Bossey inaugurates new guest house and conference hall

The Ecumenical Institute of Bossey inaugurated its recently renovated guest house and a new conference hall on 14 February, expanding its facilities for the use of churches, ecumenical bodies, local and international organizations and individual visitors. The newly renovated guest house, which was previously a traditional Swiss barn, now contains 21 rooms with modern facilities. Similarly, the new conference hall has the capacity of accommodating around 200 people, with the special equipment and assistance required for organizing meetings and events. “In these times of financial crisis, it was only because of our faith and confidence in this visionary project and the constant support from our colleagues that we have been able to complete this work successfully,” said Prof. Ioan Sauca, director of the Ecumenical Institute, at the inauguration ceremony. Sauca talked about the financial and logistical constraints that had hindered completion of the conference hall, which he said were overcome with support from the WCC Executive Committee, the WCC General Secretariat and constant efforts by the Bossey faculty and administrative staff. The Executive Committee began its February meetings in the new conference hall shortly after the dedication. The Committee meets every six months and is a governing body of the WCC. The inauguration ceremony was attended by around one hundred guests including the WCC Executive Committee members, Jean-Marc Gambazzi representing the mayor of Bogis-Bossey, Rev. Dr. Walter Altmann, moderator of the WCC Central Committee, and Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary of the WCC. Among other guests were staff members of the WCC and its sister organizations, representatives of Muslim, Jewish, Hindu and Buddhist communities in Geneva, the Friends of Bossey and the local press. At the ceremony Tveit was presented with a symbolic key on behalf of the architect of the renovated facilities. In his speech, Tveit commended the role of the Institute in bringing together people from diverse churches, cultures and regional...
Doing Their Work With Excitement

As you can see from our lead story in Beyond Boundaries a great day has arrived at Bossey. The renovation of the old barn into 21 guest rooms and the building of a new 200 seat conference hall will allow us to more fully enter into the sacred process of receiving outsiders and changing them from strangers into guests. At Bossey, hospitality is a way of life, a whole life view of encountering and serving God by welcoming, encountering and serving the neighbour (Genesis 18; Hebrews 13:2; Romans 12:13 etc).

And at Bossey, we are doing just that. One of our recent visitors, The Most Rev. Emmanuel Josiah Udofia, Primate of the African Church, Nigeria and Overseas and President of the Christian Council of Nigeria came to Bossey to take some time for individual study. In an open letter published in this edition, he writes that his reception was “loving, encouraging, and inviting” and that the staff were “doing their work with excitement”. As we see every day at Bossey, God shows up in miraculous ways through hospitality. We can expect to be joyously surprised by God when we engage in thoughtful hospitality. We extend a warm invitation to you to come and visit us and enjoy the comfort of our new facilities as our General Secretary Olav Fykse Tveit stated “as an Ecumenical Guest House”. Whether you are coming for a spiritual retreat, hosting a meeting or event, travelling for pleasure or personal study, Bossey is a haven of peace surrounded by the natural beauty of the Alps and Lake Geneva. At Bossey, we not only see hospitality as a service, but as an instrument of discipleship for both host and guest within our uniquely ecumenical setting. Receiving visitors renews our hope and our joy and enriches our relationship with Christ by acknowledging Christian hospitality as a way of life.

Prof. Fr. Dr. Ioan Sauca Director

(Left) The new 200 seat conference hall with modern facilities. (Right) The Old Barn is now a 21 room guest facility. Both projects were built with 100% ecological technologies including solar panels for heating water and geothermic energy to heat rooms.

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backgrounds for ecumenical learning, academic study and personal exchange.
He said that the “new facilities will strengthen the role of Bossey as a place for international ecumenical formation as it will offer more space to welcome guests, visitors, researchers and students.”
Tveit called Bossey an “ecumenical guest house”, where he said individuals and groups can come and spend time on work, retreats and celebrations. BB

For more information on the new guest rooms, please visit www.bossey.ch
ences in Bossey and how these will affect your realities, will depend on the extent to which you allow the ecumenical journey – also with all its struggles, contradictions and detours - to continue unfolding in you and to make it fruitful for and together with others.”

One of the speakers during commencement was the Rev. Dr. Hielke Wolters, Associate General Secretary for Mission and Unity of the World Council of Churches. He told the graduates, “Unity is not simply a stage in which churches agree on the basic doctrines of faith, but the search for unity in faith can become a transforming power that reaches beyond the limited space of churches and can help societies to grow towards justice and peace.”

This 63rd graduating class represented a wide range of geographic regions and confessions with students coming from Nigeria, Romania, China, India, Colombia, Belarus, Bolivia, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Togo, Zambia, U.S.A., Ukraine, Hungary and Kenya. While most of the students departed back to their home countries after the graduation ceremony, ten students remained on campus and continued work on the Master of Advanced Studies in Ecumenical Studies (MAS).

Chih-Mei Tang, who comes from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, is such a student and considers it a challenge to be exposed to a diverse and multi-cultural educational environment, where one can “learn, unlearn and relearn”. “To be exposed to various theological disciplines and understanding of ecumenism in Christianity is not easy. In academic learning we have to adapt to different ideas that might not be familiar to us. Yet this is the first principle of learning ecumenism that we let ourselves be challenged.” said Tang.
**The Bossey students have become part of my life**

**A Farewell Interview with Prof. Paul Isaak**

**BB:** *Professor Paul John Isaak*, you are leaving Bossey in the next days. *For how long have you been teaching here?*  
I was here for five years, since 2007.

**BB:** *And what did you do before you came here?*  
I was a professor for Missiology and Religious Studies (or Religious and Moral Education) at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences within the Department of Religion and Theology at the University of Namibia in Windhoek for 15 years.

**BB:** *Was there a difference in teaching here at Bossey compared with teaching in Namibia?*  
Yes, there is a big difference. The university setting makes teaching more abstract and anonymous. Bossey, on the contrary, is a small society of students. As a teacher you know the students much better. The encounter with them is more face to face, and thus more concrete. In Namibia, the majority of the students are Namibians, only 10% are international students, and these are mostly coming from other African countries. The situation here at Bossey is unique in the sense that the student body is international and ecumenical. Theologies from different contexts are represented. In Windhoek, we have mainly Lutherans, Reformed and Evangelicals. So we are ecumenical only in a limited way, and the focus of the teaching is on an African contextual point of view. At Bossey, the ecumenical aspect is in the first place.

**BB:** *Is there any event which comes to your mind which was striking for you here in Bossey?*  
I remember very well when our colleague *Dr. Fulata Moyo* from the women’s desk at the WCC once was giving a lecture to our students – I had to chair the session. She explained the concept of God and the problems to address God as “father”. I was very surprised, when I realised that this created some uproar in the class, mainly among students from Africa and Eastern Europe. In Namibia students are normally used to these questions.

**BB:** *What will you do when you return back home now?*  
I will go back to the University of Namibia. I will teach Philosophy and Religious Studies or Religious and Moral Education. Philosophy is a new teaching subject for me. I will deal with the influence of African philosophy on African religion. Just to give you an example what this means: In Africa, after a funeral, before going home, the people go to the house of the deceased, in order to wash their hands in a bucket full of warm water provided there. This is to wash off the coldness of death in warm water, the sign of life. It needs to happen at the place where someone has died and where the bereavement is happening. If you don’t do it, you have death on your hands, which is bad for you and your family. So, there is a deeper meaning to these types of rituals or to the rites of passage as they are called, which has to be studied. The first African theologian who studied such rites of passage is John Mbiti – also a former professor and director at Bossey.

**BB:** *I heard that you also have a small farm at home in Namibia?*  

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Yes, we have a small farm, with a few sheep, goats and cattle. It is located 80 km from Swakopmund, where we live. My wife likes farming, and goes there often during weekends. It is her initiative that we invested in this farm.

BB: So, it was not so strange for you to live here in the countryside in Bossey?
No, not at all.

BB: Do you want to say a word of farewell to the students you taught in Bossey?
Oh yes! The Bossey students have become part of my life. I have a relationship of communion with them. The students have broadened my horizon. I understand now much better how we act religiously as we act. For example I understand now why it is so difficult for the Roman Catholic Church and for the Orthodox Church to ordain women. To understand such issues, which were very strange for me before I came to Bossey, is possible, when you can link it with a person.

I would like to say to the students: I hope we stay in contact. It is good to have them as sisters and brothers. According to the words of the Psalmist (Ps. 133:1): “How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!”

BB: Thank you very much for this interview. We, your colleagues and all the staff of Bossey wish you all the best for the future, and hope to stay in touch! BB

Welcome Father Lawrence!

The faculty welcomes the new professor for Biblical Hermeneutics, Fr. Dr. Lawrence Iwuamadi who was appointed by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and arrived in March: He is a Roman Catholic priest of the Archdiocese of Owerri in Nigeria. He earned his Ph.D in 2008 from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. The title of his thesis was He called unto him the twelve and began to send them forth: The Continuation of Jesus’ Mission According to the Gospel of Mark. Before coming to Bossey he was teaching New Testament theology and the languages Greek and Hebrew at the Seat of Wisdom Seminary in Owerri. Asked about his thoughts on the appointment he replied “I received the appointment with joy and after a few months I can say that the Bossey family is happy to have me. And I think I am well disposed to collaborate and work with colleagues and the community, actively contributing my quota in the great apostolate for the promotion of Christian unity. I believe I am well equipped as an exegete to carry the students along in my area of specialization. The style of teaching may have to be fluid, taking into consideration the non homogeneity and the diverse academic preparations of the students.” BB

An Open Letter from The Most Rev. Emmanuel Josiah Udofia

In November 2011, The Most Rev. Emmanuel Josiah Udofia visited Bossey to see for himself the Institute where so many Africans study for ecumenical formation. He had this to say about his experience.

A man once said, “Travelling is an experience.” This can be said to be true in my study visit to the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey/WCC between November 21-26 2011. In fact, the reception given to me was Ecumenical (warm) indeed. Your system of reception was quite...
loving, encouraging and inviting. The staff and the faculty members’ ways of doing things are appreciative and they are doing their work with excitement. The visit was successful. Indeed the classes I attended were quite insightful, it was an encounter that cut across national, ideological and religious frontiers. The visit to Bossey/WCC has brought about changes in the present and future: It has affected my thought, habits and day to day practices. It has shaped my Ecumenical convictions. It gave me intercultural and inter-confessional encounters. The visit to Bossey/WCC was indeed a blessing to my ministry. It has affected and blessed my ministry in every area. It has redefined my ministry. I am indebted to the Ecumenical Institute / WCC for the opportunity given to me to pay a study visit and I hope more of such visits will come in the future. I would like to say a big thank you once again to the Director of Bossey, the general Secretary of WCC and their staff. Lastly, I can say all their activities are “for the fostering of unity among Christians.” I pray for God’s grace over the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey/WCC and the members of staff in Jesus name

Yours in His Service,

His Grace,
The Most Rev. Emmanuel Josiah Udofia,
The Primate of the African Church
The President of Christian Council of Nigeria, and the President of Fellowship of Christian Councils of Churches in West Africa

Amis du Château

For several decades, Amis du Château (Friends of the Château) have been a group of dedicated friends whose main interest is to preserve the heritage of the Château de Bossey. During their last meeting at the château in April, they vowed to continue their support. In the past, this group has raised and provided funds for the restoration of the tower and l’Orangerie (the dining room). “Many of the people who are part of this association have family roots that go back several centuries to the surrounding area. The moral support that they give to our work here is invaluable, especially recently during the renovation projects” said Prof. Dr. Ioan Sauca.

One of the important roles they play is to host the annual “Portes Ouvertes” which invites the local community to come and visit the château to learn more about its rich history, heritage, and programs.

The date for this year’s event is September 7th. If you would like more information concerning this event, please contact the château at +41 22 960 7300

Bossey alumni play leadership role in the WCC

Mrs. Margarita Neliubova attended the Bossey Graduate School 1989-1990, being the first female Russian Orthodox student in Bossey and at the same time the last student from the Soviet Union. “Bossey was one of THE experiences in my life”, she said during an interview at the last meeting of the Central Committee of the WCC. What fascinated her was the variety of people and theologies she encountered. It was a big difference just to read or hear about different countries and their problems and now to meet people from these countries. “We not only studied, but lived together as a big family, sharing hopes and problems, all the time doing something together. The friendship with people from other countries and denominations helps to overcome stereotypes, changes world view…”

Now Margarita is a staff member of the Department for External Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church. Her specific responsibility is ecumenical and diaconal work. She is also the coordinator of the Russia Round Table and in this capacity, for example, has developed care for people with HIV/AIDS in Russia. Since 1990 (WCC Assembly in Canberra) she is a member of the Central Committee of the WCC for the Russian Orthodox Church.

Amis du Château after their bi-annual meeting in April at Bossey

Margarita Neliubova at the WCC during 2011 Central Committee
Calling all ecumenists in California!

The Southern California Ecumenical Council will be celebrating it’s 100th anniversary this year. As part of the celebration, the group is hosting a get together on Saturday, September 27th for Bossey alumni and friends at the Athenaeum on the campus of California Tech in Pasadena. The event is being organized by two Bossey alumni, Rev. Sally Welch (1982) and Dr. John George Huber (1972) and (2000). Prof. Dr. Ioan Sauca will be attending the meeting and will present a lecture on the topic, Challenges to the Concept of Unity.

If you are interested in learning more about this event, please contact John Huber at johngeorgehuber@aol.com

News from the Faculty

A partial list of recent publications by the faculty of the Ecumenical Institute

Amélé Adamavi-Abo Ekué

Dagmar Heller

Paul Isaak

Odair Pedroso Mateus

Ioan Sauca

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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) an organisation 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.

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