

## Christian, Jewish and Muslim students take part in interreligious summer school

Anglican Communion News Service (ACNS), 1 July 2017



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[WCC] As young people from across the world gathered for a three-week Interreligious Summer School at the World Council of Churches Bossey Ecumenical Institute in Switzerland, they heard inspiring greetings 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 globalisation.

Fr Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, director of the Ecumenical Institute and WCC deputy general secretary, wished the seminar participants success. “What is our common approach to the challenges of our time - to others who may have the same values, but from a non-faith perspective?” he asked. “May God, who is the God of creation, according to our Abrahamic religions, bless the beginning of the seminar.”

The young people are pursuing the Ecumenical Institute's Certificate of Advanced Studies in Interreligious Studies, which is accredited by the University of Geneva under the Swiss Higher Education Programme for Continuing Education.

Revd Dr Benjamin Simon, Professor of Ecumenical Missiology, with responsibility for the Interreligious Summer School said: “This is a wonderful opportunity for 14 young Jewish, Muslim and Christian students from all over the world to live and study together in a safe atmosphere of conviviality and mutual respect.” Revd Benjamin added: “The aim is to find constructive solutions and to discover how religions respond to challenges of our time and to equip our participants to become bridge builders and ambassadors for just peace.”

Sheikh Hafid Ouardiri, director of the Inter-Knowing Foundation, said each year’s experience is vastly different from the last. “I’m just expecting to get more knowledge than what I have before,” he said.

“As human beings we need freedom and dignity, and freedom and dignity are the same for everyone. We have to be together to bring this freedom and dignity. Here, at Bossey, we have

this grace where we start as human beings, so our differences make us more open to be human to each other.”

The course encompasses a study period of six weeks, including three weeks of distance learning, and three weeks of residential study at Bossey. The residential period includes lectures, courses, workshops and study visits to places of interreligious interest.

Suzanne de Jonckheere, who helps lead the Continuing Education Centre at the University of Geneva, said students and professors alike, in order to support the evolution of their professional lives, and to face the complex issues of their societies, need time to think and reflect, to confront their knowledge and to share experiences. “Continuing education programmes and especially this class give you a special space of reflection and sharing,” she said.

Within the seminar, courses are conducted by professors from the Ecumenical Institute and WCC experts in collaboration with the Autonomous Faculty of Protestant Theology of the University of Geneva and Jewish and Muslim partners. WCC Communications director Marianne Ejdersten brought them greetings from the Holy Land, from where she had just returned. Participants in the seminar will have the opportunity to practice storytelling to inspire other people to work together for just peace in the world. “Take the opportunity to get to know each other with open eyes, open ears and open hearts,” Ejdersten urged.

Upon completion of the course, students will receive a Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) in Interreligious Studies.