At Bossey the daily activities of the students begin with common prayers in the Ecumenical Institute’s rustic and pastoral awe inspiring chapel. Prayer and worship life is a source of spiritual nourishment, mutual learning and a foundation for intellectual work and personal development. The common prayer together in the chapel has turned out to be a central place of cohesion and rapprochement for the students, a place where barriers and walls of resistance are broken down after the usual initial crisis and struggles of living and praying together. On their arrival some students would resist the practice of praying together with others of other church traditions and denominations. It is interesting to notice with time the role the common prayers together in the Chapel play in changing the dispositions of all the students towards each other. The students usually take turns in small groups or pairs to prepare and organize the morning prayers. The purpose is twofold: on the one hand students get to know the ways of praying in other traditions, and on the other hand they get experience in organizing ecumenical prayer services. Therefore we practice both confessionally shaped common prayer and prayer which is prepared by students from different churches. Both ways have their own challenges for the students. Each week the students pray for specific countries following the ecumenical prayer cycle in such a manner as to pray for all countries of the world by the end of the year.

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Dear Reader,

Bossey’s rich legacy of spiritual life is reflected in the new publication, A Place to Remember, The Ecumenical Institute. I wish to offer a special thank you to all former students who took the time to write about their time and experience at Bossey. It is a written testimony of remembering with each contributing his or her own part of the Bossey story. This story continues to the present day with our current cadre of students. As you will read in the story about the religious sisters at Bossey this year, their presence exemplifies an open and informed spirituality that serves a greater purpose. They help our diverse group of students grow into a rhythm of worship and work. They are always present and available with friendship and pastoral sensitivity for both the students and the staff.

Looking to the future, we have set a course for short-term seminars in 2014 with topics ranging from green churches to migration, from interfaith to women for justice and peace in ecumenical movement. I invite you all to pray for our mission as we continue to strive for Christian unity which is given to us in Christ.

Prof. Fr. Dr. Ioan Sauca
Director

Religious sisters at Bossey

It is a long tradition that people from religious communities accompany and enrich the lives of students and the whole community at the Ecumenical Institute. Especially the sisters of Grandchamp, who were of great service for many years. For the past seven years, the Ecumenical Institute has made a special effort to have every academic year a small community of religious sisters from different traditions as part of the student body. This semester five sisters are enriching the life of the community. Coming from two different churches, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and the Roman Catholic Church, they represent three different traditions: Eastern Orthodox, Catholic - Latin rite and the Maronite tradition. They come from Syria, Panama and Lebanon. One of them is following the Master of Advanced Studies in Ecumenical Studies, the others are in the Certificate of Advanced Studies in Ecumenical Studies and in the Complementary Certificate in Ecumenical Studies.

When asked about their experience and the meaning of their presence in Bossey they told me about their special relationship with the students. “Sister, you have changed my point of view about Catholic sisters” was one of the reactions a sister got from a student. They play an important role for breaking stereotypes about religious life, especially for students from countries and churches which do not have a living monastic tradition. But this is not their only role of within the student community. “Students will talk to me, when they are not ok; they come with their problems”, two other sisters told me. And they find that the regular evening prayers, organized by the sisters, play an important role in establishing this relationship of trust with the students.

But what will the sisters themselves take back to their communities and their life back home? “It is important for a monastery to have ecumenical relationships” was one of the answers. The time in Bossey gives the opportunity to establish such contacts. “We need to know the real needs of people. Here in Bossey we get to know real faces in relation to specific problems in different countries. Before I came to Bossey, I had no idea how to relate to other people, who are not of my church tradition. Now I do!”, one of the sisters said. Bossey helps to grow in the awareness that Christians belong together all over the world like “one family”. And finally “it is good to know that religious and monastic life also exists in other church traditions.” BB

The religious sisters during a coffee break at Bossey
2014 continuing formation seminars announced

The 2014 schedule of Continuing Formation Seminars has been announced. The seminars provide safe spaces for the analysis and discernment of cutting-edge themes at stake in the ecumenical movement and offer expertise and experience to accompany this discernment process. Seminars are designed to sharpen the awareness for the ecumenical implications of societal and ecclesial changes for the churches and to encourage them to engage in dialogue and cooperation, envisioning possible action, also with people of other faiths. Each seminar has space for up to 25 participants from a wide spectrum of confessional, cultural and gender representation. The goal is to engage each participant in a global study and reflection process through input by expert resource persons, as well as from each other through shared experiences and exposure.

Women’s Pilgrimage Towards Justice and Peace
The seminar will elaborate on the particular resources women can offer to the ecumenical quest of justice and peace for all, and is intended to serve as a starter for a series of events and seminars in different regions.

Green Churches: Ecology, Theology and Justice in Practice
The seminar will seek to map the different efforts and initiatives in making the link between ecology, theology and justice visible, and by drawing attention to the potential for churches to develop viable, applied ethical responses and alternatives to the menace of nature from within their traditions.

Building an Interfaith Community
This three week residential course is designed to enable participants to encounter each other in mutual respect, to learn together, and to challenge and overcome stereotypes.

Evaluating Ecumenical Formation for Migrant Church Leaders
This seminar is intended as an evaluative analysis of the different formation initiatives churches have offered for migrant church leaders, with a view to systematise the approach, discuss methodologies and coordinate regional projects.

Ecumenical Formation for Specialized Ministries
This seminar, co-organized with the Income Monitoring and Development colleagues, aims to give staff of specialized ministries orientation about the ecumenical movement and to provide a possibility for ecumenical encounter with the WCC and other ecumenical organizations. The significance of the seminar is that it gives to new staff in specialized ministries the opportunity to get to know the ecumenical movement.

Dates: September 21-26, 2014
More information is available online at www.bossey.ch.
Bossey at the 2013 Assembly in Busan, South Korea

On November 1 over 100 people gathered for a lunch reception at the 2013 WCC Assembly to celebrate the work of the Ecumenical Institute. Guests included former students and staff, donors, partners, and members of the central committee. Guest speakers were Rev. Lesmore Gibson (class of 2013), Rev. Ashraf Tannous (class of 2011), Mrs. Angelina Vladikova (class of 2007), Dr. Fulata Mbano-Moyo (class of 1994), Bishop Duleep de Chickera (class of 1992) and Rev. Margaret Rose (class of 1978). Father Professor Dr. Ioan Sauca talked about the future of Bossey and how our mission impacts the work of the churches today. The event was moderated by Rev. Robert Welsh (class of 1969).
Over 50 former students contribute to essay project

In a collection of essays, former students of the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey share how their years at the Institute created some of their fondest memories. Their experience inspired a new understanding of Christian unity and ecumenical endeavours they have undertaken in churches around the globe. The essays are featured in a recent World Council of Churches (WCC) publication A Place to Remember - the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, now available online http://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news APlaceToRemem-ber.pdf.

Around fifty former students of the Ecumenical Institute have contributed essays to the collection. In the forward of the publication Professor Father Dr. Ioan Sauca, director of the Ecumenical Institute, shared his own memories of Bossey, where he came initially as a student in 1985. “Bossey has remained in the memories of many people who have visited or studied here. This collection of essays is a testimony to the life changing experiences which have been taking place here for the past 67 years,” he wrote. The Institute, Sauca said, “continues to be a unique place and an important WCC programme that shapes the identity of the many students today who continue making a difference when they return home.”

One such student, Rev. Ainsley Griffiths, who attended the Ecumenical Institute in 1997, reported in his essay, “Living in a vibrantly international ecumenical community brought me greater awareness of the connections between the gospel and culture and the importance of understanding and engaging with our contexts before venturing in mission.” “Bossey also opened my eyes to the world’s pain in a vivid way so that when I listen to the international news about atrocities, upheavals, environmental changes and human suffering across the world, I can relate the headlines to the lives of individuals whom I regard as friends.” “For having had the privilege to be part of such a diverse, loving, challenging, aspirational, stimulating and Spirit-filled community, I remain deeply thankful,” Griffiths wrote A Place to Remember - the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey was launched on 1 November at the WCC 10th Assembly in Busan, Republic of Korea. For a paper copy, contact Kelly Brownlee at Kelly.brownlee@wcc-coe.org

Another generation of Master graduates!

The end of June 2013 saw the graduation of another generation of Master of Advanced Studies in Ecumenical Studies students from the academic year 2012-2013. Those who graduated were: Rev. Amal Chinnam, from the Church of South India, Rev. Lesmore Ezekiel, from the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, Mr Andrei Hros, from the Russian Orthodox Church in the Republic of Belarus, Mr Alexandru Malureanu and Mr Marius Oblu from the Romanian Orthodox Church. Inspired by the work in Bossey’s organic garden, Mr. Oblu (pictured above) makes Bossey even more beautiful by planting flowers near Petit Bossey. BB
Building an interfaith community at Bossey

Taking part in a summer course titled “Building an Interfaith Community”, 24 young adults were hosted by the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey in Switzerland from 12 to 30 August. “The course is an opportunity for me to learn about religions other than mine,” said Oriya Gorgi, a 21-year-old participant of Jewish faith, from Ashdod, Israel. Gorgi went on to say that her experience at Bossey has challenged her perceptions based on media reports that often depict religion merely as a source of communal divisions. “Our faiths have more commonalities than we think,” she said.

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For Mataiva Dorothy Robertson the course provided a wide understanding of multi-faith relations. The 34-year-old Robertson, from the Methodist Church of New Zealand, shared that initially she feared compromising her Christian faith identity. “My understanding of faith was somehow restricted to ‘my truth’ only. However, I ended up embracing the interfaith community wholeheartedly,” she said. “Conversations with my Muslim and Jewish brothers and sisters gave me the knowledge I lacked,” stated Robertson.

This dialogue, she stressed, reinforces the need to be respectful of other faiths, an attitude that can help foster mutual understanding and trust. Robertson referred to Scriptural Reasoning sessions as one of the highlights in the course. “In-depth insights from Bible, Quran and Torah showed me how religions share common values of humanity which can be used to build interfaith harmony, justice and peace in communities.” “When I return home I hope to collaborate with interfaith networks in New Zealand,” she added.

Similar experiences were shared by Yusef Syed, an 18-year-old Shi’a Muslim from Ireland. Born to Pakistani parents, Syed has been working with the interfaith groups in Dublin. “There cannot be black and white understanding of any religion. By participating in the course I have realized how important it is to break stereotypes attached to faith identities,” Syed said. “It is challenging to create a community of diverse beliefs. Once we engage in dialogue, we realize that a deep knowledge of religions exists behind the face of politics.” BB

Beyond Boundaries wishes to all its readers a Blessed Christmas Season!
Excerpt from A Place to Remember, The Ecumenical Institute at Bossey

I boarded the plane to Switzerland on 6th September 2011, full of expectations. To my amazement, Bossey was a family where students and staff stayed together, cooked and ate together, played together and worshipped together - eventually learning from each other. On arrival at Bossey, we all experienced culture shock. I remember having a difficulty conversing with an Indian colleague who kept swinging his head sideways which to me meant disagreement but for him it means agreement. With time, we started to appreciate our differentness - that what I consider rude may not necessarily be rude in another culture and that the way I practice my faith maybe different but not necessarily superior to others. During the orientation week, I expected to be told the do’s and don’ts of a student, how to address our professors, Swiss eating mannerisms and so on. To my surprise, instead of being given the rules, we were given freedom. Freedom to keep our unique identities as we respect other people’s identity Bossey provided practical learning experience. Diversity in the classroom, cultural evenings, Christmas around the world, Swiss parish visits and the visit to the Vatican provided unique opportunities to sample world cultures and religious experiences. This provided a laboratory where our identities were strengthened and our biases questioned. As I left Bossey, I was transformed. I was more proud of my identity, more tolerant with others, more open to work and interaction with people of other races, cultures, religious traditions and faiths. I was more convinced that if I appreciated who I am, I am more likely to appreciate and learn from others and eventually we can together serve humanity as God desires. This has greatly improved my ministry.

Loresho, Kenya
Presbyterian

If you would like to share your story of transformation while studying at Bossey, please contact Kelly Brownlee at the Ecumenical Institute:
Kelly.brownlee@wcc-coe.org
The Ecumenical Institute at Château de Bossey was founded in 1946. It is attached to the Autonomous Faculty of Protestant Theology of the University of Geneva and part of the World Council of Churches (WCC) representing some 560 million Christians on all continents of the globe. Since 1946, thousands of women and men from numerous countries and most Christian confessions and cultures have come to Bossey for seminars, conferences and academic study programmes. Many have testified to life-changing experiences in this “ecumenical laboratory.”

More information about the academic programme or how the contemporary hospitality facilities in splendid historical surroundings overlooking the French Alps may be of use to you can be found at www.bossey.ch.