



BEYOND BOUNDARIES

The newsletter of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey

www.bossey.ch



October 2024

Greetings from the Programme Director

The Ecumenical Institute at Bossey embodies the World Council of Churches' (WCC) call for churches to come together in deeper fellowship and common witness. This is closely aligned with the WCC's 2023-2030 strategic priorities, which frame ecumenical formation as both an *ethos* and a *programme*.

During the 2023-24 academic year, Bossey students engaged with a wide variety of Christian traditions, deepened their theological understanding, and forged lasting bonds of fellowship. Ecumenical formation at Bossey goes beyond mere academic study. It shapes attitudes, builds relationships, and fosters actions, equipping students with the tools and insights they need to support ecumenical efforts within their own communities.

Emphasis on theological self-understanding, alongside reflection on social thought in the historical development of the ecumenical movement helps students to grasp the distinctiveness of confessional identities while fostering unity. Students grow as individuals with potential to fruitfully contribute to global Christian witness under the guidance of committed faculty and administrative staff.

In the past year, Rev. Dr Benjamin Simon was appointed dean of the Ecumenical Institute, and Rev. Dr Joo Mee Hur was named vice dean. Simon also serves as director for the Commission on Ecumenical Education and Formation (EEF), holding both roles as an interim measure. Additionally, Dr Ani Gazaryan Drissi, previously with Faith and Order, has become professor of Ecumenical Theology and the executive for the Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) Programme. The Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity further demonstrated its commitment to Bossey's vision by renewing the tenure of Fr Dr Lawrence Iwuamadi. Also, three adjunct professors were appointed this past year: Dr Andrej Jeftic, director of the Commission on Faith and Order; Dr Masiwa Ragies Gunda, programme executive for Overcoming Racism and All Forms of Discrimination; and Rev. Dr Martin Illert, programme executive for Faith and Order, seconded by the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*. Dr Vasile-Octavian Mihoc continues to serve as professor of Ecumenical Theology and programme executive for Faith and Order, and for Ecumenical Relations. Administrative roles are filled by Ms Anu Talvivaara, Ms Caroline Schwaller Lo Moro, and Mr Pedro Nari, who serve as EEF administrator; Unity, Mission, and Ecumenical Formation/ETE programme assistant; and librarian, respectively.



Photo: Gloria Charles/WCC

This issue of *Beyond Boundaries* celebrates the stories of transformation from the Bossey community, illustrating how ecumenical formation—both as ethos and programme—is vital to creating a world where justice, reconciliation, and unity flourish amid diversity. We invite you to join us in prayerful collaboration toward this vision.

— Rev. Dr Kuziipa Nahwamba

WCC programme director, Unity, Mission, and Ecumenical Formation

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Graduation 2023-2024



Photo: Gloria Charles/WCC

On 26 January 2024, 27 students from Bossey received the 2023-2024 Certificate of Advanced Studies and the Complementary Certificate in Ecumenical Studies.

Rev. Prof. Dr Kuzipa Nalwamba, WCC programme director for Unity, Mission, and Ecumenical Formation, and Prof. Dr Elisabeth Parmentier from the University of Geneva presented the students with their credentials after a prayer ceremony in the chapel. Nalwamba, from the United Church of Zambia, noted that in a setting such as Bossey, the transformation that takes place is not just in the one who is being hosted but also in the one who is hosting, so the learning is a two-way process. “The WCC has embarked on a Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity. I invite you to continue on that pilgrimage, whatever that represents, in the context in which you are going to serve,” said Nalwamba.

Parmentier said, “Being ecumenical means simply being human and open to humanity.” She explained that the quest for ecumenism and this pilgrimage requires translation and transformation. “We need translation, to learn more about the other church in its otherness, and about the life of the others—the way we think they reflect, believe, and act—it needs translation, hermeneutics, interpreting,” said Parmentier. The world needs a new generation of ecumenists trained to translate the message. “When you feel alone in your own way, in your own country, think that there are many people who stay together and stand together for reconciliation.”

The former academic dean Rev. Prof. Dr Simone Sinn said the staff works with students in the classroom and also with relationships. “Ecumenical pioneers have to be bold, and their humanism needs to continue to be bold. This means that we will be edgy; we will call for justice; we will strive for justice, and we will have people who will confront us with questions, and continue to do so,” said Sinn.

Ecumenical pioneers have to be bold, and their humanism needs to continue to be bold.

Graduating student Rev. Shengmin Huang from China’s Northeast Theological Seminary concluded at the graduation that, “Although we are different and have different concepts, we can move towards unity together as we set sail together; progress may be slow, but it will never cease.”

Graduation 2023-2024



Photo: Ivars Kupcis/WCC

In May 2024 six graduates from Bossey received their Master of Advanced Studies in Ecumenical Studies certificates. They celebrated the joy of dialogue in a spiritual haven that will imprint the rest of their lives. In remarks to the graduates, Rev. Prof. Dr Kuzipa Nalwamba reflected that ecumenical formation undergirds everything the WCC does. “You have been on study visits, lived communally, prayed, and reflected together, and I am sure you come away with a sense of the joy, challenges, and blessedness of reconciled diversity,” said Nalwamba. “The lived ecumenical experience you have had is a microcosm of what the WCC prays for and works towards.” The ecumenical movement is richer for having the students’ gifts, Nalwamba added. “A continual learning disposition creates room for God’s Spirit to incrementally moves us towards more just, reconciling, and unity-seeking ways of life,” she said. “Therefore, go into God’s world as transforming disciples moved by the love of Christ, who continue to learn and to be instruments of transformation in personal and church life, and in societal engagements and living gently with the rest of creation.”

Rev. Prof. Dr. Benjamin Simon, director of the WCC Commission on Ecumenical Education and Formation and dean of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, shared with students his reflections on the uniqueness of

Bossey. “It is a space which invites its participants to open themselves to one another, to make the discovery of the richness of the gifts that God bestows on us in the encounter with those who are so different from us,” he said. “Bossey is what we all bring to it.”

Graduate Costantin Radu from Romania spoke on behalf of the student body, expressing profound gratitude. “Our studies at Bossey have been a transformative experience, enriching us both professionally and personally,” he said. “Bossey has been more than an academic institution; it has been a place of profound spiritual growth and self-discovery.” Each interaction, Radu added, felt like a providential meeting. “Bossey is truly a spiritual haven where the joy of dialogue is palpable, and the mystery of the person is deeply explored,” he said. “Here, we learn to value and respect the dignity of every individual, regardless of nationality, gender, or religion, with a sanctity that mirrors the respect God, the Creator and Giver, has for us.” Bossey has instilled a sensitivity to each person’s issues, Radu added. “It has encouraged us to shed national and ideological prejudices, to listen and critically assimilate what we hear and see,” he said. “We have learned the importance of humility to truly work together.”



Welcome New Professors

Since 1st of March 2024, we are pleased to have two new colleagues at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey.

Following the departure of Rev. Prof. Dr Simone Sinn, the position for ecumenical theology has now been filled by Dr Ani Ghazaryan Drissi. She belongs to the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin. Ani brings to the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey numerous competencies: a rich experience of many years of work within the WCC Commission on Faith and Order; a deep knowledge of the WCC structure, churches, and networks; and an expertise on biblical and ecumenical theology. Ani was leading the Faith and Order Commission's Study Group on ecclesiology for many years. She has several publications related to her work. In addition to her professorship, she is also responsible for the programme on Ecumenical Theological Education, which includes the responsibilities for the Global Ecumenical Theological Institutes (GETI). We look forward to working with her at Bossey as well as in the ETE programme.



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

Since 1 August 2024, the WCC programme of Faith and Order has enjoyed the active support of Rev. Dr Martin Illert as 100% programme executive. We are delighted that at the same time he will also be joining Bossey as an adjunct professor. We welcome him warmly to the faculty. His previous teaching activities at the Faculty of Theology at Martin Luther University at Halle-Wittenberg in Germany and in the academic contexts of Sofia (Bulgaria) and Arad (Romania) and his academic qualifications in the fields of Patristics, Eastern Christian, and Ecumenical Studies speak unreservedly in favour of his joining Bossey. We look forward to his contribution and collaboration in the coming years.



Photo: Ivars Kupcis/WCC

Gratitude to Rev. Prof. Dr Simone Sinn as She Moves to Muenster

Rev. Prof. Dr Simone Sinn joined the WCC, seconded by the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD) as professor of Ecumenical Theology at Bossey, working also with the WCC Faith and Order Commission from 2018 to 2024. With an international experience gained over the years, Sinn showed matchless commitment and passion for teaching ecumenism and mentoring students. She also served as the academic dean of Bossey from August 2021 to February 2024. During this time, she laboured to broaden the confessional and regional representation of the student body, and engaged in fruitful fundraising and public relations to ensure that the Bossey scholarship fund remains stable. Before joining the WCC, Sinn worked as study

secretary for public theology and interreligious relations at the Lutheran World Federation, an experience that enhanced both her passion for ecumenism and committed to the promotion of interreligious dialogue and engagement at Bossey. Sinn joined the University of Muenster on the chair for Religious Studies and Intercultural Theology (Seminar für Religionswissenschaft und Interkulturelle Theologie) in March 2024. Leaving Bossey, Sinn said, "I look back on all my years with profound gratitude." We are grateful to Sinn for her immense contribution to the life and formation offered at Bossey and look forward to continued collaboration in the future.

Dies Academicus 2023



Photo: Gloria Charles/WCC

The Ecumenical Institute at Bossey marked *Dies Academicus* on 25 October 2023 with the theme “Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity,” a paradigm coming from the WCC 11th Assembly. *Dies Academicus* was an occasion to reflect on the transformative impact of the new paradigm, with its innovative methodologies, including pilgrim visits, theological reflections within the WCC, and fostering collaboration with non-member churches and ecumenical partners as a way to address multifaceted challenges of today. The reflections acknowledged the potential within the paradigm towards engaging the uncharted territory of the digital age, intergenerational dynamics, and interfaith encounters.

Starting the day with prayers at the chapel of the Institute, Prof. Ivana Noble, a Bossey alumna, gave a sermon based on Psalm 90: 1-4,17 and Genesis 12:1-4a. The activities of the day focused on three objectives: first, creating an open forum for students and faculty to engage in a comprehensive discussion regarding the

themes of justice, reconciliation, and unity; second, sharing insights from the history of the pilgrimage and its implications for the ecumenical movement in present and future; and finally, addressing challenges and opportunities, such as the impact of digitalization, artificial intelligence, intergenerational conflicts, interreligious dialogue, ecological crisis, economics, etc.

The day concluded in a celebration of WCC’s 75th anniversary—including cake. Bossey faculty decided that in 2024, *Dies Academicus* would be replaced by an international conference from 4-8 November on the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea.



Protestant Parish of Terre Sainte at Céligny



Photo: Andrea Quesada



Photo: Andrea Quesada

Protestant Parish of Terre Saint at Céligny, about a kilometer away from the Château de Bossey is a good neighbor to Bossey students. At the beginning of each semester, they warmly invite students to the welcome worship service at their temple and in pairs to the houses of parishioners for lunch. Right after the service, the municipality of Céligny also welcomes students with an aperitif at town hall. This year Bossey invited parishioners to the Château de Bossey for a barbecue dinner to express our gratitude for their longstanding warm hospitality. During the semester, Rev. Linda Sibuet provides students with a pastoral counselling and on Christmas Day, her family and some parishioners treat students who stay at Bossey during Christmas to a nice meal at her house.

Graduate Andrea Quesada from Peru recalled heartwarming memories with parishioners: Bossey students of the year 2023-2024 were pleased to share a barbecue evening with parishioners amidst laughter, wine, and cheese. We were impressed with the kindness of everyone who attended and how interested they were in our diverse identities, languages, and cultures. The conversations lasted for hours and allowed us to connect with the people from the local community. On a following occasion, we were

part of a service at the parish where we participated in a service presided over by Pastor Linda Sibuet, who warmly welcomed us with her words, followed by a beautiful performance by the parish choir. After the service, we were invited by many families who offered to spend a Sunday with Bossey students. My friend Dimitrie and I had the pleasure of being welcomed by Christiane Steck with whom I still have a great friendship to this day. Her hospitality was present throughout the semester as she often visited us at the Château de Bossey. Her friendship was very important because she was continuously interested in the challenges we faced as students and the needs we might have, in order to help us as much as she could. We tried to reciprocate this affection by visiting her, spending quality time together and, at the end of the semester, we said goodbye at the château with the hope that we would be able to meet again soon. Undoubtedly, this friendship was one of the highlights of my experience as a student at Bossey because of the enrichment and joyfulness we both gained from this interesting and genuine exchange.

Last Visit of Focolare Students from Montet



Photo: Veasna Run

On 28 November 2023, students from the Focolare Centre at Montet made their last visit to Bossey, marking the end of a cherished annual tradition. The Montet Centre was scheduled to close in the summer of 2024, making this visit particularly significant. During their one-day visit, the Focolare students attended the “Intercultural Biblical Studies” course, taught by Fr Prof. Dr Lawrence Iwuamadi. Together with Bossey students, they explored the theme “The Genealogy of Jesus According to Matthew: Purpose of the Text and Its Reception in Early Christianity.” The academic exchange, which included group work, provided a deep and enriching experience for all participants. In a subsequent session, students from both institutions engaged in a dialogue about the opportunities and challenges of living in diverse communities. Led by Prof. Dr Vasile-Octavian Mihoc, the discussion centered on the WCC paradigm of “Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity.” It was emphasized the alignment between Chiara Lubich’s message of “Basta amare (It is enough to love!)” and the theme of the WCC 11th Assembly, “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.” Topics such as diversity and unity, companionship, and the practical aspects of ecumenism were explored in depth, underscoring the shared commitment to love and unity. In the afternoon, the Focolare students toured Bossey,

visiting the library and conference center before concluding their visit with an ecumenical prayer in the chapel.

At the Montet Centre’s closing ceremony on 8 June 2024, WCC general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay affirmed, “Though we bid farewell to Montet, our connection with the Focolare movement remains strong. The spirit of ecumenical dialogue will continue through visits of Bossey students to the Focolare Centre in Rome.” He added: “Those who spent decades here are called to go where relationships are broken and be the yeast, salt, and light.” Bossey will fondly remember the unique encounters with the Focolare students from Montet, whose presence and spirituality have enriched the ecumenical journey.

Study Visit to Taizé



Photo: WCC

A Bossey cohort of 33 students, led by Prof. Dr Andrej Jeftic, visited the Taizé Christian monastic community from 13 to 15 October 2023, at the start of their academic year. As has been the case for many years, thanks to the kind hospitality and spiritual friendship with the brothers, the visit to Taizé is one of the main study visits the students undertake during the academic year. Nestled in the peaceful hills of Burgundy, France, Taizé is renowned for its ecumenical spirit, simplicity, and focus on youth ministry, offering the students a profound experience of communal living and spiritual reflection. The students were deeply moved by Taizé's humble setting, simple meals, and unique style of worship—characterized by repetitive chants and silent prayers that transcend language barriers. This experience fostered a sense of peace and reflection. As one student noted, the simplicity of prayer in Taizé helps one “relax and stay focused while listening to God.” A highlight of the visit was the students' interactions with the brothers of Taizé, who embody humility and service. Many were particularly touched by the brothers' quiet acts of service, such as clearing students' plates after meals, described as “the most emotional and heart-touching part of the visit.” These interactions offered insights into the practical and ecclesial implications of living in such a community. The visit provided valuable lessons for the students' ecumenical formation. Witnessing a living example of the unity the ecumenical world strives for, Bossey students reflected on how Taizé's model could be adapted to their own contexts. Coming back to Bossey, often called a “Laboratory for Ecumenical Life,” Taizé left them pondering: is there a recipe for unity to be learned here, or is the search for such a recipe part of the journey itself?

Cours en “Théologie Interculturelle”



Photo: Gloria Charles/WCC

For the third time, Bossey organized in collaboration with the Office Protestant de la Formation, Neuchâtel - DM, Lausanne – Défap, Paris, and Témoigner ensemble à Genève as well as the Protestant Universities of Paris and Montpellier the French-speaking course in “Théologie interculturelle.” It represented a joint effort of French and Swiss WCC member churches and various organizations concerned with and involved in issues related to formation in intercultural and contextual theology. Rev. Prof. Dr Benjamin Simon extended congratulations to the graduates at their graduation in June 2024. “You have shared experiences on various theological themes from an intercultural perspective, while also learning from one another,” he said. Simon shared the news that in the near future the programme will be expanded into an accredited one-year course beginning in October. “This initiative and the recognition of the necessity to offer an intercultural theology course are supported by many,” he said. Graduate Florence Löliger is a deacon in the Evangelical Reformed Church of the Canton of Vaud, Switzerland, and works in the parish of Aubonne. “I really liked having two speakers each time, a man and a woman, from the northern or southern hemisphere addressing the theme of interculturality in connection with healing,” she said. Another graduate, Nehemiah Ndofula Lumeta, Bienne, explained that interculturality is a current topic that is not really practiced enough. “But we should approach things this way, and the church also should really integrate or see certain things that we don't take into account,” he said.

The Library



Photo: Samuel Mungure/WCC

At the WCC library located at Bossey we receive research requests from our students, faculty, WCC staff, and external researchers from all around the world. The requests may relate to a wide range of topics connected with the activities of the WCC along the years, more broadly concerning the ecumenical movement, or in relation with any other theological question. Re-imagining the ecumenical theology in Africa, the pneumatological dimension of koinonia ecclesiology, the outcomes of the inter-orthodox meetings about the participation of the women in the church, the liturgy as means of action in response to the environmental crisis, the pastoral response to gender-based violence in Kenya, locating the scholarly and pastoral work published of a former Bossey student from the 1970's , and so on. These are some examples of research topics covered by library users in the past months. In assistance to them, the library offers a wide range of tools and resources. On one side, the collection of books and other printed material hosted in the reading room – actually about 100,000 documents – is a rich source. These documents can be located with the Online Library Catalogue: <https://cutt.ly/WCCLibraryCatalogue>.

This freely accessible online tool allows one to locate online material which complements the printed collection. Databases like the ATLA Religion Database, or the Open Access Digital Theological Library, online journals like the Ecumenical Review or the International Review of Mission, ebooks and other material form the digital archives of WCC documents can be browsed from the web page dedicated to online resources on the library website: <https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/wcc-archives-and-library#online-resources>.

As an additional “tool,” the librarian can assist you in your search of material. Contact him: library@wcc-coe.org



Apply for the academic year 2025-2026!

The application process for all courses in Ecumenical Studies is through an online portal WCC Trakstar Hire platform. The platform requires careful preparation, filing data, and uploading and naming required digitized documents following a protocol. The platform is accessible once for one application dossier.

Complementary Certificate (CC) in Ecumenical Studies

Intended for students having completed a university Bachelor's degree certificate in Christian theology, or in a closely related discipline. The programme is accredited by the University of Geneva with 30 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credits to be achieved during one semester (mid-September - end of January).

Application deadline 30 November 2024, apply through:
<https://wcccoe.hire.trakstar.com/jobs/fk0vnmb/>

Master of Advanced Studies (MAS) in Ecumenical Studies

Intended for students having completed a university Master's degree, preferably in Christian theology or in a closely related discipline. The programme is accredited by the University of Geneva with 60 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credits to be achieved during two semesters (mid-September-end of June).

Application deadline 30 November 2024, apply through:
<https://wcccoe.hire.trakstar.com/jobs/fk0vnmk/>

Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) in Ecumenical Studies

Meant for students having completed a Bachelor's degree certificate in Christian theology, or in a closely related discipline or demonstrating a suitable level of theological literacy. The course is accredited by the University of Geneva under the Swiss Higher Education Programme for Continuing Education in accordance with the requirements of the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS) with 25 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credits to be achieved during one-semester (mid-September – end of January).

Application deadline 30 November 2024, apply through:
<https://wcccoe.hire.trakstar.com/jobs/fk0vnfw/>

Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) in Interreligious Studies

Intended to contribute to the issues of religious pluralism and intercultural acceptance in a society based on migration and globalization, the CAS in Interreligious studies aims at an international audience of young people (age between 20 and 35 years) interested and engaged interreligious dialogue, religious leaders, students, lay persons and professionals with a suitable level of religious literacy and/or experience in the field of interreligious dialogue and engagement, especially among the three Abrahamic religions. The course is accredited by the University of Geneva under the Swiss Higher Education Programme for Continuing Education in accordance with the requirements of the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS) with 10 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credits to be achieved during a period of 6 weeks (3 weeks distance learning, 3 weeks residential).

Application delay for summer 2025 to be announced using the same platform as other courses.

Beyond Boundaries is a periodic newsletter of the Ecumenical Institute at Château de Bossey.

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Thank you for your gifts!