutheran Ministries* to face the challenges



In Him,  
Executive Director,  
Rev. Dr. Abjar Bahkou

# Christian Media Ministry

## In the House of Islam

**Rev. Dr. Abjar Bahkou**

The present-day advance of globalization, along with the media, which is a chief means of effecting it, is searing the Muslim world to its core, unleashing abrupt and accelerated changes on a worldview. The changes being worked are sure to permeate all areas of Muslim life, but especially in matters pertaining to faith.

Scholars talk about existing “frontier zones,” which is a term describing any place where Muslims are more likely to have immediate contact with members of other religions. These zones are widening, and new ones are constantly opening up; the Internet and social media is itself a frontier zone of wildly boundless proportions. Here are some key components of this modern phenomenon in matters pertaining to Muslim conversion.

### **The Upending of Islamic Worldviews**

The forms and presence of media in *Dar al-Islam* (=the House of Islam) are increasing due to modernization. At the same time, natural disasters, ethnic violence, and wars are creating crisis zones to which relief workers, who are often Christians, are flocking. The media creates a frontier zone in the Muslim’s living room or bedroom, and local emergencies drawing Christian responders to create *frontier zones* in the Muslim’s backyard. Consequently, Muslims have more access and exposure to novel information and ideas than ever before. For the first time in history, elements of Islamic propaganda are subject to widespread falsification. The flood of new information is transforming Muslims’ worldviews, aspirations, and expectations. This exerts stress on typically rigid Muslim institutions and leaders, who are unable to adapt with the rapid changes, and the result is rampant disillusionment. One of the recent examples is the widespread protests in Iran against the strict religious regulations against women.

Fractures in the Islamic pillars, produced by advancing globalization, are both threatening and promising. Revolutions of this magnitude are historically volcanic, and it doesn’t seem to be any way around that. But in the midst of the chaos of a

colossus crumbling comes the opportunity to build sounder structures on surer foundations. This is the hope of the missionary.

Until the final decades of the twentieth century, history records only *two* significant voluntary *moves* of Muslims to faith in Christ. These two movements remained the only ones to speak of until the 1980's and 1990's. The last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a surge in international mission activity as well as unprecedented openness to such missionaries and their message due to the spread of Media, radical political, demographic, and social change. Garrison reports of "11 additional movements. These occurred in Iran (2), Algeria, Bulgaria, Albania, West Africa, Bangladesh (2), and Central Asia (3)." So, we have two movements in 1300 year and 11 movements in twenty years. This is not the whole picture yet. Writing in 2011, Kevin Greeson, a church planter among Southeast Asian Muslims reported that he knew of at least 25 Muslim populations that had seen at least 1,000 baptisms and/or 100 churches planted over the previous decade. Of those 25 movements, a dozen reported more than 3,000 baptized former Muslims, some as many as 300,000 converts from Islam. At least 16 of these movements appear to be church planting movements in the fullest sense of the word (Garrison, *A Wind in the House of Islam*, 18.)

When Greeson wrote this, David Garrison was working on research. Garrison's findings show that Greeson's report falls far short of the full picture. Garrison recounts his project:

In 2007, a colleague encouraged me to conduct a study of these Muslim turnings. At that time, we could count at least 25 Muslim movements to Christ that we knew of personally or had heard about through the global grapevine... By the time we completed our study, six years later, we were able to identify 82 movements to Christ taking place in every corner of the Muslim world (Garrison *A Wind in the House of Islam*, 22-23.)

Eighty-two is the total number "across the scope of Islam's shared history with Christianity" to date, so it includes the two movements that spanned the turn of the twentieth century and the eleven that occurred at the end of the twentieth. That means that sixty-nine movements have begun in just 25 years. Two movements in thirteen *hundred* years. Eleven movements in twenty-five years. *Sixty-nine* movements in thirteen years. Garrison acknowledges this in his book, saying,

In some countries the numbers within these new movements have grown to tens of thousands... Though we have established a clear floor of 1,000 baptized believers or 100 churches for defining each movement... we are less confident in guessing the *ceiling* of these movements. The cumulative number of converts to Christ in these movements seems to range somewhere between two and seven million. (Garrison *A Wind in the House of Islam*, 22-23.)

### **The power of Media to Spread the Gospel**

These movements are growing because of the spread of social media such as the Internet, TV, and radio. These tools give evangelists access to millions of people they could never meet in person. Satellite TV especially has become a ragingly successful means of broadcasting the Gospel message. Miller writes, “Today, throughout MENA (=Middle East and North Africa) [satellites] are ubiquitous. I have even seen Bedouins living out of tents, yet they have a satellite dish so they can watch their favorite shows.” (Miller “Woven in the Weakness of the Changing Body,” 3.). *Iran Alive*, Hormoz Shariat’s Christian satellite program is estimated to have a regular viewership of seven to nine million Iranians – that is 10% of Iran’s population. The famous polemics of Father Zakaria Boutros reach even more people. “It is estimated that when Father Zakaria . . . is on television in the Middle East, 60 million viewers watch.” Many of the Christian satellite programs provide further materials online, chat rooms, call centers, and follow up networks so that those who desire to proclaim and confess Jesus as their Lord and savior can either be discipled in the safety of anonymity or successfully connected to neighboring believers. Paul Heiskell, a missionary to Muslims has an extensive history of work in the Middle East. He has long anticipated the prodigious potential of Media ministry:

Arabs trust authority implicitly and don’t tend to seek out the truth. Well, that’s changing, with the advent of satellite TV. In fact, I remember, when I went to [Palestine] in ‘99. I was standing on the balcony of the home of one of my Arab friends, looking out over the city. And I said to him, “Kamal, I am looking at the end of your culture.” And he said, “Really?! Why do you say that?” And I said, “See all these satellite dishes all over your roofs? Ten or fifteen years from now, your culture won’t be the same.” And I’m seeing the opportunity in that; of course, he’s only seeing it from the negative side. But the opportunity is the

Gospel has come in. It's freely available. It's on Arab TV... on the Hot Bird, which is the European satellite, there are all *kinds* of evangelistic Christian programming. Now, as God would have it, that's also where all the football channels are broadcasting the European leagues that everybody loves... And now with the Internet, there's just a proliferation of stuff in Arabic, quality stuff! We were on a follow up network that worked with the *al Hayat* station and several other TV stations, as well as Christian radio and internet, and we were getting thousands and thousands of hits on Christian websites and phone calls to the Christian television stations. It's unbelievable. In the history of the Arab Muslim world, it's unprecedented what's going on now. The controls are down.

### **The Power of Media to Disciple**

As I alluded to above, TV, Internet, and radio ministries are using their exclusive powers of infiltration to connect with MBBs (=Muslim Background Believers) in difficult countries. In most Muslim countries, the consequences of conversion, if discovered, are designed to be so harsh as to be prohibitive. Today, the power of fear to prohibit is being regularly overwhelmed by the irresistibility of the love of God, but, understandably, many MBBs are still deeply inhibited when it comes to publicly declaring their faith, yet MBBs in the underground house churches are making radically bold, and yet discerning, choices to preach Christ to their people. However, thousands more are making independent decisions of faith and then remaining largely, if not totally, isolated within their Muslim surroundings, only engaging in Christian fellowship via the media. For some, this is the only option. In *Dreams and Visions*, Tom Doyle shares the story of two different women in Saudi Arabia who experienced authentic Christian discipleship while incapable of meeting other believers in person. Nasreen, a cloistered housewife of Mecca, accidentally stumbled upon Christian materials on the Internet. She was intrigued, and also began studying the Bible and listening to sermons online. When she was confused by what she learned, she would make inquiries in Christian chat rooms. Nasreen's chat room activity is how Rima, a believer working in "the basement of an underground ministry center in Amman, Jordan," found and began discipling her. Nasreen and Rima were soon Skyping regularly. Between information from the Internet, a relationship with Rima, and the Trans World Radio program coming in via the radio hidden in her bathroom, Nasreen confessed Christ as her Lord and savior. She is a

true disciple, operating in the power and authority of the Spirit, and participating in the fellowship of believers without ever meeting one in person.

Fatima, the youngest daughter of a proud and prominent Saudi family, began researching Christianity when writing a paper about Islam for school; she wanted to make a sub point about Christianity. But her research led her to startling conclusions. She began reading everything she could find about Jesus and Christianity, poring over the New Testament, and grilling the Christians she met in online chat rooms about their faith. Her search soon led her to conclude that Jesus was indeed the way, the truth, and the life, and worthy of her life. Once she chose Christ, Fatima became an ardent and active member of the body and a disciple of many.

Eventually Fatima's family discovered her belief in Jesus. One of her older brothers killed her for the sake of the family's honor. Before he killed her, he locked her in her room for four hours. During those last hours she reached out to her online church, asking for prayer but also proclaiming her continuing resolve and invoking Muslims to surrender to the love of God and forsake their violent ways. Faithful unto death, this martyr never attended a church and conducted her ministry entirely online.

### **Conclusion**

As baptized believers and disciples of Christ we must realize that today's technology is not just useful for *sending* Christ's message, but for *receiving* it as well. We have much to learn from our younger brothers and sisters in the Lord. They may have met Jesus after us, but they have invaluable experience, insight, and perspective that the global Church needs if it is to "attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God," and to "grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Ephesians 4:13, 15). We would not be wise to take the utmost advantage of the stunning avenues available in this new global context. Our Muslim brothers and sisters need our awareness, prayer, encouragement. Thanks to modern technology, this exchange is now possible on a miraculous scale.

That is what drove *Arabic Lutheran Ministry* to invest time, prayer, and money in global Media Ministries.

# Highlights of Our Ministry

**July 4-9, 2022.** Dr. Bahkou participated at the 13<sup>th</sup> International Symposium of Syriac Studies and the 11<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Arabic Christian Studies. The Symposium was held at the National Institutes of Oriental Language in Paris, France. At the Symposium Dr. Bahkou presented a paper titled, *Ammar Al-Basri Apologetical Discourses with Islam and its Implications to Contemporary Muslim-Christian Encounters*. More than 200 scholars, pastors, missionaries, and church leaders from all over the world attended this meeting.



**July 10-15, 2022.** Dr. Bahkou was in Beirut Lebanon. He was invited by the Arabic International Satellite Sat7 to film 30- episode teaching Program in Arabic, titled, *I Believe, Explaining the Apostles Creed*. Dr. Bahkou taught about the Nicene Creed as it was explained in Luther Small and Large Catechism. In this discipleship program Dr. Bahkou addresses many theological and spiritual questions that Muslim ask about Christian faith. Last year Dr. Bahkou was able to film a 15-episode teaching program in Arabic, titled, *Life with God, Explaining the Foundation of Christian Faith*. This is a discipleship program also based on Lutheran Confession. Faith Lutheran Church in Oakville, MO, partnered with Dr. Bahkou to film the program. These teaching segments will be broadcast at the Arabic International Satellite Sat7. Sat7 is the largest Arabic Christian Channels in the world. It covers 560 million viewers in the Arab World and North Africa.



Our media ministries reach local American Christian to Radio program. Dr. Bahkou spoke at the *Family Shield Ministries Radio & Podcast*. The *Family Shield* radio program is 28 minutes. It currently airs on 55 stations throughout the United States.



*Arabic Lutheran Ministry* partners with many Lutheran Congregations across the country in preaching and teaching to the local Arabic communities. Rev. Dr. Bahkou conducts bible study in Arabic to the Arabic congregation that meet at Faith Lutheran church in Troy Michigan. He also broadcast the teaching live on our Facebook page. Thousands of people from all over the world watched this broadcast. Occasionally he travels to minister to the community in-person.



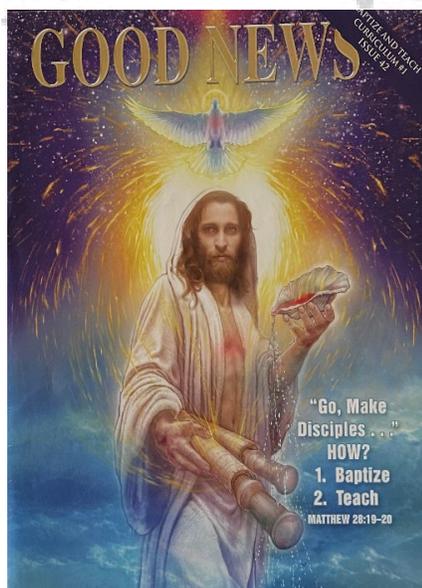
With Worship team in Troy Michigan with Pastor Toney Boose. Mission pastor at Faith Troy.

## What is *Dawa*?

Islam is a mission driven religion, just like Christianity. The term Muslim used is *Dawa*, which mean “calling” or “inviting” people to Islam. What is the Islamic strategy to call the American people to Islam? How are they doing it? What are the differences between the Christian evangelism and Muslim *Dawa*? That was the round table organized by Dr. Bahkou on May 1-2, 2022, at the Annual Multi-Ethnic Symposium organized by Concordia Seminary Saint Louis.



One of our projects is to publish and distribute worldwide an Arabic edition of *The Good News Magazine*. This is in collaboration with The LCMS Office of National and International Mission and *Concordia Mission Society*. This summer Rev. Dr. Bahkou was able to translate issues 42 and 43 into Arabic. The Magazine editor has asked our ministry to oversee the Arabic Language translation and the distribution of the magazine to Arabs locally and globally. We praise the Lord for this partnership.



## Our Ministry Team



In November of this year, our dear vice president Dr. John Loum went to be the Lord. Please pray as our team is praying and seeking the Lord for guidance to find a mission-minded person who can take the place of Dr. Loum.



Rev. Dr. Bahkou is an ordained LCMS Pastor. Dr. Bahkou currently teaches at Concordia Seminary as Associate Professor of Practical Theology and Mission. He has been doing mission among Arabs and Muslims, planting LCMS Arabic speaking churches for the last 17 years. Dr. Bahkou is our founder and Executive Director of Arabic Lutheran Ministries. For more information about Dr. Bahkou See <https://www.csl.edu/directory/abjar-bahkou/>.



Ken Payne is the Treasurer of Arabic Lutheran Ministries. He is retired AT&T engineer. He also worked for Maritz for 13 years as a statistical and financial analyst. He has earned a B.S. B.A. and a M.B.A. Ken has taught Bible Study at Concordia – Kirkwood and served on Church Council and Chaired the Adult Nurture Board and the Outreach Board. He has served as an officer of a \$90 million Credit Union. Ken has also served as an officer of Christian Outreach to Muslims Everywhere (COME). A trained Stephen Minister. He currently serves as the President of Emmaus Luther Church (a mission church) in St. Louis.



Brandon Boos is an Ordained LCMS pastor. He is the mission coordinator at Faith Lutheran Church in Oakville MO. Brandon is our secretary and media and mission coordinator.

**This is our invitation.** Please pray. Please give, please step out in faith with *Arabic Lutheran Ministries* and seize this moment to create a whole year worth moment with the Lord in 2023 and far beyond. Let us not let this moment pass from us. Let us thank God for what he has done and praise him for what He is about to do.



### **Financial Accounting of the Mission**

Financial Oversight will be Conducted by the Board of Directors  
Lutheran Arabic Ministries.

### **Name of Contact Person(s)**

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