

04-22 AUGUST 2014

BUILDING AN INTERFAITH COMMUNITY

**THE ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE,
BOSSEY, SWITZERLAND**



Building an Interfaith Community- Summer Course 2014

This course is designed to enable participants to encounter each other in mutual respect, to learn together, and to challenge and overcome stereotypes. While fully respecting and affirming each particular faith identity, the overall question to be explored is: What can we, as people of faith, do to respond and to overcome, the pressing challenges of our time as violence and conflict and build together mutually accountable societies based on respect and cooperation? The theme for this year's course is ***Religions and Climate Change: Together Safeguarding Creation***.

The course is open to young people between 18-35 years, with a maximum of 30 people to be accepted on the course. Participants should be well grounded in their own faiths and be positioned to influence the thinking of members of their wider faith communities after completion of the summer course. The structure of the programme will include spiritual exposure and sharing reflection on sacred scriptures as well as lectures and workshops on thematic issues.

The cost of the course is **CHF 3,300** which includes tuition, full board and lodging, health insurance, and exposure visits. Scholarships are available to assist participants to attend the course. The Ecumenical Institute is sensitive to special food requirements and will offer spaces for prayer according to the needs of each of the participating faith communities. **The deadline for applications is 30 April, 2014.**

Application forms and further information is available by emailing bossey_admissions@wcc-coe.org

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The structure of the programme includes:

Spiritual sharing:

Every day begins with devotion and meditation, for which each faith group will organize its own “sacred” space and taking turns, each will lead morning devotions in the presence of the others.

Scriptural Reasoning:

Selected texts related to the theme of the course from the sacred scriptures of each faith community are studied in turn.

Lectures, panels and workshops:

Formal lectures are given by specialists from Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities. Further reflections is done through plenary discussions, panels, group discussions, workshops and community building exercises.

Exposure visits

Group visits to places of worship along with opportunities to interact with members of different faith communities present in Geneva.

Participant Testimonials

In Bossey we have discussed several issues, ranging from the place of feminism in Islam to common values of peace within Christianity and Judaism. The discussions here are intense and intriguing, and we are not always in agreement. However, by the end of our conversations I always discover something new about even my own faith. This is the discovery that leads us to mutual respect, tolerance and acceptance of the other. Our faiths have more commonalities than we think.

Oriya Gorgi, Jewish participant from Israel.

My understanding of faith was somehow restricted to ‘my truth’ only. However, I ended up embracing the interfaith community wholeheartedly. Conversations with my Muslim and Jewish brothers and sisters gave me the knowledge I lacked. 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. When I return home I hope to collaborate with interfaith networks in New Zealand.

Mataiva Robertson, Christian participant from New Zealand

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. Once we engage in dialogue, we realize that a deep knowledge of religions exists behind the face of politics. One of the great things in the course is to create such a diverse group of friends.

Yusef Syed, Muslim participant from Ireland.

