



# BEYOND BOUNDARIES

The newsletter of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey

[www.bossey.ch](http://www.bossey.ch)



October 2017

# Editorial

Dear friends of Bossey, dear readers,

It is my pleasure to share with you the new issue of *Beyond Boundaries*.

Since much information about Bossey reaches you today via our WCC Communication Department, our website, Facebook, Twitter, etc. we have decided to publish, from now on, one single issue of the newsletter, at the beginning of the academic year, with a comprehensive summary of our work and activities during the past year.

The academic life has been very rich in 2017: apart from the usual graduations in January (CAS and CC-students) and in June (MAS-students) we are glad to share with you a historical event in relation to the doctoral programme we have started some years ago: we had this year the first three doctoral defences. All of them passed well their examinations and are now involved in their churches' lives back home.

During summer we had a considerable number of short term courses on ecumenical formation. Together with the colleagues from Geneva and in cooperation with our member churches the faculty members of Bossey offered a wide range of diverse programs as a response to the needs and questions which do arise in our churches and the societies today.

From the beginning of the new academic year, our colleague Peniel Rajkumar, from the interreligious desk at WCC has joined our faculty to teach in the field of interreligious dialogue. Our faculty has now 8 teaching staff, with expertise in a variety of subjects and fields.

In September we have started our courses with 30 students from 20 countries and from 10 denominations. We are happy to have again that vast cultural and confessional diversity. Yet, we regret that out of the 30 students we got this year only 6 female students. We would be grateful therefore if in the future you would help us recruit more female students and



advocate with your churches to propose female students as well for ecumenical formation at our institute.

To all of you, readers, supporters and alumni, on behalf of our staff and students we would like to express our gratitude and thanks for all the support you have given to the Ecumenical Institute Bossey. We feel supported by your prayers and contributions, by your messages of friendship and encouragements. Following the old Bossey tradition, we got this year an amount of 30,000 US dollars from the heritage of Dorothy Berry, from USA for which we are very thankful. It will be used to support the students from the Global South.

I would like to convey to you all our most sincere greetings and best wishes. The doors of Bossey are always open to you and we look forward to have you visiting us one day or to take part in one of the programmes we offer. As long as we remain united in one heart and mind and walk and serve together in the pilgrimage of justice and peace, we will be strong and our institute will continue its valuable ministry.

With all our best wishes,

*Fr Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca*  
 Director of the Ecumenical Institute  
 Deputy General Secretary of the WCC

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## “Our hope is that they continue to seek and build new ecumenical relationships”

Thirty-five new students from the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland, are embarking on a future of ecumenism, dialogue and unity, after months of intense study and fellowship at the Ecumenical Institute.

The students participated in a farewell service and ceremony on 27 January 2017. Throughout the fall of 2016, they learned about the World Council of Churches and the wider ecumenical movement, its purpose, its history and its achievements. They discovered the way of thinking and practicing faith in Christian traditions other than their own and, at the same time, practiced ecumenical life by discussing their differences and by praying together.

“With this combination, the students discover ecumenism as a life question, which is not just a theoretical issue



about which one reads in books, but which touches the essence of being a Christian,” said Rev. Dr Dagmar Heller, dean of the Ecumenical Institute. “In their future work, we hope the students will be able to help their churches to develop peace and reconciliation as the heart of their calling”.

Fr Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, WCC deputy general secretary and director of the Ecumenical Institute concluded, “As the students finish their studies at the Ecumenical Institute, it is our hope that they continue to seek and build new ecumenical relationships between faith communities in their home contexts”.

## Master students celebrate their graduation

On 14th of June 2017 six students successfully defended their Master theses and thus finished the Programme “Master of Advanced Studies (MAS) in Ecumenical Studies”.

Their research covered an interesting variety of topics: Deaconess Juliet Chinenye Eneh from the Methodist Church in Nigeria explored “The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace in a Multi-Cultural and Multi-Religious Context of Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects”.

Ms Greta Nania-Montoya Ortega from the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba worked on “Cultural Influences on Language: Relevance for Ecumenical Dialogue on Human Sexuality”.

The Indian Lutheran Pastor Sumanth Sudha Nematikanty studied “Lutherans and the Church Unity in India: The Lutheran – Church of South India (CSI) Dialogue as a Case Study”.

Rev. Angelika Piché from the United Church of Canada looked into “Conditions for Intercultural Worship in Francophone and Bilingual United Church Congregations in Canada”.

Rev. Sam Koshy Thalathayil from the Mar Thoma Church in India wrote on “Decoding the Ecclesiology of “Faith and Order” Document- ‘The Church: Towards a Common Vision’,



with special reference to Syriac Theology”.

Mr. Giorgi Tsurtsunia from the Georgian Apostolic Autocephalos Orthodox Church did his research on “The Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue in the Light of John Zizioulas’ Ecclesiology: Contributions and Problems”.

The Dean of the Ecumenical Institute wished them all the best for their future.

## Ecumenical Institute rejoices at successful doctoral defence

The year of 2017 has been a success in view of the doctoral students of the Ecumenical Institute, as three students have handed in their dissertations and had their defences.

In May 2017 Rev. Daniel Yusufu Mbaya, general secretary of the Church of Brethren in Nigeria, was awarded with a Doctorate in Theology. His doctoral dissertation was jointly supervised by professors Ghislain Waterlot and Amélé Ekué, and is on "The Witness of Non Violence of the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria in a Violent World: Towards Ecumenical Collaboration". Having himself experienced violent assaults on members of his church and the desecration of church buildings, the progress of his research was time and again jeopardised. The completion of his doctoral studies therefore constitutes more than an individual achievement.

After more than five years of



© Michel Grandjean

sustained work, often under difficult circumstances, our student Olivier Munyansanga, from Rwanda, obtained a doctoral degree in ecumenical studies late in May. Munyansanga's thesis, "Christianity, Islam and Rwandan Traditional Religion: Perspectives on Memory and Reconciliation" explored the role of memory not only in relation to the way members of those faiths relate to each other but also the role that reconciliation of memories may play to prevent violence. The thesis was co-supervised by professors Jean-Claude Basset and Odair Pedroso Mateus.

On 9th June, 2017, Iven Jebasingh Arulnanthamony defended his thesis. The title of the thesis is: "The Implications of Ecumenical Discussions on Mission and Theological Education in India from 1938 to 1998". The thesis is a major contribution to a deeper understanding of theological education in India and could serve as a model for further research in other contexts. A special highlight is the connection between historical analysis and present-day reflections on the Mission of the Church. The thesis was co-supervised by professors Marina Behera and Benjamin Simon.

## New colleague at Bossey

We are very glad to welcome amongst the faculty Rev. Dr Peniel Jesudason Rufus Rajkumar, starting this academic year. He is not new to Bossey and to the World Council of Churches. Since 2013 he has been programme executive for Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation at the World Council of Churches. In developing the profile of this position he has initiated and established a two-week annual intensive residential training programme for young ecumenical leaders from Asia called YATRA (Youth in Asia Training for Religious Amity). He has also initiated and developed a theological reflection process on 'Multiple Religious Belonging' focussing on the pastoral and theological challenges it poses to Christian churches worldwide. Alongside these he has developed and sustained on-going bilateral relations with Hindus and Buddhists by fostering conversations between religious leaders, theologians, scholars of religion and grassroots practitioners and activists.

Apart from this, he serves as coordinator of the Asia regional relationships, the moderator of the Staff Representative Group of the WCC, reviews editor of *The Ecumenical Review*,

member of the Governance Staff Group and the staff representative on the WCC's Reference Group on Human Sexuality.

Next to his many duties and engagements he has published several books and academic articles in the field of ethics and religious dialogue.

He did his Bachelor of Divinity at United Theological College, Bangalore, his Masters in English Literature and his PhD in Theology and Religious Studies at Kent University/UK.

With Peniel Rajkumar the Ecumenical Institute Bossey is blessed with a new skilled and experienced colleague, who will be contributing fruitfully to the life and work at Bossey.



Peniel Rajkumar. © Carrie Grace

## Applications open for academic year of 2018/2019

For the Ecumenical Study program, which starts every year in September, the deadline for application for the academic year 2018/19 is 30 November 2017.

For more information, please visit: [www.bossey.ch](http://www.bossey.ch) or contact: [Bossey\\_Admissions@wcc-coe.org](mailto:Bossey_Admissions@wcc-coe.org)



© Albin Hillert/WCC

## Bossey students strengthen ecumenical ties in Rome

As another academic term was coming to an end at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute, 35 international students and faculty visited the Vatican in Rome in January 2017, to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, engage in ecumenical dialogue, and to learn more about a variety of churches' work towards Christian unity.

The students were invited by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and hosted by H.E. Cardinal Kurt Koch and Father Andrée Choromanski. Relations between the Ecumenical Institute and the PCPCU are long-standing, and since 2012, Rev. Fr Dr Lawrence Iwuamadi works at the Ecumenical Institute on secondment from the Vatican, as professor of Ecumenical Biblical Hermeneutics.

"This visit is one in a series of consecutive visits invited by the PCPCU during the Week of Prayer," said Lawrence. "The trip means an opportunity to learn about, and experience, the ecumenical engagement of the Roman Catholic Church, to pray together and to see clearly the bonds that tie us all together as brothers and sisters in Christ."

"This became especially clear during the audience with Pope Francis on Wednesday," Lawrence added, "as the pope expressly noted the work of the Ecumenical Institute."



© Vatican

On Sunday, the Bossey students and staff celebrated mass together with Cardinal Koch, in which bridges across divisions were symbolically edified by children - following a liturgy used worldwide during the Week of Prayer.

"The Sunday service here was a clear example of the sense of fellowship between our different church traditions," reflected Rev. Dr Benjamin Simon, professor of Ecumenical Missiology and another Bossey faculty member accompanying the students in Rome. "But during this week we have met not only the PCPCU, but also representatives of the Anglican Communion, the Loretto-Sisters, White Fathers, Notre-Dame de Sion, the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Fokolare Movement and the ecumenical

lay Community of Sant' Egidio, for example," Simon said. "So we have also experienced some of the great diversity of ecumenical engagement here in Rome, both within and among faith communities."

"The annual trip to Rome can be one more step along the way towards discovering the full richness of the ecumenical movement, not only for the students, but also for all our Bossey staff," said Fr Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, World Council of Churches associate general secretary and director of the Ecumenical Institute, "which is why we also invited our librarian Valérie Kim and our receptionist Floriane Groß to accompany us this year."

## Interfaith engagement in theory and practice at the Ecumenical Institute

On 16-21 March 2017, a group of 22 people from eight different cities across Canada, UK and the US took part in a 5-day intensive training course on 'Interfaith Engagement in Theory & Practice' in the cities of Geneva and Montet, Switzerland. The programme was conducted by the Institute of Islamic Studies of the Islamic Centre of England, under the direction of Dr. Mohammad Ali Shomali in collaboration with the Ecumenical Institute, as well as the Focolare Movement.

Next to diverse visits in Geneva like the Museum of the Reformation, St. Peter's Cathedral and the Reformation Wall in Geneva's Old Town and to the World Council of Churches at the Ecumenical Centre, many presentations were given at the Ecumenical Institute.



© Mohammad Ali Shomali

After words of welcome by director Fr Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca and Fr Lawrence Iwuamadi, Sheikh Shomali delivered a talk on the preliminaries to engaging in interfaith dialogue and its significance in the three Abrahamic faiths, and shared his wisdom and knowledge of the procedures and etiquettes of interreligious dialogue, and in delving deeper into the spirituality of unity.

Rev. Dr Dagmar Heller and Fr Lawrence Iwuamadi gave introductions to Christianity and a run through its history, while WCC programme executive for interreligious dialogue, Clare Amos, introduced a Christian approach to interfaith dialogue.

*This is an abbreviated version of a story originally published in Islam Today.*

## Interreligious Summer School – living and learning together

"Our hope inspires us to bring these experiences, based on respect and human dignity, back to our own contexts: promoting understanding and cultivating opportunities for interreligious encounter to foster peace," said a group of young people of Jewish, Christian and Muslim background in a communiqué in July 2017, having completed the Interreligious Summer School at the Ecumenical Institute.

Through the summer school, students pursuing the Ecumenical Institute's Certificate of Advanced Studies in Interreligious Studies attended lectures about interreligious dialogue from people who encouraged them to contribute to issues of religious pluralism and intercultural acceptance in a society based on migration and globalization. The topic of this year was Peacebuilding.

As the course came to an end, the group acknowledged that they struggled with tensions when differences in belief and cultural understanding arose. "These tensions, innate to encountering difference, reflect on a micro level the violent conflicts that evolve on a macro level in our world when there are no opportunities for encounter," the students' communiqué reads. "While recognizing that dialogue requires much work and trust, we find the inclusion of each individual voice an invaluable part of the journey toward just peace."

As the group left the peaceful environment of Bossey, they acknowledged that they were encouraged by the fact that between difficult conversations, they could dance, laugh, and eat together.



© Benjamin Simon/WCC

## Living solidarity across the world - PAWEEN in consultative seminar at Bossey

From 10-14 July 2017 a group of women from North America, Africa, the Caribbean and Europe met at the Ecumenical Institute for a consultative seminar on "Empowerment of Pan-African Women in the Ecumenical Movement in a Sustainable Development Perspective."

The seminar is part of the annual activities of the Pan African Women's

Ecumenical Empowerment Network (PAWEEN), founded in 2015 in Bossey with the intention to encourage especially young women of African descent to become engaged and more visible in the ecumenical movement.

The network is a programmatic activity of the WCC department on Ecumenical Theological Education. At the seminar the group of Pan African

women developed a strategic action plan on how ecumenical theological education can promote awareness for the particular situation and contributions of Pan African women of faith. The participants issued a statement, in which they articulated their commitment to contribute to the pilgrimage of justice and peace.

## As ecumenical life continues



Bossey alumni exchange "old stories", with the dean of the Ecumenical Institute, as the WCC Ecumenical Officers meet in Geneva, in September 2017. © Marcelo Schneider/WCC



His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, himself a Bossey alumnus, greeted and conversed with Bossey students, as he visited the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, in April 2017. © Albin Hillert/WCC



As the fall semester begins, a new generation of Bossey students visit the chapel of the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, in September 2017. © Albin Hillert/WCC

## In Memoriam

Dorothy Berry was deeply devoted to the ecumenical movement and was a pioneer of her time. As a lay person she had a unique ability to communicate the ecumenical vision to lay and clergy alike.

Her studies at Union Theological Seminary led to a lifetime of service in ecumenical ministry at the local, national and global levels. She believed that intercultural and inter-confessional exchange among Christians was essential to the pursuit of visible unity in Christ and common witness to the world.

She is remembered with deep gratitude for her work in Geneva with the International Council for the International Christian Youth Exchange in the early 1970s; for her participation in many high level international delegations to advance dialogue between the churches and with people of other faiths; and for her decades of service on the US Steering Committee for the Bossey Ecumenical Institute.

She is a beloved daughter of the United Church of Christ and many other churches, including the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Reformed Church in Hungary.

Since her passing in 2013, we have remembered her often in our prayers, thanking God for her faith and ministry. May her memory be eternal and may we continue to be inspired by her witness.

The gift from her estate of USD 30,000 has been invested in the Bossey Ecumenical Institute Scholarship Fund. Each year about 35 students from around the world come to Bossey for residential ecumenical formation and academic study. Many students require financial support. Her gift helps to maintain this ministry.

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Château de Bossey.

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