Two new scholarship endowments for Bossey

The endowment of two new scholarship funds geared towards facilitating studies at the Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches (WCC) was celebrated at the graduation ceremony for the 61st session of the institute’s Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies on 3 February.

The Bishop Vinton R. Anderson Ecumenical Leadership Scholarship Fund was created to provide support for African Methodist Episcopal students attending the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies. The fund was initiated by Bishop Anderson of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the USA. Born 1927 in Bermuda, he was the first beneficiary of the Bishop Vinton R. Anderson Ecumenical Leadership Scholarship, at the graduation ceremony in Bossey.

"We thank God for giving Bishop Anderson the gifts and graces for empowering us in the work of ecumenism," said the Rev. Philip Blair and the Rev. Wilma Taylor, who are the first beneficiaries of the Bishop Vinton R. Anderson Ecumenical Leadership Scholarship, at the graduation ceremony in Bossey.

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit congratulating a newly graduated student Fr Ferdinand Pathrose. In the background Prof. Andreas Dettwiler, Dean of the Autonoumos Faculty of Protestant Theology of the University of Geneva.

New WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit: «Bossey is a great asset for the WCC»

Norwegian theologian and pastor Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, 48, was elected 7th general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in August 2009 during its Central Committee meeting. Tveit is the youngest general secretary since Willem A. Visser ’t Hooft and began in January 2010. Beyond Boundaries interviewed Tveit and asked how does he feel after his first 100 days. He smiles. “I still feel very good. This is the most meaningful job I could have. It is also the most demanding I could imagine. Almost everything I am doing through the day is highly interesting and important.” Tveit has visited the Ecumenical Institute at Château de Bossey already many times. He confesses “I love it more...”

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From the Editors

"Bossey is a great asset for the WCC. I am proud to show it to others”, says Olav Fykse Tveit, the new WCC general secretary in his interview with Beyond Boundaries. In order to keep this asset in a changing world, Bossey is continuously developing its programmes, building relationship with other ecumenical institutions and with former students. Beyond Boundaries is therefore back! During a few years Bossey was structurally in a transition being part of a larger WCC Programme on Education and Ecumenical Formation and the newsletter Beyond Boundaries (BB) was consequently suspended. From the beginning of 2010 the Ecumenical Institute, with its own newsletter, has returned to be part of the General Secretariat of the WCC. Structures and people may change, but the essence of the Ecumenical Institute at Château de Bossey remains. It continues to be a safe space where people of all ages and backgrounds may find themselves in an ecumenically enriching and challenging environment. An environment where contemporary issues of common concern to the churches are explored on many levels: by students in academic courses, by participants in programmes of ongoing education, by visitors from around the world - all becoming part of an intercultural community surrounded by natural beauty.

We welcome you warmly to discover some of the recent news from Bossey. We encourage you to share these stories with your own networks as we work to build a wider circle of friends of Bossey.

We are looking forward to your feedback and suggestions and wish you inspiring moments of reading. BB

Built on the legacy from the past, but now developed as an ecumenical meeting place, as a study center that offers something unique.” Tveit states. He invites the readers of Beyond Boundaries to work as ambassadors for Bossey so that particularly young people understand what kind of experience and training it offers.

“I would also encourage all former students and partners to return to Bossey. It is a beautiful place to stay. Bossey is an open space. It is a home, but it is open. I think it is good that WCC has such a home, where others can come and feel the heart of the ecumenical movement. I am proud to show Bossey to others. It's a great asset for the WCC” he concludes. BB
Sister Pina Sandu says that in her Orthodox monastery, in the mountains of Romania, they practise "touristic spirituality". With a resort built up around the monastery, "like it or not" the tourists "hear the bells, hear the services three times a day… They hear, they feel, they know that something is happening." As a result, their curiosity leads them into the yard and into the church – "small, sure steps towards something beautiful."

Sister Pina and five other sisters – two each from Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant orders – are providing a similar subtle but radical witness at the Ecumenical Institute Bossey outside of Geneva, Switzerland, for students and visitors alike.

The sisters live together, coordinate the worship and prayer life at the Ecumenical Institute, participate in classes – and embody a sense of "ecumenical spirituality" in daily life. Their presence alone, in their striking habits, is noticeable to all who use the Institute for meetings and events. Visitors come from church or development groups to secular organizations like Rolex or the regional Swiss television company, all of whom are invited to take part in the prayer life at the Institute.

But their main role over their year at Bossey is to provide pastoral support for the students. Rev. Emmanuel Twaahirwa, a graduate student coming from the Anglican Church in Rwanda, appreciates their worship facilitation. "When you come, you find yourself lost in academic study, you may end up forgetting your spiritual life," he says. "We have to balance the two." Even more, he appreciates their presence: "Sisters from different denominations, living together – it is important for us to learn from them."

Dealing with the tensions generated in the classroom is one way the sisters model ecumenical relationships. Sister Pina describes how after heated discussions, they would walk from the classroom to the kitchen for a meal, and the sisters would smile and talk. "It is a very delicate way of knowing which is the border between academic discussion and spiritual relationship or friendship," she emphasizes. "I hear about Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants. It is totally different when I meet a Catholic, when I meet a Protestant.. The person makes me love what the person does."

The sisters themselves were uncertain how it would work living together. Sister Sperancia Mulashani Thadeo, from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, reflected that she had met other Roman Catholic sisters but "could not imagine" how it would work living with them. "I thought perhaps they would stay in other parts," she says ruefully. The reality she found was that it is possible to live together, and the "happiest of times is
The meeting of the Plenary Commission on Faith and Order in October 2009 in Crete brought together more than 150 theologians from all over the world. Among the category of ‘Younger Theologians’ five Bossey alumni from the last three academic years participated: Rev. Modesto Achata Mamani, a Methodist and indigenous Aimara from Bolivia is a representative of his church. Rev. Bruce Myers, an Anglican from Canada was invited as minute taker. Rev. Christos-Filotheos Kolliopoulos, a monk from the Church of Greece helped as coopted staff. Rev. Aimee Moiso from the Presbyterian Church in the USA was invited as member of the national F&O commission and Michael Spyrou from the Church of Cyprus as secretary of the Holy Synod. Their participation became possible especially through their studies in Bossey as becomes clear in what Bruce Myers says: “I can in all truth say that my participation in the Faith and Order plenary meeting simply would not have been possible were it not for my studies at Bossey. It was through my encounters at Bossey that I came to know both the individuals and the issues currently at the heart of F&O. It was interesting to see for example the text ‘The Nature and Mission of the Church’ which we had studied ‘come alive’ within the context of the plenary commission’s deliberations, and to witness some of the processes that leads to such a text’s creation and subsequent revision. The plenary commission also discussed the question of moral discernment within the churches. How can different churches arrive at different conclusions on the same question, yet not have these different conclusions become the source of further division? This was one of the questions with which I grappled in my Bossey master’s thesis.” This is confirmed by words of Michael Spyrou: “My preparation at Bossey …was the study of latest texts. I also had studied carefully the diversity of understandings on particular issues, which helped me to understand the discussions at Crete.” BB
The Ecumenical Institute has a permanent faculty of six professors and is no longer depending on visiting professors. Two of them are working half-time in Bossey and the other half-time as Executive Secretaries in Faith and Order in the WCC. The professors are: Dr Amélé Ekué (Togo/Germany-Lutheran), Rev. Dr Dagmar Heller (Germany-United), Dr Paul J. Isaak (Namibia-Lutheran), Rev. Dr Gervasis Karumathy (India-Catholic), Rev. Dr Odair Pedroso Mateus (Brazil-Reformed), Rev. Dr Ioan Sauca (Romania-Orthodox).

The academic programmes have undergone several developments. For the past three academic years Bossey offered in addition to the classic Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies, two Master programmes: Master of Ecumenical Studies (MES – two academic years) and Master of Advanced Ecumenical Studies (MAS- one academic year). From the beginning of the academic year 2010-2011 one of the Master programmes remain: a newly shaped Master of Advanced Ecumenical Studies. This will be a one-year study programme, the first part of which is identical with the Graduate School. The main component of the second part – apart from writing a Master thesis - is either an internship in an ecumenical organization or a research fellowship in an ecumenical partner institute related to the student’s research interest.

For the academic year 2010-2011 the academic Dean will be Prof. Dr Paul J. Isaak.

Meet a Colleague

Speaking with Tom Trpevski it’s easy to see the passion and dedication he brings to his job at the Ecumenical Institute. As the concierge/driver/housekeeper for the past eight years, Tom is used to multi-tasking and whether its picking up guests from the airport, painting offices, or repairing guestroom fixtures, Tom’s attention to detail and willingness to go the extra mile makes him a valued member of the Bossey family. This is borne out by his commitment to ensure that everyone who comes to the Ecumenical Institute, has a great time. “Receiving guests is what I like to do most, and I especially try to do my best, to make them feel at home.” Assisting students, guests and staff is a big part of Tom’s work and everyday brings its own challenges and opportunities. When asked what his most memorable moment was, Tom was quick to reply “I remember my first year working at Bossey, I had grown so close to the students that when they left, I cried. A colleague then pointed out to me that as we get new students every year this would happen again and again!” Despite the sadness of saying goodbye, there is always the anticipation of greeting new people and the joy of making new friends. “Here at Bossey it is like a family, we share our good times and bad, and we are here for each other.”
Letters from Alumni

Beyond Boundaries wishes to share regularly some of the news received from former students—the alumni of the Ecumenical Institute—who have graduated from various academic programmes since 1952.

“Let me tell you that it was a beautiful and important time for me – with you! And I felt a lot “homesick” the first days in Heidelberg. … I would say the Bossey experience and the connection to WCC changed the context and framework of my whole theological thinking towards The One Church. My church trusted on these experiences to delegate me in the Central Committee of WCC.”

From Ms Christina Biere, Lutheran from Germany, alumna of the 53rd session of the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies Core Course in Ecumenics, 2 September, 2000 - 17 December, 2002.

“Greetings to you all from India … At present I am working as an intern in Christian Ecumenical Centre in Bangalore South India. … I really miss Bossey and all of you and cherish the nice memories we had together.”

From Ms Moumita Biswas, Reformed from India, alumna of the 49th session of the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies Core Course in Ecumenics, 1 September, 2000-17 December, 2000.

“Greetings from La Jolla California, USA! I am leading an ecumenical journey in Europe in the spring. We will visit key church and ecumenical centers in London, Canterbury, Geneva, Rome and Athens, concluding with worship at the Areopagus together with members of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. Am now chairing the Faith, Order and Witness Committee of the Ecumenical Council of San Diego County, and am also involved on the Board of the North American Academy of Ecumenists. … The Bossey experience can have lasting relevance for our lives as we continue to live out our calling as “apostles of unity”. Thus, I have decided to tell this ecumenical story to whomever will listen.”


“The studies at the Ecumenical Institute gave me the chance to have a good understanding of the diversity of the human beings, of the different ways to express our beliefs and the life styles all over the world. But through all this diversity I learnt and felt at the same time, we have only one common value which is our love for God.”

From Ms Nicoleta-Veronica Bobe, Orthodox from Romania, alumna of the 56th session of the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies For Thine Is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory: God’s Power and Human Accountability, 1 October, 2004-25 February, 2005.

“I just wish to let you know how much my whole personality was impacted by Bossey. The experience and studies while in Bossey meant a lot, but I became even more aware about it when I returned home. I am now working so that my church would become a WCC member and begin ecumenical dialogue.”

"What I have realized is that when we talk about unity, it doesn’t mean to change somebody’s faith,” states Deaconess Agnes Simbo Lema, from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. "It means to sit together, to share, to love each other and to accept each other."

Maria Elena Romero Molina, a Missionary Dominican sister from Guatemala, states it most simply, "Ecumenism is not a concept. It is a way of life."

Sister Pina reflects, "The motto of the life and work commission, back then, was doctrine divides, service unites.” Now, she states, "I could say doctrine divides, spirituality unites.”

(*) Sara Speicher is a freelance writer and former coordinator of the WCC Public

Place for a postal stamp.

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The Ecumenical Institute at Château de Bossey is 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 every Christian confession and culture 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 from:

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